

Decentralisation and Local Governance in Nigeria

Andrew Ariyo Tobi^{1*} & Gafar Idowu Ayodeji²

¹Department of Public Administration, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

²Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: tobi.ariyo@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria has over the years, initiated and implemented decentralisation policies to promote effective governance at the sub-national level. However, the narratives on grassroots governance in Nigeria showed that governance at the grassroots has not been effective. This study probed decentralisation in Nigeria to explain its failure to transform governance at the grassroots level. The study utilised a qualitative research approach and relied on information obtained from official publications, textbooks, journals and newspapers, and adopted the vertical and horizontal decentralisation as framework of analysis. The study found that series of efforts aimed at strengthening local governance in Nigeria through decentralisation found expression in the various reforms of the local government system. It found that vertical decentralisation while transferring powers to local government retained supervisory control with the other higher tiers of government. The study further showed that horizontal decentralisation, which ought to focus on empowering community-based organisations, the private sector and civil society is grossly deficient. The deficit of horizontal decentralisation has manifested in the limited impact of non-state actors on governance at the sub-national level. The study recommended a redefinition of vertical decentralisation to reverse the existing central-local relations, which have engendered a top-bottom governance structure and stymied grassroots governance. It further recommended strengthening horizontal decentralisation to encourage the growth and participation of non-state actors in governance at the sub-national level.

Keywords: decentralisation; local governance; local government; non-state actors; political decentralisation

INTRODUCTION

Received: 10 January 2023

Accepted: 19 May 2023

Published: 30 June 2023

Decentralisation has featured prominently in the reform agenda of many countries including those in sub-Saharan Africa. A common goal of decentralisation is the strengthening of governance at the sub-national with emphasis on local government and non-state actors in addressing the needs and meeting the aspirations of the people at the locality (Meyer, 2014; European Union, 2016). Although decentralisation and local governance are related concepts and often conflated, they are different. While decentralisation describes the downward shift of administrative, political and fiscal responsibilities to sub-nationalities (Wunsch, 2014) local governance encompasses mechanisms for promoting development at the grassroots, which may involve multiple actors such as government, non-state actors and non-profits organisations (Kauzya, 2003)

Decentralisation has a long history in Nigeria, yet governance at the grassroots level has not been effective. The relevance of local government as a development agent has continued to be doubted, particularly the involvement of the people of the locality in the decision-making process and service delivery (Obioha, 2019).

Against the backdrop of the preceding, this study probes why the implementation of decentralisation policies has not led to effective governance at the grassroots level in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at:

- examining the history of decentralisation in Nigeria
- ascertaining the reasons decentralisation reforms have not translated to effective local governance in Nigeria
- identifying the challenges undermining the effectiveness of decentralisation policies in Nigeria
- discussing measures for strengthening local governance in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Decentralisation

Although, there are multiple conceptions of decentralisation, yet there is the agreement among writers that it is concerned with the downward shift of governmental responsibilities to sub-national governmental units (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983; Ozmen, 2014; Chaudhary, 2019; Dick-Sagoe, 2020; Kuhn & Morlino, 2021) It is little wonder that most definitions of decentralisation focus on the downward dispersal of administrative and political powers to sub-national governments. Different types and forms of decentralisation are discernible in the literature. These are administrative, political, fiscal and market or economic types of decentralisation (Chaudhary, 2019; Dick-Sagoe, 2020; Mudalige, 2019).

Administrative decentralisation refers to a situation where the national government transfers part of its responsibilities to a sub-national entity and manifests mainly in forms of deconcentration and delegation (Ozmen, 2014). On the one hand, deconcentration refers to a situation where the central government transfers administrative duties to subordinate administrative units. In this form of decentralisation, the subunits or local agencies' personnel are also the central agency's staff. They can be transferred from the subunits to the central office. On the other hand,

delegation depicts the transfer of decision-making responsibility for "specifically defined functions" (Rondinelli, et.al., 1983, p.9) by a central authority to organisations or agencies. In both types of decentralisations, decision-making authority resides with the central or national government.

The second type is political decentralisation, also known as devolution. It signifies the downward dispersal of political authority to a lower level of government. Local government is the closest political arrangement to this type of decentralisation (Rondinelli, et.al., 1983) The objectives of political decentralisation, among other things, encompass the need to devolve governmental power to people in the locality and promote their meaningful participation in the determination of issues that affect their well-being and equally promote accountability to the local populace (Ozmen, 2014; Amah, 2018).

Fiscal decentralisation is the third type of decentralisation. It entails mechanisms for sharing public revenue among the various layers of government and powers to generate funds and undertake expenditure (Rondinelli, et.al., 1983). The goal is to make sure governments at the sub-national level have the resources to fulfil their tasks.

The fourth typology is economic or market decentralisation. It depicts the dispersal of the economic functions of the government to non-state actors. This manifests in various types of liberalisation policies and reforms such as deregulation, privatisation of state enterprises and public-private partnerships (Mudalige, 2019). Despite the differences among the various forms and types of decentralisation, their goals coalesced into increasing governmental activities at the sub-national level. Political decentralisation, in particular, stresses the exercise of discretion by the people of a locality in the decision-making process, the use of local initiatives in the conception and execution of programmes and the "introduction of administrative efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness" (Makara, 2018, p.25) in the governance process at the sub-national level.

Basically, decentralisation is valued for several reasons. It is generally seen as a mechanism for addressing the evils of centralisation and paternalistic influence of central institutions on institutions of local governance. It is seen as part of the processes of inclusion of hitherto marginalised and underserved groups and sections of the community. The inclusion of local population in the governance process, apart from

promoting a sense of belonging and legitimacy, enables policies and programmes to reflect local preferences and interests. Decentralisation is equally seen as a formidable mechanism for strengthening local governments charged with the responsibilities of promoting the development of the grassroots. In terms of administration, it reduces the volume of work and pressure on central or national government through the dispersal of such functions to sub-national institutions that are better placed to discharge them.

It should however be noted that not all decentralisation reforms have the tendency of promoting effective local governance. Several scholars such as Litvak, Ahmad & Bird, 1998; Prud'homme, 1998, Bardhan, 2002; Devas, 2005; Mosely, 2008 and Arends, 2020 among others have identified some dangers associated with decentralisation which may undermine its effectiveness. Some of the discontents include the argument that decentralisation may promote uneven development as regions or areas with challenges of resources may be lagging behind those that are viable. The argument is that where the central government is not committed to the redistribution of resources and services, equity and justice may be compromised and may lead to regional disparities. Similarly, the success of decentralisation to a large extent depends on economic and political capacities of the subnational institutions and where subnational institutions are weak in terms of resources and personnel, regional disparities may occur.

The argument in the literature is that weak economic resources apart from spawning regional disparities, may limit the capacity of subnational institutions in attracting experienced personnel with the requisite knowledge. This, coupled with other factors such as poor financial resources and excessive control by the central government may undermine development at the sub-national level. Similarly, one of the arguments against decentralisation is in the realm of its political ramification. It is argued that because it encourages local autonomy and promotes minorities' interest, it may engender separatist agitations which may undermine the corporate existence of a political community (Mbate, 2017). Furthermore, the absence of will power on the part of national political elites to disperse powers to local institutions or sub-national governments may limit the gains of decentralisation (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007).

Decentralisation has equally been criticized on the ground that it is about multilayers of government and if there is lack of proper co-ordination by the central government, it may lead to duplication of efforts and increase in the cost of governance. Lack of co-ordination and monitoring on the part of the central government may equally

reduce level of accountability at the subnational level. Still on accountability, it has been argued that decentralisation promotes corruption at the subnational level due to a series of factors such as poor accounting practices, ineffective monitoring by central government and elite capture at the local level (Bardhan, 2002).

While decentralisation is seen to have the potential of mitigating local conflicts, it has equally been argued it may spawn contradictions that may spur conflict of different dimensions at the subnational level (Shou & Haug, 2005). The foregoing aptly suggests that despite the amplified virtues of decentralisation, it could spawn some negative contradictions that may undermine its effectiveness. Hence, the success of decentralisation policies depend on how the processes are being managed.

Local governance

It is important to start this session with a discussion on the meaning of governance before delving into local governance. This is necessary because governance has become one of the buzzwords of contemporary society and could be seen to be entwined in a definitional quagmire. There are multiple definitions and interpretations of governance in the literature; hence it has defied a one for all definition. Despite the definitional quagmire, it is commonly used to describe how public institutions manage their affairs to achieve the good life expected of citizens in a given state. This task is no longer the exclusive responsibility of the government. It is now carried out in partnership with non-state actors such as civil society organisations and the organised private sector (Mudacumura, 2014).

What then is local governance? In this study, we define local governance as the way and manner the affairs of government at the sub-national level are managed. This conception of local governance encompasses the activities of the government, non-state actors and non-profit organisations at the sub-national level. It has been pointed out that not every form of governance at the sub-national level is qualified to be labelled 'local governance, rather, local governance is about the participation of the local people in the determination of matters that affect their living conditions and the advantages that flow to them. It has been postulated that in determining what constitutes local governance, attention should be on the participation of the local population and their well-being rather than what actors of governance do (Kauzya, 2003)

Local government

Globally, local governments exist to promote development and effective governance at the local level. Hence, regardless of the reasons used their existence; they are all tailored toward the need to improve grassroots development. Therefore, they are seen as decentralised institutions for promoting effective governance at the sub-national level. They are strategically located to handle the pressing demands of the people because of their efficiency and ease of operation. Succinctly put, local governments are seen as decentralised agencies that promote democracy (Gboyega, 1987; Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015).

Other liberal justifications for the existence of local governments include the belief that they serve as institutions for training political leaders, promotion of accountability in governance, and equally allowing for the participation of sections of the community that otherwise would not have participated in the political process (Gboyega, 1987). The virtues of local governments in contemporary society can also be discussed within the context of their capacity to efficiently deliver services to the local population and also promoting grassroots development based on the familiarity with the local people and their needs. In this context, they are the institutional frameworks for managing government affairs at the sub-national level. This implies that an understanding of the nature and operation of the local government system is pivotal to the analysis of governance at the sub-national level.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design. Data were collected from official publications, journals, textbooks and newspapers. These data were qualitatively analysed. This study was anchored on the vertical and horizontal decentralisation framework for effective local governance as articulated by (Kauzya, 2003) who advances the view that to understand the effectiveness of decentralisation; such an explanation should be done in two planes. These are the vertical and horizontal planes.

On the one hand, Kauzya (2003) avers that vertical decentralisation depicts the transfer of political power and authority from the central or national government to the government at the sub-national level. The framework contends that vertical decentralisation may entail the reforms of existing laws. On the other hand, horizontal decentralisation explains a situation where mechanisms are put in place for civil society

and community-based organisations as well the private sector to participate in the governance process. It is not about the promulgation of new laws. Instead, it is about the renewed effort to mobilise and organise people in the locality to participate in the determination and execution of initiatives and policies to strengthen their capacities to improve their livelihood (Kauzya, 2003).

This theoretical model helps in understanding the nexus between decentralisation and local governance in Nigeria. It permits analysis of governance that transcends the traditional focus on local government and introduces a broad-based conception of local governance, encompassing multiple actors and stakeholders. The implication is that explanations for the success or failure of decentralisation reforms should not be limited to the strength or weaknesses of local government. Instead, such explanations should be extended to the nature and activities of other actors, such as private and non-profit organisations and how vertical and horizontal decentralisation patterns shape the local population's living conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narratives on Decentralisation in Nigeria

The history of decentralisation in Nigeria is the chronology of the development of institutions of local governance which can be traced to the indirect rule policy of the colonial authorities. The policy was purportedly introduced to preserve the people's existing traditional institutions and culture. However, the shortage of white personnel could be the primary reason for introducing indirect rule in Nigeria. Regardless of the rationale for the indirect rule system, it paved the way for the Native Authority System, which eventually metamorphosed into Nigeria's modern local government system.

The desire to establish a democratic local government system in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era, when the regions were given some degree of partial self-governance in the 1950s. Before this period, the Native Authority System played the role of modern local government. However, the Native Authority System was far from an ideal institution for local governance because the participation of the people was minimal (Olasupo & Fayomi, 2012). However, the idea of meaningful political decentralisation started in the Eastern Region when an Ordinance was passed to replace the Native Authority system in 1951 (Gboyega, 1987; Monday & Wijaya, 2022). The Ordinance stipulated that the majority of council members should be elected. The Western region embraced the idea of democratic local government by enacting the

Local government Law in 1952, which stipulated that election should be the mode of electing councillors. Although the Northern region followed suit in 1954, it was difficult to supplant the deep-rooted Native Authority System with a democratic local government system because "there were very few changes of significance in the system of local administration between 1950 and 1966" (Gboyega, 1978, p.61) in the Northern region.

It is important to note that the idea of political decentralisation, which focused on the devolution of powers to local government, was not nationally determined. Each region carried out its reforms and had relative powers to independently develop a local government system that suited their different domains. This explains the various forms of local government that were in existence before the 1976 nationwide reform.

However, history was made in Nigeria in 1976 when the federal government carried out a nationwide reform that shaped the current system of local government. The objectives of the reform were, without doubt, designed to strengthen local governance. They revolved around the desire to promote grassroots democracy and development by transferring authority to local bodies, as well as mobilizing human resources to encourage local population to participate in the affairs that affect their lives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976).

The 1976 reform set a limit on the size of local governments. The smallest and largest populations permitted were determined to be 150,000 and 800,000 respectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976). The reform prescribed a uniform single-tier local government system with statutory funding from the Federation Account and a set of distinct responsibilities for local government. The administrative setup of local government was also covered by the reform. It provided for the establishment of elected local councils (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021).

In the Second Republic, major components of the 1976 reform were entrenched in the 1979 Constitution, which made provisions for elected local government councils. However, most states' governors in the Second Republic jettisoned the goal of political decentralisation as envisioned in the 1976 reform. As noted by (Gboyega, 1987), the governors who took office on October 1, 1979, within weeks of assuming office, dissolved the elected councils and, instead of making provision for the conduct of fresh elections, appointed management committees to oversee the affairs of local government councils.

The Buhari/Idiagbon administration that took over from the Shehu Shagari civilian government made an attempt to strengthen the Nigerian local government system. It set up the Ibrahim Dasuki's Committee to review local government in Nigeria. The Committee, among other things, pronounced itself satisfied with the local government structure introduced in 1976 (Monday & Wijaya, 2022) and endorsed the decision of the Federal Military Government, which reverted the number of local government councils to 301 that existed in 1976. It also recommended that Management Committee be put in place to run the affairs of the local government council (Gboyega, 1987). This recommendation was more or less a setback for local democracy in Nigeria. The attendant action taken by the Military government in terms of posting civil servants to act as Sole Administrators of local government diminished the democratic value of the Nigerian local government system (Monday & Wijaya, 2022).

The Babangida administration that took over from the Buhari/Idiagbon military administration showed interest in democratic local government as efforts were made to put local government on its proper pedestal. In the transition to the aborted Third Republic, the democratic experiment started from the local government level and a series of reforms were carried out. These included the extension of the 1988 Civil Services Reform to local government and the adoption of the presidential system at the local level (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021). In addition, as a part of the transition programme, efforts were made to democratise local governments. This started with the 1987 local government election on a non-party basis and was followed by the 1990 elections on a party basis.

In the journey to the Fourth Republic, attempts were made to democratise local government as elections were held to constitute the local government councils in 1998. Similarly, when the 1999 constitution was promulgated, it recognised the place of local government as the third-tier level of government, just like what was obtainable under the 1979 constitution. The 1999 constitution made provision for local government councils dully elected by the people and every state's government was to ensure their existence (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

The functions of local government councils are captured in the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 constitution (as amended) and for effective functioning; the constitution provides that the both National Assembly and House of Assembly of each state shall

make statutory allocation to the local government councils (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Despite these provisions of the 1999 constitution regarding the structure and functions of local government, the political elites have continued to debase the democratic status of local government. In some states of the federation, the governors repeated what happened in the Second Republic. In the early part of the Fourth Republic, some governors failed to conduct elections for the various local government councils. Instead, they appointed Caretaker Committees to oversee the affairs of local governments for several years [Abdulhamid & Chima, 2016, Anyebe, 2016; Sheriff, Farouk & Aliyu, 2021). Even in some states where local government elections have taken place, some of them were more or less a travesty of democracy as the governors manipulated them to favour the party in power in the various states (Olatunji, 2012; Alao, Osadeke & Owolabi, 2015; Hassan & Iwuamadi, 2018).

The Fourth Republic has also witnessed a series of attempts to reform the Nigerian local government. This started during the Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) when a Technical Committee of the Review of Local Government Council in Nigeria was set up in 2004. Similarly, the 8th National Assembly (2015-2019) equally took steps to amend the 1999 Constitution, particularly to enhance the local government's autonomy.

The Local Government System and Local Governance in Nigeria

Various scholars have written extensively on local government in Nigeria. Suffice it to say that the Nigerian local government system is adjudged as a failure (Hassan & Iwuamadi, 2018; Ezeozue, 2020) thus, raising questions regarding the effectiveness of decentralisation policies in Nigeria and the perversion of governance at the local level. This study attributed this failure to the albatross of vertical decentralisation and the contradictions spawned by horizontal decentralisation.

We have referred to the 1976 nationwide local government reform and the subsequent ones under the Babangida era, designed to strengthen the Nigerian local government system. These reforms ought to empower local government to drive local governance effectively. Paradoxically, the provisions in post-1976 constitutions have been the primary sources of distorted governance at the sub-national level. The political elites at the federal and state levels in Nigeria have manipulated some provisions of the

constitutions to undermine democratic grassroots governance. This has manifested in various ways, such as the failure to operate a democratically elected local government council as stipulated in the post-1976 constitutions and the attendant use of caretaker committees to run the affairs of local government (Gboyega, 1987; Anyebe, 2016, Tobi & Oikhala, 2021). Others include the distortions of local government elections and fiscal decentralisation. These developments have a series of effects on local governance. They include the following:

- they deprived the citizens the opportunity of participating meaningfully in the affairs of their locality;
- they made accountability in the local government to be a farce. Appointed members of the local government councils are not answerable and responsible to the citizens they are ought to serve but to the state governors that appointed them;
- the estrangement of the people from the government. Some members of the Caretakers committees are not familiar with the local government areas they are expected to oversee. Some do not even reside in the locality and
- promotion of a pattern of central-local relations whereby the political elites at the state and federal levels set the agenda for the development of the grassroots.

Other practices that have rendered vertical decentralisation to be ineffective in enhancing local governance are as follows:

First, the 1999 Constitution (as amended) makes a provision for the existence of a “State Joint Local Government Account” into which statutory allocations meant for local governments shall be paid into (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: Section 162, sub-sections 6). Many states’ governors have not only continued to interpret these provisions of the 1999 Constitution to deny local governments of their statutory allocation but have cultivated the unsavoury habit of diverting funds from the Federation Account to other areas and equally depleting them under different expenditures (Obioha, 2019; Ubani, 2019; Hassan & Iwuamadi, 2018). These practices which on many occasions had pitched some local government chairmen against some state governors have collectively been undermining the effectiveness of local governments as agents of local governance in Nigeria.

Second is the related issue of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy reform which stipulates that revenues collected must be deposited in a single account. In some states of the federation, this has affected the revenue profile of local governments as

revenues generated by the local governments are paid into the account, which local governments have little power to control. Simply put, there are problems with fiscal decentralisation, which have continued to weaken the capacity of the local governments to embark on projects and programme to enhance citizens' welfare at the grassroots (Obioha, 2019)

Third, state government agencies still exercise supervisory roles over local government. Such agencies include the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, which oversees local government within the state and the Local Government Service Commission, charged with personnel functions. The activities of these institutions have been weakening the autonomy of local government (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021).

Apart from the albatross of the vertical decentralisation, which has generated the above contradictions, it also the argument of this study that the effectiveness of decentralisation in promoting effective local governance depends on the organisational capabilities of various actors at the sub-national level in Nigeria. The functional existence of community-based, civil society and the private sector at the sub-national level can make up for government failure at the grassroots. Paradoxically, the impact of non-state actors and the private sector in Nigeria is not felt in grassroots governance. Apart from some organisations at the local level that have been visible as mediating agencies in the realm of neighbourhood watch and the provision of services such as electricity, water, and road repairs, among others, the impact of non-state actors of governance has been negligible. The consequence is that local governance has continued to be driven by the local governments whose activities as agents of grassroots governance are being perverted by the pattern of central-local relations that have estranged them from the local population they ought to serve. Thus, the participation of the people in determining issues that affect their living conditions remains negligible. Consequently, the virtues of political decentralisation have remained more or less an illusion.

Strengthening Local Governance in Nigeria

Discussion in this study has shown that vertical and horizontal dimensions of decentralisation have failed to engender development at the grassroots in Nigeria. The challenges undermining effective local governance have not gone unnoticed. There are

a series of demands for the amendment of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) to grant autonomy to local government. To strengthen local governance, attention should focus on the two planes of decentralisation discussed in this study. In the realm of vertical decentralisation, policy responses are needed in the following areas:

- Adherence to the constitutionally elected local government system. The idea of a using caretaker or management committee to manage the affairs of local government is an aberration of political decentralisation. Free and fair periodic elections should be held at the local government level to constitute the various local government councils. Moreover, after the expiration of elected government officers, elections should be immediately held so that there would be no room for caretaker or management committees. This will enhance the democratic virtues of the Nigerian local government system.
- True fiscal decentralisation should be adequately implemented so that local government financial autonomy can be enhanced. Similarly, the State Joint Local Government Account should be scrapped to reduce the financial dependence of local governments on the state governments (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021). Political leaders at the state level should be constantly educated and reminded of the need to adhere to the practice of true fiscal decentralisation. Such education has the capacity of changing their mind set and in the long run change their perception of local governments as state agencies.
- State supervisory agencies such as the Local Government Service Commission and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs should equally be scrapped as was done under the Babangida administration (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021).
- In the context of horizontal decentralisation, non-state actors should be encouraged to participate more actively in local governance. Community-based organisations (CBOs) are newcomers to local government in Nigeria, mechanisms to promote their growth and long-term viability should be put in place.

CONCLUSION

Decentralisation harbours a series of promises for effective and good governance at the local level if properly designed and implemented. In Nigeria, these promises have not been fulfilled. Despite the constitutional recognition accorded to local governments, the absence of autonomy has continued to weaken their effectiveness. The reasons, among others, are due to the nature and design of

decentralisation reforms. In Nigeria, the virtues of devolution of powers are often touted but what exists is deconcentration.

Decentralisation is a process; consequently, a review of the existing vertical decentralisation model can improve local government operations as an institution of local governance. Such a review should be tailored towards strengthening the capacity of local governments to undertake the task of grassroots development and, at the same time, abolishing the existing frameworks that have permitted the unwholesome intrusion into their affairs by actors in higher tiers of governments. Similarly, meaningful horizontal decentralisation where community-based and civil society organisations as well as the private sector would team up with the local government to manage the grassroots affairs is needed to make decentralisation effective in Nigeria.

We have equally noted in this study that the effectiveness of decentralisation is not automatic. It depends on a series of factors which include the willingness of the political elite to readily devolve powers to political institutions and government functionaries at the local level (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). Thus, for decentralisation to promote effective local governance, the political elites must be committed to its ideals and goals and ensure proper implementation of various reforms aimed at strengthening local governments. Similarly, the contemporary meaning of governance encompasses the government, non-state actors and civil society organisations. Hence, effective and meaningful local governance is expected to be driven not only state actor-which is the local government. Rather, civil society and community-based organisations should be actively involved in the governance process at the local level. Consequently, framework capable of promoting their participation should be put in place. This requires further research on the potential benefits of the participation of non-state actors and civil society organisations in the governance process at the local level.

Moreover, to make local governance meaningful in Nigeria, there is the need for constant evaluation of decentralisation policies in Nigeria with the view to identifying reasons for its limited success and what should be done to enhance their effectiveness.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to appreciate Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

Funding

The authors did not receive any grant from any agency for this work.

Author contributions

All the authors contributed to the publication of this article.

Conflict of interest

Not Applicable

References

- Abdulhamid, S., & Chima, P. (2016). Local government administration in Nigeria: The search for relevance. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 18, 181-195.
- Alao, D. O., Osadeke, K.O., & Owolabi, T. Y. (2015). Challenges of local government administration in Nigeria. Lessons from comparative analysis. *International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability*, 3(4), 61-79.
- Amah, E.I. (2018). Devolution of power to local government: Appraising local government autonomy under Nigerian federation. *Beijing Law Review*, 9, 275-293 DOI: 10.4236/blr.2018.92018
- Anyebe, A.A. (2016). An overview of the presidential system at the local government in Nigeria. *International Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), 1-8)
- Arends, H. (2020). The dangers of fiscal decentralisation and public service delivery. A

review of argument. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 61, 599-622

Bardhan, P. (2002). Decentralisation of governance and development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16(4), 185-205.

Chaudhary, D. (2019). The decentralization, devolution and local governance practices in Nepal: The emerging challenges and concerns. *Journal of Political Science*, 19, 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v19i0.26698>

Cheema, G.S., & Rondinelli, D.D. (2007). From government decentralization to decentralized governance. In G. S. Cheema & D. A. Rondinelli (Eds.), *Decentralizing governance: Emerging concepts and practices* (pp. 1–20). Brookings Institution Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1261v1.4>

Devas, N. (2005). The challenges of decentralization. Retrieved from <https://bibalex.org/baifa/en/resources/document/452886>

Dick-Sagoe, C. (2020). Decentralization for improving the provision of public services in developing countries: A critical review. *Cogent Economics and Finance*, 8(1) Available.<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/23322039.2020.1804036?>

European Union. (2016). Supporting decentralisation, local governance and local development through a territorial approach. *Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No.23*

Ezeozue, C. (2020). Local government reforms as instrument for national development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Trend in Scientifics Research and Development*, 4(3), 129-135.

Fatile, J. O., & Ejalonibu, G.L. (2015). Decentralisation and local government autonomy: Quest for quality service delivery in Nigeria. *British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade*, 10(2), 1-25

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1976). *Guidelines for local government reform*. Kaduna: Government Press.

- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1999). *The 1999 Constitution*. Lagos: Government Press.
level in Nigeria.
- Hassan, I., & Iwuamadi, K.C. (2018). *Decentralisation, governance and corruption at the local level: Evidence from Nigeria*. Centre for Democracy and Development. Retrieved from <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/decentralisation-governance-and-corruption-at-the-local-level-evidence-from-nigeria>
- Gboyege, A. (1987). *Political values and local government in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited.
- Kauzya, J. M. (2003). *Local governance capacity-building for full-range participation: Concepts, frameworks and experiences in African countries*. (Discussion Paper No. 33). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/esa/esa03dp33.pdf>
- Kuhn, K., & Morlino, I. (2021). Decentralisation in times of crisis: Asset or liability? the case of Germany and Italy during covid-19. *Swiss Political Science Review*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12482>
- Litvack J, Ahmad J, & Bird, R. (1998). *Rethinking decentralisation in developing countries*. Washington D, C: The World Bank
- Mbate, M. (2017). Decentralisation, governance and accountability. Theory and evidence. *Journal of African Democracy and Development*, 1(2), 1-16
- Makara, S. (2018). Decentralisation and good governance in Africa: A critical review. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 22(2), 22-32.
- Meyers, C.E. (2014). Decentralisation in Uganda. Towards democratic local governance or political expediency? In G.M. Mudacumura & G. Morçöl (Eds.), *Challenges to democratic governance in developing countries, public administration, governance and globalization* 11. (pp.95-110). DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-03143-9_6. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

- Monday, E.J., & Wijaya, J.H. (2022). The historical development of local government administration and its contemporary realities in Nigeria. *The Journalism: Social and Government*, 3, (1), 43-54. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55314/tsg.v3i1.226>
- Mosely, H. (2008). Deentralisation and co-ordination: The twin challenges of labour market policy. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/regional/leed/40917889.pdf>
- Mudacumura, G.M. (2014). Multiple dimensions of governance. In G.M. Mudacumura & G. Morçöl (Eds.), *Challenges to democratic governance in developing countries, public administration, governance and globalization* 11 (pp.1-16). DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-03143-9_1, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing
- Mudalige, P.W. (2019). The discussion of theory and practice on decentralisation and S45service delivery. *European Scientific Journal*, 15(14), 115-135.Doi:10.19044/esj.2019.V15n14p115.
- Obioha, R. (2019, May 10). Financial autonomy for local government. *Daily Sun Nigeria Newspaper*. Retrieved from <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/financialautonomy-for-local-governments/>
- Olasupo, F.A., & Fayomi, I.O. (2012). Historical epochs of local government administration in Nigeria: Women and the poor. *Global Journal of Human Social Arts and Humanities*, 12(9), 12-30.
- Olatunji, D. (2012, July 23). Ogun LG poll: The intrigues and power play. *Vanguard*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/07/ogun-lg-poll-the-intrigues-and-power-play/>
- Ozmen, A. (2014). A note to the concept of decentralisation. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(10), 415-424
- Prud'homme, R. (1995). The dangers of decentralisation. *World Bank Research Observer*, 10.1, 201-220

- Rondinelli, D.A., Nellis J.R., & Cheema S.G. (1983). Decentralisation in developing Countries. A review of recent experience. *World Bank Staff Working Papers No.581, Management and Development Series, No.8*, 1-99
- Sheriff, G.I., Farouk, I.B., & Aliyu, I.B. (2021). Challenges of democracy in Nigerian local government system: A critical analysis. *Journal of Advanced Research and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 118-128. DOI: 10.52589/JARMS-BJXQ8P44.
- Schou, A & Haug, M. (2005). Decentralisation in conflict and post-conflict situations. Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research.
- Ubani, M. (2019, August 20). The impact of financial autonomy for the development of local government. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2019/08/20/the-impact-of-financial-autonomy-for-the-development-of-local-governments-by-Monday-ubani/>
- Wunsch J.S. (2014). Decentralisation: Theoretical, conceptual, and analytical issues. In J.T. Dickovick & J.S. Wunsch, (Ed.), *Decentralisation in Africa: The paradox of state strength* (pp. 1-22). Boulder, C.O: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Tobi, A.A., & Oikhala, G.I. (2021). Local government reforms and grassroots development in Nigeria. *Journal of Administrative Science*, 18(1), 113-133