

Decentralisation and Development from Nigeria's Perspectives

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Abstract

Nigeria was decentralised into various component units comprising 774 Local Governments, in addition to numerous Local Council Development Areas; 36 states; as well as a Federal Capital Territory. These were with a view to fast-tracking development by responding to the needs of the citizenry; by bringing government closer to the people; and the people to the government, for their needs to be better addressed, and for the general development of the country. Decentralisation of the country notwithstanding, with numerous human and natural resources readily available for development, the country is still fraught with development challenges. This study to this extent analyses the nexus between decentralisation and development in Nigeria. The study gathered information through secondary sources as well as researchers' observation of Nigeria's governance activities. The study revealed that, decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government without commensurate funds to carry out those responsibilities; low taxes raising powers by subunits of government; the lack of political will on the part of the central government to appropriately devolve power to subunits of government; the issue attached to resource control; corruption among the officials of decentralised areas; conflict over siting of administrative headquarters and failure to integrate diverse groups of decentralised areas are some of the reasons for unworkable decentralisation in Nigeria. The study concludes that decentralisation has not brought about the desirable development to Nigeria. Therefore, for decentralisation to aid development in Nigeria, all the highlighted challenges must be properly addressed and squarely dealt with.

Keywords: Decentralisation; Development; Devolution; Derivation; Corruption; Funding and Sub-units

INTRODUCTION

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In the last three to four decades, decentralisation has become a basic issue in the development policy of the third world (World Bank, 1999). This was so because of dissatisfaction recorded from centralised economic planning, which has made governance reformers to see decentralisation as a better way of reducing centralised authority in governance, to encourage broader participation in democratic governance for development (Wunsch & Olowu, 1990; Olowu, 2000; Bardhan, 2002). To this extent, there was a strong policy consensus in the 1980s and 1990s regarding powers decentralisation, as one of the conditions for reforming governance for development (King's College London, n.d.; Herath, 2009; Erk, 2014).

A decentralised government is that in which there is the existence of other levels of government that is/are below the national/central government, such that the sub-national units of government “may have more or less power to make decisions in few or

many areas of policy” (Kolstad, Somville & Wiig, 2014:2). Decentralisation is nothing other than “measures of policy choices” which may not be deeply rooted in the constitution (Blume & Voigt, 2008). Therefore, the existent of the subnational units or component units may not be rooted in the constitutions and so; the numbers, sizes, boundaries, and powers of the component units are determined by the central government, and can be changed or adjusted from time to time. In essence, decentralisation is about the transferring of political authority and responsibility from central to other sub-units of governments, to aid development. The authority and responsibility so transferred may cover planning, financing, and management.

Decentralisation if properly managed and applied can be of greater advantages for developing countries, as it has the potential of enhancing efficiency, improving governance, increasing level of equity, as well as leading to better-quality development and poverty reduction (Smoke 2003). It was for this reason, that some international organisations and donor agencies including the World Bank and IMF have been given not only financial support but also institutional support towards decentralisation reforms in the countries of Africa. According to Lewis as quoted by Erk (2014) for instance, the World Bank spent a whopping sum of 7.4 billion dollars on decentralisation programmes in developing countries between 1990 and 2007.

Many extant studies on development have provided clouding and confusing evidence on the effects of decentralisation on development. However, the reality of ground in the third world, regarding development has shown that most developing countries of the world are facing serious developmental challenges despite decentralising governance. It was as a result of this that this study becomes imperative to analyse the nexus between decentralisation and development in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Decentralisation and Development

This section reviewed related literature on the two major concepts as appeared in the title of this study. The two concepts of “decentralisation” and “development” are reviewed to give a deeper understanding and their meanings as related to this study. Owing to the failure of a centralised state at solving many developmental challenges of

the state, it consequently lost to a great extent its legitimacy, so, decentralisation is accepted with the believes that it will bring some measures of development to the state. Decentralisation has, therefore, become central in the debate for the establishment of a proper channel for the development of a given country, and to this extent, different scholars from different climes have aired their views regarding the concept of decentralisation based on their perspectives, backgrounds, and environments.

Bardhan (2002) for instance has argued that decentralisation is accepted to be a means of spreading the functions of the central government. That is, it a way of dividing the authority and power of the central government by bringing in more units of government to form a sort of intergovernmental relations and for the purpose of checks and balances in government. This goes a long way in making the government more committed, responsive, and efficient. Besides, it is expected that decentralisation will help to douse social-political tensions and enhance the local cultural and political autonomy of ethnic conflicts and separatist movements. Decentralisation is said to have equally given passable and more direction towards actualising development through subunits of government in conjunction with higher levels of governments.

Manor (1999), in his study sees decentralisation as the devolution of power, whereby central government transfers specific functions, ranging from administrative, to political, and economic among others, to state, regional, local, provincial, or municipal governments. That is, whenever powers are devolved to the aforementioned component units of government, they are expected to function independently of the central government within a given environment, as well as functional areas. The definition as offered by the SDC Decentralisation Team (2001) is not at variance with that of Manor (1999); According to the SDC Decentralisation Team, decentralisation is concerned with the transfer of competencies and responsibilities by the government at the central to a subunit or subordinate authorities to effectively perform public service obligations (SDC Decentralisation Team, 2001). For the team, decentralisation is used in various ways for various situations and different phenomena. Political decentralisation is targeted at making the people actively involved in the process of making political decisions. People's involvement in political decision-making goes a long way to make the elected representatives more responsible towards the people that elected them by better representing their interests in political decision-making processes. On the other hand, administrative decentralisation has to do with the allocation of responsibilities for the fulfilment of public duties among governmental

authorities at various lower levels of government. Rüländ (1993) views decentralisation from the perspective of transferring sovereign decision and performance competencies to autonomous or partly autonomous subsystems. For him, any subunit that powers must be transferred to must be either autonomous or semi-autonomous.

In a similar vein, Crook and Manors (1998) see decentralisation as the transferring of power from the government at the central to that of lower levels in the areas of political-administrative as well as a territorial hierarchy. For them, the power being transferred can be in two forms, that is, administrative and political. According to the World Bank Group (2001), administrative decentralisation has to do with redistribution of authority, duty, responsibility, and the country's financial resources for the provision of public services between/among the existing levels of government. In other words, administrative decentralisation has to do with the allotting responsibility to aid planning, managing, and financing of public activities and functions, from the government at the centre and its agencies to other lower levels of government. The World Bank further states that political decentralisation allows citizens or their elected representatives to be involved more in making public decisions. The idea of political decentralisation has to do with the belief that decisions made with greater participation of the people go a long way to accommodate diverse opinions and interests in society than those made by political authority only. The political decentralisation through the selection of representatives from local electoral jurisdictions, allows the people to know better their political representatives, thereby, allows these representatives officials to know the needs and desires of the people. Political decentralisation requires constitutional reforms and the development of pluralistic political parties. This will lead to the strengthening of legislatures, the formation of local political units, and encourage effective public interest groups.

A more detailed definition of decentralisation or decentralising governance is offered by the UNDP. According to the UNDP, decentralisation or decentralising governance means:

The restructuring or reorganisation of authority so that there are a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance while increasing the authority and capacities of

sub-national levels. Decentralisation could also be expected to contribute to key elements of good governance, such as increasing people's opportunities for participation in economic, social, and political decisions; assisting in developing people's capacities; and enhancing government responsiveness, transparency, and accountability (UNDP, 1997:4).

For the UNDP, decentralisation is all about reorganising the institutions of governance to achieve quality governance for the betterment and overall development of a country. Islam (1997); Rondinelli (1981), opined that decentralisation has to do with the transferring of specific responsibilities from the government at the centre to semi-autonomous, corporations, and area-wide regional authorities. Such transferred responsibilities may include – raising and allocating resources, as well as planning, and managing such resources effectively for the purpose of development. In other words, decentralisation has to do with the sharing or distribution of responsibility. The central government and its agencies allocate resources to field units of central government ministries or agencies; subordinate units or levels of government; semiautonomous public authorities or corporations; area-wide, regional or functional authorities, or non-governmental private or voluntary organisations (Rondinelli, 1981, as cited in Herath, 2009:28).

Okojie (2009) identifies various reasons for decentralisation which include — to increase the public services efficiency, vis-à-vis to allow for increase local participation, and in contemporary time to assuage discontent from regional/provinces that want greater autonomy. For her, decentralisation has formed part of the democratisation process in Latin America as well as Africa, just as the military regimes have been replaced by democracies. In their study titled *Decentralisation, Governance, and Corruption at the Local Level: Evidence from Nigeria*, Hassan & Iwuamadi (2018) analyse the different position of the effects of decentralisation on corruption, according to them there are theoretical arguments regarding decentralisation, while some theorists maintain that decentralisation reduces corruption and bring about more accountable and more transparent governance, others argue “that increased autonomy and proliferation of actors increases opportunities for corruption” (Hassan & Iwuamadi, 2018:1).

Development, on the other hand, is as old as civilisation. It is widely used to refer to the diverse aspects of life that are related to humanity's well-being, particularly

in western societies from Greco-Roman civilisations up to the late 19th century (Soares & Quintella, 2008). In contemporary times, the concept equally means different things to different people. In Mahmoud's (1991) opinion, some people confused development with economic growth being measured in terms of an increase in annual Per Capital Income or Gross National Product, regardless of the pattern of its distribution as well as the level of people's participation in effective growth (Mahmoud, 1991, as cited in Abuiyada, 2018).

Seers (1969); (1972), however, raises some pertinent questions that shape and clarifies what development constitutes. According to him, the questions needed to be asked concerning a country's development include – what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? It is only when these questions are answered, and it is found that there was a reduction in poverty, unemployment, and inequality that it could be said that there is development. Put differently, development has to do with a considerable reduction in poverty, unemployment, and inequality. In essence, development can thus be seen from the perspective of halting poverty, inequalities, and unemployment through economic development. Rodney (1974), sees development as a many-sided process. According to him, development at the individual level, for instance, points toward an increase in skill and capacity of an individual for greater freedom, creativity, ingenuity, self-discipline, responsibility, and general wellbeing. Regarding development along with the social group level, it connotes an increase in the capacity to control internal as well as external relationships.

Israel (2018), sees development as a process of creating growth and positive change, the purpose of which is to improve the living condition of the people through employment generation, by expanding regional incomes, vis-à-vis harnessing the available resources within the environment. Thus, development must be visible and beneficial, although it may not be immediate, it must be continuous and bring about a positive and quality change to the people. Development to Naomi (1995) is all-encompassing as it covers economic growth, equitable distribution of economic resources, provision of health care services, access to basic education, housing for the people as well as other related essential services that can bring about quality of life to the people (Naomi, 1995). To achieve this involves a qualitative, and quantitative use of available resources. In other words, the available resources must be judiciously used for development. For Rogers (1969), development is a social change whereby new ideas are

formulated and introduced into a social system to bring about an increase in per capita income, as well as an improved living standard of the people through advanced production approaches.

The Challenges of Development in Nigeria

One of the critical challenges facing the developing countries of the world is "development". Ordinarily, attaining a higher level of development should be a primary concern of any responsive government as this will go a long way to make the citizens attach naturally to the government. For a country to be on a path of development, such a country must have its socio-political and economic stability and have a peaceful environment coupled with a visionary leader that can propel development. According to Olutayo, *et.al.*, a path to development is always difficult.

The routes, processes, trajectories, and dynamics of development are complex and confounding, necessitating detailed, broad-based, multi-faceted, and continuous specialised study. This is why it is often maintained that development is the most crucial, complicated, and contentious contemporaneous issue (Olutayo, *et.al.*, 2015:1).

In Nigeria, a lot of people live in abject poverty, and to this extent, the country has been nicknamed "the poverty capital of the world" (Borgen Magazine, 2020), with compounding problems of unemployment, hunger, crimes, and insecurity. Nigeria is undoubtedly endowed with human and natural resources which could have made the country sit comfortably among the developed countries of the world. However, the narration is different when the issue of development is raised regarding the country.

Even though different administrations at different times in Nigeria have put-in their best in an attempt to develop the country, however, six decades after independence, Nigeria is still battling with developmental challenges as the efforts of most of the successive administration have failed to yield desired results in terms of provision of social amenities, institutional development, and development of different sectors of the economy, as well as human capital development.

From 1960 when Nigeria got its independence to date, the efforts put up by the successive administration include the experimentation of four different 5-year

Development Plans; one Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP); and two different 3-year rolling plans. The successive government had also explored four different visions and strategies which include the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). Besides, the country continues to adopt and trying all sorts of developmental initiatives and strategies, yet, development remains a mirage to the country (Emmanuel, 2019). Ikeanyibe (2009) stated a clear categorisation of various development plans in Nigeria to date. For him, Nigeria's development planning is categorised under four phases viz: The Colonial Era; the Era of Fixed-Term planning, between 1962 and 85; the Era of Rolling Plan from 1990 to 1998; and the New Democratic Dispensation from 1999 till date. Apart from these categorisations, there were periods dominated by sporadic governmental actions and ad hoc planning when the country did not have a plan document that could be categorised into the four phases mentioned above. These were the periods of major socio-political disorder and the economic predicament that necessitated "transitory and sporadic actions from the incumbent administrations" (Ikeanyibe, 2009). In support of the above assertion, the Commonwealth Governance (2020) has this to say concerning the development strategies put in place by the successive government in Nigeria:

Nigeria has had relatively long experience in development planning beginning with the Colonial Development Plan (1958-68). Medium-term development plans and national rolling plans were also developed and implemented with mixed results. Other major strategic initiatives – such as the Structural Adjustment Programme; the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy; the Strategy for Attaining the Millennium Development Goals; and the 7-Point Agenda – were not seen to have been effectively implemented (Commonwealth Governance, 2020:1).

Suffice to say that, most of the National Development Plan so far introduced and other development strategies in Nigeria has suffered implementation challenges. The failure of these development planning programmes was as a result of the unnecessary attachment of Nigeria's government to foreign countries; lack of commitment of the leadership in pursuing plan objectives; corruption and wrong prioritisation or wrong selection of projects for development (Ikeanyibe, 2009). Besides, most of the national development plan strategies in Nigeria lack coordination

and harmonisation (Ibietan & Ekhosuehi, 2013). According to Adegbami & Kugbayi (2019), series of developmental strategies introduced and applied by the Nigerian government have yielded little or no result due to lack of political will of the government to implement the various policies of development to the letter and thus resulted in policy summersault, in addition to this is the problem of lack continuity of programmes of development, as succeeding government did abandon the programme that has been embarked on by their predecessors.

The challenge of development is even compounded as a result of the government inability to woo investors into the country, while those investors on the ground are gradually exiting from the country as a result of insecurity, hostile business environment as well as lack of basic infrastructure especially stable electricity supply (Adegbami & Adepoju, 2017). Adegbami & Adepoju further state that:

The laxity in governance has also culminated in the declining industries. For instance, poor governance resulting in creating a hostile business environment has been one of the reasons that led to the relocation or folding up of businesses in the country. Gone are the days when companies and organisation such as Peugeot Automobile Nigeria; Volkswagen Nigeria; Dunlop Nigeria Limited; Michellin Nigeria; BATA; Lennards; Kingsway; A.G. Leventis; and Phillip Nigeria among others were flourishing in Nigerian, but now these companies and organisations are not in the country again. In a similar vein, industries such as Steel Rolling Mill, Osogbo; Steel Rolling Mill, Ajaokuta; Arewa Textile Mill; Nigeria Airways all are now moribund (Adegbami & Adepoju, 2017:150).

Even with decentralised political administration in place, there have not been desired results in terms of development. It is not surprising that the people can no longer trust the government when any promise of development is made, and as such, it is dawning on the people that the government will say one thing and does another. The government, in turn, has developed a thick skin, and shows a low response to people's yearnings and aspirations, by paying lip service to the issue of people's welfare and the provision of social services. As a result, it could be argued that enormous resources which are accrued to government coffers yearly, and which are supposed to be used for

development purposes were plundered wittingly, while impunity in governance becomes the order of the day.

Decentralisation and Development Debacle

The idea of decentralisation, a political administration that allows lower levels of government greater administrative authority to deliver services (Khan, 2002), is conceived to allow lower levels of government to have effective control over the affairs of local areas to facilitate development. Therefore, the responsibility of the government in a decentralised political area is to deliver those services that the public collectively want. A critical assessment of many developing countries, Nigeria inclusive shows that the purpose of decentralisation has been defeated, as there was no meaningful development being facilitated by these subunits. To this extent, this section analyses why decentralisation remains unworkable and has failed to yield the expected development in Nigeria. Thus, some factors that have been halting decentralisation from spawning development include, but not limited to the following:

Low/Inadequate Funding

One of the challenges restricting decentralisation from bringing about development into a decentralised area is low or inadequate funding. A proper decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government is expected to be accompanied by corresponding funds to carry out those responsibilities. Transferring specific functions to lower levels of government, without resources commensurate with those specific functions transferred will lead to poor delivery of services, vis-à-vis poor development. The present revenue sharing formula for the three levels of government is 52.7%; 26.7% and 20.6% to the Federal, State, and Local governments in that order. This percentage of revenue received by the local government has been grossly inadequate especially if development is to begin from local. And given the fact that most of the local governments in Nigeria depend solely on the money received from the federation account on monthly basis, it then makes development a herculean task for them.

Low Tax Raising Powers by the Subunits of Governments

The Federal Republic of Nigeria comprises three levels or tiers of government, that is – the federal, the state, and the local government. These three levels of government although shared functions and responsibilities, as well as revenues to be able to perform the shared functions and responsibilities. However, the revenue sharing formula is highly favourable to the federal government than other levels of government. Beyond this is the low capacity of the lower levels of government to raise taxes to complement the revenue shared from the federation account (Adegbami & Osungboye, 2019). With regards to the power to raise taxes, the lower levels of government are also at the receiving end as the federal government has tax-raising power compared to other levels of government especially the local governments. For example, under Schedule II (part I), of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), under the exclusive legislative list, the federal government has 68 items on which it can act. The items include – Defence; Customs and Excise Duties; Police; Arms, Ammunition and Explosives; Currency issue and External affairs, Mineral exploration, and Power supply among others. Schedule II (part II) of the constitution which was tagged Concurrent Legislative List, comprises 30 items on which both the federal and the state governments can act. The listed items under the concurrent list include – education, health care, roads, and water supply. The local government's residual power is contained in Schedule IV of the Constitution. The residual legislative list includes – provision of public goods and services – primary school health care facilities, – provision and maintenance of markets places, motor parks, and public conveniences, cemeteries, homes for the destitute or infirm, etc.

The above analysis regarding tax-raising powers among different levels of government revealed that the federal government wields power to legislate on 68 matters in the exclusive legislative list, as well as 30 subject matters which it shared with the state government in the concurrent legislative list. It should be noted, however, in case of a clash of interest between the federal and the state government to legislate on a particular matter under the concurrent list, the federal government power supersedes that of the state government (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Regarding the local government, its power is limited when compared to the powers of the federal and state governments. In essence, the federal government controls most of the items that can yield many revenues, to the detriment of other levels of government. It is not surprising that other levels of government always go cap in hand begging the

federal government for finance from time to time. Besides the federation account where all the country revenues are accrued is under the sole control of the federal government and it disburses to other levels of government their “unfair” shares on monthly basis.

Lack of Political Will to Appropriately Devolve Powers

Another main impediment to effective development through governance decentralisation has been the lack of political will to appropriately devolve power to the lower levels of government by the central government. According to Martinez-Vazquez & Vaillancourt (2011), given the fact that "genuine decentralisation requires different degrees of democratisation and political opening", the elites thus realised that genuine decentralisation could lead to the empowerment of the political opposition which could stand to challenge them on issues relating to governance. The fear on the part of political elites that a grassroots-based local democracy and leaders may spring up as a result of decentralisation has been a factor considered for the weakening of a decentralised government.

It thus not surprising that local governments are in many instances given a lot of responsibilities for which they are not well prepared for or incapable of carrying out. Functions and responsibilities that are supposed to remain centralised, or put under the direct supervision of the central are put under the direct control of the local government, while the central government held on to those activities of governance that might be better administered locally (Bossert 2000). The central government is reluctant to cede necessary and adequate powers to the local authorities, as well as limit the autonomy of local authorities, all these constitute a hindrance to the effective performance of decentralised government from aiding appropriate development. In a similar vein, Roeder and Rothchild (2005), were of the view that decentralisation will further empower the subnational leaders. Put differently, decentralisation will enhance various subnational leaders to garner resources with which they can use as formidable weapons in mobilising the people of the decentralised areas and manipulate the population to demand and call for more political powers from the central government. These type of situation on some occasions have elevated tensions, where subnational leaders gain prominence among their followers, and confronted the central government for more political and economic autonomy which has consequently threaten the power of national political elites, and the corporate existence of a country as a whole (Roeder and Rothchild, 2005; as cited in Faguet, Fox, & Poeschl, 2014).

Decentralisation of Nigeria's political system could be said to have commenced following the splitting of the existed four regions of Nigeria into twelve by Gowon's administration in 1967, shortly after the civil war. This step has equally led to the adjustment of revenue distribution, which could be said to be favourable to the federal government when compared with other levels of government. Prior to this period, each of the regions used to retain 50% of the derived revenues from its domain and remitted the remaining 50% to the Federation Account. By 1970 however, the percentage of revenue retained by the regions continued to fall, such that by 1975, it has fallen to 45% and later 20%. From then on, the component units of the federation were made to pay all their revenues directly into the Federation Account from where the contributed revenues are disbursed based on the landmass, population, need, and other considerations. However, the derivation principle, that is, the policy whereby a certain percentage of revenues derived from the exploitation and extraction of crude oil in a particular territory is retained by a producing community was consequently deemphasised. Beyond this, by 1982, the derivation principle was completely stopped, while a special 'development account' was introduced which allocated 1.5% of total government revenues to the oil-producing states (see Ushie, 2012).

The new revenue allocation system and resource control had continued to have impacts on the development of the decentralised areas particularly those local government areas of the oil-producing sections of Nigeria. The underdevelopment nature of the oil-producing areas continues to generate tensions and hostilities between the inhabitants and the oil companies in the region. Tensions and hostilities have on several occasions snowballed into a violent conflict which has not only consumed people's lives but also got destroyed the little development on the ground in the oil-producing areas (Adegbami, 2013).

The Babangida's administration in 1991 increased the derivation allocation from 1.5 to 3%, this step notwithstanding, hostilities in the oil-producing areas persisted unabated, insurgencies sprang up and violent conflict continued. The seeming security degeneration continued agitation from the oil-producing communities and the perceived threat to the country's economy forced the 1995 Constitutional Conference to recommend 13 percent as derivation revenue to the oil-producing communities. This was to cushion the effects of massive pollution, degradation, and total neglect of the oil-

producing communities by the federal government, even though high percentages of revenues for the country were being derived from those areas. With the entrant of the country to the Fourth Republic in May 1999, the 13% derivation provision was ratified and endorsed by the 1999 Nigeria's Constitution. The remaining 87 % of the national revenue in the Federation Account is allocated among the tiers of government in this manner – the federal government gets 52.7%, the states get 26.7%, while the remaining 20.6% is for local governments. Therefore, the fact that major resources of the country are constitutionally placed under the control federal government has made it difficult for many local governments to perform some of their constitutional responsibilities especially in providing relevant social amenities, and as such, restricting the local governments from aiding development.

Corruption Among the Officials of Decentralised Areas

Scholars have at different times lent their voices to the debate as to whether decentralisation will bring about a reduction in corruption or not. While some researchers believe that decentralisation will lead to a reduction in corruption, others have argued that decentralised political systems are even more corruptible when compared with a centralised government. Banfield (1979), for example, has argued that there is a tendency for decentralised political systems to be more corruptible than the centralised ones. He further states that, given the fact that the potential corrupter has only a few people to influence within a government's sector, and that only a fewer centralised agency exists to enforce honesty in such a system, there is every possibility for such corrupter to perpetrate atrocity easily in the governmental offices. Similarly, Prud'homme (1995), states that there are many avenues to perpetrate corruption at the local level of government. This is because the officials at this level of government have more relatively discretionary powers compared to the decision-makers at the centre. In essence, there is a higher propensity for officials at the local government to corrupt, to demand as well as to accept a bribe in the course of performing their assigned duties (Carbonera, 2000).

Although local government is accepted to be an instrument for development, this is because it a level of government that is close to the people, and as such, it is in a better position to address the challenges of the local populace. However, the laudable objective for creating a decentralised unit referred to as local government has been defeated in Nigeria. This is partly due to corruption been perpetrated at the local

government level. At the grassroots, corruption has been the order of the day and can be seen as a major reason for the poor state of development at the local government areas in Nigeria. A former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman Mrs. Farida Waziri once lamented regarding corruption and the state of development at local government level that:

Waste of government resources at the council level had reached monumental proportions. The local government council in the country could not explain the mismanagement of over N 3.313 trillion allocated to them in the last eight years. Unfortunately, local government officials have not left their hand unsoiled in this regard...the local governments of the good old days have become a mere memory of times gone by (as cited in Adeyemi, 2012:191).

In essence, the resources meant for various development at the local government level have gone down into individuals' pockets, while the local government that was expected to propel development remains stagnated and continued to suffer developmental challenges.

Conflict Over Siting of Administrative Headquarters

It is a paradox that decentralisation that is supposed to bring about development has on some occasions generated conflict that led to the destruction of little development on the ground in Nigeria. The creation or establishment of decentralised units of state and local governments had in some instances spawned violence which has led to wanton destruction of peoples' lives and their properties, as well as projects for development. The siting of local governments' administrative headquarters had at different times occasioned different violence in some parts of Nigeria. For instance, the relocation of the Warri-South local government's headquarter which had early being sited at Ogbe-Ijoh an Ijaw town to an Itsekiri town of Ogidigba spawned violence, especially between the Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic groups. In the same vein, the positioning of the headquarter of Ife East local government at the Oke-Ogbo part of Ile-Ife generated a violent conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke (Adegbami, 2020).

The violent conflict not only led to the killing of the people but also brought about the destruction of properties belonging to the government and private individuals.

Besides, it also brings about an increase in the level of poverty in the areas, this is because, a lot of people lose their means of livelihood, while others lose vital organs of their bodies, and thereby incapacitated from being economically productive. Faguet, et. al., (2014), suggest that for decentralisation to be implemented to check conflict, such decentralised governments must be responsive to “national minorities” as this will help in curbing tensions from the polity. According to them:

Local Governments that become ‘little tyrannies’, ignoring or oppressing local minorities, will stoke tensions, threatening not just particular governments but the notion of democracy itself. Hence decentralisation should be designed with strong local accountability mechanisms that align local leaders' incentives with the will of local citizens and allow voters to hold politicians responsible for their decisions. And the central government should enact strong safeguards of minority rights nationwide, to which individuals and groups can appeal in any locality (Faguet, et. al., 2014:9).

Failure to Integrate Diverse Groups of Decentralised Areas

Failure to integrate different groups of decentralised areas is a great challenge halting development in the decentralised areas. Decentralisation will continue to generate conflict as long as the leaderships of the decentralised areas fail to integrate the diverse groups vis-à-vis the majorities and minorities groups of a devolved area. According to Tsebelis (1990); Lijphart (1996), cited in Faguet, et. al., (2014), there is no doubt that decentralisation has the capacity to accommodate diverse groups. One of the conditions that can aid a decentralised area to be at peace is to bring the diverse groups together under an umbrella of the unity of purpose and engage them in making common decisions. The concentrated groups should also be encouraged to be thoroughly involved and participated in some other activities of governance. The groups should be given power, especially to make decisions on different issues that have to do with them as an entity. This step, apart from giving the people a sense of belonging, and make them contribute their quotas toward the development of their locality can also go a long way to bring about relatively peace needed to plan for development.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The idea of decentralisation is conceived for powers to be transferred to subunits of government to facilitate and to fast-track development. Therefore, the responsibility of the government in this context is to deliver public-oriented services for development. Accordingly, Nigeria was decentralised into various component units comprising 774 Local Governments, in addition to numerous Local Council Development Areas; 36 states; as well as a Federal Capital Territory. These were with a view to effectively aiding development by responding to the needs of the citizenry; by bringing government close to the people; and the people to the government, for their needs to be better addressed, as well as for the general development of the country.

A cursory view of decentralised areas of the country revealed that is still fraught with development challenges, notwithstanding the numerous natural and human resources readily available for development. The challenges of development in Nigeria were attributable to the irresponsiveness of government to the yearnings and aspirations of the people. This has made a lot of Nigerians to be in abject poverty and has equally earned the country a nicknamed “the poverty capital of the world”, with compounding problems of unemployment, hunger, crimes, and insecurity.

From 1960 when Nigeria got its independence to date, a series of developmental strategies have been adopted and applied, with little or nothing to show for it. The failure of the developmental strategies so far applied could be attributed to poor implementation of those strategies, unnecessary attachment of Nigeria’s government to foreign countries; lack of commitment of the leadership in pursuing plan objectives; corruption; wrong prioritisation or wrong selection of projects for development; lack coordination and harmonisation of the developmental plans; the problem of and lack continuity of programmes of development. In addition to this is the government’s inability to woo investors into the country, while those investors on the ground are gradually exiting from the country as a result of insecurity, hostile business environment as well as lack of basic infrastructure especially stable electricity supply.

Decentralisation has, therefore, remains ineffectual, in bringing about much-needed development to Nigeria for the following reasons – decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government was made without commensurate funds to carry out those responsibilities; lower levels of government have low tax-raising

powers, and there was lack of political will on the part of the central government to appropriately devolve power to the lower levels of government. Other challenges include – the issue attached to resource control; corruption among the officials of decentralised areas; conflict over siting of administrative headquarters of decentralised areas and failure to integrate diverse groups of decentralised areas. The study concludes that there has not been significant improvement with reference to development in Nigeria, especially when Nigeria is compared with some of the countries with little resources, and yet with a measure of development which they achieved by effective management of their little resources. Thus, decentralisation as far as Nigeria is concerned has not brought about desirable development. Therefore, for decentralisation to aid development in Nigeria all the highlighted challenges must be properly addressed and dealt with.

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