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Paradox of Leadership

The Paradox of Leadership in the Local Government Administration in Nigeria

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Abstract

In Nigeria, local government is governance architecture created to address local concerns. Over the years, local government has continued to invoke debates among the rural public over the influence of leadership on its administration, thus emitting differing interpretations and misconceptions about the system. Each strand of the views exemplifies the underlining prevailing perception of individual evaluator, analyst and critics about the local government leadership and administration. It is either that a particular group is criticizing local government leadership and administration in its approach and mechanisms for rural governance and development, or another group is eulogizing local government leadership and administration for its development strides, efforts at empowerment of rural populace and roles in deepening the practice of democracy. While neither of the opinions is entirely correct or surmises the current trend in the system amid mixed experiences commonly observed, this study examines leadership in local government administration in Nigeria, with emphasis on the contending perspectives. It is a qualitative research, descriptive in nature and employs secondary data like books, journals, internet materials and other publications, including personal observations. The study also adopts role theory of leadership. The theory offers premises for interrogating the multiple perspectives from which the major paradoxes of leadership in local government administration in Nigeria are understood and what solution to proffer in the form of an alternative approach to leadership.

Keywords: *administration, functionalism, governance, leadership, Nigeria*

Introduction

Leadership in local government administration in Nigeria is either generally engulfed in dilemma or particularly suffused in controversies. While the rationale for creating local government has remained indisputable, especially in Nigeria, the issue of leadership in the administration of the system is conceived as a potent factor that vitiates the intended objectives for adopting the third tier government. In addition, it significantly punctures its relevance in the context of modern day governance at the local level. It is believed that, aside the importance of local government generally, the pattern of leadership in the administration of the system, may not conform to global best practices and therefore, requires leadership standard for operating a congenial, effective and efficient local government system.

In other countries of the world, local government systems of administration were adopted, ostensibly to help in mobilizing human and material resources to transform rural environment, to provide initiatives in deepening the culture of democratic governance through engagement of the rural people in political participation, policy formulation and implementation. Whereas the system

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of leadership in local administration in the U.S, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Australia, etc, are reputed for catalyzing development and empowerment initiatives, the peculiar experience in Nigeria is a situation whereby local government leadership confronts challenges that hinder the performance of similar roles. The comparative insight no doubt gives credence to questions about the essence of local government in Nigeria. The gloomy picture posed by the questions fuel public division on the rating of local government in rural development amid huge financial allocations and what hinders its functions.

The foregoing perspectives capture the two basic classes of local government from which the efficacy of leadership and administration is illustrated. The first class is an attempt to justify the existence or need for local government based on its being essential to a democratic regime or for practical administrative purpose like responsive, accountability and control. The second class elaborates on the fact that an effective local government system neither contradicts the purpose of a democratic regime in their internal operations nor admits a representativeness, accountability and control (Gboyega, 1997). Perhaps, leadership in the local government administration in Nigeria is bedeviled by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect not only its structure and operation but also the human elements that shoulder the responsibility of transforming policies and decisions into tangible actions and measurable impacts. Otherwise, there is no better way to explain the decay in the system. Asogwa (2013) observes that local government creation is intended to mobilize human and material resources through involvement of the people in their areas. Despite the supposition implied in the assertion, the trend in Nigeria is rarely the case in practical terms, perhaps due to inept leadership.

Sequel to the above background, the predominant perspective overshadowing leadership in local government administration in Nigeria suggests that the system is entangled in bad leadership, which presents its incapacity to show innovation and resilience in the management of human and material resources within its spheres of influence and jurisdiction. In same vein, the shared opinion among observers, public commentators and practitioners is that leadership in local government administration, inundated by the existence and prevalence of poorly trained workforce, lacks the fundamental knowledge and clear understanding of strategies for realizing the mission, vision and goals of the local government. At times, there is consensus on both factors but many a time, external factors related to ambiguity in constitutional provisions on local government system and excessive meddling roles of the state authorities occupy strategic place in the categorization of its woes and add to the mist. For this reason, the paper examines the type of leadership that provides appropriate environment and ensures that local government administration in Nigeria is effective and impactful.

It addresses this issue from different viewpoints broken into sections for clarity and comprehension. Section one handles the introduction; section two dwells on conceptual review, and focuses on explaining the meaning of local government, leadership and administration and section three looks at the type of leadership applied in the governance of government institutions. In furtherance, section four interrogates the paradox of leadership in local government administration in Nigeria, while section five delves into questions about leadership in local

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government administration. Section six undertakes the identification of role expectances from an astute leadership in local government administration. In addition, section seven proposes some valuable strategies for strengthening leadership in the local government administration and section eight presents the conclusion and recommendations. The format, no doubt, provides a clear roadmap for the study.

The Conceptual Review

Local Government

Local government, as a concept, lacks uniformity in conceptualization. It is variously defined; hence, the absence of common ground or consensus on any form of universally preferred, adopted or applied definition by scholars, practitioners and researchers. While some definitions describe the structure and authorities of local government, explain its activities and spheres of influence or where it exercises its jurisdiction, others contradict them, especially when juxtaposed with what it actually stands for in the polity. Accordingly, Okpata (2004) defines local government as a political authority set up by a nation or state as a subordinate authority for decentralizing political power. Meanwhile, the question in the case of Nigeria is how much of this political power is decentralized and freely exercised by local government. Arguably, the essence of decentralizing political power is to ensure the participation of the rural populace in governance and decision making that result in rural transformation. This supposition or assumption reflects in the views of Orewa and Adewumi (1992) that local government is a system of local communities and towns, which are organized to maintain law and order; provide some limited range of social services and cooperation of the inhabitants in joint endeavours towards the improvement of their conditions of living.

Organically connected to the foregoing assertion is the nature of local government structure and form of administration it adopts, whether inclusive or exclusive and whether democratic or authoritarian in nature. Okibe and Eneasato (2020) posit that local government is the third tier layer of administration in Nigeria. Its essence hinged on the need to devolve administration to the grassroots and, thereby, integrate the rural populace into the mainstream of leadership training, participation in decision-making, development efforts and governance. This is more so when considered that local government is a political administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specific locality (Agbakoba & Ogbonna, 2004). Therefore, it ought to be largely conferred with enormous responsibilities that require both strong leadership and adequate legislative oversight, for transparency, checks and balances in the system (Nwoba, et al., 2015). The implication, therefore, is that local government is a system of government by the popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place (Udenta, 2007).

Accordingly, Ikelegbe (2005) posits that local government is government under the responsibility of the local people and in the interest of the local population by local representative bodies. Local government is also a political unit set up by law as a tier of government with

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legislative and executive powers to take substantial charge of the management of local affairs by few persons who are either elected or appointed to carry out the mandates for which the council was established in the overriding interest of the people (Agbor, 2004). Despite the divergent perspectives from which scholars define local government, the concept is largely inclusive in theory but divisive in practice.

Thus, local government is administrative machinery instituted to bridge the yawning gap in governance at the local level and thereby bring both government and development initiatives at the doorsteps of the rural populace through ebullient leadership and participative administration charged with coordinating efforts at enhancing manpower development, economic empowerment, political education and activating national peace-building and development projects in a country. These are made possible through effective, people centered and result-oriented system of leadership and administration at the grassroots level.

Leadership

Leadership is a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal. It also denotes the ability to lead, direct and organize a group (Ogbeidi, 2012). In other words, it is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a group or organization, set goals for the group, formulate paths to the goal and create some social norms in the group (Uveges, 2003). Similarly, Reed (2001) describes leadership as a potent combination of strategy and character and of the two elements; character is the most preferred for leadership. Undoubtedly, these definitions point to the fact that leadership is a process of social influence by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent (Chemers, 2002).

Based on the foregoing, a leader, therefore, is expected to demonstrate qualities, which embrace but not limited to good character, vision, tact, prudence, and ability to lead by example because people basically ascribe leadership to those who they feel can most enable them achieve important goals or objectives. It applies to both private and public administration, with differences in the structures, scope, the subjects, environment, objectives, the personnel and their responsibilities. Hence, political leadership refers to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Thus, effective leadership is instrumental in influencing a focused, reasonable, goal conscious and result oriented administration. The organizing principle around which leadership measures its purpose and compliance with rules of engagement is the ability to develop concise and comprehensive administration blueprints that address the whole aspects of institutional rules, the enforcement mechanisms, compensation and punishment structures and perhaps, the feasibility of adaptability to changing situations. It portends that the political system is a dynamic process that demands flexibility in administration and it stunts when leadership is not only weak but also significantly inarticulate.

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Administration

Administration consists of getting the work of government done by coordinating the efforts of people so that they can work together to accomplish their set task (Pfiffner, 1946). Administration as a term does not mean the same thing to different sets of people; it makes it imperative to present different definitions that reflect the biases of different schools of thought in local government debates. The diverse meanings of administration serve useful purpose in understanding what administration stands for in the context of local government system in its generality. Marumel (2016) cites John, A Veig, who argues that administration is determined action taken in pursuit of conscious purpose. It is the systematic ordering of affairs and the calculated use of resources, aimed at making those things happen, that we want to happen and, simultaneously preventing developments that fail to square with our intentions. It is the marshalling of available labour and materials in order to gain that which is desired at the lowest cost in energy, time and money.

Furthermore, Henderson (1970) posits that administration is a variety of component elements, which, together in action, produce the result of a defined task done. Administration, primarily, is the direction of people in association to achieve some goal temporarily shared. It is the inclusive process of integrating human efforts so that a desired result is obtained. Administration is the central powerhouse of the motivational impulsion and spirit, which makes the institution drive to fulfill its purpose. In support of the above definition, Balogun (1987) states that administration is the capacity of coordinating man and often conflicting social energies in a single organism, so adroitly that they shall operate as a unit. It is the arrangement of men and materials in the rational proportion for carrying out of purposes. Broadly conceived, administration is the organization and use of men and materials to accomplish a purpose. As a type of cooperative human effort, it requires high degree of rationality, with skills to organize and direct men and materials aright for optimum results. It works in the same way an engineer with skill builds structures or a doctor with skill understands human ailments.

From the earliest period of evolution of the concept, scholars used administration to denote what happens around government. In consonance, Willoughby, (1927), argues that the term administration might be employed in Political Science in two senses. First, it denotes the work involved in the actual conduct of governmental affairs, regardless of the particular branch of government concerned. It is, thus, quite proper to speak of the administration of the legislative branch of the government, the administration of justice or judicial affairs, or the administration of the executive branch as well as the administration of the affairs of the administrative branch of the government, or the conduct of the affairs of the government generally. Secondly, it denotes the operations of the administrative branch only. In the case of this study, what it considers is the administration of local government that might be inclusive of the above-mentioned categorizations.

The definitions make it clear that administration has two essential elements, i.e., a collective effort and a common purpose (Marumel, 2016), which the major common purpose is to

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achieve general goals of the system as a unit. Based on its institutional setting, administration is divided into two, public administration and private administration. The former refers to the administration, which operates in a governmental setting, while the latter refers to the administration, which operates in a non-governmental setting, that is, business enterprises. On that note, the attention and emphasis of this study is on public administration, which preoccupies local government staff on daily basis.

Leadership and Local Government Administration

From the classification of administration into public and private in the preceding section, the principal focus here is on the type of public administration that operates in governmental setting, which leadership in the local government falls under the category. Part of the reasons for examining the centrality of leadership in government is that it is the nerve center of public administration. Public administration (including leadership in the local government system) is an aspect of the larger field of administration that exists in a political system for the accomplishment of the goals and objectives formulated by the political decision-makers. It is also known as governmental administration because the adjective ‘public’ in the word ‘public administration’ means ‘government’ (Marumel, 2016).

In the above context, the focus of public administration is on public bureaucracy, that is, bureaucratic organization (or administrative organization) of the government. Thus, there are definitions of public administration as there are scholars, which indicate a plethora of meaning associated with the concept. Simon, Smithburg and Thompson (1971) contend that public administration is meant in common usage, the activities of the executive branches of the national, state and local governments. Based on the foregoing definition, Waldo (1955) conceives public administration as the art and science of management as applied to the affairs of the State. The process of public administration consists of the actions involved in affecting the intent or desire of a government. It is thus, the continuously active, ‘business’ part of a government, concerned with carrying out the law as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by the courts, through the process of organization and management. Rosenbloom (2010) simplifies this by stating that public administration does involve activity, it is concerned with politics and policy-making, it tends to be concentrated in the executive branch of government, it does differ from private administration, and it is concerned with implementing law.

In other words, public administration is the use of managerial, legal and political theories and processes to fulfill legislative, executive and judicial governmental mandates for the provision of regulatory and service functions for the society as a whole or for some segments of it. The forms of administration at the national and state levels of government share much in common with the local government system of administration. Nigro (1970) identifies the key components of public administration that illustrates its broad meaning at each level and the relevance of astute leadership:

- it is a cooperative group effort in a public setting;
- it covers all the three branches – executive, legislative and judicial, and their inter-relationship;

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- it has an important role in the formulation of public policy and thus part of the political process;
- it is different in significant ways from private administration; and
- it is closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals in providing services to the community.

The consequence of these embodiments of public administration is that local government leadership and administration as part of public administration has to do with the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy as declared by the competent authorities. It deals with the problems and powers of the organization and techniques of management involved in carrying out the laws and policies formulated by the policy-making agencies of government (Dimock, 1937). By implication, public administration is the law in action. It is the executive side of a government. To affirm this, Tonwe (1998) opines that it is a form of administration related to the operations of government whether central or local. Illustrated hereunder with examples include some forms of leadership styles that indicate the type of administration techniques applied in government, including local government.

1. Theoretical Framework

Leadership in the local government, just as it applies to other formal institutions, is an expose of what each position in an organization does, the way and manner it does it in relation to stated goals and objectives and what category of persons or offices that does it. Role theory of leadership captures these actions and explains the complex nature of roles, how it affects the performance and productivity of an organization or government institution. Role theory became prominent since the 1920s and 1930s through the works of Mead, Moreno, Parsons, Linton and Simmel (Hindin, 2007). They classified role theory into broad two types, which are structural functionalism role theory and dramaturgical role theory.

- In the first instance, structural functionalism role theory assumes that everyone has a place in the social structure and every place has a corresponding role, which has an equal set of expectations and behaviours. On the other hand, dramaturgical role theory assumes that life is a never-ending play, in which we are all actors (Yang, 2012). Both two types role theory of leadership offers some useful insights in this study. Some of the major assumptions of the theory are that:
 - role is a position with specific duty that leadership is expected to fill and perform;
 - each role is a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms, and behaviours that a person has to face and fulfill;
 - people behave in a predictable way, and that an individual's behaviour is context specific, based on social position and other factors; and
 - role conflict is imminent and its nature determines the level of impact on the system.

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Virtually all positions in the local government council occupy a place with assigned roles or duties. Thus, a specific type of role is expected from each position, as either chairman, supervisor, counselor, political appointee or a career civil servant. In other words, how the leadership performs the roles, determines the impacts it has on the society. In the case of Nigeria, performance of roles among leaderships in local government administration has been mired in doubts and this study interrogates the trend and proposes what steps and actions that must be taken to streamline leadership in the system.

Types of Leadership in the Administration of Government Institutions

Leadership in every governmental system, which sometimes is used comparatively to denote administrators may be divided into two categories: political appointees (including elected officials) and those who belong to permanent civil service. There are many approaches to leadership in administration of government institutions, be it at the national, the state and local government levels and none in the context of Nigeria is peculiar to local government system. The difference in their applicability in the various tiers of government is that in the case of local government, which is a third tier government, the administration is subjected to external control on issues pertaining to the structure, finance, operation and leadership. It affects its type of leadership and administration. The attendant style of leadership exemplifies or qualifies the type of administration prevalent in the system. Examples of leadership styles selected for explanation in this paper include democratic/participatory style of administration, authoritarian/exclusive/bully style of administration, and the laissez-faire/abdicatoric style of administration. The leadership styles account for the different views about local government system of administration in Nigeria.

Democratic/Participative/Inclusive Type

Democratic form of leadership, also known as participative, inclusive or shared administration involves a type of leadership in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process. Both the political officers and career servants feel a sense of belonging in the business of government and readily contribute their quotas in policy formulation and implementation. Dessler and Starke (2004) identified some attributes that distinguish democratic or participative style of administration from other forms of leadership style in a governmental system:

- those at the helm of affair are egalitarian types who feel comfortable rolling up their sleeves;
- the leaderships at all levels are team-oriented people who view experienced staff as peers;
- they are consensus builders who like to mediate disagreements; and
- they are also flexible explorers who share decision-making with key staff;

This style of leadership in local government administration has advantages beyond collective goal accomplishments and cooperation among all the stakeholders in the system, but also includes that:

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- employees have increased job satisfaction and a sense of empowerment;
- relationships are built on mutual trust between labor and management;
- absenteeism is lower among employees with a stronger commitment to performance;
- productivity increases as a result of a solutions-centric workforce that has input; and
- creativity and innovation increase among employees through team collaboration.

Essentially, democratic administration does not only require a special type of leader, but also requires a special group of participants. Everyone has to be on board with the participatory process. This requires an extremely intuitive and observant leader who acts decisively when conflicts arise among team members (Dessler & Starke, 2004). Subordinates are engaged in decision-making process either through direct participation or by consultation. It unties the cord of exclusion, marginalization and indolence. Mobilizing, organizing, leading, directing, accommodating, tolerating and welcoming initiatives, skills and unique potentials possessed by subordinates are the principal attributes of democratic approach to leadership. But the peculiarity of Nigerian political culture of absolutism makes the democratic type of leadership very scarce in the local government administration, exactly the same way it exists at other tiers of government in Nigeria. It buttresses the general decay in inclusive governance and preference for authoritarian style of leadership in the system.

Authoritarian/Autocratic/Bully Type

The authoritarian style of leadership in administration is nearly opposite of the democratic style. It is exemplified when a leader dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, and directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Sometimes, it is referred to as autocratic leadership (Du, Li & Lou, 2020), which rarely accepts advice from followers, (Aiken & West, 1991). According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), Wang and Guan (2018), the characteristics of this style of leadership in any form of administration, include that it:

- allows little or no input from group members;
- requires leaders to make almost all of the decisions;
- provides leaders with the ability to dictate work methods and processes;
- leaves group feeling as if they are not trusted with decisions or important tasks;
- trends to create highly structured and very rigid environments;
- discourages creativity and out-of-the box thinking;
- establishes rules and tends to be clearly outlined and communicated; and
- hurts morale and leads to resentment.

Authoritarian political leadership is commonplace in the local government administration in Nigeria, where the chairman wields absolute power, treats the subordinates with disdain and

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manipulates staff welfare without regard for any limiting laws. In many local governments, it is common to find situations where councilors are suspended, his entitlements denied, worker's salaries owed for months, some staff queried, suspended without pay and several other similar punitive measures taken by the leadership of the council without adherence to due process. Nonetheless, the system secures compliance to order because of regular use of threat and punishment by the leadership.

Laissez-Faire/Abdicratic Type

Laissez-faire approach to leadership, also known as delegative leadership, is the idea that the participants should be able to work problems out and make their way through a challenge without too much extra guidance (Anbazhagan & Kotur, 2014). The abdicratic leader takes extremely "hands-off" approach to leading in order to encourage group problem-solving and critical thinking, without allowing staff to depend on the leader for the final word (Dessler & Starke, 2004). The hands-off does not imply complete withdrawal or abandonment of responsibility by the leader; instead, the subordinates are allowed to work with little or no interference, constraining directives and supervision. Remarkably, the major characteristics and idea of laissez-faire or abdicratic type of administration or leadership in local government are that:

- there is little guidance from leaders, i.e. hands-off approach;
- staff have the ability to make decisions;
- people are expected to solve their own problems;
- there is access to many resources and tools;
- it allows for constructive criticism from leaders;
- leaders take charge when necessary;
- leaders take responsibility for overall actions and decisions; and
- accountability falls to the leader.

What it means is that the workers that implement policies and enforce decisions, other than the leader, are considered essential organ in local government administration. The result is that they are allowed to apply their initiatives to facilitate policy implementation and accomplishment of local government set goals without the leaders' intermittent interference in the process. Exercising freedom in policy implementation encourages learning on the job and in furtherance, reduces error margins in discretionary application of power and builds confidence in the subordinates. However, leadership in local government administration does not apply laissez-faire style and it is evident in the system.

Dialogues on Leadership in the Local Government Administration

Opinions are sharply divided on which systems of leadership is considered most appropriate for local government administration in Nigeria. Many subscribe to democratic/participatory/inclusive system of administration where everybody is useful and contributes in policy formulation and participation in the implementation. The essence of

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promoting a democratic and participatory leadership system is based on its importance in enhancing cooperation in teamwork, building culture of belongingness in decision-making process among staff and expressing commitment to duty without ethnic, religious and gender bias vices. Those that are opposed to democratic system of administration argue that it has the tendency to abuse familiarity, compromise access to leadership, and can easily provide opportunities to challenge constituted authority on issues of rights and privileges, the subjects and contents of its policy framework, including the implementation mechanism and general work ethics guiding the staff.

Although democratic leadership is universally acclaimed to be the best form of administration, some are of the opinion that in African setting and given the culture of familiarity exhibited by cronies and relatives in government, autocratic or authoritarian form of administration best suits leadership in the local government system. Hence, workers and subordinates need compulsion to perform their duties. It might be for this reason that most administrations in Nigeria tilt towards authoritarian style, which sometimes is blamed on colonial legacy and long military control of political leadership in Nigeria and other times, on our detest for authority, instinct for insubordination, truancy, indifference to rules and responsibilities and general poor work orientation. Unarguably, autocratic system of leadership in administration bridges the gap created by workers' nonchalant attitude to work and dissenting behaviour towards rules of engagement in the local government system. It forces staff to be liable for their actions and applies punishment for deterrence. Observers believe that it is best for the local government system where workers rarely come to work.

On the other hand, the laissez-faire pattern of leadership in administration is somewhat rare in the local government system except in very few circumstances where the leadership is stripped of powers by a higher supervising authority. Once it does happen, the leadership becomes indifferent and allows staff to do work without interference. Sometimes, the scenario occurs in the local government when the leadership is starved of funds and feels stranded, thereby appearing visibly reluctant to undertake responsibilities that do not yield personal material benefits. The leadership easily acquiesces to hands-off method, especially when staff erects to perform tasks, which does not require funding. This is where expressions like, "use your initiative", "discuss and agree among yourselves", "you are free to do whatever you consider appropriate", etc, are frequently used by the leader while addressing the subordinates.

The fact that the leadership style encourages hands-off and offers little guidance are not intentional at any level of leadership in Nigeria but either born out of lack of experience on the task, substitution of supervisory functions by other higher authorities, helpless financial predicament to influence the staff or clampdown by the state. This is the reason that laissez-faire leadership is rarely witnessed except in extreme cases where it is imposed by the type of circumstances aforementioned.

The Eight Paradoxes of Leadership in the Local Government Administration

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The Rural Proximity and Rural Dislocation Paradox

Local government intends, from its original conception, to serve rural purpose, to bridge the wide gap of access to national and state governments and thus bring governance to the doorsteps of rural populace. It is, therefore, closest to the rural people both for participation in governance and for contribution in development programme. Although rural proximity to the seat of power in the local government is physically true, but it is also elusive to the rural people in terms of their sense of belongingness, integration and participation in governance, which depended on the type of leadership.

In other words, while the local government headquarters and buildings are near to the people, the leadership and administration is far from them. In some cases, it is either that the national or the state government appears closer to the rural people in a local government or that the people are isolated without feeling government presence. There are several instances where national and state governments implement beneficial development projects or empowerment programmes, which the local government leadership could not do or even show concerns. This irreconcilable reality has made some rural people feel detached from the local government system and readily doubt its relevance as a third tier government.

The Inept Leadership and Mangled Administration Paradox

Experience of what happens in many local governments shows that majority of the political leaders who superintend over the affairs of local government are businesspersons, political contractors, relations of those around the corridors of power and cronies of godfathers (Okibe & Eneasato, 2020). Many of these leaders are imposed on the people and not a product of their free choices. This is the root of leadership insensitivity and reluctance to be accountable to the people. In the views of John and Rupak (2008), the proper practice of democracy is maximized when people at the grassroots are empowered to elect their own representatives and are able to hold them accountable.

Similarly, significant numbers of career servants who quickly attain leadership levels such as Head of Personnel Management (HPM), Treasurer (TR), Cashier, and Head of Departments, get the access and nod through the influence of their sponsors, who ensure that they occupy the sensitive positions to help fast-track their interests in the system. Coincidentally, many of the leaderships in the local government have no idea of public administration, and rather than allow subordinates who have knowledge and skill to take lead in some initiatives, they dabble into virtually everything, all in a bid to prove that one is a leader. This is part of the reasons why neither democratic nor laissez-faire leadership, which provides subordinates the opportunities to be involved in policy formulation, rarely thrives in the administration of local government.

Pertinently, human capacity in leadership positions is a major product of constant education on the job through training and retraining of the personnel. This remains a challenge to all institutions of governance in Nigeria. To say the least, there is lack of training and retraining of staff in the local government. In rare instances where provisions for training are made to improve on staff skill and capacity, it is either that the leadership or the beneficiary of the training

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opportunity diverts the money for other personal effects and waves the training. The practice retards staff career growth and leaves the political leadership and career servants in perpetual ignorance.

The Turn-By-Turn Leadership and Selective Estrangement Paradox

The concept of turn-by-turn system of leadership is a new approach adopted in Nigeria and geared towards zoning of offices among various units that constitute each political division. It is commonplace at the national, state and local government administration and leadership, including in all institutions of government. These are where appointments and promotions to certain positions are based on a quota system, which partly derives from federal character principle contained in Section 14(3-4) of the 1999 Constitution, as amended. Turn-by-turn leadership is not constitutional but a political contraption crafted for the major purpose of sharing positions of leadership among the ruling class across their ethnic, sectional, cultural and religious divides.

In the local government, the rotation fluctuates, sometimes observed, sometimes neglected and very often follows the discretion of the sitting governor, godfathers and super stakeholders. However, there has been a trend in the case of Enugu State, for example, where the rotation draws from sharing of other layers of elective offices among the constituent units in a council area. Despite political meddling, which occasionally alter the balancing equation in the distribution of leadership positions, the normal trend that has been observed over the time is that the positions of chairman, deputy chairman, secretary, and leader of the council are spread among the units. It is not sacrosanct in Nigeria; instead, it oscillates based on the prevailing political bargain and depending on how the winner-takes-all syndrome in the system is managed.

The practice compromises collective drive in leadership but draws the leader closer to staff that hails from the same unit with him/her, whereas others remain isolated and in suspicion. It encourages nocturnal and clandestine meetings on how to serve the interest of few staff in posting and remuneration, in addition to prioritizing the unit that produces leadership for development projects and empowerment programme. The essence of the skewed attention is that each leader and administration has the tendency of repeating the same practice of favouritism and nepotism when it becomes its turn.

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The Divide and Rule Leadership and Pillage Administration Paradox

In every administration and leadership, divide and rule is a regular feature. There are sets of people referred to as ‘cabal’, ‘kitchen cabinet’, ‘VIPs’ and stakeholders. Apart from benefiting from contract awards, appointments and other material incentives, they are also sets of people that are regarded as the allies of the leader with whom they take some key decisions on important issues. It exists at all levels of administration and local government is not an exception. The divide and rule attitude sows bad blood in the system, encourages scapegoat of the excluded class, entrenches backbiting and avoidable opposition to leadership. Observers have identified it as one of the major drawbacks in the system of local government administration in Nigeria.

The Get-Rich-Syndrome Leadership and Deprivation Administration Paradox

Since the economy of Nigeria finds solace in oil money, political officeholders and the public imbibe the culture of rent seeking in government administration. Thus, greed, corruption and pilfering remain hydra-headed monster bedeviling the system. Political offices provide access to the sharing of national resources, which are utilized with minimum accountability. Greed masks every level of governance and career services in Nigeria. The underlining ambition of majority that aspires for political offices and strategic positions in civil service is to make quick money and become rich. It has been the root cause of perennial corruption cases in the system.

As a result of the foregoing cases, leadership is no longer seen as selfless service but an opportunity to embezzle or divert public funds into personal accounts. To amass wealth and sometimes empower cronies when in leadership position is regarded as a normal practice. Local government administration provides this platform for get-rich syndrome, as many Chairmen, HPM, TR, Cashiers, Head of Departments, Supervisory Councilors, Councilors, Contractors and Personal Aides of the Chairman depend on their leadership positions to loot the system. Ironically, it happens at the expense of the generality of the local government populace, thereby neglecting the core mandates of local government administration, which emphasize inclusive governance and rural development.

The Sycophancy Breeding Leadership and Misplaced Priority Administration Paradox

Sycophancy in government administration occurs when performance of legitimate functions of government are erroneously exaggerated to invoke unwarranted stream of praises on a public officeholder or government in power. Critical observers describe it as deceitful, misleading and highly opinionated. It beguiles the masses to believe failed government actions, which a sycophant paints in different colours and thus makes governance wane significantly in integrity (Okibe, 2020). In fact, local government leadership and pattern of administration is the breeding ground for sycophancy, from where the antics are exported to state and national levels of government.

The leaders recruit, nurture, condition and package these sets of people for bootlicking services. They are referred to in Igbo parlance as ‘Oti-Mkpu’ (praise singers), and engage in image

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laundering for government, political leaders and other persons of interest in the public and civil service. The ulterior motive is usually to conceptualize leadership in misleading context, by painting their styles of leadership, type of policies and accomplishments in falsehood. It creates sharp divides in social values, kills public morale, and sows seed of mistrust and loss of confidence in leadership. It readily and easily upturns positive political culture and jeopardizes the entire system of governance in the rural areas that may have no confidence in the national and state leadership.

The Godfather-Godson Settlement and Chessboard Administration Paradox

It is believed that some leadership positions are mere settlement or payback package from godfathers and for godsons. It happens at all levels or tiers of government in Nigeria. In the case of local government, the positions range from chairman, deputy chairman, supervisors, councilors, to administrators, including those reserved and occupied by career civil servants, which are subject to political influence. This mode of settlement works in the form of a Trojan Horse that reduces local government administration and leadership as arena for trade-by-barter. It brings about master-servant relationship, in which the master still plays decisive roles in the affairs of his servant despite the claim that he has been settled. The system is a conduit pipe that drains local government resources, it has persisted and there is no doubt that it is quite an ugly trend.

The State Government Emasculation and Power Usurpation Administration Paradox

Local government is the third tier level of government but heavily subjected to state control. The control involves their structure, operation, funding, mode of constituting the leadership and general administration. The emasculation does not only affect the role of local government leadership in rural development but also in the cause of deepening democratic practice in the grassroots. Chukwuemeka (2014) acknowledges that the concept of local government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the politics and governing process at the grassroots level. Invariably, the meddling roles of the state in the local government muscle its independence or autonomy and the practice of any definite type of leadership and administration in the system.

Questions about Leadership in the Local Government Administration

Creation of local government as a third tier of government was primarily done to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government. As government and leadership closer to the people, the local government has a duty to offer leadership training through inclusive governance and thereby, encourage initiatives and boosts leadership potentials of the rural dwellers, (Local Government Reform, 1976). By involving members of the local community in the process of governance, it spurs them to mobilize human and material resources, to respond to local wishes as regards services and developmental activities. Obviously, local administration helps to provide a two-way channel of communication between local and state/federal governments.

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In the views of Alao, Osakede and Owolabi (2015), local government is created to fill the gap among the people, the communities, the state as well as the federal government. Thus, the local government provides such services the other tiers of government cannot provide due to the remoteness of those communities as well as their peculiar needs only known to the government at the grassroots. For the foregoing reason, local government needs to be adequately funded and it is only feasible when it is granted administrative and financial autonomy. Adeyemo (2005) contends that local government financial autonomy is the freedom the local governments has to exercise their financial authority within the confines of the constitution to enable them discharge their constitutional responsibilities without interference or restraint from higher authorities.

In general, the pattern of leadership and administration in the local government system naturally throws up some crucial questions. The answers for them is imperative, to refocus leadership and proffer the appropriate method of administration to adopt. Aside that, the misunderstanding about some of questions on the local government is better resolved by clarifying what the under-listed queries imply:

- relevance of local government in Nigeria;
- local government autonomy and leadership capability;
- ambiguity in uniformity in local government structure and leadership;
- mode of elections into leadership positions in the system;
- local government efficiency in service delivery;
- corruption in the local government system;
- quality of career staff and political leadership; and
- nature of inter-governmental relations among tiers of government.

It is the duty of leadership to provide clue to some of these questions by adopting the requisite administration approach, which recognizes synergy, cooperation, collaboration and team spirit among staff and in intergovernmental relations. The essence, according to Erunke and Mbumega (2014), is that no sole government could deliver radical improvements in service delivery on its own, which means that coordination, cooperation and collaboration are essential prerequisites. Similarly, Ogunna (1996) maintains that intergovernmental relations involve legal, functional, administrative and financial interactions and cooperation among the levels of government. What it means is that leadership is a necessity for this dual purpose and the complementary functions expected to be performed by interdependent entities.

Role Expectances from Leadership in Local Government Administration

As a system of government that focuses on rural administration, the leadership at the local government is looked upon to fulfilling the core objectives for establishing the third tier government. Foremost in the objectives are to extend development to the rural areas, to sensitize, educate, socialize rural people and ensure that they participate in governance. In this context, Nico (2008) observes that local self-governance plays critical role in enhancing democracy. It brings government closer to the people through both representative and participatory democracy and

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allows for the deepening of democracy by facilitating the participation of minorities and disadvantaged groups.

In essence, local government allows for autonomous self-governance of smaller constituent units of government directly and democratically responsible for their own electorates. The caliber of leadership and pattern of administration is central to actualizing the tasks assigned to the system. Of course, there are many expectations from the leadership and administration in every local government, from general to specific, among which includes:

- democratic and participative administration;
- rural development and transformation;
- promotion and harnessing of rural economy;
- economic empowerment and capacity building;
- engagement of rural people in democratic practice;
- leadership training and manpower development;
- interest articulation, aggregation and peace-building;
- political education and sensitization;
- information dissemination and socialization;
- promotion of peace, security and conflict resolution;
- harnessing local initiatives in policy formulation;
- engaging community leadership in policy implementation; and
- education, sports and socio-cultural development.

Strategies for Strengthening Leadership in the Local Government Administration

Recognizing that leadership is essential in every organization and that administration is the mechanism for enforcing and implementing policies of government, strengthening leadership in the local government administration is apt. Several measures can be adopted to achieve this objective, like:

- resolving the question of third tier nomenclature affixed to local government;
- granting fiscal and administrative autonomy to local government;
- de-emphasizing patron-client system of leadership in the local government;
- instituting presidential democratic system at the local government system;
- putting strong system of checks and balances among the hierarchies of leadership;
- localizing local government leadership to blend with its autonomy;
- stamping out corruption, nepotism and favouritism in the system;
- setting jurisdictional boundaries among the tiers of government;
- centralizing local government election management body;
- unifying local government leadership tenure and remuneration;
- reversing local government as dumping ground for inept workforce;
- ensuring effective supervision and strong disciplinary measures;

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- training and re-training of local government staff; and
- motivating welfare structure and package.

Several attempts at strengthening the leadership and operations of the local government system in Nigeria have been frustrated by corporate financial interests of many governors through the State Houses of Assembly. It makes the autonomy of local government in Nigeria to be mere figment of imagination. Granting administrative and fiscal autonomy to the local government to enable it perform the functions listed in the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution, (as amended) is very important. Eboh and Diejomaoh (2010) stated that adequate financial resources are *sine qua non* for a virile local government system. In other words, it is central to enthroning strong, viable, accommodating and accountable leadership in the local government administration. The measure also requires holistic overhaul of the system, in terms of the structure, operation and leadership in the local government.

Most time, people overlook the fact that leadership and administration in the local government are interrelated and maximally draw their real essences from other inherent factors that serve ancillary purpose in shaping the system. Very imperative in the categorization includes:

- observing the tenets of internal democracy in the process of nominating candidates for local government elections by political parties;
- allowing popular choice made by the people to remain;
- refraining from imposing candidates;
- abstaining from influencing the electoral process to truncate the verdicts of franchise freely exercised by the people; and
- stopping the state authorities from perpetuating the untoward practice of crippling the local government leadership in the guise of exercising constitutional control over the system.

In cognizance of the above, there is apparent need to enforce Section 7 of the 1999 constitution, by constituting the local government leadership with democratically elected officers, in addition to the express and unambiguous pronouncements made in Section 162(3), which approves that,

Any amount standing to the credit of the Federation Account shall be distributed among the Federal and State Governments and the Local Government Councils in each State on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

To be precise, Section 162(3) envisages the empowerment of local government leadership to perform functions assigned to the third tier government in Nigeria and should supersede and expunge Section 162(5-8) listed below, to whittle down the influence of the state over the local government leadership. Obviously, scraping these subsections will bring relief to manipulations in the system.

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1. The amount standing to the credit of Local Government Councils in the Federation Account shall also be allocated to the State for the benefit of their Local Government Councils on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.
2. Each State shall maintain a special account to be called State Joint Local Government Account into which shall be paid all allocations to the Local Government Councils of the State from the Federation Account and from the Government of the State.
3. Each State shall pay to Local Government Councils in its area of jurisdiction such proportion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.
4. The amount standing to the credit of Local Government Councils of a State shall be distributed among the Local Government Councils of that State on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the State.

Leadership is defined by its ability to act freely and not held in chain by a dictator, who remotes the system of its administration to suit purposes external to the local government jurisdiction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Leadership in every administration is very important. It has proven to be the driving stimulus for enforcement actions and activation of channels of interaction among the leaders, subordinates in the office and the public. Each type of leadership style aforementioned and discussed has peculiar impact on the administration of any political system or institution. Leadership in the local government system has witness and continues to experience mixtures of the democratic/participative leadership, authoritarian/autocratic leadership and laissez-faire/abdicatoric leadership styles. However, autocratic model seems to be most apparent and conspicuous. The reason, as previously stated, are rooted in the nature of political culture in the country, the mode of election into the positions, the master-servant system of administration and near complete control of the system by forces outside the system but with higher command especially from constitutional framework.

It is evident that democratic participative leadership is ideal in most systems, including in the local government. The participative leadership style makes leaders and workers to build synergy, exposes them to the skills and potentials of each team member and thereby, builds confidence in each other to ensure smooth operations of the council. The democratic leadership disposition and openness to engage staff in policy formulation, encourages commitment towards joint efforts in policy implementation. Ironically, evaluation of the trend in Nigeria generally and in the local government in particular reveals something not impressive. Subordinates to leaders in the local government are commonly in the habit of abusing exercise of authority by the leadership. Familiarity encroaches on official work of the local government and compromises respect for due process. For same reason, autocratic leadership style has become fashionable. As compelling force applied on the staff to be compliant to rules of engagement, work ethics, and services, the

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authoritarian leadership style operates a command structure that seeks to mobilize the staff towards doing the will of the local government.

The findings of the study reflect the subsisting operational challenges that hinder progress in the system. Of course, the common problems with leadership in the local government have much to do with greed, inability to delegate tasks to the subordinates, divide and rule administration, intolerant to opposition, abuse of office and power, insensitivity to the public and relegation of collaboration with other hierarchies of authority in the council (Okibe, 2016). Apart from inducing infighting, including deliberate frustration of policies and programmes of the administration by those whose duty it is to ensure enforcement action on directives or implementation of projects, it also makes workers reluctant to rendering the necessary services to the rural populace. It retards both rural development and human empowerment, which many leaders that are foisted on the people care less about the implications.

The study recommends many ways by which the identified problems could be addressed and thereby create a robust prospects for effective and accommodating leadership in the local government administration in Nigeria. First, local government autonomy should be guaranteed and the leadership of the council freely elected, made accountable to the people and not to the State House of Assembly or the governor. Second, participative leadership style should be encouraged with a mix of authoritarianism which is a compelling force to secure obedience to law, compliance to conditions of service which will restrain staff from neglecting or compromising constituted authority.

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