



**CORRUPTION
AND
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT:**

The Third World Perspective

Edited By

Godwin Onu

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CORRUPTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The Third World Perspective

E. Remi Ayedé

IPSA, Ibadan

July 1, 2003

[Signature]

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Godwin Onu

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PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS IN NIGERIA'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Remi Aiyede

This paper attempts to explain the ethical crisis in local government in Nigeria by examining the structural and normative ethical content of local government reforms. It argued that, although efforts were made to integrate public service ethics into the reforms, ethics programmes were unsystematic and were for a long time very limited. Moreover, key actors did not demonstrate serious commitment to them. The reason for the lack of commitment is attributed to the instrumental use of corruption for regime sustenance that shot through Nigeria's politics of distributive federalism, which came to its own in the last two decades. This has destroyed the idea of public service and generated strong forces within local government angling for a share of the "national cake." Popular accountability has been undermined by the disjunction of the location of expenditure from the sources of local government revenue.

INTRODUCTION

Economic failures in Nigeria have perpetually placed the public service under the scrutiny of scholars and development practitioners alike. This is the case because the public service is the bedrock of development administration. The public servant has been described as corrupt, ineffective, inefficient, unresponsive and dishonest. The engagement with public administration has also shifted to local governance. This is because the failure of public administration has often been associated with over-centralization. Thus, decentralization demands a good understanding as well as strengthening of local government structures to enable them effectively carry out the functions that fall on them as decentralization proceeds.

In Nigeria local government has assumed the status of the 'basic unit' for the administration and development of the country. Indeed, it has long been viewed as a vehicle for development, and it continues to be a major institution employed by various federal and state governments' and multilateral agencies' to implement programmes in primary health care delivery and poverty alleviation. While the growing significance of local government as well as the various reforms executed in that level of government has generated scholarly interests, much of the work in that field, as Gboyega (1987) has observed, is dominated by a tradition in local government studies that is institution oriented, more concerned with service outputs of local government councils, and negligent of the political values underlying the local government system. More critical is the relative attention paid to ethics in local government studies. There appears to be an underlying assumption that the local government system is bereft of substantial bureaucracies and as such of limited use for ethics focused research. Concern with the local

government service is often limited to issues of executive capacity and other personnel problems of the local government with a great pre-occupation with difficulty in attracting qualified staff, the training needs of local government officials as well as issues of recruitment, retention and promotion.

Recommendations have often been skewed towards the generation of a careerist service at the local government level in order to retain high calibre personnel. In terms of policy it has resulted in the creation of a unified local government service commission outside the purview of the local government to oversee personnel matters, particularly for the senior staff. Yet since the 1976 reforms when local government increased in number and began to enjoy substantial statutory allocation from the federation account ethical problems have become too critical to local government performance not to be a subject of academic focus in its own right. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the 774 local governments currently employ more than the total number of workers employed by the 36 states of the federation.

Admittedly, scholars and policy makers alike have alluded to ethical problems in local government. Part 1 and 2 of the fifth schedule of the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions provided a Code of conduct for public servants that covers such areas as conflicts of interest relating to outside compensation, post retirement employment restrictions, the maintenance or operation of a bank account in a country outside Nigeria, financial disclosure/asset declaration, regulation of the political activities of civil servants, and acceptance of gifts. It also provides for a Code of conduct Bureau, and the code of conduct tribunal. Part II of the fifth schedule (13) of the 1999 Constitution extend the operation of that code of conduct to cover "Chairman, members and staff of local councils."

Indeed, the Dasuki committee set up in 1984 observed that the problems of local government were operational, arising largely from the behaviour of operators of the system. But the road suggested by the committee for resolving this problem was to increase vertical control over local government by both the state and federal governments. In practice this translated into complicated intergovernmental conflicts over jurisdictions between the state and federal government. The superiority of the central government under military rule generated rivalry between the states and local governments in a struggle for greater influence and resources at the centre. This rivalry, which is playing itself out under the current democratic dispensation, has further overshadowed the deep-seated ethical problems that continue to dog local government in Nigeria. This is occurring in spite of the fact that the presidential system, which involves separation of powers and checks and balances among different arms of government, has been introduced at the local level since 1991.

In this paper, the main thrust of our analysis is the condition of public service ethics in local government in Nigeria. It assesses the structural and normative ethical content of various local government reforms in Nigeria in order to explain the state of public service ethics at that level. For the purpose of this analysis three major epochs are identified in the development of local government ethics in Nigeria. They correspond to three major reforms embarked upon by Nigerian Governments since the late 1950s. These were the reforms in both

Western and Eastern Regions following the granting of self-rule in 1950s which went on till military incursion in 1966, the 1976 national reforms in which Local Government became established as a third tier of government, and the General Babangida/Abacha reforms which were influenced by the recommendations of the Dasuki Committee, the report of the Political Bureau and the 1988 civil service reforms which was part of the neo-liberal economic reforms and the protracted transition to democratic rule from the mid 1980s to the 1990s. An attempt is then made to make sense of the realities.

Theoretical Framework

It was O.P. Dwivendi (1988) who argued that the profession of the public servant is parallel only to the priesthood in terms of the moral standards the society expects it to uphold. Civil servants are expected to show unwavering integrity, absolute impartiality, and complete devotion both to the public interest and to the state. This belief has underlined various standards and requisites of performance on which the public service has been erected in our modern world. In Nigeria, three critical values are often emphasized for public servants because the public service originated from the British colonial administration. These are neutrality, impartiality and anonymity, which are the ethical foundation the British public administration. The essence of these principles is to insulate public servants from the temptations of partisan politics, ensure fairness and competence within the administration. More than this, these principles are expected to boost the confidence of the people on administration and by extension in government generally. It is a truism that most people repose a lot of confidence on a government composed of people who practice high moral standards.

The logic behind all of these as C.A. Baker (1971:397) has pointed out is that modern government depends increasingly on the acceptability of those who are governed. Thus, the question of ethics goes beyond mere philosophical analyses. It is indeed a practical question that reaches back to the legitimacy of the state.

To be sure, the failures of governments to successfully prosecute certain public policies and the scandals that have trailed such failures have served to strengthen the pre-occupation with public service ethics. Efforts have been made to write codes to govern the conduct of public officials. Legal regulations and enforcement and safeguards have also been put in place to prevent unethical conduct. Beyond these, institutional and management reforms have also been embarked upon to improve behaviour of public officials. Today, ethics programmes have become integral to governance (Sherman, 1998). Recent studies have concluded that corruption has had serious implication for growth and equity. It has had significant social costs and adversely affects private investment rates. Corruption increases poverty rates as resources earmarked for prosecuting social programmes are diverted to illicit purposes. So wiping out corruption has become crucial to economic competitiveness, growth and equity (Potts, 1998).

Generally, there are two approaches to instituting public service ethics. These are the normative and the structural approaches. The normative approach draws upon organizational development. Its emphasis is on how ethical values are inculcated or put into operation in organizations. The structural approaches focus

on the formal legal arrangements, primarily regulatory and legal prescriptions and prohibitions by which the state seeks to channel and control the behaviour of public officials. In practice however these approaches fuse into one another (Gilman and Lewis, 1996). This paper treats them as the two sides of the ethical coin. The character of a country's ethical programme is often determined by its historical experiences and traditions of public administration. In the words of Rohr (1991:294), "administrative systems cannot be divorced from national histories and administrative ethical standards are necessarily grounded in the specific administrative systems."

Local Government and Decentralization Reforms in Nigeria

Local government in Nigeria developed from the native authority system introduced in the colonial era. The native authority system was one in which the traditional ruler was a go between in the relation between the colonial lords and their people. In the south the native authority system quickly ran into a lot of problems because of the absence of an effective traditional structures conducive to the operation of the Lugardian indirect rule approach, except in the old Oyo kingdom headed by the Alaafin of Oyo. The fragmentary nature of traditional authority system and the receptivity of western influence demanded direct action from the centre in the provision of roads, health, water and education. The later created an incipient elite that sought to take over the enviable position of the colonial rulers.

By the 1950s the local administration reforms began to be effected in the southern part of the country as the regions in the south started to enjoy some measure of self-rule. In both regions three basic layers of councils were introduced. In the West we had local councils, district councils and provincial councils these corresponded to local, district or urban and divisional councils introduced in the East a year earlier. According to Gboyega (1987), these reforms were introduced to promote liberal values of participation and efficiency in local administration. In the north the case was different. The emirate system provided a good environment for the thriving of the native authority system. At independence the native authority system came to its own, and the emirate councils became the de facto local administration. Thus, in 1960 when the country became independent, separate development patterns in local government had emerged between the north and the south. In fact, within the south there were variations in the internal management of these different layers of local administration.

The intervention of the military in the governance of the country was to have a lasting impact on the direction of local administration in Nigeria. When the military took over government in 1966, it dissolved all local councils and appointed sole administrators to head the districts in the south. It also abolished the native authority system in the north. The military created 12 states in 1967 and introduced two-layered administrative system below each of the 12 state governments. This brought about some uniformity in the governance of the various states of the country and reduced the differences in regional patterns of local administration. It however gave the state governments free hands to determine the internal management arrangement of these authorities. By 1973 some states had embarked

on some forms of experimentation with local management. Most of this experimentation was affected by the mood of the nation (coming out of civil war in 1970) and the way national challenges were perceived or interpreted by the ruling military junta. Local government became enmeshed in the drive for social and political integration and conceived as instruments for the implementation of the country's development plans designed by the national government at the grassroots.

These experimentations with local government did not escape the attention of the Public Service Review Commission set up in 1972 by the national government as part of the effort to secure adequate development and optimum use of manpower for meeting the challenges of developing the country. Thus, the commission in its report submitted in 1974 made two important submissions relating to local government that had influence on the 1976 reform. The first was the proposal for a single tier local government and the second was its recommendation of a financial and functional review of state-local relation in favour of local government.

The 1976 reform changed the face and direction of local government as well as its politics. The reforms were informed by the need to make local government "an effective instrument of development and the need for adequate resources to enable local government meet their obligations, which are mainly to stimulate development at the grassroots." The 1976 reform (1) created a multipurpose single-tier local authority to be called local government; (2) increased the functions of local governments; (3) abolished the old divisional administrations; (4) recognized local government as the third tier of government in the Nigerian federal structure and granted 5 percent of federally collected revenue to local governments and 10 percent of their states total recurrent revenue to guarantee adequate revenue source for local governments from both state and federal governments; (5) maintained local government as representative bodies; (6) gave it constitutional guarantee (1979 Constitution); and (7) improved the working conditions of local government staff and secured their tenure by establishing the local government service Board (Nigeria, 1986; Gboyega, 1987; Yahaya, 1989).

But several issues relating to the quality of service at the local level were left undefined and undetermined. It was assumed that the financial and functional independence of local governments would secure good quality service delivery at that level. The short sightedness of this assumption is buttressed by limitation of horizontal accountability to democratic participation through the election of local government chairmen. Not only that the reform had no answer to important problem of reducing local government into an epiphenomena of the struggle for power (politics) at the state level under civil rule in the first republic. It retained vertical control and supervision of local governments by the state governments and paid little attention to the likely erosion of the weak democratic content by the inevitable dependence of local government on statutory allocation for the bulk of their revenue. It was therefore logical that this problem resurfaced in the second republic when the country returned to civil democratic rule. There was massive interference of states in local affairs. States disregarded the essence of local governments and failed to pass statutory allocation from the federation account and

other revenues accruing to local governments to them. The states easily defied the democratic foundation of local government by appointing management committees. The state governments multiplied the number of local governments in the country by creating several new ones. Some local governments were obviously created to gerrymander electoral constituencies, while others were too small to be economically viable. Because they exercised their constitutional authority without recourse to the federal government, the creation of new local governments became embroiled in political controversy (Osaghae, 1989; Yahaya, 1989; Adeyeye 1995, Gboyega, 1989, 1998). Therefore, once the military returned there was enough justification available to the national government to buttress an intervention in local government.

In 1984, the Buhari administration abolished all the new local governments created by the states during the Second Republic and set up the Dasuki Committee to look into local government. This committee observed that the problem with local government was operational, "arising directly from the behaviour and attitudes of the persons who operated the system." In that regard it recommended that sole administrators be replaced with management committees comprised by representatives of wards appointed by the government to preserve the participatory element of local government. Further more, it recommended that the federal government should formalise its role in local government and establish a national local government service commission to oversee the local government service. It tried to rationalize the timing and criteria for creating new local governments by prescribing that new local governments should be created only after ten years interval and that it should be based on a minimum taxable population. It also recommended the decentralisation of local government services through the establishment of area development offices, not more than seven approved for each local government. But the Babangida government, which had overthrown the Buhari government when the committee submitted its report, decided to chart out a new comprehensive programme of political and economic reforms.

In 1986, a political bureau, set up to fashion a new philosophy and structure of government for the country, approved many of the recommendations of the Dasuki Committee. But it underscored the political role of local government in promoting political mobilisation and popular participation. In the opinion of the Bureau, "political objectives have tended to be ignored, efficiency tend to be regarded as an end in itself" in local government reform in Nigeria. While recommending a management and organisational format for all local governments, it stressed that the village clan or autonomous community or urban neighbourhood should be the primary unit of local government and should be organised for productive and community action. It recommended the delegation of responsibilities to committees at the level of these subordinate units of local government, emphasising the need to apply the presidential system of separation of powers to local government and the use of elections to fill political positions in local government councils. Furthermore, it stressed the need to improve the autonomy of local government, which had suffered from the excessive state government control and interference in the performance of their duties (Nigeria,

1987). It was the out put of these two bodies that provided the background to the Babangida reforms in local government. As it has become clear, the drive for autonomy was the ideology that used to promote the series of reforms carried out in that sector by the Babangida government. In his speech in 1988 he emphasised that

Local Governments are no longer there just to pay salaries. They are there to ensure collective participation in governance, create the conditions for employment opportunities, and provide social services which can improve the well-being of our people... (with) necessary freedom and authority to operate... not as mere adjuncts to the state but as a true coordinate and effective level of government (Babangida 1988: 18)

Between 1985 and 1993, the Babangida administration executed structural changes by creating additional local councils three times. The local government creation exercises were purportedly done to match federal constituencies with local government areas in the first instance and to right the wrongs of the preceding re-organisations in the second and third instances. However, under that regime local governments began to be created around personalities (Roberts, 1997:46-47) and became immersed in the Babangida personal rule project that was underplayed by an instrumental use of corruption. The instrumental use of corruption to ensure regime stability has been clearly captured by Gboyega (1996: 5-6) as the strategy that "allowed people to compromise themselves through corruption so that they might be more loyal or amenable to his (Babangida) political manoeuvres.... he allowed subordinates to take their own turn at plundering public resources. Those who could not be placed in public positions that granted access to public revenues were directly paid to support the regime." Babangida treated allegations of corruption with extreme levity and rewarded others in the bid to build a network of acolytes and stakeholders in the regime's sustenance. Indeed, what remains to be said is how this strategy was extended to states and local government re-organization in the bid to multiply opportunities to plunder state resources and how it has been institutionalized as the major value underlying Nigeria's distributive federalism. Distributive federalism is a process whereby the federal governmental structures in a country are reduced to agencies for the distribution of centralized resources to the populations and communities of the constituent units albeit in sometimes-informal ways. Under the Babangida regime where this merged with the instrumental use of corruption to ensure regime stability, it generated a pattern of behaviour that "fosters in the citizens an attitude of mind that relates to the state only on the basis of sharing a "national cake." In short, the resource windfall from petroleum has created a situation in which the struggle for the control of state power is largely to enhance the predatory access of different segments of the political class to this windfall"(Mabogunje 1995: 4). Thus, distributive federalism in Nigeria's rentier post-colonial state has become contradictory to the idea of public service as regimes employ corruption to stabilize political power and citizens perceive state resources as booties for personal and group enrichment.

Indeed, Babangida's personal effort to penetrate the grassroots was shown in the promulgation of Decree No 15 of 1989 that vested the power to dissolve a council or remove an elected Local Government Official in the president. The decree removed this power from state governments. Also, the names of local governments were then entrenched in the decree and the 1989 Constitution to safeguard their territorial boundaries against arbitrary alteration in context where the president's power superseded that of the Constitution. The president intensified his penetration of the grassroots by the establishment of the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) under his office in 1986 and bringing the conduct of local government elections under the National Electoral Commission through Decree no.23 of 1987 and Decree no 8 of 1989. DFRRI was "not only to effectively promote a framework for grassroots social mobilization, but also to mount a virile programme of developmental monitoring and performance evaluation"(Babangida, 1986: 141). In 1988, the Ministry of Local Government was abolished and replaced by a Department of Local government in the office of the Governor. The new department was "not to control but to provide guidance and supervision of local governments." States were to incorporate local governments into their planning process. Statutory allocations were then sent directly to the local governments to avoid them being diverted by states as has been the case in the past. It was also mandatory that states should remit 10 percent of their internally generated revenue to local governments. Babangida emphasized his commitment to reinforcing the autonomy of local government and his aversion to any effort by the states to undermine his efforts. All of these moves were to strengthen his hold on the country even though they were purportedly done to promote local government autonomy. Thus, under the Babangida regime the federal government took over local government policy formulation and local government became a delicate policy arena where it was safer for state governments not to act independently of the centre (Gboyega, 1998:33). In July 1989, Babangida removed the elected chairman of Enugu local government for allegedly becoming a security risk and in the same year he dissolved all councils elected in 1987 (Fajonyomi 1997:40).

The 1988 civil service reforms were also extended to local governments between 1991 and 1992. The high point of these reforms for local government was the application of the presidential system that made the local government chairman the chief executive and accounting officer. Supervisory councillors became political heads of their department, members of Executive Committee (the cabinet) and elected councillors the constituted the legislature of the local government (Decree No. 23 of 1991).

The supervisory roles of state governments were eventually removed in 1992 when the federal government introduced a model financial memorandum to guide the financial operations of local government. According to the circular "it shall no longer be necessary to maintain spending limits for the Executive Committee of Local government...subject to the following conditions: (a) the provisions of the Financial Memoranda should be scrupulously adhered with, particularly those relating to the control of expenditure as well as contract, purchases, payments and personal advances procedures; (b) the projects should be contained in the approved budget or approved supplementary estimates of the

Local Government for the year; (c) for the avoidance of doubt, it shall no longer be necessary to refer any contract, whatever its size, to any organ or functionary of the state government for approval provided it had received prior approval of the Legislative arm of the Local Government during the normal process of the annual budget" (as cited by Gboyega, 1998:). For the purposes of accountability, an office of the Auditor General of Local Government and an audit alarm committee were established.

Commenting on these bodies, Gboyega (1998:40) has this to say:

The impact of the Auditor-General of local government has not been felt at all. There is no state in the country where it has demonstrated that he was effective. Their offices are understaffed, and their itinerary, if they have one, is too slow to move them where they are needed urgently, e.g. where there are allegations of impropriety and impeachment process are threatened. Nor can the situation be remedied easily as there are a general scarcity of qualified professional accountants and auditors in the country.

As for the audit alarm system, he noted, "there is no known record of this system having been activated to check irregular payments." The point is that these provisions were never made to promote accountability given the ethos underlying the reorganization process. At best they were made to provide the needed veneer of public accountability to give the regime a positive image. In any case, the provisions like the other provisions relating to the democratic processes in local government were subject to the disposition of the military junta that was clearly above the law in Nigeria. In January 1992, the Local Government Service Commission was abolished to put all local government staff under the firm control of the Chairman. However, the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) members' protests against high handedness and witch hunting by the local government chairmen led to the resuscitation of the Commission six months later.

The bottom line is that the stakes for local government were raised with the increase in statutory allocation to local governments from 10 to 15 per cent in 1990 and to 20 per cent in 1992. The multiplication of local governments did not only increase the number openings for the position of local government chairman but also for councillors and local government employees. The natural outcome was the emergence of strong forces within local government itself pressing for more autonomy for local government in relation to the state and pressing for national government intervention in the internal management arrangement in local government in order to protect their peculiar interests. There are three noticeable groups. The first is the National Union of Local Government Employees. The second is the National Conference of Local Government Chairmen (now Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON)). The third is the National Councillors' Forum. The one for councillors did not emerge until the current democratic dispensation for obvious reasons. These are the groups for which the

local governments now exist. Thus, local politics have been reduced to politicking between these groups for a good share of the "national cake."

During Gen. Abacha's administration, additional local governments were created in 1996 raising the number to 774. The exercise was markedly arbitrary and was trailed by widespread inter-communal conflicts over the location of local government headquarters and/or the inclusion of communities in local governments they never wished to join. Chairmen of Local Governments were removed as the Accounting officers, and Career officers became secretaries to the Local Government as well as the Accounting officers and the Chief Administrative officers of Local Governments. But the regime retained some measure of autonomy for local governments since the Federal Ministry of Finance through the Central Bank of Nigeria, directly paid their monthly Statutory Allocation from the Federation Account into the bank accounts of each Local Government. On the other hand, local government elected officials were removed and replaced by caretaker committees largely headed by retired military officers. Later on, five percent of statutory allocation to local governments were paid to traditional rulers to secure their support for the Abacha self-succession project.

Thus, by the time the transition that led to the current democratic government came on stream, local government had become devoid of its local and democratic content of governance. Most local governments rely on the centre for over eighty per cent of their revenue. Local governments were therefore reduced to grassroots satellites of the national government, a strong leverage for the national government in its dealings with the state government. The underlying politics of distributive federalism has generated strong forces for which local government is the veritable instrument for drawing from the massive resources (largely oil rents) that are under the control of the Federal Government. It is no wonder that there is a great confusion on the operations of local government under the current dispensation. The 1999 Constitution make conflicting provisions for control over local government, thereby crystallizing the ambivalence that has trailed the history of local government development in Nigeria. Under the current dispensation, states have in the bid to prove their power over local governments issued guidelines for administrative and financial activities of local government. In several states elected local government chairmen have been suspended by State Houses of Assembly. A few have gone on to create new local government councils, although the national government has refused to recognize these newly created councils for the purpose of statutory revenue allocation.

The Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) has gone to court to challenge the suspension of local government chairmen by State Houses of Assembly and has been lobbying the National Assembly to extend the tenure of local government to four years.

On 12 September 2001, the National Association of Local Government Employees held a public demonstration in Abuja to protest what it called Zero Allocation to Local Government that many of these governments claim has made it impossible for them to pay the salaries of their staff. They want to improve the finances of the local councils by securing an increase in statutory allocation to local governments from the federation account.

Councillors in Cross Rivers State have demanded for a monthly pay of N120,000, blackmailing the Governor with a threat that he would lose their support in the contest of the 2003 elections if he fails to do so (Eno-Abasi, 2001:1.2). This is occurring at a time when the federal government issued a circular requiring that all monies paid to councillors in excess of the N53,803 approved by the Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Allocation Commission be recovered from the beneficiaries in the public interest (Egede et al 2001:1.2). It is public knowledge that councillors in some local governments have been able to extort a monthly salary of up to N125,000 from their local government, a sum that is considered outrageous considering the general wage levels in the country, the demands of the job, and the general level of skills of councillors across the country.

Recently Obasanjo has decried the level of corruption at the local level saying "chairmen and councilors just share the allocations for councils among themselves" (as cited by Ezomon, 2001: 11). The local government chairmen continue to contest the claim that corruption is prevalent in local government. Some have even argued that the prevalence of corruption was not enough justification for state government encroachment, insisting that local government is an autonomous tier of government. Why has the national government not taken over any state government because of corruption, they questioned. Local government chairmen have in several states resisted the effort by State Houses of Assemblies to scrutinize their accounts and performance (Bello, 2001:3). Only recently, the Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission, Justice Mustapha Akanbi, announced that his Commission has established prima facie cases against 78 council chairmen out of the over 300 petitions received in respect of local government councils. He however lamented that the commission has been hindered from carrying out its functions because of poor staffing and funding, poor public enlightenment and more importantly, the spate of litigations challenging its constitutionality (Ogbodo, 2001:1).

A survey of three local governments, Mushin, Shomolu and Ajeromi/Ifelodun local governments in Lagos state revealed that most citizens do not even know the functions of local governments regardless of their gender and social status. More disturbing is the discovery that even local government officials themselves are not appraised of the statutory functions of local government (Integrity 1998:15-16). What is more, citizens are not aware of how local governments derive their budgets. Most citizens felt that corruption "constitute a problem in local government administration and many were convinced that little could be achieved by citizen's seeking services from local government officials without making illegal payments or bribes." (Ibid.: 53) A World Bank commissioned study on local government in Nigeria has this to say :

Informants generally saw government servants as self-serving, high-handed and unaccountable, and believed the misuse of public funds to be widespread, even general. The monitoring and evaluation of projects appeared to be non-existent. In discussion, local government officers often seemed unfamiliar

with their own areas, and rural communities attested that, like the councillors, they rarely, if ever, visited (Francis et al 1996).

Summary and Conclusions

The History of local government in Nigeria is the history of competition for pre-eminence between the drive for effectiveness and efficiency on the one hand and the drive for participation and accountability on the other. Effectiveness and efficiency is pursued in terms of making local government an autonomous tier of government within the Nigerian federal structure, while accountability is sought by subjecting Local Government and its officials to popular participation and other forms of control respectively. A study of the processes involved put in bold relief the current state of local government reforms as the longest experiment in political reform and provide lessons on how local government reforms may or should not, be conducted if the goal is to instill sound public service values among local government officials.

In the first phase, the reform of local government was essentially underlined by the need to introduce participatory government at the grass root. In this phase, the need for participation and accountability enjoyed pre-eminence, this was because as Gboyega (1987) has noted the reforms were motivated by liberal values.

The second phase, which was part of the reconstruction programme after the civil war (1967-1970), was informed by the perception of local government as engines for transforming the society towards economic development. Issues of effectiveness and efficiency had greater sway.

The third phase was informed by the complex factors that emerged from economic decline, neo-liberal economic reforms and the transition to democratic governance. There initially was a conscious effort to balance the two perspectives, which were encapsulated in the several decrees and the 1988 civil service reforms that sought to introduce the presidential system in local government. The multifaceted, incremental, and experimental and rapid (changes) (including reversals) nature of these reforms demonstrated the keenness of the competition between effectiveness, efficiency and autonomy on one hand and the drive for participation and accountability on the other.

Through these reforms local government has moved from the position of being under strict control by state governments, in terms of finance and personnel, to a point where they now operate the presidential system with separation of powers at the local level. Various programmes to sustain public service ethics at the local level have included the prescription of limits of authority to incur expenditure for local government depending on the size of internally generated revenues, introduction of Financial Memoranda and Instructions, Creation of the office of the Auditor General of Local Government and the Audit Alarm Committee and the streamlining of the Personnel Management System.

In spite of these, local government reforms were subjected to the instrumental use of corruption for regime stability and immersed in the politics of distributive federalism. These underlying bases of the reforms have made nonsense of public service ethics at the local level. This was worsened by the dependence of

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