

Chapter 5: Local Government

5.1 DEFINITION AND STATUS

A local government is a government at the grass root level. It is a political authority which is created for the local communities for the purpose of providing local services and promoting local democracy. Local democracy is achieved through full involvement of the local people in the management of their affairs. The local government is usually created by a law of the central government. But in a federal system of government, it is created by a state government law. It should be noted that while the local government system is created by a law of legislature, each local government authority is created by an instrument. An instrument which creates an individual local government authority defines its geographical boundaries, structure, functions and powers. As a local government is created by a law, it is a legal person which can sue and be sued.

Although the local government is a creature of the state government and thus subordinate to the state government, it is nevertheless given adequate powers and autonomy to discharge the functions assigned to it. The local government is a form of decentralization. Through the local government system, government functions are decentralized on a territorial basis thereby making it possible for the inhabitants of local communities to participate in the management of their local affairs. This form of decentralization of government functions and powers is known as *devolution of powers*. Devolution of powers means the transfer of a certain measure of political authority from the centre of the field.

5.2 THE PURPOSE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The primary purpose of the local government system is to bring government to the local level where the people will be fully involved in providing essential local services. This can be fully discussed under the following headings:

Bringing Government Nearer to the People

By creating local governments, government is brought to the doorstep of local communities. Consequently, many local people are elected as councilors -while others serve as a staff of local government. The local people are frequently involved in the election of their councilors. All these result in increased political participation. It also facilitates mass political mobilization and results in the practice of local democracy. It ensures that the local inhabitants take keen interest in the management of their local affairs. The local councilors are well known to the local inhabitants and as such, they often present their needs and demands to them. By so doing, the local people have the positive feeling that they are participating in government. The councilors who normally live with their people identify the priorities of the people and evolve strategies suited to the area for the execution of priorities.

Even and Rapid Development

The local government is also created to ensure even development of the state. This is achieved by sharing resources for rural development on the local government basis. The central and state governments use the local government areas as units of sharing government amenities and offices. The local governments mobilize local resources and leadership in providing local services to the people. There is healthy competition among various local governments in this endeavour. This results in rapid development of the rural areas and consequently of the entire nation. The central and state governments are so far removed from the local people that they cannot identify and serve adequately all their needs. The local governments complement the efforts of state and central governments towards national development.

The Need to Satisfy Cultural Diversity

There are cultural differences within each nation. Various communities have their peculiar traditions, customs and needs. Each community aspires to preserve its culture and satisfy its local needs in accordance with its tradition and culture. Local government is a device for the recognition of this cultural

diversity. Thus it is a principle of local government system that local governments are structured in a manner that takes full account of the traditional political organization and culture of the local people. The structuring of local government areas should follow the pattern of the unity of traditional communities. The organization of local governments should reflect peculiarities in culture and traditions of various communities.

Training in Political Leadership

Local government serves as a training ground for future politicians. Potential politicians start to learn the skills and techniques of politics at local government elections, council meetings and committees. Local government elections offer them the opportunity of learning how to campaign and contest elections. They are exposed to the problems and hazards of elections and election campaigns and they start early to evolve appropriate strategies and the necessary 'thick skin' to absorb and effectively handle the problems. At council meetings, councilors learn how to debate public issues. They serve in or preside over committee meetings where they acquire political leadership skills. With such local experiences, they can perform better at the national level.

Local Services Provided at the Appropriate Level

Local knowledge, leadership skills and strategies which are peculiar to certain local areas are essential for effective provision of services to such areas. Accordingly, an African proverb says "A people's type of firewood cooks well for those people." The local people possess the appropriate resources for meeting their needs. They have the capacity for effective identification of their needs and problems and can diverse appropriate means and strategies for satisfying them. The central government tends to adopt national standards and uniform strategies for the provision of services to various parts of the nation. Uniform strategies and rigid national standards are not suited for provision of local services.

Full Exploitation of Local Resources for Development

The local government is expected to serve as an instrument for full exploitation and mobilization of local resources for community development. For these purposes, local government in some areas stimulate communities to undertake self-help projects. Local government is expected to work in joint development projects with their respective community leaders and organizations. In such a joint endeavor, communities generate funds and local leadership for the project while the local governments provide technical and professional manpower and equipment. In this way, the people levy themselves in order to provide their basic needs such as rural roads, health institutions, schools, civil centres and others. Through this means, the local government exploits and harnesses local resources and mobilizes the local people for self-help development projects.

Communication Link and Citizenship Training

An essential purpose for the establishment of local governments is to enable them serve as important links between the people and the government. The local government communicates to the people about government policies and actions. In turn, it communicates to the government about the people's needs, demands and problems. The local government headquarters serves as an information centre for the local people. Furthermore, through the continuous information which the local government gives to the people about the problems, programmes, policies and actions of the governments, the people acquire citizenship training. This is essential for the citizens to discharge their civil responsibilities effectively.

5.3 THE FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The local government's functions are the basic local services. The nature and scope of functions assigned to local governments differ from country to country depending on the philosophy of the nation, the extent of geographical area and population size of the local government area, the available fund and the quantity and quality of available manpower. In spite of these variations, the functions which are normally assigned to local governments are services which are local in nature. The functions which are generally regarded as local government functions can be classified into twelve categories as follows:

Making of Bye-Laws

The primary function of the central and state governments is to make, execute and adjudicate laws. Although the local government is a government, it does not make laws. Rather the local government makes bye-laws on all the subjects that are assigned to it by law. The political institution that makes bye-laws is the local government council just as the legislature makes laws for the state or central government. Bye-laws regulate the activities of inhabitants of local government areas as they relate to local government functions and powers. Moreover they give legal backing to the activities of local governments. Bye-laws ensure law and order within the local government area and promote social and economic development of the area. An example of a bye-law is one which fixes the amount for market stall fees and provides fines for defaulters. There are also bye-laws which forbid street trading.

Collection of Rates

Rates are taxes imposed on the inhabitants of a local government area by the local government. They are usually imposed through bye-laws which give legal backing. There are three main forms of rates. The first is *general rate or capitation rate* which is a fixed amount of money levied on annual basis by the local government on all rateable adults. Rateable adults are generally taxable adults; those adults who get financial incomes from their employment or occupations. General rate is also called poll tax. The second form of rate is *property rate* which is tax imposed on privately-owned buildings and tenements, which is based on the current value of such property. It is a fixed sum of money charged on the owners of the property for a fixed period of time, generally annually. The third form of rate is a *special rate* which is a fixed sum of money levied periodically on certain specific services provided by the local government to cover its part or full cost. An example of a special rate is education rate. It is the responsibility of the local government to fix the amount for each of these forms of rates, and impose them on the people within the area.

Establishment of Markets and Motor Parks

A local government establishes markets. It builds market stalls, lockup stalls, and provides other facilities in the market and charges fees for these services. It also controls and regulates restaurants and other public eating places. It is the duty of the local government to control and regulate slaughter houses and slabs. It also controls and regulates outdoor advertising, shops and kiosks. Furthermore, it is the function of the local government to establish and manage motor parks. The local government charges various fees for the provision of these services.

Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Local governments are responsible for the registration of births and deaths which occur within the area of jurisdiction. It is also their responsibility to register marriages. The registration of births, deaths and marriages require the local government to issue certificates to their effect. Thus, the local government issues birth, death and marriage certificates. It charges fees for these services.

Licensing

It is the responsibility of the local government to issue a variety of licenses to owners of certain materials for their use. It grants licenses for radio and television sets. The local government also issues licenses for bicycles and trucks (other than mechanically-propelled trucks). It also grants licenses for wheelbarrows, carts and canoes. The local government charges appropriate fees for each of the licenses which normally expires at the end of each year. When a license expires, it is normally renewed with a fee. A license authorizes the use of the materials for which it is given.

Establishment and Maintenance of Roads, Streets and Bridges

The construction and maintenance of rural roads and urban streets is one of the traditional functions of the local government. Good access roads constitute a basic need for rural communities. The scopes of the roads which are assigned to local governments vary from country to country depending on the size of

the local governments and their financial strength. Local governments also construct bridges, drains, culverts and other highways. They are also assigned the duty of giving names to roads and streets in urban cities and the numbering of houses.

Provision of Recreational Services

It is generally the responsibility of the local government to provide recreational services within the area of its jurisdiction. Local governments establish and maintain open spaces and promote games and sporting activities. In some countries, this service is jointly provided by the state and local governments. Under the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria, the construction and maintenance of open spaces is clearly assigned to the local government.

Provision of Health and Social Welfare Services

The provision and maintenance of health services are functions which are jointly performed by the state/central government and the local government. Thus, local governments establish and maintain health centres, maternity homes and dispensaries. They provide sanitary inspection services and health education. Local governments also have powers to establish and maintain public conveniences and refuse disposals. Local governments also provide social welfare services jointly with the state/central government. They establish and maintain homes for destitute and motherless babies. They control beggars, and establish and maintain public burial grounds and cemeteries.

Provision of Education Services

Local governments participate in the provision of educational services. They establish and maintain primary schools. They also provide nursery and adult education schools within their areas of jurisdiction. Local governments are empowered to award scholarships and give bursaries to deserving students. Local governments also serve as communication links between the people and the state/central government. They inform and educate the people on government policies and actions while, on the other hand, they communicate to the government on the people's needs and problems which they cannot solve or satisfy.

Provision of Agricultural Industrial Services

The provision of agricultural, industrial and commercial undertakings are services which are concurrently provided by both the central, state and local governments. Local governments only participate in these services to the extent which the state/central government allow them. Local governments thus establish and maintain agricultural projects, and provide agricultural extension services. They have the power to undertake small-scale industries. They can embark on commercial ventures such as transport services, supermarkets, and so on.

Maintenance of Law and Order

Maintenance of law and order is the function of all governments; local, state or federal. Local governments have a primary responsibility of maintaining law and order within their respective areas of jurisdiction. They use the law enforcement agents of the central and state governments to enforce their bye-laws. In some nations of the world, local governments have their own police. For instance, during the First Republic in Nigeria, local governments in Northern Nigeria had local government police. However, in Nigeria today, the police force is exclusively the federal government's function. Local governments ensure that there is no breakdown of law and order within their areas. They settle inter-village disputes or conflicts among groups within their area.

Other Services

In some countries of the world such as Britain, local governments are assigned such functions as the provision of water supply, fire service, housing and police services. In Nigeria, these are the functions of

the state and federal governments. In Britain, some local governments are permitted to establish municipal airports, but this is rare. Local governments also participate in economic planning of the state.

5.4 TYPES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The structure and organization of local governments differ from country to country depending on the attitudes, values and orientations of the people and the circumstances of their history and tradition.

Thus, each country has its own type of local government system which tends to suggest that as many nations we have in the world, so is the number of different types of local government systems. However, attempts have been made to broadly classify local government systems. Here we shall classify local governments into six types, namely: French, English, Communist, Presidential, Commission, and Manager types.

The French Type

The French type of local government is a form in which the local government is merely an extension of the central government. In this system, the staffs of the local government are part of the civil service of the central government. The local government has a council headed by a mayor. But the council is under the direction and the control of an administrative officer of the central government known as the prefect. The prefect has power to approve or veto any decision of the council. The prefect is a technocrat. He is a well-experienced and professionally qualified administrator. He is the embodiment of the local government. The prefect must approve the policies and bye-laws of the council before they can have any effect. He serves as the link between the local government and the central administration. A classic example of the French type is the system of local government in France itself. The divisional administration system of the former East Central State of Nigeria under the Administration Decree of 1971 is another example.

The English Type

The English type of local government system is a type in which the local government enjoys autonomy which is exercised by a popularly elected council. The council has full control of the local government business. It makes policies and bye-laws on all matters assigned to the local government. It has full control of the staff which it employs and disciplines. In some countries, local governments have common employing agency for their staff known as the Local Government Service Commission. This is a semi-autonomous body established by the state/central government to appoint, promote and discipline local government staff. This is the case in Nigeria. But in Britain, local government staff are directly employed by individual local governments. The degree of autonomy which is exercised by this local government varies from nation to nation. Moreover, this autonomy is never absolute as the central or state government has to exercise some control on the local government. The control is to ensure that a certain minimum standard of service is attained by the local government. The control is also aimed at ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the local government. A classical example of this type is the British local government system. The county council of the former Eastern Nigeria and the Local Government system of Nigeria under the 1976 Reforms are also good examples.

The Communist Type

The communist type is one which is practiced in socialist countries. In socialist states, the socialist ideology conditions the pattern of their local government systems. In those states, the local government authority is an inseparable part of national planning and development. The socialist parties give leadership, firm control and direction. The local government system is structured in a manner that fosters economic and social development. Thus, planning for economic and social development of the local government area is the most important characteristic of the communist type. Another characteristic is democratic centralism which is a socialist principle that implies that those policy-decisions should be made by the top hierarchy of the government after debate and agreement by them. Democratic centralism implies that those at the base of hierarchy do not participate in the decision-making process of government. In this type, there is no local autonomy. The local government personnel are integrated with

those of the central government by adherence to common socialist ideology, principles and values which call for uniformity in government operations, common standards and unity of purpose. A classic example of this type is the U.S.S.R. local government system.

Presidential Type

This type is fundamentally based on the principle of separation of powers and checks and balances. We have two various forms of this

type - the strong Mayor-Council form and the weak Mayor-Council form. In the two variations, the mayor is not a member of the council. The mayor is elected chief executive of the local government while the council, also elected, makes the policies and bye-laws of the local government. The mayor is a full-time paid councilor who serves for a fixed tenure. He can recommend legislation to the council and can veto legislation. The difference between a strong Mayor-Council form and a weak Mayor-Council form is that, in a strong Mayor-Council, the mayor is given control over budgets and has the power to appoint, remove and direct departmental heads. But in a weak Mayor-Council, the mayor has little effective control over the administration; the council usually appoints and removes officers. The presidential type is found in big American cities.

Commission Type

The Commission type is a system in which all the legislative and executive powers of the local government are vested in a small elected body termed Board of Commissioners. In this type, three to seven persons are elected to serve collectively on local government council. They are called commissioners and each of them is charged with a department of the local government. These commissioners that also constitute the council elect one of themselves to serve as the mayor. The mayor acts as the chairman of the Board of Commissioners (Council) and at the same time, heads his own department. He also performs certain ceremonial functions and has the power to veto legislation of the council of which he is the chairman. The commissioners, who are both legislators and departmental chiefs, are elected not by wards but by the entire electorate of the local government area. They are full time councilors and serve for a fixed tenure. This type is also found in American cities.

Manager Type

In a manager type, there is an elected council, an elected mayor and a professional manager. The mayor presides over the council which is responsible for policy making. The manager is generally elected by the council for an indefinite term. He is also responsible and accountable to the council. The manager is an experienced and

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Other Services

In some countries of the world such as Britain, local governments are assigned such functions as the provision of water supply, fire service, housing and police services. In Nigeria, these are the functions of the state and federal governments. In Britain, some local governments are permitted to establish municipal airports, but this is rare. Local governments also participate in economic planning of the state professional expert in administration. He is the manager of the local government, and the administration of the local government is entrusted to him. The manager runs the council business with a high degree of independence. In this type, the local government is run like a business, the council is likened to a board of directors with the manager being likened to the general manager. The manager of the council adopts management styles and techniques in the administration of the council. Examples are seen in some large cities in the U.S.A. This type had also been practiced in the former Western State of Nigeria during the Gowon Military Administration.

5.5 SOURCES OF REVENUE

No organization, whether private or public can operate without funds. Every organisation has sources through which it raises funds to perform its functions. The sources of revenue for local governments are numerous. These are discussed below:

Rates

There are three types of rates. The first is general rate which is also called capitation rate or poll tax. The second is special rate. The third is property rate. The capitation rate or poll tax is a fixed equal amount (flat rate) levied on rateable adults. Rates are paid annually. Rateable adults must possess financial income which qualifies them to pay rate. A special rate is a levy which is imposed by the local government for the provision of specific services. An example is education rate which is imposed by the local government for education services. Water rate is also a special rate which is imposed specially for the provision of water supply to the people of the area.

Property rate is a tax imposed on the owners of private buildings and tenements. The property rate is based on current values of the property. Thus, before the tax is imposed on a property, the building or piece of land is assessed by valuation officers who are professionally trained for the job. Property rate can yield a lot of revenue for the local government if it is properly managed. Property rate, as a source of income, is very stable. Its yield does not shrink very significantly during periods of economic depression just like most other sources. Furthermore, property tax is really a fair tax since

it is based on ability to pay and is related to the income of the payer. However, the greatest problem of property rate lies in its accurate assessment and collection.

Fees

Local governments charge fees for certain services which they render to the people. They charge fees on market stalls, lock-up stores, and slaughter houses. They also charge fees on motor parks. Local governments charge fees for a variety of licenses which they issue such as radio and television licenses, bicycle licenses, and licenses for wheelbarrows, canoes and carts. Local governments can realize very huge sums in radio and television licenses. But in Nigeria, most owners of radio and television sets do not license them and the local government finds it extremely difficult to force the people to license their sets. Thus, huge sums of money are lost annually by the local government. Local governments also charge fees from licenses for bakeries, sale of liquor, restaurant and public eating houses. There are also revenues from licenses for the use of loudspeakers in public places, and mounting of signboards.

Fines

Fines are charges imposed on individuals for breaking bye-laws of the local government. Bye-laws of local governments carry penalties in form of fines for their violation. Local governments prosecute individuals who violate their bye-laws in courts where they are fined. For effective enforcement of bye-laws, local governments in some countries of the world have their own courts e.g. Native Authority Courts.

Profit and Earnings

Local governments can undertake business ventures. Income which accrues from such ventures is profit. Local governments can establish small scale industries such as soap factory, bakery, and agricultural farms. They can also establish petrol filling stations, transport service, and supermarkets from which they make profits. They get earnings from renting out houses and lands to individuals and organizations.

Grants

Grants are financial aids given to local governments by the state or central government to enable them provide the services assigned to them. Grants are employed by the government to control, encourage and assist local governments. There are four types of grants namely: *general grants*, *special grants*, *matching grant* and *equalization grant*. *General grant* is also called block grant. It is a special amount paid annually by the central or state government to aid the recurrent expenditure of local governments. The amount of general grant paid to each local government is based on the population of the local government. Local governments are free to spend general grants on any service of their wish. The *special grant* is a financial aid by the state or central government made to meet the cost of particular services of national importance. For instance, the local government can give grants specially for education, agriculture, health, etc. The specific grant is applied by the local government to the service it is specifically meant for. It has an advantage that the grant is tied to a particular service and the local government cannot use it for any other purpose. *Matching grant* is financial aid to local governments that embark on certain development projects listed as priorities of government. It is given in certain fixed percentages of the total actual cost of the project. The percentage can range from 20% to 80% of the actual expenditure of the project. The amount of percentage fixed for each service would depend on the amount of priority which government attaches to the service. Matching grants are usually given in the area of education, agriculture, roads and health. Such grants are aimed at stimulating and encouraging development. *Equalization grant* is usually made to poor and backward local governments to enable them catch up with the advanced ones.

Statutory Share of Central Government Revenue

Local governments having a statutory share of the central government revenue is a recent development. This development arose as a result of the failure of states or central governments to give adequate grants to local governments. This approach tends to replace grants which had been the most traditional form of local government revenue. This revenue source has a far reaching legal and constitutional implication. It has the implication that the local government is legally recognized as a tier of government of the nation and as such it has the right to a share of the national revenue. Thus, a revenue allocation formula is established under a law which provides the percentage which each level of government receives as its right from the national revenue. For instance, in Nigeria, under the Revenue Allocation Act of 1982, local governments have a share of 10% of the federation accounts and in addition, they get 10% of state government revenue. The payment of statutory share of federal government's revenue to local governments is mandatory.

Gifts and Donations

A local government is free to receive gifts and donations from individuals and organizations, which when received, form part of its revenue. Launching of development projects is an easy means of realizing donations in Nigeria.

Loans

Local governments are empowered to raise loans. They can get loans from state/central governments, banks and other financial institutions. Loans are used to fund capital projects such as market development, agricultural and industrial projects. However, a local government, in most cases, requires approval by the central or state government before securing a loan.

5.6 CONTROL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Legally, local governments are subordinate to the central/state government. Consequently, it is controlled and supervised by the state/central government. The primary purpose of the control is to ensure that local government operates within the limits of its power and provides efficient services to the people. The major means through which the local government is controlled are discussed below:

Legislative Control

Local governments are generally created by the law of the legislature. The law provides for the structure, functions and powers of the local

government. The legislature has the power to amend or alter the law establishing a local government reducing its powers or changing its structure. The legislature can reduce the revenue sources of a local government through the alteration of the law. On the other hand, the legislature can criticize local governments in the legislative Assembly over their poor performance. The legislature can also set up investigating panels to probe the activities of a local government or its officials.

Executive Control

The chief executive (president or governor) has the power to suspend or dissolve a local government council which he considers inefficient. When the chief executive dissolves a council, he appoints a caretaker council or sole administrator to manage the affairs of the council until a new election into the council is conducted.

Administrative Control

Administrative control is the most crucial and detailed form of control. The control is exercised by the Ministry of Local Government. The ministry can issue regulations which guide local governments in the making of their own bye-laws. The ministry regulations are normally adopted by a resolution of the council. In some countries of the world, the ministry or department responsible for local government also has the power to veto bye-laws. The ministry also provides local governments with financial memoranda for efficient management of local government funds. A financial memorandum is a policy manual of local government which guides the management of its funds. The ministry or department responsible for local government affairs is vested with the powers of providing standing orders for the local government council. In some countries of the world, the ministry approves bye-laws, major programmes, projects and contracts of local governments.

The local government inspectors in the Ministry of Local Government inspect the activities of local governments to ensure that they conform to rules and regulations, and that high standards of service are maintained. These inspectors inspect regularly all books, accounts and records of local governments. They have the right to attend local government council meetings. They can offer advice to the functionaries of the local government.

Excessive control of the local governments by the ministry in Nigeria resulted in the abolition of the Ministry of Local Government by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria in January 1989. However, the federal government created an Inspectorate Department in the office of the State Governor which is now responsible for local government affairs. This department still exercises certain degree of control over local governments.

Financial Control

The ministry or department for local government approves the annual estimates of local governments before they are implemented by the local governments. The state government must approve proposed rates and fees before they come into effect. Any change in approved rates and fees must also receive the approval of the state government. The annual statement of income and expenditure is usually prepared by the local government and is presented to the ministry or department responsible for local government for scrutiny. The accounts of local governments are annually audited by the central or state government auditors. The auditors have the power to issue audit queries in cases where misuse of fund is suspected or where expenditures are made contrary to rules and regulations of the local government. Where the staff or councilors of the local government misappropriate funds, they are served audit surcharge to make them 'vomit' what they have 'swallowed'.

Judicial Council

The judiciary controls any organ or agency which is established by law. As we have noted earlier, the local government is created by law. Thus, it is a legal personality which can sue and be sued. Where a local government exceeds its powers, it could be taken to court. The court, where it is satisfied that the local government has exceeded its power by making a certain policy or an action, can declare such policy or action ultra vires and consequently, null and void. Any aggrieved citizen can take the local government to court to seek redress. Where a local government fails to perform its duty, the writ of mandamus can be invoked to compel the local authority to perform its duty.

Public Complaints Commission's/Ombudsman's Control

The public complaints commission/ombudsman is established to protect the citizen's rights. Where a local government encroaches on the rights of citizens, such citizens can take the matter to the public complaints commission in order to obtain justice. The public complaints commission has the power to compel local governments to carry out their statutory duties. Consequently, the public complaints commission possesses the power to check the excesses of local governments where the citizens are politically conscious and are aware of their rights.

5.7 PROBLEMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government, as a result of its status, structure and nature of organization, is faced with a number of problems. These problems are fully discussed below.

Inadequate Autonomy

Local governments require adequate autonomy and freedom of action in the functions assigned to them in order to perform effectively. In some nations of the world, this autonomy is denied them. This problem stems from the subordinate status of the local government. Excessive control over local governments is exercised by the Ministry of Local Government. This was the case in Nigeria before the Ministries of Local Government were abolished in all the states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1989. Some of these controls cause delays and frustration of programmes. In Nigeria, it took the Ministry of Local Government many months to approve local government annual estimates and bye-laws. Sometimes, annual estimates were approved many months after the commencement of the financial year it was meant for, whereas local government could not implement annual estimates until they were approved by the Ministry. The same delay occurred in the approval of major programmes and contracts. Where revenue materials such as receipt booklets, rate tickets, etc, were supplied centrally by the Ministry of Local Government, a lot of delays were also exercised in their supply. This resulted in loss of funds by local governments as revenue officials could not collect revenue without them. The abolition of the Ministries of Local Government in all the states of the federation may solve this problem of inadequate local government autonomy in Nigeria.

Financial Problem

Financial problem is a universal problem of local governments. This is a serious problem as a local government cannot execute its programmes without funds. Local governments generally have three main

sources of revenue, namely; internally generated revenue (otherwise known as independent source), external source, and loans. Local governments are not able to generate enough revenue from internal or independent sources as these sources in developing nations like Nigeria are generally poor sources, and some of them prove difficult to collect revenue from. Sometimes, the cost involved in collecting revenue from some of them exceeds the actual revenue realizable. The state government often encroaches on some of their viable independent sources. The situation is worsened by corrupt and fraudulent practices of revenue officials. As a result, a lot of revenue collected does not go into the purse of the local government.

External revenue which comes from the state and central government are also often inadequate. The local governments' share of the national revenue is very small. For instance, in Nigeria, all local governments receive only 15% of the Federal Accounts. In countries where grants are given instead of statutory allocation, these are equally inadequate. Generally, these grants are delayed and are not given when they are most needed. In most countries, local governments find it difficult to get loans from commercial banks because they lack the necessary collaterals.

The solution to the financial problem lies in giving local governments more funds through increased grants or statutory allocations. There should be no delay in paying grants to local governments. On the other hand, more viable independent sources of revenue should be given to local governments. Local governments themselves should put in efforts in generating revenue from internal sources.

Furthermore, they should establish industrial, agricultural and commercial ventures which can yield revenue for them.

Staffing Problem

Generally, local governments lack adequate and well-qualified personnel. In particular, they lack well-qualified and experienced professionals and technicians. Many reasons are responsible for this staff problem. Firstly, local governments lack the funds for hiring adequate and well-qualified staff. Secondly, they are controlled by the state government, and are not free to directly employ any staff of their choice. Thirdly, professionals and other well-qualified personnel do not like to work under a local government. They look down on local governments. Fourthly, many people do not want to work in rural areas. Fifthly, the conditions of service for local government staff are, in most countries, lower than those of the civil service.

In order to solve this problem, professional and technical personnel should be encouraged and motivated to work with local governments. The condition of rural areas should be improved to be attractive to job seekers. This can be done by providing good roads, electricity and water supply. Finally, the conditions of service in the local government and the civil service should be the same in all respect, both in theory and practice.

Inappropriate Structure

One of the crucial problems facing the local government is how to structure it so that it is not too small to be unviable and not too large to lose touch with the local people. In some countries, local government areas are too large and could not satisfy the political value of people's identification with their local government and of mass participation of the people in the management of their affairs. In other places, the local governments are not structured to take into full account the traditional political organization and culture of the people. Yet in others, the local government areas are so small that they are unviable. Local government areas should be adequate in size. It should not be too small or too large. And it should take into account the culture and the indigenous political organization of the people.

Corruption and Misappropriation of Funds

Some local government staff and councilors, especially in developing countries, indulge in corruption and misappropriation of funds. Many councilors take bribes in the performance of their functions. For instance, local government staffs have been known to collect revenue with fake receipts and then divert

the revenue collected into their private purse. They also embezzle local government funds. Sometimes, they take bribes from people while rendering official service. This problem can be solved through election of honest and disciplined councilors and the employment of honest and disciplined staff. There should be a programme of training for both councilors and staff. Local governments should evolve effective checks and controls to minimize corruption and misappropriation of funds while appropriate disciplinary action should be taken on proven cases of official corruption.

Poor Quality of Councilors

Council business requires knowledgeable and experienced councilors. But one observes that in developing nations like Nigeria, many councilors are neither knowledgeable nor experienced. In some areas, one finds that many councilors are semi-illiterates. In such situations, the performance of the local government is generally low. In most cases, this situation arises as a result of low level of development. Furthermore, people look down on a councillorship as an undignified status. Moreover, some people do not consider the council business as stimulating and thus do not consider it as worthwhile service. Furthermore, educated and experienced citizens prefer to live in urban cities while rural areas are dominated by low class men and women.

The solution to this problem lies in the political education of the people to change their attitude towards local governments. Greater attention should be given to the improvement of rural areas and establishment of industries in these areas to attract educated and experienced people to take up residence. Retired public servants should be encouraged to go back to their homes and live in rural areas where they can contest local government elections and help in the task of community development. Finally, councilors should be elected to serve on part-time basis.

Negative Party Politics

In some places, local government councilors conduct council business along party lines. Party politics in local governments results in conflicts among councilors. It also results in victimization, oppression, favouritism and neglect of certain areas; sometimes party interests override community interests. On the other hand, some experienced and knowledgeable citizens who hate partisan politics do not come out to contest local government elections. Consequently, the local government cannot get the benefits of their wealth of knowledge and experience. The solution to this problem lies in insulating local government elections from party politics. Furthermore, the council business should not be conducted along party lines.

KEY POINTS

Definition of Local Government

A local government is a political authority which is created in local communities for the purpose of providing local services and promoting local democracy.

Purpose of Local Government

- (a) It brings government nearer to the people.
- (b) It ensures even and rapid development.
- (c) It satisfies cultural diversity.
- (d) It serves as a training ground for future politicians.
- (e) It ensures that local services are provided at the level where they are most appropriate.
- (f) It ensures full exploitation of local resources for development of local communities.
- (g) It serves as a communication link between the government and the local people.

Functions

- (a) It makes bye-laws.
- (b) It collects rates.
- (c) It establishes markets and motor parks.
- (d) It registers births, deaths and marriages.
- (e) It is responsible for issuing a variety of licenses.
- (f) It establishes and maintains roads, streets and bridges.
- (g) It provides recreational services.
- (h) It provides health and social welfare services.
- (i) It provides educational services.
- (j) It provides agricultural and industrial services.
- (k) It maintains law and order.

Types of Local Government

- (a) *French Type* is one in which the local government is an extension of the central government.
- (b) *English Type* is one in which greater autonomy is granted to elected local government councils.
- (c) *Communist Type* is one which operates under the socialist principle of democratic centralism.
- (d) *Presidential Type* is one based on the principles of separating the elected executive from the elected council.
- (e) *Commission Type* is one which operates as a board with elected commissioners each heading a department.
- (f) *Manager Type* is one which is run like a business by the manager who is given a high degree of autonomy.

Sources of Revenue

These include the following:

- (a) Rates
- (b) Fees e.g. motor park fees, registration of birth fees, etc
- (c) Fines for breaking its bye-laws
- (d) Profits and earnings from business ventures
- (e) Grants from state/ central government
- (f) Statutory share of central government revenue
- (g) Gifts and donations
- (h) Loans

Control of Local Government

Local governments are controlled by:

- (a) The legislature.
- (b) The executive through dissolution.
- (c) The ministry or the department responsible for local government affairs.
- (d) Central/state government auditors.
- (e) The judiciary.
- (f) The public complaints commission.

Problems of Local Government

- (a) Inadequate autonomy
- (b) Inadequate finance
- (c) Inadequate staff
- (d) Inappropriate structure
- (e) Corruption and misappropriation of funds
- (f) Poor quality of councilors
- (g) Party politics

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Essay Questions

1. What are the main purposes for the establishment of local governments in a state?
2. Discuss the main functions of local governments.
3. Identify and discuss the main sources of revenue for local governments.
4. Compare and contrast the English and French types of local government.
5. What are the main problems of local governments?

Objective Questions

1. The local government is seen as an extension of the central state government in
 - A. English type of local government.
 - B. French type of local government.
 - C. Presidential type of local government.
 - D. Manager type of local government.
2. A powerful legal instrument of controlling local government is
 - A. criticism by the legislature.
 - B. Writ of habeas corpus.
 - C. writ of habeas corpus

D. Impeachment.

3. Which of the following is not an independent source of revenue for local governments?

- A. Grants
- B. Markets and motor park fees
- C. Rates
- D. Radio and television license fees

4. An exclusive function of local governments is

- A. Education.
- B. Health.
- C. Agricultural services.
- D. Registration of births.

5. A local government is *not* normally

- A. A legal personality.
- B. Created by law of state or central government.
- C. Created by the act of the federal government.
- D. Subordinated to the state or central government.

Answers

- 1. B
- 2. C
- 3. A
- 4. D
- 5. C