

Analysis of Local Government Performance and Leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the quality of local government leaderships in Nigeria. It explores how local governments' inefficiency and poor leadership have been a major challenge facing the development process in Nigeria. The paper has two objectives. The first is to identify the professionalism of a sample of Nigerian local government chairpersons. The second is to examine whether there are systematic correlations between local government chairpersons' professionalism, political partisanship, local characteristics, and performance. The paper argues that the quality of local government chairpersons has significant policy implications because of their vital role in policy making and implementation. The concluding section provides some policy recommendations on how local government leaders could improve performance.

Keywords: Local Government, Performance, Leadership, Education, Public Policy, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Nigeria is a petroleum producing country in West Africa. The nation has a federal system of government that is divided into 36 states and 774 local governments. The World Bank (2011) estimates the current population of Nigeria to be about 162.5 million people. Nigeria adopted a federal system of government after a unitary national government resulted in political crisis and several military coups. It was believed that a federal system of government would bring the government closer to the people of Nigeria (Dibie, 2014a). The number of localities has risen since 1970 progressively from 299 to 301 in 1979. The number of local governments was increased by a military government to 449 in 1987 after a military regime overthrew the civilian government on December 31, 1983. The current 774 local governments were created in 1991 by the military government at that time (Otobo, 2002).

According to Robert Dibie (2014a), the relationship between federal, state and local governments in Nigeria is characterized by the supremacy of the federal over the regional and local governments. This can be attributed to the long period of military rule that gradually concentrated all powers on the national government. Jones Aluko (2006) argued that the 1999 Nigerian constitution made the local governments more dependent on the state governments. This provision in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution that was approved by the military administration virtually put the local government at the bottom of the political totem pole.

Federalism in Nigeria is characterized by poor and ineffective intergovernmental relations. The nature of the relationship between state and local governments has been described by scholars (Aluko, 2006; Olowu and Ayo, 1985) as the military chain of command approach to governance. Although, several inter-governmental institutions have existed in Nigeria for a long time, no serious effort has been made to understand why these two tiers of government are not functioning harmoniously. Dibie (2014a) contends that part of the problem is that successive political leaders and public administrators in Nigeria fail to realize that federalism cannot be successful without effective use of intergovernmental instruments. According to Adamolekun (1999), Eneanya (2010) and Aluko (2006) poor intergovernmental relations have led to administrative and policy failures resulting in the collapse of many laudable developmental programs initiated at the local government level during both military and civilian administrations. One major component of this quality and leadership problem is

the intractable nature of corruption and lack of qualified administrators at the local government level. Despite the lofty measures put in place by the federal government to address corruption at the local government level, the outcome has been dismal.

Local governments in Nigeria are governed by elected officials known as Chairpersons (Mayors). These local leaders play a very important role in local government performance, as s/he performs not only political but also administrative functions. Despite these very important duties, inadequate attention has been paid to the appropriate qualification of potential chairpersons. There has been a lack of oversight in the management and administrative activities of local governments. Several scholars have reported on the problem of not having competent leadership personnel at the helm of local government affairs in Nigeria (Adamolekun 1999; Haruna 2001; Dibie 2004 and 2014a). As a result, the financial resources earmarked for economic development projects are either mismanaged or misappropriated.

Local government administrations in Nigeria are confronted with a number of problems; but the shortage of skilled personnel is considered the most urgent. There is severe shortage of qualified professionals working at the local government offices all over the country (Dibie, 2003; Eneanya 2010). Without doubt, there is a need for local governments across Nigeria to start hiring well-trained and experienced professionals; this would improve the quality of city and county services that they provide.

Dibie (2003, 2014a) discusses the impact of having local government officials in Nigeria who lack the experience and the professional training in the financial, administrative and technical departments of the local government. Dibie (2014a) suggests that the reason most of the staff in local government positions lack the training for the jobs they were hired to do is because hiring in the Nigerian civil service is marred by 'Political Patronage.' This is a system where elected politicians reward their supporters by giving them government jobs and contracts without considering their qualification or ability to do the job. The needs of citizens at the local level have increased due to urbanization in Nigerian cities. Therefore, the nation should have people who can appropriately address the need of people at the local level. In some cases, state governments are working with the chairpersons to provide them with qualified professionals who can effectively implement programs for the benefit of citizens.

Another major problem facing the quality of local government leadership is the gradual erosion of power and authority at the local level. There is no clear separation of

powers between state and local government as expected in a federal system of government. As a result of these flaws in the way federalism is practiced in Nigeria, state governments have begun to take over many services formerly provided by the local government administration. Sometimes the state government administrators interfere with the affairs of local governments by usurping their allocations from the Federal Government. This makes accountability difficult, making useless their idea of financial autonomy (Eneanya 2009; Adebayo 2004).

The data on local election participation in Nigeria shows that there has been low election turnout at the rural areas of the nation. This low turnout and the limited research interpreting local voting patterns and the electoral involvement can be a key indicator in a discussion of citizen participation in local affairs. Further, there are major contradictions between Nigeria's expectation of citizen involvement in democracy and actual level of citizen involvement in complex technical decisions or heavily bureaucratized and strongly professionalized service delivery operations.

The paper seeks to contribute to the literature on African local government leadership by:

- 1) identifying the background characteristics of a sample of Nigerian local government chairpersons; and
- 2) examining whether there are systematic correlations between local government chairpersons' professional skills, political partisanship, local characteristics, and performance in terms of coverage of primary education.

The research data were derived from three local government administrations period (2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010) across 17 local government areas of Abia state in Nigeria. Studying local government chairpersons has significant policy implications because, as Salisbury (1964) posited, "the local government chairperson is both the most visible person in the community and, on questions of public policy, probably the most influential" (787).

Theoretical Framework and Federalism

The theory of federalism suggests a layered cake in which the top layer is the national government, the middle layer; the state government and the lower level, the local government

(Bardes *et al.*, 2002). The national government is sovereign over the rest in the federal union (or the cake). The main functions of the federal government are (1) national defence; (2) foreign relations; and (3) the promotion of the general welfare of the citizens (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). In the case of the local governments in Nigeria, their activities should involve policymaking, implementation, and proactive governance. Also, public administration at the local government level should be viewed, not only as a managerial tool, but also as a legitimate means for advancing the broader public concerns of equity in the provision of public goods and services.

The federal system of government has two major principles, both of which must exist simultaneously in order for it to be distinguished from unitary governments or confederations. First, there must be division of power between the national government and local governments. Second, boundaries of localities cannot be changed by the national government without the consent of the citizens within those boundaries. No locality may be divided among other localities without its consent, and no new locality can be created out of its territory without the consent of its representatives within the Nigerian National Assembly (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

The recent actions emanating from local governments and administrators, which so often affect citizens' lives, are also examples of the *state's* continuing authority over the local government in Nigeria (Olowu, 1999). For example, most states have created the Ministry of Local Governments. This ministry is responsible for the initiation of several local government policies and the control and supervision of local government laws. The ministry also issues directives on the implementation of new policies from the state government and matters concerned with administrative practices and procedures, as well as giving sound and constructive advice, guidance and assistance to local governments (Eneanya 2010). This is not what the layered cake federalism principle is all about. As practiced in Nigeria, the governor of a state is the boss of the local government chairperson. According to Robert Dibia (2014a) the Nigerian model makes the role of local government councils meaningless. The council's duties involve waiting for the state government to issue directives. The most recent trend in this respect has been the Federal Government of Nigeria's action, in which the *initiative* for many public policy decisions particularly in education, social, and environmental issues has now shifted back to the states, and, because of future budget constraints, it appears that it is likely to remain there for years to come (Adebayo 2004; Aluko 2006). According to Robert Dibia (2014a) the appeal of federalism in Nigeria was that it retained state traditions and local

authority while establishing a strong Federal Government that is capable of handling common problems. In addition, federalism allows many functions to be delegated by the Federal Government of Nigeria to the 36 states. Also, federalism brings government closer to the citizens at the state and local levels. It also facilitates more access to the influence of government agencies and policies, rather than leaving the population restive and dissatisfied with a remote faceless, all-powerful Federal Government.

One point worth noting is that the continuous creation of additional local governments by successive military regimes after the 1976 nationwide local government reform has contributed to instability at the local government levels. Victor Abia (2006) and Jones Aluko (2006) argue that when the military government dissolved local government's councils and created new ones; it automatically disrupted the smooth running of some local government administrative activities, which up till then had been functioning properly. In some cases, the local chairpersons and their staff became demoralized which further open the door for corrupt practices, bearing the fact that the rule of law in Nigeria is ineffective (Adebayo 2004; Dibia 2014b; Olowu 1999; Aluko 2006).

Scholars and political practitioners constantly search for tools that could improve governmental performance. In developing countries, such as Nigeria, the adoption of decentralization tends not to achieve this goal. Decentralization is expected to improve governmental efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness by transferring functions from central to sub-national governments. This transfer has made local governments responsible for planning, funding, and implementing social programs, such as education. As a result, long-term development has become a function of local government performance. Local action, however, varies considerably across Nigerian localities, leading us to ask what explains local government performance in Nigeria?

Existing explanations for organizational performance refer to political, economic, and demographic factors. Among the political influences, scholars look at government ideology (Swank 2002), partisan support (Doig and Hargrove 1990), legislative oversight (Santiso and Belgrano 2004), government type (Clingermayer and Wood 1995), citizen participation (Blair 2000), politicians' motivation (Anderson 2003; Gibson and Lehoucq 2003), and electoral competitiveness (Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993). As socioeconomic determinants, studies refer to budgets, inequality, governmental production, and level of development. Among the demographic explanations, scholars also point to the size and nature of the target group (Durant and Legge, 1993; Lineberry, 1976). Despite these

varied explanations, literature has not given considerable attention to the potential effects of managerial quality. This study seeks to contribute by examining the influence of managerial quality on local government performance when assessed in terms of primary education funding. This study's thesis is that managerial quality—operationalized as mayoral public sector experience—adds to a locality's performance.

Existing studies of service delivery focus disproportionately on the United States while remaining limited in developing countries (Boyne 2003). Departing from that, this study not only tests the managerial quality hypothesis, but also moves from both the school district to the local government and from the United States to Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute by evaluating the predictive power of theories developed in the United States when transferred to the third world. Specifically, we draw data from the 17 municipalities of one of the Nigerian states over a six-year period (2005-2010) to present the preliminary results of the effects of managerial quality on municipal performance in an African setting. Findings indicate that mayoral qualifications such as having public sector experience before coming to office positively influence a locality's performance in terms of primary education funding. Thus, the improper implementation of the principles of federalism and decentralization continues to cause administrative problems in Nigeria. The next section presents an analysis of local government performance in Nigeria.

Analysis of Local Government Performance

The Nigerian Local Government system, like those of most African countries, are characterized by political instability, scarcity of resources, lack of accountability, poor planning, lack of political leadership, and poor grassroots participation (Adebayo 2004; Wunsch & Olowu 1996). After 51 years and billions of dollars in oil revenue, vast majority of Nigerians still live on less than a dollar a day. Nigerian political institutions have not changed, as they continue to mirror the "colonial administration model" which "has prevented the emergence of strong civil societies (Young 1994). In addition, emphasis on central control from national ministries weakens the local service area (Olowu 1990; Olowu, Soremekun & William 1995).

In the Nigeria constitution, a local government is a political sub-division of the state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the

powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected, or otherwise locally selected (UNO, 1961). Many scholars have variedly defined what a local government system ought to be. Whalen (1960) offers a more detailed description by listing the characteristics of a local government: a given territory and population, an institutional structure for legislative, executive and administrative purposes with a separate legal identity, a range of powers and functions authorized by delegation from the appropriate central or intermediate legislature, and with certain autonomy within the limitations of common law (Whalen, 1960 p. 377). According to Ojofeitimi, (2000) the word "local" connotes that councils are meant for small communities and the word "government" means that they have certain attributes of government.

The local government reform of 1988 reduced the responsibility of local governments to only four key areas, taking away their jurisdiction on matters like water supply and prisons precipitated a decline in confidence on the abilities of the local government says Dibia (2003). Though the military governments that initiated these changes said the goal of reducing the role performed by the local authorities was to help them focus their entire resources on four key areas assigned to them; works education, agriculture and health. But it became difficult for local administrators to generate community interest and support (Dibia, 2003).

Managerial Quality: In the public management literature, scholars have stressed the role of managerial quality on organizational performance (Avellaneda 2009; O'Toole & Meier, 2003; Boyne 2003). The "management-quality" hypothesis suggests that qualified management facilitates program success, thus contributing to overall organizational performance. The manager is the one who selects the strategies that best fit the activities, the material, and the human resources of the governmental agency. In addition, although government outputs are usually the product of collective action, it is safe to say that some public policies are implemented through the actions of a single actor.

In the Nigerian local context, the identifiable individual who occupies responsible position is the mayor; who is referred to in the Nigerian context as chairperson. Consequently, the qualifications of the mayor should matter for local performance. However, literature on Nigerian local personnel highlights the lack of skills and leadership, which in turn results in poor planning, poor implementation and poor

performance. For example, in his study of Nigerian local public servants, Dibie (2003) argues that the problem of local governments in Nigeria is one of personnel. Dibie makes the case that as more states were created in 1980s and 1990s, many of the staff at the local level moved up to work for the state and the federal governments, leaving localities without skilled labour to work at the public service (Dibie, 2003). However, as local revenues and expenditures took a downward spiral, many local employees were also out of work. Therefore, the inability of local governments to attract professional staff is the reason for their poor performance (Dibie 2003). Omar (2009) and Khemani (2006) also stress the poor performance of administrators at local government level by offering some reasons for this setback. For Omar (2009), for example, the migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and a better life has taken a toll on the current infrastructure (medical, educational and commercial), leaving localities without the necessary channels for service delivery. This lack of infrastructure, according to Omar (2009), is the results of poor planning and poor implementation of projects on the part of local administrators. Local administrators' poor performance persists due to the lack of accountability and monitoring mechanisms, weak relationship between local officials and residents, and mainly by the inadequacy of local skilled labour (Omar 2009).

Given the lack of skilled labour, having a qualified mayor in terms of education and experience should compensate in part for personnel deficiencies. In addition, a qualified chairperson is expected to select more qualified personnel in order to fulfil his/her political goals. A qualified mayor is also expected to make allocations of money based on the high priorities of the locality. In this paper, we assume that primary education funding should be an area of high priority for every Mayor, and that how well they fund education is indicative of their commitment to citizen participation and development.

Research Methodology

In this paper the unit of analysis is a locality-year. Nigeria has 774 local governments with an average of 21 local governments per state. This paper examines 17 local government areas in Abia state in Nigerian. Abia state was chosen for several reasons. It has 17 local governments, which is close to the average of 21 per State. Moreover, Abia State's economic status is very close to the average in the country; being neither the richest nor the poorest state. Abia has an average developed economy with a population

of about four million people; which is the average per state for a nation of about 170 million (World Population Review, 2014) people divided into 36 states. Abia also has an average poverty rate of 38% that is close to the national poverty rate of 43%. The data illustrates that the State of Abia resembles the country as a whole. When it comes to education, the State of Abia fairly reflects the Nigerian nation; the national literacy rate is 71% for urban dweller and the literacy rate for Abia State is 78%.

Data on the 17 localities were collected from different government agencies in Abia State. We relied on Nigerian Census data, which was available from Nigeria's National Census Bureau. We also relied on interviews of some mayors and the local government secretary. The local government secretary or appointed representatives act as chief of staff of the municipality and therefore have supplementary roles that they play on governing the domain. Data availability, on the other hand, limited data collection to a six-year period (2005–2010).

Dependent Variable: In measuring a locality's performance as per-capita education spending, we suggest that this measure reflects local performance because during the last decade, localities through their chairpersons, have promoted education by eliminating fees and levies in the public school sector; thereby investing more public funds per student. With these measures, chairpersons seek to increase per-pupil funding in their localities. Despite the generalized promotion of school enrolment, we see significant variation in terms of per capita education spending school across the 17 local government areas. The data for the dependent variable was obtained from the Abia State Board of Universal Basic Education. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics for all the variables used in our study.

The author employed four independent variables. **Mayor's Public Experience:** is a dummy variable that was coded "1" when the mayor held a public servant position before coming to office; otherwise "0." The data for this variable were provided by the headquarters of the Progressive Peoples' Alliance Party in the city of Umuahia – Abia State capital. **Chairperson's Age:** is a continuous variable. These data were obtained at the headquarters of the Progressive Peoples' Alliance (PPA) Party in the city of Umuahia; the state capital. **Chairperson's Education:** The Chairperson's educational background was obtained at the headquarters of the Progressive People's Alliance Party in the city of Umuahia. This variable captures the highest level of education obtained by the

chairpersons. Figure 1 shows the coverage of primary education across the 17 localities of the Abia State from 2005 to 2010.

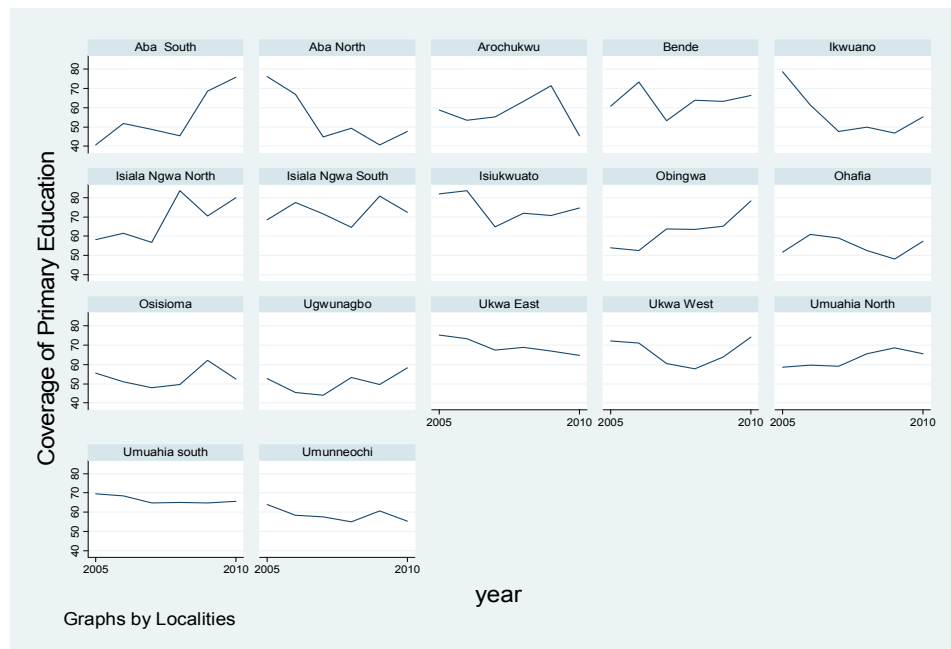
Population: The population data for each municipality were obtained from the 2006 Nigerian National Census data. Values were adjusted per year by using the growth rate of 3.3% as furnished by the National Population Commission (NPC).

Local Education Budget and Total Local Budget: The total and education budget of the municipality were obtained from the Ministry of Local Government Affairs. These values correspond to the budget transferred from the state to the localities and which must be spent on education. The data are reported in Naira, the Nigerian currency. As at the time of this study, the exchange rate is 165 Naira for US\$ 1. Finally, we also controlled for **local election year** because in election year, governments may be inclined to spend more in order to gain voters. This study used ordinary least squares in SPSS to run the quantitative analysis. Consequently, our hypothesis states the following:

- *H1: Local government chairpersons with public administration experience will support increased per capita education spending.*
- *H2: Local government chairpersons are likely to spend more on education in an election year.*

Government performance has also been explained as a function of party ideology and partisan alignment. However, in the Nigerian context, these two explanatory factors are not applicable for the following reasons. In Nigeria, and at the state level, it is counterproductive for local politicians to belong to a political party different from that of the governor of the State. This calculation has resulted in frequent party defection, which in turn has led to a lack of representation in Nigeria (Omodia, & Egwemi 2011). Politicians defecting from their parties exhibit a lack of ideological commitment and a penchant for opportunism (Ereton 2009:61). Local politicians who support the party in power at the state level will be rewarded with contracts and other financial gains (Egwuemi 2007a). Politics in Nigeria is a 'zero sum game' that operates with the winner-take-all logic, and to be part of the winning team a politician has to align with the party in power notwithstanding the party platform or constituency that elected him/her. Opposition, therefore, is cornered into what Kawu (1999) calls "the island of frustration and anger" which can lead to desperation. Consequently, politicians resort to the "if you can't beat them join them strategy" (Egwemi 2007a).

Figure 1: Coverage of Primary Education in Abia State, Nigeria (2005-2010)



Source: Derived from survey data

This scenario denotes a ‘consociational allotment’ of the largesse to stakeholders. This is a theory of elite cooperation where the elite of different communities agree to cooperate among themselves. These coalitions are built on pan-ethnic bargain rather than on mass support, driven by ethnic competition for the bounties of the State, while they stoke the fires of ethnic disagreement. This is the only way they can ensure that a political ally does not renege on the promise of offering them a political position, ambassadorial post, or public project contracts.

The above discussion suggests that in the Nigerian context, party ideology and party alignment cannot be used as predictors of government performance because all the chairpersons within a particular state are aligned to the same party as the governor; therefore, there is no variation in terms of party affiliation across localities. The next section explains the research design, data collection and variable operationalization to test the propositions.

Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

The study was an examination of the performance of chairpersons within the context of local governments in Nigeria. The dependent variable in this model was per capita education spending, which was used as a proxy to measure the performance of chairpersons across Abia State in Nigeria. The main independent variable is the professionalism of the chairperson; this was measured in the context of her/his professional training and experience as a civil servant, as opposed to having no civil service training. The control variables are: the education level of the chairperson, the age of a chairperson and the percentage of school age children who were enrolled in school within the district. Other control variables were whether or not it was an election year, the non-education budget of the district and the population of the district. The descriptive statistics of the variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N=102)

Descriptive Statistics					
Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Per Capita Education Spending	102	9.05	1141.00	135.8608	138.42566
Chairperson Profession	102	0	1	.38	.488
Chairperson Education	102	1	4	2.74	.984
Chairperson's age	102	32	71	50.53	8.803
Primary enrolment	102	40.62	4677.00	107.0588	457.08567
Election Year (yes=1; no=0)	102	1.00	2009.00	1338.3333	950.30820
Non-Education Budget	102	292.51	10298.75	2880.9208	1809.30855
Population	102	47953	511678	174963.23	91065.615
Valid N (list wise)	102				

Source: Derived from survey data

Table 2: Multivariate Analysis of change in per capita education spending in Abia State, Nigeria

Variable	Coefficients
Constant	395.467*** (94.896)
Chairpersons' Professionalism	72.965* (31.916)
Chairpersons' Education	-2.628 (13.087)
Chairpersons' Age	-4.058* (1.581)
Percentage of Students Enrolled	0.028 (0.026)
Election Year	-0.056* (0.012)
Non-Education Budget	0.015 (0.008)
Population	0.000 (0.000)
Number of observations	102
Adjusted R-Squared	0.285***

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Derived from survey data

Within the multivariate analysis (Table 2), the adjusted r-squared was observed to be 0.285, with an F-Test significance of 0.000 (highly significant). The constant was observed to have a significance of 0.000 and gave a starting point for the regression line of NGN395 per student per year. The diagnostic tests for autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson) and multi-collinearity (VIF) were normal, so there was no indication that the model suffered any particular regression errors. The number of cases within the model was 102.

The independent variable was moderately significant in a positive direction, with chairpersons who had civil service training and experience before being elected spending NGN73 more per student per year than chairpersons who had pursued non civil service careers before being elected. The control variables of the age of a chairperson, and the election year were also significant; they were negatively associated with the dependent variable, indicating that older chairpersons spent less money on education than younger chairpersons. The results also showed that during election years, chairpersons spent less money on education than during non-election years. Other variables measuring the education of the chairperson, the percentage of school age children who were students within the district, the non-education budget of the district and the population of the district were not significant factors in the model.

These results suggest that a chairperson's previous training and experience in the public sector is positively correlated to primary education spending. That is, with other variables remaining constant, localities whose chairpersons held a public sector position before coming to office are more likely to increase their per-capita education spending. Results also suggest that during election year, municipalities tend to decrease primary education coverage compared to non-election years. Apart from the chairperson's age, the other independent variables failed to achieve statistical significance. The next section will suggest some policy recommendations that could help local government administrators to become more efficient.

Policy Recommendations

Local government chairpersons and public administrators at the local level can contribute to the process of sustainable development in Nigeria. The predicament of the Nigerian people can be attributed to the way federalism is practiced in Nigeria and the pervasive nature of policies pursued in the country has provided a painful but important lesson. Economic progress blossoms best when economic freedom expressed through the market place is promised and enhanced (Dibie, 2014b). There is significant evidence to show that bad governance is the biggest single reason for poverty in Nigeria. Bad governance stems from inefficient and unskilled public administrators and elected political leaders at the federal, state and local governments. The rule of law in Nigeria suffered major setbacks during the series of military regimes in the eighties and nineties

(Olowu, 1999; Aluko, 2006). In order for Nigeria to develop in the twenty-first century, the rule of law has to be revived at the national, state and local government levels.

The benefits and salary of local government chairpersons and public administrators in Nigeria need to be reviewed. Currently, public administrator and local government chairpersons are underpaid and they lack the motivation, and the sense of purpose and direction (Dibie, 2014b). At this point, the only objective that they have is how they can use their position to enrich themselves (Adebayo 2004; Abia 2006). The Federal Government of Nigeria must address the problems associated with unskilled administrators and associated poor benefits. These efforts could galvanize the public service at all levels by developing a professional public service team that is competent and based on a merit system.

Further, since the local governments are very dependent on the Federal Government for resources, the national government needs to introduce an intergovernmental relations management program that could enable public administrators, local government chairpersons as well as all public institutions to understand that every change process must begin with a picture of the destination shared by everyone. Public administrators, local government chairpersons and citizens should be re-trained to accept that self-interest need not take second place to constitutional rights, justice, truthfulness and fairness. The concept of new public management should be introduced in the country. The new public management practice in Nigeria should nurture customer service values that are characterized by teamwork, employee participation, and flexible management, the use of new technology, and appropriate benefits and recognition.

The need to hire the most qualified personnel is paramount in local governments as well as the federal and state governments. This also calls for fitting the right individual to task for which they are most suited by training, experience and temperament (Dibie, 2014a). The concept of career development suggests that a merit system should also include a plan that will enhance the general direction of a government employee's career in such a way as to develop his or her potentials to the fullest. This could also foster the maximization of candidates' abilities. In addition, there should be a positive and conscious attempt to identify a number of administrative specialist positions, which could help to provide a more structured framework for career development.

In order for local governments to achieve efficiency and maintain it, there is the need for departmental policies and programs to be reviewed constantly. Such review could be

on an annual (short-term or long-term) basis. The review is absolutely essential because it will enhance soul searching that could rejuvenate the public administrators and local government chairpersons in their service to the people. Also, inputs by way of resources used should be related to outputs and outcomes or achievements; this is the notion of the management technique known as PPBS – Programming Planning Budgeting System.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the quality of local government leadership in Nigeria. It uses survey data to analyze the impact of local government chairpersons and the quality of the regional government performance. A sample of 17 Nigerian local governments across a six-year period (2005-2010) was utilized.

Besides testing the influence of local government chairperson's professionalism on education spending, the paper also assesses the role of the chairperson's characteristics (education, age) and characteristics of the locality (budgetary resources, population) on local government performance. The preliminary results suggest that municipalities whose chairpersons come to office with previous public sector experience tend to give greater priority to primary education. Our second hypothesis was not confirmed, that in the local election year, municipalities tend to commit more funds to primary education. The analysis showed that chairpersons did not spend as much on education during election years. These are preliminary results, as our study presents limitations in data availability. In the future, we plan to obtain data for more localities and test for other local factors that are expected to affect performance.

Access to information encourages accountability. There must be wide-ranging access to information on the tasks, objectives and activities of local government chairpersons and their administrators. The role of Nongovernmental agencies (NGOs) and the press in monitoring the political process, party financing, election and effectiveness of local governments' chairpersons is essential for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. In order for corruption among local government's leaders to be curbed, the freedom to offer constructive criticism without being victimized by coercive apparatus of the state and local governments' officials must be guaranteed.

On the whole, it is evident that ethical and professional leadership should be by example. Local governments' leaders should empower followers instead of using their

power to dominate them. It is anticipated that when professional local governments' chairpersons and public administrators take ownership of their career development and the strategic goals in their different localities, the rewards of good governance will be prevalent in Nigeria.

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