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# Building institutions for partnership in local governance in Nigeria

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**A developmental explanation for the niche of informal institutions and their linkage to governance suggest that they evolve functionally within societies to address checks and balances and comparative advantage issues. Contemporary attitudes and beliefs about informal institutions and the role that they play constrain centralization of authority, in the sense that national government becomes pre-eminent just in time to avert fragmentation and atomization. Just as predictably, informal bodies exert their influence when decentralization provides better approaches to solving societal problems. Through the polycentric governance theory, this paper argues for the fact that management of common pool resources by stakeholders yields better results and sustains democratic governance the most. The paper concluded with the facts that true democracy can not be said to be in place if the people do not identify with the state, if the system continues to be alien to the cultural frame of reference, corrupt in its behaviour, fails to guarantee the people's security and does not influence the economic activities of the people in a positive way. It is therefore advocated that the system must recognize the importance of local institutions and realise that institution building cannot take place without taking the super-institution of the state into consideration.**

**Key words:** Institutions, governance, local government, democracy.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The desire to strengthen local government and thus make it a veritable organ for development has a long history around the world. Its philosophic roots can be traced to the works of Rousseau and that of Alexis DeTouqueville. Rousseau's works focused on the discussion on how government ought to be set up and run if they are to be good government, that is, when the reason for government is aimed for the common good and is wholly supported by all citizens of good will (Thomson, 1968). Rousseau's ideal state is a very small, compact, more like the tiny Greek states of old. Alexis DeTouqueville (1969) on the other hand was fascinated by the nature of America's democracy and public administration. This arose from his visit to the United State of America (U.S.A.) and the realization that the citizens were very much involved in the management of their government whether at the local, municipal or at the metropolitan levels.

History abound within the African continent to prove

that organized state structures existed in most parts of Africa hundreds of years before its social structure was laid waste by slavery and colonialism according to Johnston (1998).

These states, under hereditary monarchies, were characterized by complex institutions such as age-based military conscription, taxation, advisory structures, an education system, a judicial system, markets and so on.

The experience of many African countries with the style of adopting the system of government inherited from their colonial masters has often turned out to be a failure (Green, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1990). Several reasons account for the failure, ranging from a combination of uninhibited particularism such as corruption, incapacity to resolve social conflict peacefully, external pressure and intervention, rapid technological, outclassing and economic incompetence. In the view of Johnston (1998), this has led 'since the late 1970's to declining legitimacy on the part of the African state and its institutions in some

countries. This has in turn led to the marginalization of the state and in some cases its collapse'. In the Nigerian contexts, it has been argued that the formal structures of government in Nigeria have increasingly become a fiction in governance. According to Olowu and Erero (1997), the services they provide have declined sharply in quality and quantity, which inadvertently has given rise to the development of alternative institutional structures for providing essential services.

Considered from another dimension, empirical studies have shown that highly centralized states are expensive to run, they are cumbersome, inflexible and are subjected to being abused (Esman, 1991). Similarly, it has been argued that democracy must be rooted in functioning local, participatory self-governance institutions (Wunsch, 2004). Democracy has certainly shown itself to be the best system for controlling governments and engaging people in their own governance. The position of several literatures on governance is in no doubt unanimous that African governments have not been doing well politically and economically. They are therefore of the belief that emphasis should now be shifted to the growth of civil societies, public ownership of political institutions, mobilization of talents and resources into constructive patterns and countervailing power vis-à-vis national institutions. This new re-awakening is undoubtedly a reaction to years of frustrating experience with highly centralized national governments.

A very ready explanation that can be given for the continuing malaise of governance in African nations is the choice of their policies and the strategies employed in pursuing them. These policies include centralization (Olowu, 1995), central control of resources both fiscal and jurisdictional (Gboyega, 2003; Skelcher, 2005; Muthaba, 1989), turbulent economic and policy environment which have undermined local institutions (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995, 1996), leadership attitude to the laws of the land as if they are unchangeable and the absence of complimentary reforms in the legal systems (Aye, 1997). According to Wunsch (2004), the underdeveloped local civil society left local governments rudderless as they tried to develop policy and deliver services.

This paper strives to point out that states must share their powers of governance with regional and self-governing communities. That there should exist a jurisdictional integrity that recognizes the political and legal competence of a unit of government to operate within a spatial and functional realm, where the citizens are enabled to give consent to and pass judgment on the exercise of authority by that governmental entity. Conversely, the paper advocates for the bottom-up approach in the process of policy making and governance. This implies the empowerment of the people at the efforts of democratizing state institutions. By this, there should be the transfer of responsibilities and resources from the central government to local governments and the development of networks between local governments and local non-

states actors like the civil societies, community organizations, non-governmental informal associations and international organizations. The United Nations (1996) recognizes this fact when it said that "local governments that have real power can more effectively address local interests as well as exercise a check on operations at higher levels of authority". This check under normal circumstances will help to avoid waste in the course of governance; it should help to mobilize additional resources for local level development that would have remained dormant. Additionally it will help to bring about accountability in governance, innovations and higher productivity. Luckily, the concern for development to get every aspects of a nations life has captured the attention of world bodies like the world bank, the UNDP, WHO, ILO, OECD etc. and they are presently championing the cause for grassroots based development.

### **Explanation of local governance**

There appears to be a dilemma in the conceptual explanation of social science terms. Scholars and experts confront this dilemma by defining and analyzing the terms within their interests and scope of work. In this paper 'governance' will be taken to mean the way society as a whole manages the full array of its political, economic and social affairs. The World Bank (1994) defines it as 'the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social development'.

This paper would want to view governance as a kind of power relationship between formal government institutions and local self-governing communities. This implies the sharing of authority for public management between state's structures and non-governmental community institutions (Kooiman, 1993; Hyden, 1992). This is what the UNDP (1997) termed as the 'exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels'. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

In scholarly circles, when discussing democracy and economic development, the idea of improved or good governance cannot be ignored. The discussion of governance nowadays gives prominence to government failures especially in developing countries, thus giving rise to policy prescriptions for good governance. Good governance therefore emphasizes the paradigm shift of the role of government (Hagnat, 2001). In a nutshell, good governance is essential for governments to succeed and for development to take place. From the account given by Fakuda-Parr and Parizio (2002), they quoted the United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, saying at the millennium declaration 2000 that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development". Whether we are talking of governance or good governance, just as the

dancer cannot be separated from the dance, the organs or actors executing governance in their respective spheres cannot be relegated to the background (Marc and Byong-Joon, 2002). Good governance amongst other things allows for participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency, equitability and the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision making over the allocation of development and resources.

With the above background, local governance can be said to have the primary objective of empowering the people as part of effort at democratizing and decentralizing state institutions so as to support local self governing structures. It can also be said to mean the development of networks between local governments and local non state organs like the civil society, the private sector and international organisations. The UNDP (2004) gave a comprehensive meaning to what local governance ought to be. It described local governance to comprise of a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level. It requires partnership between local governmental institutions, civil society organizations and private sector for participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable services delivery and local development. It advocates for the empowerment of local governments with authority and with resources together with the building of human capacity so as to function as participatory institutions that are responsive and accountable to the concerns and needs of every citizen. At the same time, it is concerned with the strengthening of grassroots democracy and the empowerment of citizens, communities and their organs to participate as equal partners in local governance and in the local development process. As democratic governance has emerged in various parts of the world, both the international donor community and to a lesser extent, newly democratized governments have become increasingly concerned about creating more open, responsive and effective local government and the enhancement of community based citizens participation.

### **Framework of analysis and methodology**

This paper adopts the polycentric governance theory as its tool of analysis. The lesson here is that community efforts to manage common pool resources work best in the context of polycentric governance. A political order is polycentric when there exist many overlapping arenas (or centers) of authority and responsibility. These arenas exist at all scales, from local community groups to national governments to the informal arrangements for governance at the global level (Elinor et al., 1994; Elinor, 1990, 1992).

The polycentric theory should be understood better in the sense that by shaping the incentives facing individuals and local communities, governance either facilitates or hinders economic development. It stress that if the overall governance structures reinforce the capability of local groups to deal with their own problems, then user groups have an incentive to manage their own common-pool resources wisely. Under these circumstances, development is likely to be sustainable. Conversely, if local rules are routinely superseded by the policies of higher authorities, then it will be much more difficult to restrain individual appropriators from engaging in opportunistic behaviour. In these circumstances, any effort to develop the national economy as a whole will rest on shaky foundations at the local level.

The polycentric governance theory is based on the emerging field of public goods economic theory (Tiebout, 1956). It characterizes the existing complex patterns of local governments in metropolitan areas as polycentric systems. Key to this theory is the distinction between the provision and the production of local services. That local government, organized on behalf of the local people can make decisions to provide services for the people or get the people involved in the production of these services. An important feature of the polycentric theory is the emphasis on the efficiency related consequences of alternative service production methods (Bish, 1971). That non-governmental informal institution producing local public services tends to be more efficient than public producers of the same services (Savas, 1987; ACIR, 1987). It was the United Nations development programme (UNDP, 2004) that said "people participate more effectively if institutions and decision making processes are located closer to where they live."

The methodology used for this work relied on existing literature, commentaries from researchers and observations over a period of time.

### **Decentralization and local governance**

Around the world presently, there is the movement towards greater decentralization. What however has to be considered is whether decentralized governance can be an effective vehicle for achieving the goals of sustainable human development and enhanced government? Olowu (2002) argued that 'whichever way one looks at it, Industrialized countries are more decentralized than developing countries'. Also, Mahwood (1992) argued in the preface of his book that 'the demise of the centralized party state in many part of Africa has resulted in a growing emphasis on good government' at the local level.

Since the last few decades, the need for strong decentralized local government has been receiving consideration globally as 'African states became subject to external as well as internal democratic pressures' (Tordoff and Young, 1999). Due to the extensive failure of the centralized states in Africa, the need for genuine decentralization

**Table 1.** The strength of local governance.

Country	Resource availability	Authority	Local political process	Performance: Management and operations	service delivery
South Africa	Very strong	Strong	Weak	Very strong	Weak
Swaziland	Very weak	Weak	Very Weak	Very weak	Very weak
Botswana	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong

Source: James S. Wunsch (2004) African studies quarterly.

**Table 2.** Size of the Nigerian public service.

1.	Total number of public servants in the federation	2, 500, 000
2.	Total number of public servants in the federal public Service	1, 200, 000
3.	Total number of civil servants in the federal civil service	160, 000
4.	Total number of public servants in the parastatals	1, 040, 000
5.	Total number of extra-ministerial departments/parastatals	600
6.	Number of federal ministries	31
7.	Number of ministers	42
8.	Number of permanent secretaries	39

Sources: National political reform conference 2005: Report of the committee on public service.

has become so obvious that it can no longer be ignored. In this regard, governance is being advocated to emerge under a network of more bottom-up approach to decision making. Certainly, much of the new focus in governance is in forms of control that go beyond top-down, hierarchical options (Stoker, 1998). This implies that governance means the rules and forms that guide collective decision making. And decision making here refers both to the formal and informal institutions at the local level.

Wunsch (2004) provided an interesting insight into the understanding of decentralization in the African context. He used the arguments of Fesler (1949) to distinguish between devolution and deconcentration in analyzing local government systems and in describing patterns of decentralization. He explained devolution to mean the distribution of authority to make decisions and to take action by local governments independently of central administrative oversight. Central government might retain overall legal control and the authority to alter local government powers. Deconcentration on the other hand occurs when local entities act largely as the local agents of central governments, manage personnel and expend resources allocated to them by central government authorities. Deconcentration in this context refers to the redistribution of central resources to localities on the sufferance of those central authorities. Studies have shown that most of the efforts made at pursuing decentralization in

many African nations are nothing but deconcentration. Suffice it therefore to argue that real improvement in local government performance and in local participation in governance could only be expected when devolution is logically pursued. A look at the Table 1 helps to shed light on the position being argued for in this paper.

Wunsch's (2004) argument is that three major factors facilitate the effective performance of local governments. These factors are resources, authority and a working grassroots based political process. Greater levels of each of these were expected to be positively associated with improved local government performance, with the latter including internal operations and delivery of services appropriate for local needs. From the Table 2, it can be seen that although South Africa has a very strong resource base and a strong authority, but its local political process is weak. And this political process constitutes weak civil society, political parties, legislative arena, information flows and the informed and active public.

The case of Swaziland paints a pathetic picture as it is shown to be at the very beginning of the process of building viable local, democratic governance.

In the case of Botswana, local governments displayed unusually high levels of performance, both in its internal management and its record of services delivery. The reasons attributable for this success according to Wunsch (2004), are a substantial and sustained flow of fiscal and personnel resources, a national climate which has remained open to local party politics, an open and critical media and activity by diverse voluntary and civil organizations. Other reasons according to him comprise stable legal environment and a sustained commitment from the center to maintaining real local government.

The lesson for Nigeria is that good governance or local self governance for that matter, requires both knowledge and will on the one hand and supporting and consistent institutional arrangements on the other hand. Those matters concerning knowledge and institutional arrangements are not independent and additive, but are related to each other. Therefore, good governance at the local level can only be accomplished through institutional arrangements that are radically and consistently polycentric. To try to mix hierarchical ordering processes (as we are currently experiencing in Nigeria) into such a polycentric setting is a recipe for the generation of societal conflict. An examination of the cost implications of governance in Nigeria

will perhaps shed more light for the need for decentralization (devolution).

In addition to the data presented above is the large number of political office holders comprising legislators, ministers, special advisers, special assistants etc. at the federal level. The report of the committee on fringe benefits (2003) in the public service of the federation, presented these facts:

- i.) Number of political office holders in the federal government - 1, 448.
- ii.) Number of persons in the national assembly – 469.
- iii.) Judiciary officers - 1,152.

Allocation to the national assembly in the 2005 budget rose from ₦ 22.3 billion in 2004 to ₦ 32.9 billion in 2005. This implies that the country spends approximately N20 million yearly to maintain each legislator.

The federal cabinet is comprised of 29 ministries with 39 ministers and 90 special advisers, special assistants and personal assistants. This is in addition to the president and the vice president (report of the committee on the executive, national political reform conference, 2005). The scenario painted above for the federal civil service is replicated at the state and local government levels, although at varying degrees. It therefore makes sense to argue for freeing the enormous resources and power concentrated at the centre into the local governments and local institutions and through polycentricity, manages the nation's resources judiciously and to the benefit of every citizen.

The polycentric governance theory according to Ostrom (1990) talks about the common pool resources where stakeholders are collectively involved in the issue of decision making, implementation and monitoring. Individuals and group in their respective communities and localities have to build their local institutions to work with their local governments where each stakeholder is fully committed and then develop a system for mutual monitoring. Ostrom, along with other scholars identified certain broad general principles that support decentralization and increase the performance and sustenance of institutions at the local government level.

These principles according to Dolsak and Ostrom (2003) are:

- i.) Rules are devised and managed by resource users.
- ii.) Compliance with rules is easy to monitor.
- iii.) Rules are enforceable.
- iv.) Sanctions are graduated.
- v.) Adjudication is available at low cost.
- vi.) Monitors and other officials are accountable to users.
- vii.) Institutions to regulate a given common-pool resource may need to be devised at competing levels.
- viii.) Procedures exist for revising rules.

The positions of the scholars cited above are clear on polycentricity in the sense that they deal with the

guarantee for longer term considerations when building institutions. The principles also suggest guidance for local institutions in the pursuit of governance where the amount of authority exercised by anyone individual or organization is restricted and where the aim is to increase capacity for co-operation. The underlying lesson so far learnt is that community effort to manage common pool resources work best in the context of polycentric governance because there exists many overlapping arenas of authority, responsibility, check and accountability.

### **A revaluation of polycentricity in local governance**

In a report by the United Nations (1996) on innovative policies and practices, it was stated that, economically highly developed European and North American countries, spend in excess of 40% (in Sweden, it is 70%) at the sub-national or local level... the figure is often more on the order of 10 to 20% ... of many parts of Asia and Africa'.

Going by the Maxim of lord Acton that 'power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely', the emphasis being placed on strengthening local governance in this work is to break the grip of corruption and underdevelopment that has become the hallmark of centralized governments.

Scholars and development policy analysts focus on what happens at the national level especially on political and economic development. Very few of them realize that this focus is constraining the ability of local communities to address their own problems. Conversely, if all community based institutions are ready to do is to lobby government for special privileges and then there will be no need for their existence as they may not contribute much toward finding solutions to problems of local governance. Only polycentric governance can nurture and sustain the self-governing capabilities of local communities.

An implicit theme in polycentric literature is that if people in the developing world want to emulate the successes of advanced industrial society, then they need to learn how to make efficient use of their physical, human and institutional resources. But the process of learning need not be unidirectional. Communities in the developing world can contribute important insights to a developed world that is just beginning to confront severe problems of resource depletion (McGinnis, 1999). The problem actually is that policy analysts tend to overlook the many alternative institutional arrangements designed and implemented by self-governing communities.

In polycentric governance, the efforts of user groups to manage common pool resources are granted the same status as individual or corporate rights to private property. Just as individuals are presumed to be the best judge of their own actions, groups should be presumed to be capable of managing their common resources. A basic tenet of public policy should be that those groups who are able to manage common pool resources effectively should be

allowed to do so. Government can only intervene either when the groups fail to manage their resources effectively or if the group violates basic standards of fairness, accountability or other issues of concern to society as a whole (McGinnis, 1999). The polycentric governance theory best suits the successful operation of local governance. This is in the sense that much can be learned by a careful examination of the ways in which local communities have organized themselves to solve collective problems, achieve common aspirations and resolve conflicts.

A dilemma, which is apparent in most African countries, is about the ways policies of decentralization are pursued. On the surface, decentralization would appear congruent with calls that self-governance is being practiced. But what is actually being practiced is only a change of the locus of decision making. What has to be explained is that the smallness in the size of the unit of government does not confer on it to be classed as decentralized. What matters is the amount and level of involvement of the people in decision making process. The smaller the unit and the more the people are involved, the closer it will be to polycentricity and the more efficient and cost effective services delivery would become. This is the reason why it would sound logical to argue and recommend for a reformation of the entire political and administrative apparatus in Nigeria, so as to remake society from the ground up. The cautionary note that has to be sounded here however is the fact that it was the pursuit of the desire for a Utopian ideal that provided the groundswell for the terrible costs of totalitarianism in such countries as the defunct Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe etc. This is where the argument for the fact that the people should become involved at building their own institutions and working to get it endure and collaborate with formal governmental structure becomes reasonable (Vincent, 1997). What is required is the laying of solid foundation for sustainable development (Bello-Imam and Obadan, 2004). This implies the granting of autonomy and incorporation into the mainstream, informal governmental bodies into the governance process, with the state bureaucracy playing only a supportive and supervisory role.

### **Polycentricity, democracy and development**

It is often argued that governance in Nigeria has failed especially at the local government level. This is despite the huge inputs that level of government has received from the center over the years. This is shown from the astronomic rise in fiscal allocation from a paltry 3 to 5% in 1976 to 10% in 1981 to as high as between 20 to 23% presently. This is in addition to 10% internally generated revenue from the states, together with local government's own internal sources. The reasons why the huge inputs have not translated into sustainable outputs and desired outcomes according to Olowu (2002) are:

- i.) Lack of clear policy and institutional framework of inter-governmental relations that can ensure that resources allocated to local governments achieve their socio-economic objectives.
- ii.) The system of local government revenue which makes them heavily dependent for up to 94% of total revenue on external sources practically exclude the citizens from the budgetary and governance process.
- iii.) The present mechanisms for ensuring accountability and transparency at the local government leave too much power in the hands of the executive mayor and less in the council, the community and the citizenry.

Other reasons can be explained on the problems of corruption and its heavy toll on governance and on the economy of Nigeria. Also, the wide gap between the government and the governed is a contributory factor to the malaise. So also is the over bloated coterie of political office holders and their hangers-on who have to be paid from the purse of local government, causes a huge drain on the resources of local government. In simple terms, it can be safely stated that the cost of governance has become overbearing on the finances of local government, such that they have little or nothing left for development purposes.

An interesting caveat is presented in Table 3 about the expenditure incurment of some selected African countries at the local government level.

Table 3 shows the huge revenue accruable to Nigerian local governments by African and global standards but with very little expended for local development.

Literature abound to point out the fact that many liberalizing autocracies in developing countries have pursued the colonial logic of using local government as the building blocks for democratization at the national level (Olowu, 2002; Hicks, 1961; Barkin, 1994). Hyden (1999, 1995) for example is of the opinion that the politics of developing areas has always been community based. This position has not detracted from the policy directions being prescribed by bodies like the World Bank, I.M.F., OECD, NEPAD, UNECA etc. All these democratic posturing is geared towards bringing about good governance and sustainable development to the people. In this light, the UNDP (1997) acknowledged the following as core ingredients to bring about good governance and development:

- i.) Participation.
- ii.) Rule of Law.
- iii.) Transparency.
- iv.) Responsiveness.
- v.) Consensus orientation.
- vi.) Equity.
- vii.) Effectiveness and efficiency.
- viii.) Accountability.
- ix.) Strategic vision.

Good governance and sustainable development will

**Table 3.** Share of sub-national local government expenditure as a share of GDP and expenditure 1997/1999.

Country	Share of Local Government as % GDP	Share of Local Government Expenditure/Total Expenditure
Ghana	3.0	8
Senegal	1.8	7
Swaziland	0.6	2
Zambia	0.5	3
Zimbabwe	3.0	8
Uganda	4.0	21
Total	2.1	8
Nigeria	12 (69%)	5 (26)
OECD	11	10.30%

Source: Olowu Dele (2002) governance in developing countries: The challenge of multi-level governance.

thrive better under a democratic environment where people have that inalienable right to make decisions for themselves. In situations where this control is absent, where people do not have faith in their government and where the performance of government is below expectations, there is bound to be high cost for sustaining such government and valuable resources frittered into frivolities. The central argument of this paper is that while growth in national production (GDP) is necessary to meet all essential human objectives, what is important is to understand how this growth translates or fails to translate into human development. Some societies have achieved high levels of human development at modest levels of per capital income. Other societies (Nigeria inclusive) have failed to translate their comparatively high income levels and revenue earnings into commensurate levels of human development. The World Bank (2003) supported this opinion when it said, "ensuring sustainable development requires attention not just to economic growth but also to environmental and social issues."

It has to be stated that good governance constrains the actions of corrupt public officials and politicians. Also, reducing corruption stimulates technological change and encourages economic growth and development. Thus, democratic governance is the key to sustainable growth and development and improvement in the quality of institutions at all levels.

The whole essence for this section of the paper is to pursue an ideal model of local governance that recognizes the inevitability of informal institutions in the governance process so as to avoid wastage of very scarce but also very valuable resources. The paper recognize that local government plays major roles in facilitating and promoting three important values which nurture democracy and sustain good governance at the local level. These are:

i.) Liberty: as local government is a vehicle for dispensing political power and catering for local variations.

ii.) Participation: as local government extends choice and individual involvement in the democratic process.

iii.) Efficiency: as local government with its greater sensitivity to local conditions, enables the matching of services to the needs and wishes of local communities (Bekker and Jeffery, 1989; Mahwood, 1992; F.R.N, 1976).

In addition, local government must be seen to be legitimate by being politically acceptable to the society it serves. It must also be viable in the sense that it must have the financial and human resources to enable it to conduct its functions efficiently. This is the crux of the matter, necessitating the need for both formal and informal institutions to work together and in partnership for the good of the local communities.

## Conclusion

In this paper, effort has been made for us to appreciate the fact that institutions are social creations grounded in shared understanding. This shared understanding will not be able to support self and good governance if the basic ingredients of democracy are absent. More importantly, we have to know that crafting and establishing polycentric governance structures will not be that easy. It will require the organization of group management of common pool resources. In like manner, communities and the group constituting the local governance bodies have to take responsibility for their own conditions of life. Public officials must arrange for the provision of public goods by working directly and in partnership with those informal bodies that are readily available. People need to be self-reliant, yet also be willing to work with government officials to solve collective (common) problems.

The primary loci of this paper has been to argue for the empowerment of the people as a part of the effort at democratizing state institutions and to initiate/support local self-governing structures and not the extension of

state control to the local organs. Following closely is the need to develop not local government as such but local governance. This is in the sense that we are asking for not only the vertical transfer of responsibilities and resources from the centre, but also the development of horizontal networks between local governments and local non-state actors. The synergy between these concerned institutions will lead to innovations, cost saving and higher level productivity as disconnected structures becomes networked together for the good of the people at the local level. An indisputable fact that would have become clear by now is that the heart of achieving good governance is building appropriate institutions anchored in a constitution that has the support and input of the main political forces in the nation (Friedman, 2003).

### Recommendations

It is proffered that those legitimate organs at the local level must not be captured by local elites. Although influential people are needed because of their clout and resources, they must not be allowed to exclude the masses of the people since the purpose of polycentric governance is to allow for local participation and for all to be involved in decision making and resource management (control). A few rich and influential people have hijacked politics in Nigeria. Local participation in governance should preclude this from happening. The requirement is to allow for only institutions that enhance public participation, accountability and the transparency of local level institutions to their constituents. Based on this argument, the constituting organs together with the local governments should be able to design frameworks that would guide elections and the control of office, provide checks on the executive and bureaucrats, ensure accountability and transparency and guarantee free and unfettered information flow. Basic mechanisms that would allow for the full integration of both the formal and informal structures of governance should be pursued.

The 1976 local government reform guidelines, which provided for a uniform, single-tier system of local government nationwide has to be revisited. It represents the old order of centralization and the erroneous belief that the classical notion of hierarchy and command represents the best form of management. Several of the developed countries operate multiple system of local government (Bish and Ostrom, 1988). Uganda and India are classical examples amongst the developing nations. Several literatures have it that a mixed system of varying sizes of local governments is better than single tier, large sized local governments (Olowu, 1989; Ostrom, 1997; Smith, 1985). The 1999 constitution under which the present democracy is anchored places local government under the control of the state governments (section 7, sub-section 1 and 2 and section 8, sub-section 3 - 5). Therefore, each state should be able to manage affairs that concern her local governments and also work better with the non-

formal institutions so as to bring about accountability in governance and development at the local level. In this regard, the 1999 constitution should be reviewed to take cognizance of this dilemma.

Being so much distraught with the situation as it were, Adedeji and Otite (1997) had cause to lament when they said that 'the 1976 local government reform broke with the observance of the federal principle'. Their recommendation, which this paper whole heartedly agrees with, is for government to "create structures and design policies and programmes that serve the interest of all and contributes optimally to the development process."

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