

An Apparasail of Local Government on Mandatory Functions in Southwestern Nigeria (1999-2019)

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ABSTRACT

This study appraises the performance of local government on their mandatory roles, especially in delivery of essential services to the populace at the grassroots in southwestern Nigeria between 1999 and 2019. Data for this study were collected through the primary and secondary sources. The study revealed that generally, local government has not been able to perform to expectation in discharging their mandatory functions due to fact that state governments had been diverting their attention more to concurrent functions than their mandatory functions. The study also revealed that the performance of local government in their mandatory functions has been a story of good to bad from year 1999 and 2019. The paper highlighted some recommendations and concluded that local government in southwestern Nigeria has significantly, though at a low ebb, performed their mandatory functions in provision of essential service to the populace between 1999 and 2019.

Keywords: Local government, Mandatory function, Concurrent function, Service delivery, Southwestern, Nigeria.

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Highlights of this paper

- This study appraises the performance of local government on their mandatory roles, especially in delivery of essential services to the populace at the grassroots in southwestern Nigeria between 1999 and 2019.
- The paper highlighted some recommendations and concluded that local government in southwestern Nigeria has significantly, though at a low ebb, performed their mandatory functions in provision of essential service to the populace between 1999 and 2019.

1. INTRODUCTION

In any nation of the world, good governance can also be measured in the way powers and functions of government are being decentralized. In the writings of Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Cabell in 1816, opines that the best way to have a good government is to divide it among many, and not to put it all to one, but distributing those functions among the tiers of government according to their capacity and competency. He further stated that national and state government should be accorded appropriate functions while the local government should be encumbered with the things that are locally needed, because the more government is closer to the populace and their problems, the more development would be attained and sustained. The full dividend of democracy cannot be seen, unless we begin to admit that our problems are not central problems and it cannot be solve centrally but at the source, place and by persons, where and whom is deeply felt.

In Nigeria, local government has functions to perform, in terms of provision of essential service which is stipulated clearly in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This constitution described the functions of local government into two forms, i.e the exclusive or mandatory and concurrent functions, especially with the state governments. Local Government is directly responsible to the people at the grassroots. It is charged with the responsibility of service delivery to the local communities by providing basic community services, which both improve the standard of living and enable the community to generate and attract economic activities. Local Governments are in the best position to provide certain services to the local populace efficiently than the Federal and State government due to their closeness to the grassroots. The 1976 Local Government reform, in particular, was aimed at decentralizing some significant functions of the state government to local levels in order to harness local resources for refined development. The essence of transferring responsibilities of governance from central government to lower levels of government, particularly, at the local level is to bring governance to the people at the grassroots. There is no doubt that the efficient and effective service being delivered at the local level would definitely determine the level of development at the center, which would precipitate national development in the long run.

There are dissents perspectives about the achievement and flop of local government in Nigeria, especially in the delivery of services to the grassroots as stipulated in the Constitution and other statutes. Studies have revealed that local government has been effective in providing services to the grassroots even before given the constitutional roles in 1979 and 1999 (Ola, 1984; Olowu, 1980). However, studies revealed that local government had not been able to perform up to the expectation of the people in the provision of social service especially in the areas of mandatory functions since 1999 (Adedire, 2014; Afrobarometer, 2008; Agba, 2006; Ikeanyibe, 2008). Hence, this study intends to appraise the extent at which local government perform their mandatory function in the areas of infrastructure in southwestern Nigeria between 1999 and 2019. The paper is divided in the following parts. Introduction, methodology, conceptual clarification, theoretical framework, appraisal of local government on their mandatory functions, recommendations and conclusion.

2. METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary data were employed for this study. Primary data were derived from questionnaire and interviews. Secondary source of data were obtained from books and journals. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select 18 Local Government Areas in Southwestern Nigeria. The sample size of 632 respondents was selected for administration of questionnaire out of the study population of 3,158 representing 20%. The respondents consist of senior officers in various departments include: Works; Community Development; and Local Government Education Authority. Also, selected for the administration of questionnaire are traditional rulers; executives of Market Women Associations; executives of Nigeria Union of Local Government Employee; executives of National Union of Road and Transport Workers; executives of Nigeria Union of Teachers; executives of Parents Teachers Association/ Committee Based School Management Committee and executives of Community Development Associations. In addition, interviews were conducted to complement information gathered from questionnaires. Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean value, and standard deviation.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

3.1. Local Government

Blair (1977) opines that Local Government is an institution that has particular resident population occupying a defined area with a locally authorized organization and governing body on a separate legal entity with the power to provide certain public or governmental services and a substantial degree of autonomy, having the legal power to raise part of its revenue. Muttalib and Khan (1982) define it as “an ancient institution with a concept of administration having a direct bearing with the provision of services to local clients of the state”. Local Government still remains the ancient institution where services are expected to be delivered in a timely and adequate manner.

The 1976 Local Government Reforms extensively conceives Local Government as “Government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the State and Federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized”.

Local governments are consensually and universally regarded as governmental administrative units closest to the people, or in a general parlance, the grassroots. Therefore, they act as a veritable agents of local service delivery, mobilisers of community-based human and material resources, and organisers of local initiative in responding to a wide variety of local needs and aspirations. Lawal (2000) defines local government “as that tier of government that is closer to the people and which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain”. The idea of local government represents the administration at grassroots level for meeting peculiar needs of the people at the local level.

3.2. Functions of Local Government in Nigeria

Constitutionally in Nigeria, Local Government performs two sets of functions i.e exclusive and concurrent functions. Adeyeye (2016) elucidates further by described the functions of local government in three forms namely, the Exclusive (Mandatory), Concurrent and Permissive (additional) functions.

3.3. Exclusive (Mandatory) Functions

Exclusive functions are also known as Mandatory functions. Exclusive functions are functions that are expected to perform singlehandedly by local government without the interference of other tiers of government. The exclusive functions of local government in Nigeria are functions listed in part A of the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These are:

- i. “Collection of rates such as tenement rates, television, radio and non-mechanically propelled vehicle licenses (trucks and bicycles).
- ii. Establishment and maintenance of burial grounds, cemeteries, homes for destitute and infirm, market, motor-parks, parks, gardens and public conveniences.
- iii. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets lightening, drainages and other public highways, open spaces or such facilities as may be prescribed by State House of Assembly from time to time.
- iv. Assessment of privately owned house or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the house of Assembly of State.
- v. Numbering of houses, naming of streets and roads.
- vi. Controlling, regulating and licensing of sale of liquor.
- vii. Controlling and regulating of outdoor advertisement including kiosks, shops, restaurants, and laundries
- viii. Registration of births, deaths, and marriages”.

3.4. Concurrent Functions

Concurrent functions are functions expected to be performed in relation to other tiers of government. Local governments in Nigeria embark on concurrent functions in conjunction with State and Federal Governments, but most, especially with the State Government. These functions are also listed in part B the same fourth schedule in the following areas:

- i. “Economic and development planning of the state.
- ii. Provision and maintenance of primary, adult, and vocational education.
- iii. Agriculture development and natural resources (other than the exploitation of minerals).
- iv. Provision and maintenance of health services (especially primary health).

Other functions may be conferred on a Local Government council by the House of Assembly of the State”.

3.5. Permissive Functions

Permissive functions are functions that are not listed in the fourth schedule of the constitution as that of exclusive and concurrent. Permissive functions may be conferred on local government through the legislative of the House of Assembly of a State and that of the local government council. [Adeyeye \(2016\)](#) also opined that permissive functions are normally not listed in statutes or constitution, but are assigned by the appropriate legislative body in the intergovernmental context.

3.6. Efficiency Theory- Services School of Thought

This school of thought, according to [Ola \(1984\)](#) has been agreed with by some scholars who are of the view that Local Government exists to provide basic essential services and as such, it will be judged on the scale of efficiency over how best these services are provided. [Mill \(1975\)](#) asserts that “Local Governments are in the best position to efficiently provide close services that are essentially local in nature and that if Local Governments are not in existence, it would have to be created”. Efficiency theory is one of the theories that found the rationale behind the

way and manner services are being provided at the local level. The theory believes that there are services and functions that should be divided among the central and local government due to their proximities. The service like defense and external affairs should be provided by central government, for the purpose of maintaining national standard. The theory further argues that local government should be able to provide some services more efficiently than the central government due to their closeness to ordinary citizens (Adeyemo, 2010).

This school of thought argues that local government should not be solely judged because it bring about democracy and encourage participation, but rather by the standard of services that it provide to the local populace which meet up to the standard of national inspectorate. Sharpe (1970) further asserts that efficient performance of local government in delivering some essentials services is compelling to the extent that something else would be created in its place if local government did not exist. The central point of this school is that local government primarily exist to provide social services such as primary education, primary healthcare, local roads, sanitation, law and order and others services in efficient manner. Mackenzie (1961) the leading advocate of the efficiency service school, quoted in Adeyemo (2010) notes that service delivery is expected to pre-occupy the resources, power and time of the Local Government. Kafle and Karke (2003) note that local government exists primarily to ensure efficient service delivery. Some scholars find this school so important that they believe that it should override other school of thoughts in local government, especially the democratic school, because the need for efficient service delivery at the local level is more cogent than democratic participation. Bello-Imam (2010) also observes that efficient service delivery to the populace at the local government level is gradually emerging as the most important justification for the existence of local government.

3.7. Appraisal of Local Government on their Mandatory Functions with Regard to Provision of Social Service in South-Western Nigeria between 1999 and 2019

This section sought to appraise the performance of local government on its mandatory functions with specific reference to constitutional provisions. To achieve this specific objective, this study enlisted the mandatory functions upon which respondents were expected to rate the extent level using the Likert scale of measurements, such as Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, Very Low Extent and No Response. However, the mean value and standard deviation were used to summarise the strengths of the data distribution. In this regards, a decision rule was set as thus: where $(\bar{\chi} > 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards Agreement; and where $(\bar{\chi} < 2.5)$, more respondents tended towards Disagreement.

In the Table 1 below, about 90 (15.8%) of the respondents rated to a very high extent and 159 (27.9%) of the respondents rated to a high extent the performance of local government on construction and maintenance of roads. However, 216 (37.9%) of the respondents rated this same performance to a low extent; and 103 (18.1%) of the respondents rated the performance to a very low extent. While, just 2 (4%) of the respondents did not respond to the assertion $(\bar{\chi} = 2.91, SD = 1.698)$. The implication of these data distribution is that more than 50% of the respondents evaluated the performance of local government on the construction and maintenance of the road to a low category.

Similarly, with regard to construction and maintenance of drainages, the reactions of the respondents varied to each of the value response. About 58 (10.2%) of the respondents rated it to a very high extent, and 161 (28.2%) of the respondents rated it to a high extent, making an aggregate of 219 (38.4%) of the respondents who fell in a high category with the performance of local government on construction and maintenance of drainages. However, there was an overwhelming 60.1% of the respondents that rated the assertion to a low category $(\bar{\chi} = 2.73, SD = 1.795)$. Importing from these data position, one can maintain that local government has not enjoyed the good performance

on the construction and maintenance of drainages in the selected local government areas within Southwestern Nigeria.

The respondents also berated the performance of local government on the construction and maintenance of bridges. This was evident in 61% of the respondents who rated to a low extent the mandatory function of construction and maintenance of bridges. Nevertheless, 37% of the respondents still rated it to a high category on the same assertion ($\bar{\chi} = 2.22$, $SD = 1.888$). With this descriptive statistics, it becomes obvious that local government did not have a creditable role of the construction and maintenance of bridges in the selected Local Government Areas within Southwestern Nigeria.

Establishments and maintenance of motor parks are one of the mandatory functions to be performed by the local government system. There was a mixed reaction by the respondents on the assertion. There was a frequency and percentage 275 (48.3%) of the respondents who rated the function to a high category and 282 (49.4%) of the respondents rated it to a low extent. To this end, there was skepticism by respondents against this function ($\bar{\chi} = 2.58$, $SD = 1.873$). This implies that establishment and maintenance of motor parks is a notable mandatory function of local government; but its performance has little remarkable extent.

Establishment and maintenance of recreation facilities (play-grounds, parks, open space, etc) in primary schools were inquired into by this study in an attempt to find out whether local government discharged its constitutional responsibility. In their responses, 65 (11.4%) of the respondents rated this function to a very high extent; and 167 (29.3%) of the respondents rated it to a high extent. However, 196 (34.4%) of the respondents berated the assertion to a low extent; and about 137 (24%) of the respondents languished it to a very low extent. While, just 5 (0.9%) of the respondents remained indifferent ($\bar{\chi} = 2.45$, $SD = 1.808$). This indicates that an approximate of 60% respondents felt unpleasant with the functional roles of local government on the establishment and maintenance of recreational facilities across the selected Local Government Areas for this study.

An assertion was raised on the construction and maintenance of public conveniences (Toilet). Being one of the primary function of local government, an aggregate of 268 representing 47% of the respondents rated the function to a high category, while more than 50% of the respondents relegated the function to lowest ebb ($\bar{\chi} = 2.97$, $SD = 1.634$). This is an indication that all cannot be said to be well with the local government on their performance of the construction and maintenance of public conveniences within the selected Local Government Areas for this study.

The control of sewage and refuse disposal is a cardinal health function which local government is primarily responsible for. Respondents were therefore asked to examine the extent to which local government has performed their responsibilities on the subject matter. In their reactions, 71 (21.5%) of the respondents rated this function to a very high extent; and 158 (27.7%) of the respondents rated it to an ordinary high extent. However, 212 (37.2%) of the respondents placed the assertion to a low extent; and 115 representing (20.2%) of the respondents berated this function to a very low extent. With about 14 (2.5%) of the respondents made no response. This is a clear indication that the respondents tended towards disagreement than agreement as shown by the mean value ($\bar{\chi} = 2.88$, $SD = 1.721$) which is below the mid-point of 3.0.

The observations of the respondents were however examined on the construction and maintenance of Street Lightings by the local government in the study areas. It was revealed that about 68.3% of the respondents berated the performance of local government on both the construction and maintenance of street lightings. Although, encomiums were still showered with 29% of the respondents on the same primary service of local government. Yet, the latter cannot overwhelm the former ($\bar{\chi} = 2.63$, $SD = 1.856$). It appears to be a generalized rating that local government has not been noted to have performed remarkably on their mandatory functions, street lightings as an example.

In addition, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which local government has performed on the establishment and maintenance of libraries in their respective local government areas. In their response, 47 (8.2%) of the respondents rated it to a very high extent; and 126 (22.1%) of the respondents rated it to a high extent. However, 195 (34.2%) of the respondents berated this function to a low ebb; and 190 (33.3%) of the respondents also placed this function to a very low pedestal ($\bar{\chi} = 2.20$, $SD = 1.960$). Thus, the summation of the low category (67.5%) markedly overrides that of the high category (30.3%). This implies that local government has not been efficacious on the establishment and maintenance of libraries within the selected Local Government Areas in Southwestern Nigeria.

Furthermore, the technological trend of administration at all levels was considered in this study. To this end, respondents were asked the performance extent of local government on the provision of Information Communication Technology facilities, especially within the Local Government Secretariat and Primary schools. Reacting to this, 56 representing 9.8% of the respondents rated this provision to a very high extent; and 117 (20.5%) of the respondents rated it to an ordinary high extent. Meanwhile, 183 (32.1%) of the respondents relegated this same provision to a low ebb; and 208 (36.5%) of the respondents berated it a very low extent. Just 6 (1.1%) of the respondents was indifferent ($\bar{\chi} = 2.28$, $SD = 1.954$). The data distribution indicates that an aggregate of 68.6% respondents who disregarded the performance of local government on the provision of information and communication technology facilities across Local Government Secretariat and primary schools within the selected Local Government Areas for this study.

Table-1. Appraisal of local government on their mandatory functions with regard to provision of social service in South-western Nigeria between 1999 and 2019.

S/N	Assertions	Very High Extent	High Extent	Low Extent	Very Low Extent	No Response	Descriptive Statistics	
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
i.	Construction and maintenance of Roads	90 (15.8)	159 (27.9)	216 (37.9)	103 (18.1)	2 (.4)	2.91	1.698
ii.	Construction and maintenance of Drainages	58 (10.2)	161 (28.2)	203 (35.6)	143 (25.1)	5 (.9)	2.73	1.795
iii.	Construction and maintenance of Bridges	64 (11.2)	147 (25.8)	206 (36.1)	142 (24.9)	11 (1.9)	2.22	1.888
iv.	Establishment and maintenance of Motor Parks	71 (12.5)	204 (35.8)	161 (28.2)	121 (21.2)	13 (2.3)	3.03	1.873
v.	Establishment and Maintenance of Recreation Facilities (Playgrounds, Parks, open space etc) in primary schools	65 (11.4)	167 (29.3)	196 (34.4)	137 (24.0)	5 (.9)	2.45	1.808
vi.	Construction and maintenance of public conveniences (Toilet) in Primary schools	96 (16.8)	172 (30.2)	204 (35.8)	93 (16.3)	5 (.9)	2.97	1.634
vii.	Sewage and refuse disposal by the road sides	71 (12.5)	158 (27.7)	212 (37.2)	115 (20.2)	14 (2.5)	2.88	1.721
viii.	Construction and maintenance of Street Lightings	54 (9.5)	111 (19.5)	205 (36.0)	184 (32.3)	16 (2.8)	2.63	1.856
ix.	Establishment and Maintenance of Libraries	47 (8.2)	126 (22.1)	195 (34.2)	190 (33.3)	12 (2.1)	2.20	1.860
x.	Provision of Information Communication Technology facilities in Primary schools.	56 (9.8)	117 (20.5)	183 (32.1)	208 (36.5)	6 (1.1)	2.28	1.954

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

3.8. Test of Hypothesis

This section deals with the analysis/interpretation of hypothesis of this study. The statistical tool used in the analysis of the data is Spearman’s correlation coefficient. The level of significance used in the analysis is 5% (i.e. 0.05).

Table-2. Correlation analysis between local government and mandatory functions in Southwestern Nigeria.

Hypothesis	Correlation co-efficient (r)	df	p-value	N
Local governments have no significant effect on their mandatory functions	+0.374	1	0.000	201

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

The Table 2 above presents the effectual association between local government and their mandatory functions. According to Table, the spearman’s correlation coefficient was positive (+0.374), but significantly low at $p < 0.05$. The positive coefficient indicated that there is thirty-seven percent (37%) positive association between local governments and mandatory functions in Southwestern Nigeria. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that local government has significantly, though at a low ebb, performed their mandatory functions.

To complement the data gathered through questionnaire administration, some key stakeholders were interviewed. The interviewees identified some mandatory functions of local government in the area of road construction and primary schools. In the words of HOLGA of Abeokuta south, local government in Ogun state stated that:

the mandatory functions of local government in regards with construction of roads and education which is more of primary include; construction of roads, grading of roads, construction and maintenance of drainages, bridges, culvert, public toilet especially in the school, recreation facilities in the schools, street lightings and even establishment and maintenance of motor park so as to ease the transport system in each community. All these are part of mandatory functions that are related and attached to primary education and roads issue at the local level (Field survey, 2019).

Most of the interviewees also agreed to the fact that local government has their mandatory functions in respect of road construction and primary education within the above-listed functions.

In appraising the extent at which local government has performed their mandatory functions with regard to road construction, most of the interviewees affirmed that Local government had been performing their mandatory functions more on the grading of roads than tarring. Director of Works in one of the local government selected affirmed that:

“in the areas of road constructions at the local level, the local government had been short of funds to tar some of the rural roads that need serious attention, but alternatively most of the times resulted to the grading of it especially during the dry season. In the areas of primary education, local government has some mandatory functions to support the activities of SUBEB and LGEA, especially in the area of construction and maintenance of public conveniences, recreational facilities, establishment and maintenance of libraries and probably provision of ICT facilities in this era of global village, but to some extent they have performed moderately low in these aspects due to lack of fund” (Field survey, 2019).

Most of the interviewees concluded in appraising the extent at which local government has performed their mandatory functions with regards to provision of social services especially in the areas of roads construction and primary education in southwestern Nigeria between the year 1999 and 2019 as follows; between 1999 to 2003 - very high extent, 2003 to 2007 -high extent, but from 2007 to 2019 - very low extent. In the words of Director of CDI in selected Local Government of Osun State:

local government performed their mandatory functions independently and efficiently as expected from 1999 till 2003. From 2003 to 2008 local government performed this function very well, but from 2008 till date, everything has been taking over, local government has not done anything to enhance education at the primary school level because everything has been taken over by the state government. Most of the functions and activities of local government has been taken over by the state government. (Field survey, 2019).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The facts still remain that local government has not been able to perform to expectation in their mandatory or exclusive functions in provision of essential services to the populace largely because they are financial incapacitated by state government towards these functions. The state government diverts the attention of local government more to the concurrent functions, while the mandatory functions suffer.

There is need for paradigm shift from this direction, to allow local government to be appropriately accountable to the citizens. The good story of the year 1999 to 2003 should be restored, when the attention of local government to their mandatory functions was rated very high. The independent of local government to embark on service delivery without much attachment to state government should be increased.

There should be synergy between the exclusive or mandatory and concurrent functions, so that one will not suffer at the expense of another. More so, exclusive or mandatory functions should be encouraged to strive and survive because of its peculiarity to local governance, so as to vitalize efficiency, responsiveness, accountability and transparency that will lead to good governance at the local level.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that local government has significantly, though at a low ebb, performed their mandatory functions. The extent at which local government performed their mandatory functions with regard to the provision of social service to the populace in southwestern Nigeria between the years 1999 and 2019 has been a story of good to bad.

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