

BOOK REVIEW

Title: Key Issues in Local Government and Development: A Nigerian Perspective

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TEXT EXPOSITION

Introduction

The book is divided into seven apposite sections. Section one aptly treats, Conceptual and Theoretical Issues and Evolution of the Local Government System; section two follows with Planning and Decentralization: Local Government and Development Issues; while section three, expectedly introduces: Local Government and Democratic Practice in Nigeria; because, at this point, the reader is anxious to see the promoted Nigerian perspective. Section four equally aptly brings in, Contemporary Issues in Personnel Administration in the Local Government System. Section five, under; Local Government Legislative System: Structure, Patterns and Trajectory; returns the work to a theoretical template. Under Structure and Institutional Context of Local Government, in section six; the imperatives of theoretical and empirical blending in the work, is further underscored. Essentially, governance and due process issues have continued to attract global attention. The closing section (section seven) on Governance and Due Process at the Local Government Level; is therefore considered germane.

Section One

In this section, the opening chapter of the book, “Theories and Models of Local Government: An Overview”, presents an enticing taste of what to expect in the rest of the chapters, as the editor-contributor, moves beyond the local government sphere, to explicate on “theories and models”. Evolution and Structure of Local Government in Nigeria, follows as the second chapter of this obviously important work. However, besides other proof reading mix-ups in the reference section of this particular contribution, the last item refers to a certain Okoli (1966), a commissioned paper by the Presidency in Abuja. The reader begins to doubt what the Presidency was doing in Abuja in 1966. Following immediately however, is the empirical viewpoint on the evolution of the local government system in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, which once again attracts the reader’s interest as the contributor handles the inherent problems and prospects, from an empirical perspective. The following chapter on Local Government in Nigeria: An Overview of the Structures and Functions; is equally well delivered. We however note again in the opening sentence of the third paragraph, on page 88 where

Federal Government is written as Federal Go'. In any case, section one of the book ends on a highly promising note, with the contribution on Participation in Community Development: Theoretical Explications. The author correctly highlights that the study and practice of community development is a bit complex. For instance, where does community as a concept and as a geographical reality start and end? Is everything done in government related to communities? How does community development differ from rural development?

Section Two

The opening chapter of section two on Key Issues in Economic Planning for the Local Government System: A Nigerian Perspective; indeed starts with some immensely engaging propositions. By the second paragraph although, the reader begins to see "Samuel Aluko, raised the issued of..." In the concluding section, you also see, "As indicate in Ikpeze (1995)". The next chapter on Rolling Plan Technique and Effective Project Implementation at the Local Government Level in Nigeria; was quite insightful. The chapter that follows, which deals with Local Government in Development, was equally highly insightful. The next chapter would have followed in this sequence of insightful contributions but in an attempt to look at the concept of Local Government, this contribution states on page 159: the concept of local government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots level. What the word "philosophical" is doing in this sentence is not self-explanatory. Next is the chapter on Decentralization, Local Government and Participatory Development at the Nigerian Grassroots; which started well and also ended very well, devoid of proof reading slips. The topicality of the next chapter on, Optimizing Local Government Finance through Public-Private Partnership; makes it attractive to the reader. The next chapter is on Decentralization for Grassroots Development: Theory and Practice. The chapter is also well delivered. Government Community Cooperation on Project Management for Sustainable, Peaceful and Rural Development; is the caption of the next chapter. Substandard proof reading appears here again, as the reader encounters in the first paragraph 'According to Koontz, cannice and eihrich (2008)". This particular paper also suffered from inadequate formatting. An example of such is found on page 222 where the reader sees the sub-heading: Conflict Resolution and conflict management. The next chapter on Re-Strategizing Internally Generated Revenue for the Nigerian Local Government; however makes up for the proof reading shortcomings of some of the preceding chapters. Its usage of the data on Revenue Allocation to Federal, States and Local Governments by the Federation Account Allocation Committee (June 1999-May 2007), was quite enriching. In fact, there are other tables in this contribution that add to its importance in the entire volume. The reference section of this particular contribution also looks remarkably different. The caption of the next chapter is a bit intriguing. It says: Politics of Local Government Creation in Nigeria: A Panacea for Rural Development. Is it being suggested that the politics of local government creation in Nigeria can become a panacea for rural development?

The next chapter is entitled as follows: The Effectiveness of Policy Implementation in the Public Service: A Case Study of Enugu State Agricultural Development Project (ENADEP), 2000-2006. The chapter brought strong theoretical, empirical and statistical approaches into the volume. Its reference section, even as it was affected by inadequate formatting, was also very rich. The chapter that follows is captioned, The Imperative of Community Participation in the Implementation of Development Programmes. The chapter is well written and well presented. The next chapter is entitled: Local

Government and Service Delivery within the Framework of the 7-Point Agenda. It starts by describing Local Governments in Nigeria, as “single tier Governments”. This description actually requires further explicatory emphasis which was not provided. In addition, on page 304, the chapter posits that the power and energy sectors in Nigeria provide 80% of government revenue and 95% of its foreign exchange. There must have been a mix-up in this position, between the power/energy sector and the petroleum industry. Besides, this particular chapter, an otherwise important contribution in the book, has no reference section. The chapter that follows is the last chapter in this section of the book and it is captioned, Local Government Areas, Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and National Development: NULGE Perspective. NULGE must be assumed to mean National Union of Local Government Employees (in Nigeria). The reader would therefore keep looking for a NULGE perspective in the paper and would finally not see it.

Section Three

Section three of the book is invitingly captioned: Local Government and Democratic Practice in Nigeria. Its opening chapter is also, attractively entitled; Women and Politics in Local Government System in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. This chapter is rich in content but it leaves the reader to organize the challenges and prospects on his/her own, from the contents of the chapter. 2007-2008 Local Government Elections in Nigeria: History, Controversies and Challenges Ahead; is the title of the next chapter. The chapter is considered well written. The next chapter is entitled, Operationalizing the Concepts of Corruption and Nepotism in the Nigerian Local Government System. The opening sentence asserts as follows: In all facets of life in our contemporary societies, corruption and nepotism remain pervasive. It appears as if “societies” in this sentence was meant to be “society”. This would have made the sentence to be less sweeping. Nevertheless, this chapter is considered rich. The closing chapter of this section entitled, Problems of Local Governance in Nigeria: An Analysis; does for this section, what the closing chapter of section one also did for that section and the entire book; that is, the ending of a section, with an immensely rich contribution.

Section Four

As we enter section four of the work, it must be acknowledged that in the presentation of the various contributions, the editor would have to balance the works of the highest standards, with the next in ranking. In this section therefore, he introduces as the first chapter, Improving Human Development Index in Nigeria: The Tasks before the Local Governments. This particular contribution is highly well written. Another highly well written chapter follows. It is entitled Nigerian Labour Policies and Practices: A Historical Perspective. The next chapter is entitled Employee Welfare, Incentives and Benefits in the Nigerian Local Government system. Its opening sentence starts, “It is axiomatic to posit...” This makes the reader to recall that on page 133, the opening sentence of that chapter also started with, “It is axiomatic to posit...” In effect, sometimes, some of these tongue twisting words as “axiomatic” are better left out of the opening sentences, pending when the focus of a paper has been thoroughly established. The rest of the contribution remains engaging until the second page of the references on 456, when inadequate formatting once again occurred. Data Collection and Analysis for Manpower Planning in the Local Government System in Nigeria; is the title of the next chapter. In the first paragraph of the conclusion on page 468, we see “corporate goals” written as “cooperate goals” and “increase” written as “in crease”. Otherwise, the chapter is rich in content and is adequately illustrated. At this point, it begins to appear as if something about this

section indeed makes it exciting to read. This is because, the next entry on Environment and Manpower Planning in the Local Government System; is also highly well presented. Next is the chapter on Empowering and Engaging Nigerian Local Government Employees for Optimum Performance. This contribution has one of the richest references in the entire volume, even when the reference section suffers from inadequate formatting.

Section Five

Section five is on Local Government Legislative System: Structure, Patterns and Trajectory. The opening chapter is entitled, Separation of Powers in the Local Government: The Legislature Experience. Curiously, the chapter also starts with, "It is axiomatic to posit"! In any case, despite the inadequate formatting of the reference section, it is a well researched chapter. The chapter that follows is entitled thus: The State Joint Local Government Account and the Fiscal Autonomy of Local Governments in Nigeria: The Case of Enugu State (May 1999-May 2007). This contribution possesses immense theoretical, empirical and statistical flavour. It also has a well presented reference section. The book at this point returns to its best presentations, devoid of proof reading mix-ups as we also see in the next chapter entitled: The Legislative Arm in the Third Tier of Government: Framework, Functions and Interrelations. However, to appraise/appreciate the next chapter, the reader would need to go back to the table of contents. In the body of the book, this chapter is captioned: Legislative for Executive Relationship in a Democracy: Focus on the Nigerian L.G.A System. A look at the table of contents however, shows it as "Legislative-Executive Relationship". Note that this same caption could still have read, "The Legislature-Executive Relationship..." The chapter that follows, The Challenges of Evaluating the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria, indicates a great attempt at returning the book to an empirical template. The next chapter bears the following title: Examining the Challenges of Councillors in a Democratic Local Government Structure: The Context of 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. The chapter is considered well written and equally well presented. The next chapter on Legislative Administration in Nigeria: a Focus on the Nigerian Local Government; is another contribution with an important theoretical and empirical balance. The title of the closing chapter of section five is as follows: Promoting Discipline among Local Government Employees in Enugu State: The Synergy between Labour and Management. It has already been noted that the closing chapters of all the sections are strategically selected. This particular chapter is not an exception. It has on page 619, a highly illuminating table on the characteristics of motivated, de-motivated and un-motivated people. The reference section is also considered well presented.

Section Six

In the table of contents, section six reads: Structure and Institutional Context of Local Government. In the body of the work however, section six reads: "Structure and Institutional Context of the Operating the Local Government System". For purposes of this review, the table of contents entry is adopted. In addition, the first chapter in this section is captioned in the body of the work as, Local Government in Nigeria Structure, Roles and Expectations. The table of contents however, had observed the necessary punctuation rule that announces the intended caption. Incidentally, in depth of contents and formatting thoroughness, this entry ranks among the best in this volume. The title of the next chapter immediately makes up for the shortcomings in the title of the preceding chapters, as the reader meets: Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations in Nigeria: Structure, Lapses and the Road Map; a highly captivating caption. Indeed, this chapter ranks among the best in the book. As the reader goes through its breezy contents and statistical

colourations, the impression that is formed, is that of a well researched and well presented contribution. Logically following this chapter is the contribution entitled: Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria: Implications for Local Government Viability. This concise contribution is equally considered well documented and well presented. The reader would observe again that the work has returned to an upbeat level. The next chapter is consequently entitled; The Seven-Point Agenda and Local Government Administration: Accomplishment Responsibility. This chapter is highly well written. Inter-governmental Relations and Local Government Capacity for Service Delivery, is the caption of the next chapter. This is another well written chapter, concluding this particular section.

Section Seven

This final section of the book is captioned, Governance and Due Process at the Local Government Level. The first chapter in this section is captioned, Transparency, Public Accountability and Development at the Local Government Level. This contribution returns the work to a strong theoretical pattern. It is richly written and well presented. It also sets a high tone for the last series of contributions. Hence, the next chapter strongly enters with; The Legal Basis of Due Process in Nigerian Public Administration: A Focus on Proper Procurement and Award of Contract Procedure. By the way, the reader would have realized by now that proof reading mix-ups are interestingly, no longer features of this obviously significant book. This contribution is accordingly truly rich and well presented, with neither content nor technical shortcomings. Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance at the Local Government Level: Towards a Working Template; is the title of the next chapter. A notable feature of this contribution is that it brought back diagrammatic illustrations into the work, as used on pages 729 and 734. Subsequently, the next chapter on; Due Process and Grassroots Development: The Place of Local Government; duly enriched the chapter with diagrammatic illustrations. Rural Development and Public Accountability in Nigeria: An Appraisal; is the title of the next chapter. This contribution is considered rich in content and in references. The final chapter of the book is captioned: Local Government Financial Regulations, Management and Due Process. It fittingly brings this remarkable work to a close, with an empirical contribution.

General Comments

In general terms, the book has truly and admirably touched upon Key Issues in Local Government and Development. Although it set out to present a Nigerian Perspective to these issues (as the subtitle suggests), the entire volume designates an academic output of immense universal import. The preface indeed, posits that the book promises to address core issues of contemporary concern to practitioners and scholars of local government administration in Nigeria. This, it has successfully done. In addition, it raises some important conceptual issues. For instance, the book freely features the concept of local government administration. The back-cover blurb announces that the book is an intellectual “compass” for navigating the turbulent waters of Nigeria’s Local Government Administration. Then the question arises: What do we really mean by Local Government Administration? How and when does local government also become administration? On page 21 of the work, we encounter the terminology of “local politics and administration” which is self-explanatory. When we say “local government administration”, is it also self-explanatory?

The book is unquestionably, beautifully packaged and highly enticing to purchase. However, there are some errors that must be attributed to inadequate proof reading. Under table of contents, page iii, we see “Note of Contributor”. On page vi, Okey Ikeanyibe’s topic is announced as “Nigerian Labour “Policies” and Practices, instead of Labour “Policies”. Further down the page, the subtitle of Ogban Ogban Iyan and Chukwu Augustine’s contribution reads: The Case of Local of Enugu State (May 1999-May 2007). Moreover, “Augustine” is spelt as “Augustne”. In “Note on Contributors”, we see about Malachy Okwueze: “He held a Ph.D LL.B”; R.C. Onah: is the immediate Past Head of the Department of “Public Department and Local Government” and some other such proof reading mix-ups. Above all, the blurb on the back cover, describes this book as a book of “Reading’ instead of a book of “Readings”.

However, despite the above proof reading mix-ups, the book stands out as a significant contribution to Public Administration literature, in the Nigerian academic space. Earlier in the closing paragraph of the preface, the editor asserted as follows: The book has also benefited immensely from the contributions by a number of “men on the spot”; very advanced and experienced public bureaucrats at important institutional levels of governance and public administration in Nigeria. In addition, professors and senior academics of national and international repute from varied disciplinary background in the humanities made very incisive contributions (page xiii). The editor’s claim is completely correct. In the final analysis therefore, this is undoubtedly, a highly important work. The editor has done a great job in availing it to the academic community, practitioners in the field of Local Government and indeed, the general reading public.