
Language Corruption and Nigeria's Debased Political System

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Nigerian political community and language corruption as a tool of political propaganda in a devalued system. The paper examines the linguistic cultures as observed in a democratic culture. Since the present democratic dispensation from 1999 to date, the linguistic resources as an important aspect of social tool for political and social re-engineering draws the attention of people to language as a tool for political propaganda and social interaction. The paper therefore tries to x-ray the relevance of language as a specific act and integral part of social interaction in achieving political power in Nigeria. The paper finally recommends how language is used to gain exercise and keep power. It further shows how linguistic links by political actors play critical role in highlighting democratic culture and enhancing its practice.

Keywords – Language, Politics, Political Propaganda, Democracy, Electoral Campaigns

Introduction

Bear (2000) noted that in democratic culture, there are connected linguistic cultures. He explains further that democracy nourishes more effectively as a result of linguistic activities that lead to democratic development.

In Nigeria's democratic dispensation since 1999, there has been additional political culture value that has been illustrated as a result of language use. Opeibi (2009) and Taiwo (2008) further noted that Nigeria's democratic process was brought into greater lime light as a result of the way the political actor's device means of communicating with the electorate. They also observed great growth in the Nigerian political culture especially the manner Nigerian politicians apply language in the expression of their political and campaign messages which are directed towards convincing voters and re- invigorating the Nigerian democratic practice.

In this paper, attempts are made to investigate language use in political propaganda campaign promises, and campaign advertising. Awonusi, (2004) opined that Nigerian political culture depended on the adoption of linguistic social interaction. It is quite noticeable, since the present political dispensation there has been an appreciable level of appropriate choice and effective deployment of language among political actors. These have in no small measure contributed usefully towards the appreciation of the Nigerian political process.

Schaffner, (2004), quoting Dieckmann stated that political language is used in the context of politics or specific political vocabulary. This means that language can be

used with sole aim of achieving a specific, politically motivated function or that words and phrases may refer to extra linguistic phenomena in politics.

Opeibi (2011) sighting Gastil noted that politics and language are meaningfully associated with the sole aim of achieving the goal of persuading a listener to take action. This is because language helps in convincing the electorate about political matters for political reasons. Opeibi (2009) further noted that language and politics achieve greatly social networking. This is because the social cultural manner of language use develops and increases social interactions among people especially politics actors.

The major focus of this paper is language and politics in Nigeria's present democratic dispensation. Language is described as human social phenomenon. It determines the way and manner we see the world and things around us. Ezema, (2009) noted that language is not an abstract construction of the learned or dictionary makers but it is something arising out of work, needs, tie, joys, affections and thirst of long generation of humanity. Ezema (2009) citing Baugh asserted that language has political influence, economic soundness, projects, commercial activities and social well being and reinvigorates the specific and social contributions to civilization.

Politics on the other hand deal with human nature; it reflects societal affairs for the development of man and his environment. Politics is very important to human society. Though in Nigeria, it is regarded as a dirty game, politics itself is not dirty.

Ezema(2009) citing Ojukwu noted that politics needs to be played according to the rules. He further said that in politics it should avoid intellectual conceit or dishonesty.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural/linguistic society as such language and politics develop several social, political, economic, and linguistic issues which have determined the level of democratization of Nigeria.

Language Act Theoretical Framework

Political utterances are constructed for the mere reason of not just communicating meaning but designed to achieve political meaning. The language of politics is merely designed to arouse the support of the electorate in a political agenda.

Opeibi (2008) citing Van Dijk noted that language expresses "do something" this is because he believes that language is an important aspect in a social interaction. Also citing John Austine he said that language is used by human because of real and potential act that are created out of utterances. These utterances express actions.

Darmayenti, (2009) opines that language act theory is meant to perform actions. i.e. how meaning and action are related to language. Opeibi (2011) citing Smith said that language act theory points out how language can be used. Further citing of Cearle by Opeibi shows that language as a unit of communication has meaning. These are by five classes of language act:

- i. Representatives act that states what the speaker believes to be such as confirming or asserting;
- ii. Declaratives are the acts that the language user adopts to obtain something ease such as commanding, requesting or suggesting;
- iii. Directives are acts the language users use to commit himself to some future actions such as premises, pledges, refusals and threats;
- iv. Expressive such as thanking, and

- v. Declaratives such as appointing, resigning despite the effectiveness of this, it is important to note that language is very important in politics.

In this paper, we shall adopt John Austine's language act functional theory of communication as being illustrated by Nigerian political actors in the present democratic dispensations. It is also important to establish the level. This language theory evaluates the effectiveness of political communication.

The major importance of this paper therefore is to examine the language system of Nigerian political actors and the extent it impacts on the electorate.

Language as tool for Political Propaganda

Propaganda is an all pervading issue in Nigerian politics. In the Nigerian political environment, propaganda has undergone extensive semantic expansion as an important encompassing metaphor in Nigerian language use. It relies most on dissimulation, illusion, and most especially the manipulation of truth so as to gain undue advantage and facilitation of undeserved benefit. In this section it will be important to illustrate the linguistic lie dictation devices which are expressed by a calculated application of deceptive language.

In this paper, it will be important to discuss the use of deceptive language by the political class in order to gain undue advantage.

Agbedo (2012) identified language as a very important organ of political corruption. According to him, the use of Avoidance strategies means the deliberate use of deceptive words to obfuscate corrupt practices applying the Arcand and Bourbeaus's best intension criterion he established the functional hierarchy of words and phrases as misappropriation, misapplication, soft landing we would, perhaps he disposed to determining the extent to which the overt the presence of intension is dominant in terms of the message being transmitted. He further illustrated the avoidance strategy of politicians by identifying the John Austine's Felicity condition of sincerity and graces' maximum of quality. This exemplifies the theoretical basis for evaluating the truth conditions of words. This explains further that language in politics is only intended to perpetrate political corruption.

The declarative use of language in Nigerian political environment is determined to change the status of the user of the language. According to Opeibi (1999) language is used to confer through the illocutionary act with performative verb to deceive and change the listeners understanding of the actual intension of the speaker. Also the application of expressive act is intended to capture the trust of the user of language. For instance, the political class can express regret or remorse for their inordinate political action and ask for forgiveness from the electorate. These can be illustrated by use of such action words like apologize, offer, bless, ask, wish just to mention a few in other to express their various aspects of feeling. Opeibi further said that directly or indirectly illocutionary forces enacting acts such as apologizing, thanking, wishing among others are used. Quoting Clinton and Schaffner he said that Nigerian politicians deploy coercion and dissimulation as political strategies. These are shown through coercion, resistance, dissimulation, legitimization and de-legitimization of language. The political class applies coercive language in order to evaluate their language roles and functions while the application of dissimulation is meant to control information.

The role played by language in the Nigerian political environment is very important. It helps in the political education of the electorate. This is why it is important to apply language when handling political matters and people efficiently by politicians. Language is better expressed and most importantly in the acquisition of political skill because of the importance of language as a means by which politicians acquire awareness. It is not supposed to be deceptive as a result of the multi-cultural nature of Nigeria. Politicians who are well versed in use of language win support of the electorate through the act of language manipulation in order to convince and influence the electorate. Politicians manipulate language as a result of the thinking ability of the electorate.

According to Ezema (2009), we can scarcely think all without using words, even if we do not speak, we are constantly using words in our head to help us to think. It is hard to imagine though going on at all without using words.

Language as part of social interaction in politics

In the Nigeria political environment language is used to enhance the thought pattern and quality of Nigerian politicians while engaging in politics. Language involves speech making, declaration of manifestos, electioneering campaigns as political activities. Politicians are often associated with use of state emergency, high blown and dying metaphors, clichés and outmoded state phrases in addition to committing serious concord, tense, pronunciation and sentence structural errors. Ezema further observed the use of dying metaphors used by the Nigerian political class in speeches and writing to include 'take up the cud get for', 'toe the line', 'An ass to grind', 'fishes in trouble waters', among others. He further identified the use of meaningless words such as clarions, realm, expedite, armylrate, statusquo, and among others. Language corruption in Nigeria debased political system unfortunately forms sources of corrupt influences. These political expressions create dishonest ways of deceiving the Nigerian electorate.

Language as a result of its political importance plays crucial role in Nigeria. It is important to take into consideration the multi-cultural and multi-lingual nature of the country into consideration in political discussion. The disparity of indigenous language within the geographical areas of Nigeria accounts for the various inter-ethnic dicotomy of communication. These have actively affected the realization of worthy linguistics objective which would help Nigeria political environment. Language corruption as a result of the multi-cultural nature of Nigeria has seriously affected efficient political cultural development. Ezema (2009) quoting Emenyonu and Nta observed that the choice of a national language has become more political than a linguistic issue. Ethnic group in Nigeria interprets the choice of any language as the country's linguafranca as a way of conferring political domination on the part of a particular ethnic group.

Language is very important in the national life of the political class and the electorate. It assists them most especially in their social, political and economic life. This is because both benefit through listening to each other, through newspaper, radio and television programmes, as well as interpersonal interactions. Ezema (2009) quoting Jowith stressed that language in National political context is unparrelled. He also added that it involves decision making and opinion forming which will help in the education and enlightenment of the populace.

Ezema further cited Mohammed by quoting that language is an important tool for the acquisition of modern knowledge which helps in self development. In addition he pointed out that language has an unequal role to play as a tool for political communication as well as national administration education and mass media for promoting Nigerian desirable cultural diversity.

Relevance of Language in Achieving Political Power in Nigeria

Language in Nigeria, democratic setting exhibits some communicative competencies. It involves the lexico grammatical items and multi-world expressions which give information and attracts attention. This is as a result of specific linguistics structures which are importantly used in political communication. Beard, (2000) explains that language of politics is characterized by sound bites. He identified the following variables; 3-part-list, parallel structure, metaphor, contrast and discuss strategies.

Beard, (2000) quoting Atkinson pointed out that the use and application of 3-part-list, structure by politicians forms a very efficient means of conveying and transmitting information as well as actualizing the intended message. This variable is mostly typical among politicians in order to gain support and approval. According to Beard this gives the politicians use of language unity and completeness.

Illustrating this, Opeibi gave this example “ I apologize to you, I apologize to the nation, I apologize to my family, and friends for all the distress I have caused them”. This occurred after the former honourable speaker Alhaji Salisu Ibrahim Buhari, former Speaker House of Representative presented to the National Assembly a forged Toronto University Certificate.

The use of parallel structure as stated above exemplifies rhythmic pattern of attracting attention by politicians when addressing the electorates. The application of language and its linguistics features in this variable brings about lexical syntactical and semantic repetitions. This strategy is applied by the political class to create effect and achieve their personal goals and objectives.

Metaphor has been identified as a political way of use of language that brings about comparison between one idea and another. In applying this in the Nigerian political environment, the political environment, the political class tries to add a lot of meaning to ideas because they associate the Nigerian socio-cultural environments which are shared by the politicians and the electorates. Again Opeibi illustrated this by saying. “The Human soul is strongest when it forgoes revenge and forgives injury.

This example is intended to convince and persuade the electorate to accept the politicians as well as forget the past in order to accept them in their political aspiration.

The use of contrast is very typical of Nigerian politicians. The application of positive and negative contrast in the language of Nigerian politicians places the electorate in a situation of indecisiveness. This in most cases places the electorate in a situation where a good decision in acceptance or refusal of political campaign promises become difficult example as stated above under metaphor. “the human soul is strongest when it forgoes revenge and forgives injury”. Finally, Opeibi (2008) citing Halliday and Hasan pointed out that Symantec relation in the use of language is interconnected through cohesive devices such as discourse strategy. He identified that the use of pronoun in political language plays a very significant role between the politician and the electorate during political discussion and campaign.

Conclusion

The paper has looked into the linguistics strategies adopted by the political class which is attempt to enhance the Nigerian democratic practice has positively or negatively affected the electorates. It is an attempt to review the Nigerian debased political system and bring into line light the relevance of language in political practice. The paper is also intended to review the Nigerian political language culture as compared with the unearthical political practices which has affected the growth and sustenance of the nascent democracy.

The language corruption has become problematic among politicians and electorates. This is because the political environment is deceived by baiting people into corruption. Negative social and political behaviour are created and influenced by language.

The current study is intended to draw people's attention into the negative aspect of Nigerian political history as well as finding solution that could address it.

The application and relevance of this study is the language structure as it reflects on the Nigerian social and political life. The paper therefore is intended to throw more light on the great effect of language and its impact in the significance of the Nigerian political growth and social interaction among politicians and electorates.

Recommendations

Language is an important tool for national unity and cohesion. It is very vital in the political life of the nation as a result of the linguistic corruption in the Nigerian situation. It is therefore recommended that:

- i. Language performs different functions in Nigeria which are very indispensable because of the Nigerian multilingual nature. Functional approach to language should be embraced.
- ii. The Nigerian multi-ethnic society should have equal opportunity to the effective use of language. The current disparity experienced by citizens especially electorates in the use of language should be brought to an end. The political class should endeavour to apply language in order to express the adequate functionality and communicative competence.
- iii. Language is an important tool for the transmission of the country's rich political heritage. It is also important for the effective interaction among the various ethnic groups. The ultimate goal therefore is that language increases the politicians.
- iv. Language should be used to flourish a democratic practice through proper deployment of its linguistics resources.
- v. Language demonstrates particular linguistic and social events which are central in the deepening of Nigerian democracy.
- vi. The Nigerian democratic process should be successfully practiced and sustained through language. It linguistic forms the bedrock as conveyed by the speakers message.

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Devolution of Power and Revenue Mobilization: Imperative for Effective Public Service Delivery in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The question of devolution or distribution of power and responsibilities among the tiers of government has been a heated debate for years. The debate has been able to gather more proponents than opponents. It is therefore safe to argue that devolution of power looks like the most appropriate path to be toured by our political leaders. As convincing as the arguments for it are, especially the appeal to the quick distribution of public service to the citizens, this debate has not been successfully translated into reality such that the citizens can effectively claim to have been beneficiaries of effective public service delivery in Nigeria. This paper therefore, without reawakening the whole debate (because the discourse is still ongoing in the literature), addresses the paradigmatic effects of devolution of power and revenue mobilization in effectively alleviating the socio-economic pains of the Nigerian people. Thus, this paper relies on existing literature (mainly secondary sources of data) in order to successfully drive out its points.

Keywords: Devolution, power, revenue, public service and decentralization

Introduction

This paper is an a priori attempt to interrogate the political industry on the devolution of power and revenue mobilization as a viable way of improving the well-being of the citizens through effective public service delivery. Thus, it becomes imperative to analyze the constructs that have come to form the pillars in the topic of our discourse. This paper moves from initial definitions and descriptions of the concepts to the complete gamut of literature that have in the past attempted to delineate the interrelatedness between power devolution and the effective revenue mobilization vis-à-vis the peoples' well-being. Having established the existing discourse in the literature, the paper discussed the methodology while findings, conclusion and recommendations were drawn based on empirical analysis of thematic issues. The truth is that devolution of power and revenue mobilization have become crucial matters in our political lexicon to the three-tiers of government and the entire Nigeria populace.

Literature Review

Distribution of responsibilities between national and sub-national governments has been a subject of enduring debate among practitioners and scholars alike in the world of public administration and beyond (Bin, 2012:2). One reason for this among several, is the

cosmopolitan nature of the modern world, where to effectively govern the whole country demands the need to distribute power among the sub-national governments. The central, whether in Federal or Unitary systems, cannot govern effectively without the support of the sub-national bodies.

The concept and meaning of devolution has taken different shapes in the literature according to the number of scholars who are interested in the discourse. Devolution as a political lexicon has evolved over time and in the process has undergone changes in terminology and meaning (Jacobs and Chavhunduka 2003:2). According to Mukonza and Chakauya (2012:101) devolution is “a form of decentralization through which authority to formulate policies in selected areas of public policy is conferred to elected sub-national levels of government”. For instance, in a federation, the self-governing status of the component states is typically constitutionally entrenched and may not be altered by a unilateral decision of the central government (Bin, 2012: 2). For Chigwenya (2010:2), devolution is the transfer of administrative and political powers from central government to lower tiers. The lower tiers become semi-autonomous, but they have decision-making powers. In the same vein, it is argued that devolution makes democracy stronger by giving people more say in matters relating to their local areas. It allows local authorities to exercise discretionary powers when making decisions on matters that affect local communities (Onyango, Cheluget, Akello, Okari and Keraro, 2012:705). For Mukonza and Chakauya (2012:101), devolution of power is perceived as the transfer of authority for decision making from central to local government. Devolution is a form of decentralization whereby the central government assigns some duties to the sub-centres.

Devolution, unlike mere deconcentration and delegation, provides for better problem-solving capacity, which considers local knowledge and conditions (Jacobs and Chavhunduka, 2003). However, the distinction between devolution and decentralization most times comes through easily in the literature. Decentralization is broader compared with devolution. In fact, the various types of decentralization are deconcentration, devolution and delegation.

Decentralization is described as the transfer of powers from central government to lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (Crook and Manor 1998, Agrawal and Ribot 1999 cited in Yuliani, n.d). Power is trickled down to the lower levels with the aim of accelerating development. This power takes two forms namely *administrative decentralization and, political or democratic decentralization*. The former is a transfer of central government authorities to lower-level or to other local authorities who are expected to be accountable to the central government. The latter refers to the transfer of authority to representative and downwardly accountable actors, such as elected local governments.

The under listed are the several types of decentralization.

Political decentralization: Form of decentralization in which different levels of government—central, meso and local—are empowered to make decisions related to what affect them.

Administrative decentralization: Form of decentralization in which the constitution delegate different levels of sub-national governments control resources and other administrative matters.

Fiscal decentralization: The sub-national levels are empowered to generate their revenues and utilize them as they deem fit especially in meeting the needs of the local people.

Market decentralization: The process whereby government privatizes or deregulates so as to accommodate the participation of its people.

According to Nyanjom (2011) devolution is one among several forms of decentralization, which is a characteristic of all governments globally while decentralization as a governance tool, is based on the principle of subsidiarity which assigns specific functions hitherto conducted by central government to the lowest feasible sub-centres. Decentralization is used to cover a broad range of transfers of the "locus of decision making" from central governments to regional, municipal or local governments" (Sayer, Elliott, Barrow, Gretzinger, Maginnis, McShane, and Shepherd, 2005).

Devolution of power refers to the transfer of governance responsibility for specified functions to sub-national levels, either publicly or privately owned, that are largely outside the direct control of the central government" (Ferguson and Chandrasekharan, 2005). Devolution of power refers to one form of administrative decentralization which transfers specific decision making powers from one level of government to another (which could be from lower level to higher level of government, in the case of federations, or government transfers decision-making powers to entities of the civil society. Regional or provincial governments, for example, become semi autonomous and administer forest resources according to their own priorities and within clear geographical boundaries under their control. Most political decentralization is associated with devolution" (Gregersen et al.). Devolution ensures equitable distribution of resources hence the assumption that if adopted it will enable local residents to make relevant and accurate decisions regarding priorities for their own areas (Nhede, 2013:32).

Devolution is the transfer of power to sub-national units, provinces and local authorities, so as to give them autonomous discretionary decision-making power within their geographical areas of jurisdiction" (*The Chronicle* 23 July 2012). While devolution refers to the statutory granting of powers from central government of a sovereign state to sub-national levels, decentralization is the transfer of power from central to lower levels in a political, administrative and territorial hierarchy (*The Chronicle* 7 March 2012). *Decentralization of power* means the assignment of some of the powers vested in the Central Government, upon regional units of administration or otherwise, the *devolution of the powers* of the Central Government upon regional units in order to facilitate administrative functions and also to involve regional individuals in administrative activities. Decentralization and devolution of power is the act of sharing the power and the responsibilities the central government with the sub-nationals.

Fleiner (2006:3) captures the whole essence of devolution of power thus:

Devolution and autonomy based on decentralisation is mainly a challenge for the federal units to achieve based on this autonomy legitimacy with regard to their own democratic community. The issue

of participation of the different federal units in decision making processes on the other hand is the most sensitive issue of legitimacy of the federation. Indeed through their participation the federal units are required to find solutions in order to accommodate the different units but also to establish justice within the entire community. Their challenge is to contribute to the legitimacy of the federation and of their proper federal unit.

The true spirit of federalism encourages the active engagement of the federating units in the governance of the whole polity. The legitimacy of the federal government therefore hinges on its willingness to share its power with the federating units. Absence of devolution of power therefore licenses hidden and perceived rancour against the power and the legitimacy of the federal or the central government. As argued by Bin (2012: 2) “in a federation, the self-governing status of the component states is typically constitutionally entrenched and may not be altered by a unilateral decision of the central government....Fundamentally, federalism is about the sharing of public power”. Devolution of power becomes a necessary imperative in a federal system of government like the US, Brazil, Australia, Russia, Germany, Nigeria, etc.

From Fleiner (2006) extensive discussion on the goals of devolution of power, the under listed can be drawn. Devolution:

- i. Accommodates diversities
- ii. Strengthens local democracy
- iii. Provides for additional vertical separation of powers
- iv. Provides for state bureaucracy closer to the citizens.
- v. Creates new motivation on the local level for the citizens to commit and invest its engagement for local public interest.
- vi. Helps to integrate citizens and to enhance nation building
- vii. Enables local authorities to experiment and to innovate new concepts and measures for the management of public interests.
- viii. Finally it helps to reduce at least corruption on the central level if local authorities are effectively accountable to the local democracy.

For many of these reasons devolution provides often more effective and efficient management of state affairs, because power and responsibility of authorities on local level, who bear quickly the consequences of bad decisions, coincide.

On local level authorities can be more flexible and adapt quicker to new challenges than on the central level (Fleiner, 2006: 6).

Power at the local level could have a quick usage in fixing local problems unlike the central trying to respond to local challenges. Thus, to effectively cater for the whole society, there is a need for power to be shared by the central government to the lower-level authorities for the sake of enhancing the lives of the people. Reasons for the devolution of power therefore, include:

- i. the need to build up unity in midst of diversity,

- ii. the difficulty of administering a whole country by central government at the centre alone without involving the sub-nationals,
- iii. to ensure national security.

Devolution refers to transfer of decision making power and much policy making powers (especially development and social service policy) to elected local representative authorities or units or to autonomous public enterprise. This model of decentralization is sometimes referred to as political decentralization (Massoi & Norman, 2009). Devolution of power is the assignment of the executive, legislative and judicial powers vested in the central government to local government authorities by the Act of Parliament. This can be implemented only through the constitution. The devolution of power, in a federal system of government like Nigeria, is contained in the constitution. The current 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in Section 4 (Second Schedule), indicates the Exclusive Legislative List, consisting of 68 responsibilities, on which only the federal government can act. Both the federal government and the states have concurrent power to exercise. The concurrent list has 12 items. States have exclusive legislative power in residual matters. The executive power is distributed in the similar manner between the two tiers of government (Bin, 2012: 3,4; 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

Revenue Mobilization Conceptualized

Section 162, Sub-section 10 of the 1999 Constitution defines revenue as any income or return accruing to or derived by Federal Government of Nigeria which includes:

- (a) Any return, however described, arising from the operation of any law;
- (b) Any return, however described, arising from or in respect of any property held, by the government of the Federation;
- (c) Any return by way of interest on loans and dividends in respect of shares or interest held by the Government of the Federation in any company or statutory body.

Devolved local authorities have the power to make laws of local nature and raise revenue needed to meet development with very minimum interference from the centre (Warioba, 1999). Revenue mobilization has been described as the organized process of sourcing for funds from all identifiable statutory sources to accomplish the specific goals and objectives of government, government requires revenues to execute its responsibilities and objectives (Olajide, n.d). It is the process of collecting money or monies from internal and external sources by government and private establishments. The emphasis of this study however, is on the government component of revenue mobilization (Nwogwugwu, Wabeke & Alao, 2015:3). The Nigerian constitution (sections 153 & 162) creates the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission to monitor the accrual to and disbursement of funds from the common pool called the federation account; and work out the principles for sharing of proceeds between the centre and the units (Ekwonna 2012:274; Ebiziem, 2016). Revenue mobilization is the priority of all countries in the world because of the developmental or capital projects the governments have to execute. In addition to that is the need to provide essential services to their people such as healthcare, education, social amenities, and security among others.

Olajide (n.d) points out two principal goals of revenue mobilization. According to him, the primary goal of revenue mobilization is to actively harness and account for the various sources of revenue accruing and accruable to the coffers of a government, authority or person. The other goals of revenue mobilization are to ensure that sufficient funds are pooled together to enable government perform its constitutional responsibilities to the citizens. With Decree No. 49 of 1989, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida gave Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission a statutory existence even though he had earlier on inaugurated it on September 16, 1988 (Olajide, n.d). The 1999 Constitution also made provision for Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission which was inaugurated by President Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo on September 20, 1999.

With the present democratic institutions in place, the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) is empowered by paragraph 32(a) of Part I to the third schedule of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) to the same to perform the following functions:

- a) Monitor the accruals to and disbursement of revenue from the Federation Account;
- b) Review, from time to time, the revenue formulae and principles in operation to ensure conformity with changing realities; provided that any formula which has been accepted by an Act of the National Assembly shall remain in force for a period of not less than five years from the date of commencement of the Act;
- c) Advise the Federal, State and Local Governments on Fiscal Efficiency and methods by which their revenue is to be increased;
- d) Determine the remuneration appropriate to political office holders; and
- e) To discharge such other functions as may be conferred by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria or any Act of the National Assembly.

Board of Customs and Excise, the Federal Inland Revenue Service, the Central Bank and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation are the government bodies and agencies that collect revenue on behalf of the Federal Government; and the revenues realized are paid into government's special account called the Federation Account. It is the task of the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission to ensure that the revenues collected by these bodies and agencies are paid into the Federation Account. Revenues are not generated for the sake of increasing the purse of the Federal Government. Revenues are to be mobilized in addressing the general needs of the society and also pay government's workers – politicians, civil servants, public servants among others.

The revenue mobilized is to assist government to stimulate the agricultural sector by encouraging mechanized farming, providing storage facilities: electricity; boreholes if not pipe-borne water; mass transportation system; affordable housing schemes etc, in the rural areas. It is also to assist government in the development of the industrial sector of the economy. Apart from agriculture and industry, other areas include the provision of economic, social and political infrastructures for even development of the Nation (Olajide, n.d).

Revenues are met for the provision of public service to the people and also government's provision of infrastructural development – economic, social, and political among others. This reinforces the fact that the government exists for the protection of the lives, liberty and property of the people. Revenue mobilization is the act of marshaling, assembling, and organizing financial contributions from all incomes accruing from identifiable sources in an economic setting (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). Revenue mobilization at the local level is basically required to underwrite service delivery, a primary goal of decentralized local government. Olowu & Wunsch, (2003) stated that sound revenue system for local governments is an essential pre-condition for the success of fiscal decentralization. Oates (1998) adds that local revenue mobilization has the potential to foster political and administrative accountability by the empowering communities.

Certain factors have been noted as challenges to effective revenue mobilization in developing countries and they include low income, demographic factors and underdeveloped financial markets. According to IMF Report (2011), in many African countries, the task of mobilizing more fiscal revenue is complicated by increased mobility of tax bases resulting from trade liberalization and the mobility of investment and capital income, tariffs and other trade taxes. In like manner, Stren (1998) holds that one of the challenges facing countries in their developmental efforts is the issue of revenue generation to fund the numerous developmental projects which are crucial to enhance the living standards of their citizens.

Arising from these challenges, Adu-Gyamfi (2014:108) holds that “the need for aggressive internal revenue mobilisation by sub-national institutions has become very essential in view of the fact that local authorities have the responsibility to provide services to their respective geographical areas”. Dankwambo, 2010, cited in Nwogwugwu, Wabeke & Alao, (2015:4) holds that problems militating against revenue mobilization, collection and remittance in Nigeria, are:

independent revenue, non scientific estimates, poor tracking of Independent revenue, lack of standardized incentives for High revenue performance, submission of financial estimates, poor funding of monitoring activities, adherence to traditional sources only, unspent balances, revenue leakages, unavailability of treasury receipts, delay in issuance of receipts, lack of monitoring power by OAGF, lack of dedicated revenue accounts by some MDAs, inadequate legislation, lack of sanctioning instruments against defaulting individuals and organizations, lack of strong inter-agency collaboration (CBN, FIRS, NNPC, OAGF, FMF and MDAs), lack of qualified and experienced staff to the divisions of the MDAs, overdependence on oil revenue by government at all levels.

Concept of Public Service Delivery

As noted by Brewer, Chandler and Ferrell (2006) “the spirit of decentralization is that local government should generally be in a better position than the central government to

identify local needs, and to deliver public services accordingly". Devolution of power is to help bring government to the people and the people to the government. The local authorities are also empowered to generate income in order to meet their immediate local needs beyond what the central government can provide. According to Bray (2008), aside the internally generated funds (IGFs), the local authorities are expected to fashion out projects and programmes that are related to poverty alleviation in their locality. For Waema (2005), local governments with strong and viable local revenue collection have higher degree of autonomy, and are found to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of their citizens. The constitution makes provision for various sources of local revenue to local governments which could vary from one locality to another depending on economic practices, natural endowments and others. The Constitution provides for various sources of local revenue to local governments which vary from area to area-based on economic practices, natural endowments, among other things (Waema, 2005).

The truth is that public services contribute to the creation of a fairer, more just and adequate society. They offer security and protection to all, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged ones. They are the defining factors of a civilized society (Fatile and Ejalonibu (2015:5). Public services are essential commodities for the wellbeing of the people. It could be argued that one of the most fundamental reasons for the existence of the civic government is to ensure the provision of public services to its people. Thus, Aldridge and Stoker (2002) hold that public services are regarded as services provided by a government to its citizens either directly through the public sector or by financing and regulating private provision of services (Aldridge and Stoker, 2002). Public services are therefore services provided by the government either directly or indirectly to improve the quality of lives of the citizens. The debate of the ideals of public services prioritizes the people being the primary user of these services.

On the ongoing debates on the necessity of the provision of public services, Aldridge and Stoker (2002) cited in Fatile and Ejalonibu (2015:5) identified some basic characteristics commonly associated with a modern public service which include:

- i. Reliance on tax payers' money to establish or sustain the service through part or whole subsidy in order to contribute to community well-being.
- ii. Accepts a different and extended type of accountability. Politicians and managers of public services have to justify why they allocate and ration resources in the way that they do and those services in turn are subject to a form of democratic accountability and scrutiny.
- iii. Unified customer base i.e. most public services are unable to choose their customers and most customers are unable to choose their public service suppliers.
- iv. Often exist where there is or can be no adequate market provision.

In delivery public services in Nigeria, like every other part of the world, the local government becomes a viable agent. The central government cannot determine or ascertain the real needs of the people except for the intervention of the local government which is a representative of the voice of the central government among the rural people and the voice of the people to the other tiers of government – state and federal in the case

of federal system of government. Hence, this analysis gives credence to the need for the devolution of power and its attendant revenue mobilization which are to aid the effective delivery services to the local people. Though these variables have become interdependent on themselves, in reality there is a question of how sub-national government has been able to carry out its duties of delivery public services to its people.

The Question of Effective Public Delivery Service to the People

Current findings in literature have shown that devolution or decentralization have not properly resolved the challenge of effective service delivery to the local people. The failure of the local government to deliver on its terms of creation has brought up some questions about the relevance of the local authorities.

According to ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo,

‘What we have witnessed is the abysmal failure of the local government system. It is on record that at no time in the history of the country has there been the current level of funding accruing to the local governments from the federation account, yet the hope for rapid and sustained development has been a mirage as successive councils have grossly under-performed in (their assigned responsibilities). Almost all the areas of their mandate..., yet the clamour for the creation of more LGAs has not abated’ (Obasanjo, 2003).

Thus, the local government that should be an extension of the central government in disbursing the dividends of democracy (in a democratic setting) to its people has failed in doing that hence the whole apparatus of government is construed as not responsible and responsive to needs of the people. Whereas, decentralization or devolution was conceived as the most appropriate requirement for meeting the needs of the generality of the people.

According to Ukiwo (2006:2) “instead of bringing government and development closer to the people, local governments have produced absentee local government chairmen who are only seen at council headquarters when the monthly ‘Abuja Allocation’ arrives and vamoose with their standby jeeps and mobile police escorts after superintending over the sharing of the local government’s share of the national cake among the relevant stakeholders”. In other words, both the allocation from the central government and the revenue generated internally are used to finance the flamboyant lifestyles of local government chairmen and their compatriots. The attendant result is failure to delivery public service to their people.

Methodology

This paper employed qualitative method. Qualitative study refers to the method which relies on text and image data, and draws on diverse strategies of inquiry (Creswell, 2003). Thus, the paper utilized a prior as against a posterior discursive method of research relying on textual analysis.

According to Mckee (2003), textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. According to him, when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text. Using textual analysis implies that this paper utilized secondary sources of data.

Discussion and Findings

Oates (1972) holds that “each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision”. He based his proposition on the following:

- i. Local governments understand the concerns of local residents;
- ii. Local decision making is responsive to the people for whom the services are intended, thus encouraging fiscal responsibility and efficiency, especially if financing of services is also decentralized;
- iii. Unnecessary layers of jurisdiction are eliminated;
- iv. Inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation are enhanced.

These reinforce the importance of local government as the extension of the other tiers of government in reaching the local people such that they are not denied the benefits accrue to them as citizens. However, from literature, it is clear that in Nigeria, the devolution of power has not produced effective service delivery to the local people. Corruption has become one of the major challenges defacing the whole idea of devolution of power because the claim is that even though we cannot claim to be practicing true federalism in Nigeria the creation of local governments to meet the purpose of decentralization has not produced the desired result. As a matter of fact, the opponents of devolution of power even claim that the power of local authorities should be restricted in order to avoid abuse. Corruption has been identified as a hydra-headed cankerworm devouring the capacity and resources of the local government to carry out its functions.

In February 2010, the chairman of Ijebu East Local Government Council in Ogun State was suspended from office on account of various financial misdeeds. Similarly, in Benue State about two years ago (2010), the House of Assembly suspended 12 council chairmen in the state and directed that the chairmen should refund a total of 150 million naira being financial misdeeds associated with the excess crude funds received by local governments in the state. In Kogi State, the chairman of Ibaji and Ogori Mangogo Local Government Areas were suspended over what was described as non-performance and misappropriation of resources. It was alleged that the statutory allocation of 75 million naira received by Ibaji Local Government for December 2008 was neither used for payment of salaries or implementation of any meaningful project. More so, the loan of 200 million naira or the excess crude fund of 380 million collected or received by the Ibaji Local Government were not judiciously used. Also illustrative and instructive in explaining the issue of corruption as an impediment in the non-performance of local governments in Nigeria is the arrest and prosecution by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of a former Enugu State Governor, Chimaroke Nnamani on the allegation of diverting local governments' funds in the state (Zakari, 2010 and <http://www.articlesbase.com/leadership-articles> cited in Agba, Akwara and Idu, (2013: 459).

The failure of devolution of power translating into the delivery of public service to the people was captured by Bello-Imam and Roberts (2001). For them, the factors are:

- i. Revenue inadequacy
- ii. The erosion of local functions particularly in the revenue yielding areas by state governments and their agencies
- iii. Politico-administrative problems such as inadequacy of skilled and technical manpower, lackadaisical attitude of existing local government staff, official corruption, variable Structures/sizes of local government among others, and
- iv. Lack of integration of the relevant communities in the execution of local services.

One interesting thing that is found in the literature again is the concept of interferences by the other tiers of government in the activities of local governments. The challenge of financial autonomy of the local government has been a perennial issue. Public service delivery has suffered in the face of political interferences which affect the resources of the local government and the wellbeing of the people (Ndubuisi & Onuba, 2016; Adeyemo, 2005; Njoku, 2009).

This was also captured succinctly thus:

Local governments in Nigeria lack financial autonomy and are often considered as an extension of states ministry. Decisions are taken by state governors and imposed on local governments in their state for implementation. Federal allocations to local government are first deposited into a particular ad hoc account before being disbursed. The motive behind this is to divert the money to another thing entirely which does not have impact on the lives of the rural dwellers but that will be beneficial to the state governor (Agba, Akwara and Idu, 2013: 460).

It seems therefore accurate to argue that what we have in Nigeria is a form of political decentralization without fiscal decentralization. The people are at the receiving end of these political interferences. Even locally generated revenue are misappropriated.

Conclusion

Devolution of power grants local governments powers and responsibilities in three dimensions: political, administrative, and fiscal. If well articulated and practiced, devolution of power can help reduce poverty, promote cooperation between the government and the people, and at the same time help increase political leaders' capacity for transparency, accountability and responsiveness. The current challenge facing effective public service delivery is still traceable to corruption in all the tiers of government. The federal and the state political leaders, in one way or the other, still sit on the resources of the local government. In the same vein, political leaders and government appointees at the local levels see the allocations from the central as their own share of the national cake. Who suffers? The people because public service delivery is for them.

Recommendations

- i. There is a need for the people to rise up and device a means of holding their leaders responsible. If the leaders are not accountable, the people should make them accountable.
- ii. The anti-graft agencies need to be strengthened such that there are no sacred cows.
- iii. The concept of devolution of power should go beyond mere political and administrative decentralization. It should include the ceding of financial aspects of governmental power.
- iv. Since corruption has become endemic and as one of the forces against effective service delivery, there is a need to device a more daring punishment in order to forestall and discourage its (corruption) practitioners.
- v. The government should engineer true federalism as a way of enhancing true cooperative existence

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