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## The Nexus between Public/Political Office Holders and Efficient Local Government Administration in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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### ABSTRACT

With a current life expectancy of 54.07 years, Nigeria was ranked 216 in the world and 16<sup>th</sup> in Africa. This statistics show that Nigeria is still lagging behind when compared to other countries. At the local government level, especially in most rural communities, access to basic social and infrastructure facilities such as quality healthcare, potable water, quality road network, modern schools, among others are very limited. Hence, life in the rural areas is miserable characterized by high level of poverty. The above socio-economic realities prompted an inquiry into a study of this nature. This work is titled "political office holders and efficient administration of local government areas". The study among other things sought to identify roles political office holders could play towards the attainment of efficient administration of local government areas; ascertain the challenges that confront political office holders in the efficient administration of council areas and recommend possible measures to address the challenges. Content analytical method was adopted to review relevant literature. Systems theory propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1956) was adopted as the theoretical framework of analysis. Some of the challenges that hinder political office holders from achieving efficient administration of local government areas include party politics, corruption, undue expectations from constituencies, calibre of personnel/public officers, recruitment and sources of personnel in the local governments etc. The researchers therefore recommend that political office holders should constantly engage in regular workshops and training programmes to update their knowledge and skills. The world now is a global village and things are changing both in politics and governance and to keep abreast with the trends, regular training for capacity building is needed. The ideas of yesterday may no longer work; hence, new approaches of dealing with public issues/administration must be put in their perspective.

Key words: Political Office Holder, Local Government, Public Policy, Politics, Administration

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### INTRODUCTION

The study of local government and its functionaries in modern time has become very imperative because of the advantage arising from the myriad functions they perform. This unequivocal recognition of the importance of this third tier of government, especially in Nigeria's federal system has made existence, a constitutional matter. For instance, section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, states inter alia:

The system of local government by democratically elected

local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed; and every state shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

The above extract from the 1999 constitution (as amended) has given the seven hundred and seventy four (774) local governments in existence in Nigeria, a legal backing. Meanwhile,

local government as a concept, subjects itself to so many definitions and interpretations as there are many scholars and writers in the field of local government administration. The United Nations Office for Public Administration (1977:1) sees local government as:

...a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purpose. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.

Though the above definition may appear comprehensive and encompassing in content and in pursuance of the search for the true meaning of the concept, however, [1] pointed out some of its serious flaws and according to him,

First, the power of local government to "exact labour" creates an impression of its tendency to resort to forced labour which is unacceptable in modern times. Second, the assertion in the definition that governing body of a local government can be "locally selected" is faulty. It implies that in the case of Nigeria for instance, all caretaker committees of management and sole administrators can pass as local government, whereas in actual fact, such appointed bodies are mere brands of local administration.

The local administration as highlighted above by [2], is the administration of the grassroots at the local government areas by the federal (national) or state government through the use of bureaucrats or an agency of either or both tiers of government. This definitely negates the idea behind the creation of local government.

A working definition is therefore necessary here and we shall adopt one considering the volume of this paper

and the timing too. The (1976:1) guidelines for the reform of local governments in Nigeria defines local government as:

Government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantive control over local affairs, as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the 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 thorough active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local activities and response to local needs are maximized.

The above definition as provided by the 1976 local government Reforms Handbook, clearly and in a broader spectrum reveals the essence of local government as a distinct tier of government in the Nigeria Federal System. [3] in lending credence to the foregoing view states that "what distinguished the 1976 local government reforms from all previous exercise in the country is the formal and unequivocal recognition of local government as constituting a separate level of government.

Local government administration on the other hand, entails efficient coordination of men and materials in order to drive development at the grass root level. This requires a well trained human resources, adequate planning, qualified elected and appointed political office holders, strong financial base among others. Political office holders are therefore expected to galvanize and ensure efficient mobilization and utilization of human and material resources to frontally attack the

developmental yearnings of the people at the grass root level.

Local government administration in Nigeria has come of age. The history of local government in Nigeria including Ebonyi State can squarely be traced to the British colonial rule. Between 1930s and 1940s, for instance, local government was known as chief-in-council and chief and council, where traditional rulers were given pride of place in the scheme of things [4]. The British administration established what has been variously called indirect rule, Anglo-African governments, etc. The British resident supervised the traditional rulers who were in direct contact with the people. [5] revealed that the colonial government took a paternalistic view of local government and delivered government from the top. The traditional rulers were collaborators in this administrative deal and thus incurred the wrath of the western educated elites who were effectively excluded from local government. Even the traditional rulers who were christened native authorities (NAS) were neither native nor authority. Arising from the above, in 1951 the western and eastern regions passed local government laws which whittled down the powers of traditional rulers by opting for elected local councils. This was the first opportunity for Nigerians to have a say in their own affairs. There were other important developments and reforms which gave impetus to the modern local government system in Nigeria according to [6]. For example, the landmark local government reforms of 1976, which recognized local government as a third tier of government alongside the federal (first tier) and the state (second tier) governments by the 1979 constitution and now 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended; the revenue allocation Act, 1981 which made for statutory allocation of 10% of national revenue to local government, which was later implemented in 1982, but was later increased to 15% in 1989 and 20% in 1992; the Dasuki Report of 1985 which mandated state governments to contribute 10% of their internally generated revenue to the running of local governments among others. The essence of the above is to give local governments the necessary

footings to carry out their assigned functions.

The functions assigned to local governments in Nigeria are so numerous as a result of its strategic position in the political hierarchy of the nation. The fourth schedule (section 7) of the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended highlights the functions of local government in Nigeria, thus:

...(i) the consideration and making of recommendations to a state commission on economic planning or any similar body on economic development of a state; (ii) collection of rates, radio and television license; (iii) construction and maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, market, motor parks and public conveniences, etc.

[7] added that there are four hypotheses which justify the existence of local government:

Hypothesis one states that you do not talk of local government without talking about national government. Local government implies the existence of a higher level of a more encompassing or broader government. Hypothesis two states that local government is too remote to fill. Hypothesis three states that, local government implements the ideals, objectives, programmes and aspirations of the national government at the local level. This is in a way an extension of hypothesis two. Finally, the fourth hypothesis states that the ideology of the national government will to a large extent

determine the structure and functioning of local government.

It is therefore, based on the above background, traditional and fundamental functions of local governments that the existence of political office holders became inevitable. A political office holder is any person or an individual elected or appointed into a given public office at any level of government to carry out some stipulated responsibilities. The assumption of the office is usually preceded with an oath of allegiance to the constituted authority and to discharge assigned responsibilities with utmost faith; without fear or favour and in the interest of the public. There is usually a specified tenure of office and areas of jurisdiction to avoid conflicts. At the local government level, the political office holders include but not limited to the local government chairman, the vice chairman, the secretary to the local government, the elected councilors, the management committee members etc. These officials are expected to efficiently utilize the available resources of their respective local governments to achieve sustainable development especially in the rural areas. Unfortunately, the state of rural areas in Nigeria especially in Ebonyi State, suggests that local governments have not lived up to the expectations of the masses. It is against this backdrop that this study has become imperative to explore the roles of political office holders, challenges and possible recommendations to improve local government administration in Nigeria vis-à-vis Ebonyi State.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the huge human and financial resources invested in local governments in Nigeria, not much has been realized in terms of human and infrastructure development. Hence, the long decades of local government existence has not translated to decades of sustainable development. Life in most rural communities in Nigeria, especially in Ebonyi State is miserable characterized by inadequate supply of basic social and infrastructure facilities to drive socio-economic development. Available statistics reveal that more than one

hundred million (100) Nigerians live in abject poverty, unemployment rate increased by 8.2 percent in 2015 [8]. The 2016 World Economic Forum Human Capital Index rated Nigeria 120 out of 124 countries studied [9]. [10] maintained that:

In most contemporary Nigerian rural communities, there is general low and inadequate provision of basic infrastructure such as electricity supply, potable water, agricultural storage and processing facilities, irrigation and transportation facilities. Also, the rural areas have restricted access to basic education and healthcare facilities because of long distance to traverse to their locations in adjoining towns. Majority of deep wells/boreholes sunk in the rural areas for water supply are not functioning, hence the rural households recourse to fetch water from streams/brooks.

The situation in Ebonyi State is the same especially in the rural areas where basic social amenities are lacking. [11] discovered that physical infrastructure (such as roads, potable water and electricity) and social services (such as education, health, recreation and security) are not adequately provided. Many people in the state even those living in the urban centres lack access to clean source of water. Healthcare facilities are not adequately provided and people still die of preventable diseases. Many primary and secondary schools in the state are still in dilapidated condition. There is high level of poverty which affects mostly women, children and the aged. Inadequate supply of infrastructure facilities and the degrading condition of life in most rural communities according to [12], has resulted to increasing migration/inflow of people into the capital city thus

leading to congestion and attendant urban problems like unemployment, increasing house rents and general high cost of living, amidst low level of income. Unfortunately, the incessant rural-urban migration has now left farming for the aged while the able bodied youths migrate to cities for greener pastures. This ugly situation has hindered effective production of agricultural products. The above problem statement is therefore a challenge for the political office holders to address.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This paper pursues the following objectives:

1. It seeks to explore roles expected of political office holders especially at the local government level.
2. Identify the challenges that confront political office holders in their effort to achieve efficient administration of local government areas.
3. Recommend possible measures to enhance the administration of local government areas in Nigeria and the Ebonyi State in particular.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

**Local Government Area:** This is the geographical location of a given local government. It is at the local government area that the impact of the local government councils is felt by the people. The extent to which political office holders efficiently manage the resources of the local government council will reflect and impact lives in the council areas.

**Local Government Council:** Local government council is the local government as constituted and reorganized by the constitution as the case in Nigeria. It is composed of political office holders, various departments and committees, personnel (both elected representatives and career civil servants), materials, structures, extant laws guiding the conducts of members, among others.

**Political Officer Holders:** A political office holder is any person or an individual elected or appointed into a given public office at any level of government to carry out some stipulated responsibilities. The

assumption of the office is usually preceded with an oath of allegiance to the constituted authority and to discharge assigned responsibilities with utmost faith; without fear or favour and in the interest of the public. The tenure of office is usually specified.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researchers adopted systems theory propounded by [12], as the theoretical framework of analysis. A system is a whole made up of interdependent parts which must work harmoniously to achieve predetermined goals and objectives. System theory assumes that every organization is made up of internal and external environments. Therefore, the two environments including the different parts that make up the organization must be seen to cooperate in pursuance of the stated objectives. Local government is not an exception. All systems, interact with and are influenced by the environment (political, social, economic, ethical, technological etc.), and in turn, influence its environment.

In the words of [13], "a public administration system receives inputs from the environment in the form of:

The demands of citizens for the maintenance of law and order and the provision of goods and services. Public administration processes these demands within the governmental administration... The results of the processing stage are collectively regarded as the outputs. They consist of the relative orderliness of the society, the quantity and quality of goods and services and the timelines of their delivery.

Political office holders are key stakeholders and very important part of the local government system. They supposed to play critical role towards the attainment of goals of local government administration. As a part of the entire local government system their position is indispensable. They must harmoniously work with other parts if



efficient administration of local government areas must be achieved. It is based on the foregoing that this theory fits the study.

### **Roles of Political Office Holders in the Efficient Administration of Local Government Areas**

Efficient local government requires coordinated effort in order to ensure that available resources are properly utilized in the administration of local government councils. This will further translate into concrete socio-economic development for the entire local government areas. Apart from the responsibilities attached to the respective offices of public officials, there are notable roles political office holders play in order to realize the ideological underpinnings behind the establishment of local governments in order to address the yearnings of the citizens. Some of these roles are discussed below.

1. **Leadership:** Political office holders are expected to provide and sustain leadership if the local government must continue to exist and creditably discharge its assigned responsibilities. Leadership is the function of the designated position and the exercise of the responsibilities involved in that position. Leadership according to [14], is the capacity to influence others through inspiration, generated by a passion, motivated by a vision, birthed from a conversion, produced by a purpose. Leadership is the ability to direct others by influence. [15], define leadership as : "influence, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly toward the achievement of group goals". A leader must be trustworthy. This is why the greatest leader, Jesus Christ spoke of trust thus:

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much... And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give

your property of your own" [16].

An attempt to determine the common qualities which effective leaders possess is usually problematic because of different contradictory traits which individuals occupying leadership positions have been found to exhibit. That is why [17] noted that:

...among the effective executives I have known and worked with, there are extroverts and aloof, retiring men, some even morbidly shy. Some are eccentrics; others are painfully correct conformists and are thin. Some are warriors and some are relaxed. Some drink quite heavily and others are total abstainers. Some are men of great charm and warmth; some have no more personality than a frozen mackerel.

Nevertheless, there are still some qualities or characteristics that appear common to most leaders. These characteristics are as follows:

- I. A leader should be able to inspire his followers. Political office holders especially at the local government level should apply their full capabilities to the accomplishment of the goals of their offices.
- II. A leader should be a motivator. He should create an enabling work environment that would motivate the workers to put in their maximum effort towards achieving the goals of their organization.
- III. A leader should be optimistic and abhor pessimism. A leader should believe in himself and that he is capable of achieving certain set objectives.
- IV. A leader should have a clear vision of the direction he wants his organization to go.
- V. A leader should be intelligent so as to be able to make reasoned judgment of events and situations.
- VI. Another important quality of an effective leader is emotional stability. This enables him to keep in personal features in check, make

rational and objective decision and judgements.

- VII. An effective leaders should possess the requisite chrism the requisite charisma to enable to e in the words of [18] "...store the emotion of men, and capture their hearts and minds.."

[19], added that effective political leadership is at the heart of effective democracy. Political office holders are crucial to our shared vision for local government efficient, accountable, reliable and changing lives for the better. Unfortunately, the laudable goals expected of political leadership in Nigeria at various levels of political divisions are yet to be realized. This was better captured by [20] thus:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

2. **Policy Making:** it is the responsibility of political office holders to make sound public policies. [21] define public policy as "hard patterns of resource allocation represented by projects and programmes designed to respond to perceived public problems or challenges requiring governmental action for their solution". On the other hand, [22], defines public policy as a "major guidelines for action". Political office holders are expected to play major role in the initiation of major economic, social and educational objectives of both the federal and state governments. Policy sets direction for action. The success of political leaders in the administration of local government areas therefore lies in the quality of policies made by the stakeholders. The chairman of the local government, the councilors management committee members and other stakeholders have direct role to play here.

3. **Policy Implementation:** Policy implementation is not the exclusive

of core and career civil servants. Political office holders at different levels of government are part and parcel of policy process. The policy-administration dichotomy has been criticized in view of the fact that policy making and execution are inseparable. Therefore, both political appointees and civil servants cooperate in both policy formulation and implementation. For instance, [23], argued that:

The making and execution of policy are inseparably intertwined. Genuine -policy - as distinguished from meaningful generalizations comes into being through the activities of an entire organization. Purposes are given meaning and content by the people who cooperate in carrying them out. Purposes emanate from an entire organization in interaction with its environment. Those highest officials who may be vested with the formal authority for policy formulation often do little more than (a) legitimate the policies developed at the lower levels of hierarchy; (b) make slight adjustments in some of the proposals submitted to them, or (c) make occasional choices between submitted alternatives. A large part of the work of people below the higher levels consists of preparing such policy proposals and interpreting them once they have been formally endorsed.

Political appointees especially management committee members are therefore very crucial in policy implementation. It is essential that the policy to be implemented is clear and specific in order to achieve the intended goals.

**4. Political – Community Mobilization:**

One of the major reasons for the establishment of local government is grass root mobilization for development. Political office holders are supposed to champion this course. Local governments are veritable and appropriate institutions for promoting democracy at the local level. In order to ensure efficient administration of local government areas in Ebonyi State, political office holders must mobilize the people politically through political education, political enlightenment and political actions. They must become useful tool for the conduct of election at this level. With such, according to [24], the process of political recruitment is institutionalized and the institution can then help to train people for higher responsibilities.

**5. Financial Management:** Efficient local government administration requires prudent financial management. Political office holders at all levels of government occupy sensitive and vital positions. They are usually in-charge of the disbursement of invaluable financial resources. Local government has two broad sources of revenue namely; external and internal sources. The external sources include statutory allocation, grants, loans etc. while the internal sources include taxes, fees, licenses, charges among others. The bulk of revenue for the expenditure of local governments is derived from the statutory allocation from the federal government.

The importance of finance can therefore not be overemphasized. [25] corroborated the above point when he stated that:

Among the most crucial decisions of the firm are those which relate to finance, and an understanding of the theory of financial management provides them with conceptual and analytical insights to make these decisions skillfully.

[26], articulated the main objectives of financial management system to include:

- i. Proper planning and budgeting for public expenditure
- ii. Effective and efficient administration of government revenue
- iii. Proper use of budget resources
- iv. Effective control of public expenditure
- v. Accounting and reporting on public finance
- vi. Full accountability for all public spending.

In view of the foregoing, it is worthy of note that financial management at the local government level must take cognizance of the Model Financial Memoranda (MFM) which stipulates the spending limits of political office holders. Political office holders are expected to pursue the above stated objectives vigorously.

**6. Monitoring and Supervision of Government Programmes and Projects:** it is the duty of political appointees who occupy public offices to ensure efficient monitoring and supervision of development programmes and project at the local government areas. Lack of adequate supervision of projects constitutes the bane of efficient local government administration. This manifests in abandonment of projects and siphoning of funds meant for development in the local government areas. Management committees are expected to make serious intervention in this regard.

**Issues and Challenges faced by Political Office Holders in their Efforts towards Efficient Administration of Local Government Areas**

**1. Undue Constituency Expectations:** Often times, political office holders are faced with undue expectations from their constituencies. This becomes more prominent especially in the area that lack basic social amenities. Members of these areas expect the appointees or the elected representatives to perform magic. They want their conditions to change and expect their leaders to ensure development of the constituency at all cost. This type of pressure



usually characterizes politics in developing countries especially in Nigeria.

Another dimension to the above is family pressure, friends and relatives. The tendency is for members to expect you to deep your hands into public purse and solve their problems. The political office holders are therefore tempted to deviate from their oath of office of paying allegiance to constituted authority and public interest to pursuing private gains. At the extreme, this often results to official corruption. The challenge therefore is on how government officials can curtail this pressure.

2. **Corruption:** Corruption is one of the banes of political office holders and constitutes the impediments to efficient administration of local government areas. [27] sees corruption as abuse of public office for private gain. It is a bad record that any Nigeria ranked 136 least corruption nations out of 175 countries studies (Transparency International, 2016). Nigerians surveyed believed that corruption has astronomically increased from 2011 to 2015. Also, Global Financial Integrity estimates that \$157 billion in the past decade left the country illicitly [28].

[29], regretted that:

Nigerian leadership is using the nation's wealth to corrupt, really to destroy, the country, so no improvement or change can happen... Corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage, and Nigeria will die if we continue to pretend... The World Bank recently released numbers indicating that about \$400 billion has been pilfered from Nigeria's treasury since independence.

We all know the consequences of corruption. This was neatly captured by [30] in the following words:

The consequences of looting the common

wealth of the country could be such level of deprivation in our social and economic services that people's lives could be affected like women who may not get ante-natal care, hospitals that are not well staffed and not well-funded, roads that are not well constructed, people could have accident and die. I am wary that an accused person may not have thought of the final consequences it have on people.

The ugly menace of corruption in Nigeria was one of the major reasons why the current administration led by President Mohammadu Buhari made the fight against corruption one of the cardinal objectives of his administration. How far the federal, state and local governments have tackled corruption in Nigeria is a discourse for another day.

3. **Party Politics:** Another major challenge that faces political office holders is the harmful effects of party politics. This has impeded efficient local government and overall development of the council areas. On this, [31] notes local government party politics is in practice an extension of the party in power. The financial resources and other resources of the local government are often mobilized to sustain the party from losing control at the top. The chief executive of the local government is required to make some returns to the party, for the administrative running of the party. The party in power is entitled to a certain percentage of the contracts awarded in the local government. The local government chairman and the members of the councils are encouraged to award contracts only to party members as a way of attracting members of the opposition parties and the new members into the party. All these practices minimize the financial resources available to the local governments to carry out their

statutory functions and hinder grass roots development [32]. This again is a challenge.

4. **The Problem of Revenue Generation:** One major problem of revenue generation in the local government is the mis-match between the tax raising power and responsibilities assigned to the local government. This singular problem has become an albatross and the bane of efficient local government administration in Nigeria. Local governments have failed to render efficient services especially to the rural dwellers as a result of meager and unproductive sources of internal revenue. [33], wrote that of all the problems faced by local governments in Nigeria, it is quite clear that the most recurrent ones are finance and the sizeable mismatch between their statutory functions and responsibilities and revenue assignments. The flow of financial resources available to them and the constraining limits of their tax raising powers of fiscal jurisdiction. In Nigeria, "the degree of decentralization of expenditure is higher than the degree of decentralization of revenue". Thereby causing a great divergence between sources of revenue and functional capability of the councils. This means that there is lack of symmetry hence the problems of non-correspondence of vertical fiscal imbalance. The challenge before is to bring your ingenuity to bear and ensure efficient utilization of the available financial resources.
5. **Wasteful Public Expenditure:** [34], argued that the spending of most local government is not only characterized by waste but also by very pervasive corruption. Although corruption is described as a cankerworm found in every facet of the Nigerian society, it is particularly worrisome at the local government level. In the public domain corruption is so entrenched that it almost becomes the normal way of getting things done. This may sound too superfluous. But what is clear though is that corruption is entrenched at the third tier of government that it is obvious to

everybody that there is not much development to show for the huge financial resources that have accrued to the councils. Thus, the views of Nigerians collated in the Political Bureau Report in 1987 still remain valid till today. That despite the strategic importance of local government to national development process, its contribution has been minimal. The former Governor Ikedi Ohakim of Imo State gave a damning verdict on the performance of local governments. He stated that it is obvious that the local government is not working. The council system has failed woefully in Nigeria. And if nothing is done to salvage the situation, the country will continue to have problems at the grassroots. "We have wasted money to the extent that the council system has become an enterprise of a different dimension where some big men try to install their house maids and houseboys so that they can be making returns... the council system has enriched only few individuals who are now being chased by the masses on the street" (Guardian, 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2007). Political officials are to ensure that unnecessary expenditures are curtailed.

6. **Caliber of Personnel/Public Officers:** Efficient local government administration is a function of officials who possess the requisite skills to discharge with every sense of diligence, the functions assigned to them. [35] notes that no nation in the world can carry out any of its development programmes without adequate and competent manpower. Qualified manpower is not only critical but a measure of a nation's strength, security and wellbeing. Unfortunately, the caliber of staff in most local governments in Nigeria does not support any meaningful administration at that level of government. This mostly manifests in poor quality of service delivery. Local governments are staffed with unqualified personnel who are not properly trained on the rudiments and pros and cons of administration. Operationally, officials lack coordination and understanding among themselves, a factor which

has hampered efficient administration. The above view still aligns with the position of [36] who observed that:

Government institutions of today could hardly be possible-certainly would not function effectively without an understanding of their managers and ways organization function toward public goals.

Supporting the above, [37] observed that local governments in Nigeria have serious problems of personnel who render efficiency and effective services. He argued that this stems from the fact that most of the personnel of local government are either ill-trained or untrained in their various areas of operation and services. This situation is made worse by the unwillingness of some qualified officers to take up appointments in the local government.

**7. Recruitment and Sources of Personnel in the Local Government:** [38], see recruitment as a process of assessing a job, announcing the vacancy, arousing interest and stimulating people to apply. [39] notes that the importance of having efficient and effective procedures for recruitment can hardly be exaggerated. If organizations are able to find and employ staff who consistently fulfill their roles and are capable of taking on increased responsibilities, they are immeasurably better placed to deal with the opportunities and threats arising from their operating environment than competitors, who are always struggling to build and maintain their workforce. However, despite the numerous gains of efficient recruitment process, recruitment and sources of personnel in the local government is often politicized and this has been the bane of manpower development of local governments. [40], regretted this when he observed that:

A key ailment of local government administration in Nigeria is related to one of its traditional functions, which is staffing

(manpower). In every area of local government development, human resources play an indispensable role. Badly managed, the human resources can limit the progress of the people at the grassroots in many directions. On the other hand, if the manpower is effectively managed and planned, its knowledge, powers, skills and competence can lead to enviable social and economic progress in the local governments.

A politicized recruitment undermines merit system and has resulted to poor performance of local government officials in Nigeria. Interestingly, recruitment processes and guidelines for local government staff are well spelt out in the Handbook on Local Government Administration Chapter II, Section 5.9. Section 5.9.1 states as follows:

All recruitments by the local government Junior Staff Management Committee (JSMC) must, as a rule, be in consonance with the manpower needs of the local government as provided in the approved local government estimates. Any violation of the provision of the section will lead to the members of the JSMC and the approving authority being surcharged and the person so irregularly appointed being summarily removed from the service of the local government.

Unfortunately, recruitment at the local government level in practice hardly adheres to the above stated rules. [41], observed that politicization of recruitment enthrones spoils system in the working of our public administration, hence, Nigerian public offices and institutions have been saddled with mediocre and technically

unqualified personnel with the “include the bearer...” syndrome. In contributing to the above discourse, [23], [24], revealed that the consequences of politicized recruitment include corruption, low productivity, inefficiency, overstaffing, indiscipline and mediocrity.

**8. Problem of Training Inadequacy and Lack of Sustainability:** The connection between training and performance of personnel has long been established. It is worrisome that this has not been internalized at the local government level. Training of personnel has not been given the due attention and one of the consequences is low productivity. Most local governments in Nigeria possess staff who are not trainable. Regrettably, the process of their recruitment is a major factor. In aligning with the above fact, [11], maintained that if we can have a reliable and externally valid selection process, training and personnel development efforts would appear superfluous. [1], corroborated the above view when he averred that staff training and development in most public institutions in Nigeria manifest itself in “I.M”, relation, clientalism, kindred ties and if you like ethnic chauvinism, thus evaluation of certain candidates has been very subjective, saddled with caution. This ugly practice has constituted a cog in the wheel of local government administration. Coupled with the above, is the fact that adequate funds are hardly released for training and manpower development programmes. Available training programmes are usually not based on training needs, thus constituting the gap between staff performance and efficient administration of local governments. It is also worrisome that training and workshops seem to be an exclusive right of the few principal officers. Most staff and political office holders of the local governments sees training as an opportunity to travel and enjoy allowances and not as an exercise to improve their skills. [8], regretted this when he wrote that an untrained member of staff is a liability to a

dynamic organization, as he not only applies the wrong skill but also impacts the wrong knowledge to others coming after him and those he happens to be supervising. In a situation where training is provided, the trained staff may not be effectively utilized thereby resulting to a good number of them applying for job outside the local government. This again, hinders efficient local government administration in Nigeria.

Similarly, [9], observed that where training exist in the system, they were often carried out arbitrarily without due recourse to adequate training needs assessment. He regretted that this ugly scenario often resulted to a sort of mismatch between training and job descriptions such that employees tend to find themselves performing tasks where they have insufficient competencies. This undoubtedly, result to inefficiency in the local government system.

**9. Lack of Proper Supervision and Monitoring of the Officials for Goal Attainment:** Activities of officials at the local government and other public institutions in Nigeria are hardly subjected to proper supervision and monitoring. This is also one of the major encumbrances to the efficient local government. This manifests in all aspect of local government administration. Most staff are seen in the local government usually when it is time for payment of salaries and entitlements after which the area is deserted. This has been the practice over the years and has hindered progress and development of the grassroots. Another dimension to lack of proper supervision and monitoring manifests in the area of revenue generation for administration of council areas. Revenue agents and collectors are not adequately monitored. Hence, funds generated for the development of council areas are diverted for personnel use. Embezzlement of revenue by local government revenue collectors have also resulted in widespread unwillingness by

communities to pay taxes. This happens as a result of lack of proper supervision and monitoring. [32], posited that one of the factors responsible for local government poor revenue generation is the casual attitude of the revenue collectors and other treasuring staff. They labour under the illusion that (no matter) whatever federation account will provide adequate funds for the payment of personnel emolument. This assumption is deceptive and unhealthy too in that with poor revenue generation efforts, some councils have found themselves unable to pay salary after deductions made by the state government. With proper supervision and monitoring this unconventional practice can be dealt with.

10. **Problem of Performance Appraisal in the Local Government:** Performance needs to be appraised if performance lapses must be identified and addressed. This area also, has not been given the desired attention especially at the local government level. It is therefore one of the gaps that needed to be filled between public office holders and efficient local government administration in Nigeria. [38] notes that:

Normally, appraisals in the local government are to be conducted annually as per practice. Employee performance appraisal is carried out with the Annual Performance Evaluation Report commonly called APER form. Usually, at

the end of every year, a staff is supposed to fill the performance form and submit to his or her direct supervisor for assessment... Employee appraisal is supposed to be based on job content each aspect of the job details of the requirements of a job in order to critically assess performance.

It is argued that appraisals if objectively done, can help distinguish between a dedicated worker and a lazy one; provide systematic judgements to back up salary increase, transfers, promotion, demotions or terminations', identify individual's current level of job performance, identify training and development needs, motivate subordinates through recognition, help managers counsel and coach subordinates so they will improve their performance among others. Unfortunately, local government in Nigeria have not fully benefited from the annual employee appraisal. Performance appraisal in the local government is characterized by biases against employees on grounds of sex, race, religion, position, supervisor's lack of interest and unclear standards, (Egwu, 2015). Nwizu (2002), maintained that public institutions in Nigeria have difficulties in accurately measuring the performance of their employees thereby resulting in unsatisfactory performance in key positions and loss of unrealized potentials in any employee. The case of local government is not an exception and this also truncates efficient local government administration.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusively, with every sense of sincerity efficient local government administration has eluded us over the years. Most local government areas lack basic social and infrastructure facilities such as quality road network, lack access to potable water, epileptic power supply that does not support industrialization, most primary and secondary schools are in dilapidated conditions and need urgent attention, school enrolment has been low, poor healthcare system, among others. These

variables constitute the reasons for high level of poverty among the rural populace. However, all hope is not lost. In this study attempts have been made to identify and discuss the salient roles political office holders can play in achieving efficient local government administration in Ebonyi State and other places. These roles include providing quality leadership, policy making, and policy implementation. Others are political - community mobilization, financial management, monitoring and



supervision of government programmes and projects, etc. Unfortunately, it has never been a smooth ride for public officials as they are faced with challenges which range from undue expectations from their various constituencies, official corruption,

inadequate fund, party politics to mismanagement of financial resources. The general impression of the study is that these challenges can be addressed if political office holders and other relevant stakeholders can take the bull by the horn.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to provide quality leadership, political office holders should constantly engage in regular workshops and training programmes to update their knowledge and skills. The world now is a global village and things are changing both politics and governance and to keep abreast with the trends training is inevitable. Again, both policy making as well as policy implementation require great skills. The ideas of yesterday may not really work. Hence, new methods of dealing with public issues must be put in place through training.
2. Political office holders should avoid unnecessary clannish interest as this has been the bane of efficient local government administration. You must see the local government as one entity that belongs to all of you. You must attach values to issues that hold all of you together and not primordial values and sectionalism.
3. As a political office holder you must shun all manner of corrupt practices.
4. There should be proper monitoring of the activities of the local government officials in order to make sure that there is no derivation between what the establishing laws for local government administration stated and what is being practiced.
5. As political office holder you should maintain harmonious relationships before you can achieve result.
6. Political office holders should carry along their subordinates and integrate them in the programme of the council. Ensure that participatory leadership is enthroned and established at the local council areas. Also cordiality of labour and political office holders. They are partners in progress in the actualization of the objective of good governance.

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