

The Effect Of Economic Downturn On Local Government Service Delivery In Ekiti State ,Nigeria.

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Abstract:- Discourse On The Local Government System In Nigeria Involves Two Major Notable Factors: The Intervention Of The Military In Politics, And The 1976 Reform Of Local Government Which Brought A Lot Of Changes Into The System. However, The 1979 Constitution, Which Provided The Basis For The 1976 Reforms, Plunged The Local Government System Into A Of Challenges, And Ever Since Then Local Government In Nigeria Has Remained Non Relevance. This Paper Examines The Implications Of Economic Downturn On Local Government Administration In Ekiti State. Indeed ,Local Governments Generally Depend On Monthly Allocation From The Federal Government Through State Governments. This Study Therefore Finds Out The Effectiveness And The Efficiency Of Local Governments' Performance In This Era Of Allocation Inconsistence. Basically, Local Government Is Saddled With The Responsibility Of Ensuring Quality Service Delivery To The Grass Root (People). The Study Therefore Raises Fundamental Question As To How Have The Local Governments In Ekiti State Been Able To Execute Those Life Proving Projects Expected Of Them Even When The Receipt Of Financial Allocation Is Not Feasible. The Study Employs Primary Source Of Data Collection Which Involves The Administration Of Designed Questionnaires To Elicit Information From The Grass Root (People) And The Selected Stakeholders.

The Study Concludes On The Note That There Can Be Effective Performance Of Local Governments' Functions In Ekiti State Provided The Internally Generated Revenue Is Aptly Upgraded.

Keywords: *Economic Downturn, Service Delivery And Local Government Administration .*

I. INTRODUCTION

The System Of Local Government Administration Has Received Critical Attention Since The 1950s, When The Federal System Came Into Operation In Nigeria (Adamolekun 1979; And Gboyega 1987; Cited In Adeola (2008). Little Wonders Therefore That The System Has Not Been Able To Attain Its Desired Objective Of Ensuring Quality Service Delivery. However, The 1976 Reform Acknowledged The Place Of The Local Government System As Government At Local Level, Established By Law, With Defined Power (Ozohu And Chima 2015). The Implication Of This Is That Local Governments Are Created With The Ultimate Goal Of Bringing Government Closer To The People At The Grassroots. In Nigeria, The Introduction Of The Reforms Aimed To Effect Accelerated Development And To Enable The Local Population Participate And Hold Those In Power Accountable For Their Actions And Inactions. However, A True Third Tier Has Not Been Witnessed In Nigerian Politics, Despite The Widespread Acceptance Of Local Government As A Potent System To Mobilise People For Local Participation In Governance (Ozohu And Chima, 2015). Several Studies Have Established The Challenges Bedevilling The Nigerian Local Government System, Including Issues Such As Poor Funding, Paucity Of Human Capital, Corruption, Poor Service Delivery Etc. However, Little Attention Has Been Paid To The Economic Forces That Have Shaped The Operation Of Local Government In Nigeria. There Are 774 Local Governments In Nigeria And It Is Instructive To Note That All These Local Governments Are Usually Affected In The Period Of Economic Melt Down. This Study Examines The Contributing Factors Amounting To The Implications Consequent Upon The Economic Down In Ekiti State In This Era Of "Change" In Nigerian Politics.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Relevance Of Local Government In Ekiti State To Engender Good Governance Has Adversely Been Hampered By Inconsistence And Erratic Nature Of Monthly Allocation Of Funds .Indeed, This Development Has Rendered The Essential Place Of Local Government System To Nothing But A Ruse In Ekiti State. A Situation Whereby 6 To 7 Months Salaries Have Not Been Paid To The State Civil Servants Let Alone Local Government Workers. As Worse As This Situation Is, The Community Development Programmes/Projects Normally Undertaken By The Local Government Have Not Been Implemented As Usual. This Study Therefore Takes A Look At This Precarious Situation And Examines How Best To Provide Survival

Mechanism To The Local Government Administration In Ekiti State During This Era Of Change Accompanied By Paucity Of Funds. Conceptual Clarification Of The Local Government And Economic Downturn .

III. CONCEPT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This Aspect Examines The Clarification Of Concepts Of The Local Government And The Economic Meltdown/Downturn As Operationalised In This Study. In Clarifying The Concept Of Local Government, Attempt Will Be Made To Reflect Some Scholarly Contributions. Local Government In A Multi-Ethnic Federation Is Important Because It Creates A Sense Of Belonging Among The People. It Is Responsible For Local Affairs, And Designed To Address Various Specific Local Needs. Laski (1975) Corroborated This View When He Argued That “*We Cannot Realise The Full Benefit Of Democracy Unless We Begin By Admitting That All Problems Are Not Central Problems, And That All Results Of Problems Not Central In Their Incidence Require Decisions By The Populace, And The Persons, Where And When The Incidence Is Most Deeply Felt*” (Laski 1975 In Tonwe 2012). Local Government Is The Public Administration Of Towns, Cities, Counties And Districts. It Is The System Of Locally Elected Members Representing Their Communities And Making Decisions On Their Behalf. Local Factors Such As Geography, The Environment, Ethnic Make-Up, Economic Opportunities And Health Can Be Better Taken Account Of By Locally Elected Councils Charged With Making Decisions That Affect Their Communities. These Decisions Can Relate To The Effective And Efficient Provision Of Services To Meet Community Needs. In Conceptualizing Local Government, Ron Exiner(2012) Maintains That Councils Achieve Their Goals And Fulfill Their Roles In Various Ways Which Includes: Planning And Monitoring, Service Delivery, Lawmaking & Enforcement Representation And Advocacy. In Carrying Out The Planning And Monitoring Role, Local Governments Set The Overall Direction For Their Municipalities Through Long-Term Planning. Examples Include Council Plans, Financial Plans, Municipal Strategic Statements And Other Strategic Plans. Setting The Vision, And Then Ensuring That It Is Achieved, Is One Of The Most Important Roles Of Local Government. Equally, The Area Of Service Delivery .

Local Government Is Responsible For Managing And Delivering A Range Of Quality Services To Their Communities, Such As Public Health And Recreational Facilities, Local Road Maintenance, And Public Libraries. Furthermore, Local Governments Do Make And Enforce. Local Governments Legislate And Make Decisions In Areas Over Which They Have Legislative Authority. The Laws Made By Local Governments Are Called Bye Laws And Cover Issues Such As The Activities Permitted On Public Land, Animal Management, And Use Of Infrastructure. Local Governments Are Also Responsible For Enforcing Local Laws And Other Legislation Over Which They Have Authority. The Activities Of Local Governments Are Guided By Policies. Developing And Implementing These Policies Are Key Functions.

On The Representation Function Of The Local Government, Councils Often Represent Their Local Community On Matters Of Concern To Those Constituents. Ron Exiner, (2012) Adds That The Local Performs The Function Of Advocacy .Local Governments Have A Role In Advocating On Behalf Of Their Constituencies To State And Federal Levels Of Government, Statutory Authorities And Other Sectors.

Local Government Is Further Perceived By M.P Barber(1975) As: *System Of Geographical Decentralization In Which Some Functions And Responsibilities Of Government Are Delegated To Government Units Or Bodies At The Local Level*

The Truth Of The Matter Is That Local Government As Agent Of Development Depends On The Successful Management And Mobilization Of The People At The Local Level Since Development Itself Is An Economic Phenomenon Which Equally Relies On The Empowerment Of The Local Citizens At The Grass Roots(Akinbosade,2003:27). Besides, The 1976 Local Government Reform Conceptualizes Local Government As: *Government At Local Level Exercised Through Representative Council Established By Law To Exercise Specific Powers Within Defined Areas. These Powers Should Give The Council Substantial Control Over Local Affairs As Well As The Staff And Financial Institutional Structure To Initiate And Direct The Provision Of Services And To Determine And Implement Projectsso As To Ensure , Through Devolution Of Functions To These Councils And Through The Active Participation Of The People And Their Traditional Institutions, That Local Initiative And Response To Local Needs And Conditions Are Maximized.*

This Definition Of Local Government As Postulated By The 1976 Local Government Reform Sees Local Government As Being Concerned With The Administration Of Local Affairs By The People Inhabiting The Locality Their Own Representative Body Made Up Of Elected Councilors Or Representatives And A Chairman. (Akinbode 2003). Nevertheless, It Must Be Emphasized That Local Government Is Not Absolutely Local Or Independent As Such, Although Individuals Of A Defined Area Are Opportune To Manage Or Have A Say In Their Own Affairs Yet, There Exist A Minimal , If Not Overriding Control, From The State And Federal Government . This Interventional Tendencies From Top Have Impacted Negatively More Often On The Administrative And Finances Of The Local Government. Economic Downturn

The Concept Of Economic Downturn Is Perceived Differently From Various Scholars Of Reputed Majorly , It Is Considered “ A Situation Of Recession , Whereby The Economic Calculations Are Wrong” Economic Downturn Is Described By (Henry 2016).

*As An Economy That Is Already Suffocated With Liquidity ... A Situation Of High Rate Of Inflation, High Level Of Unemployment , High Cost Of Fund, A Situation Of Poor Working Condition For Workers – No Salaries, Irregular Remunerations... A Situation Where The Acceleration Into Poverty And Economic Turmoil Is More Rapid.*In A Very Related Development (Simon 2016) Submits That Economic Downturn Potent:

A Situation Whereby Both Monetary And Fiscal Authorities Are In A Panic Mode. In A Situation , It Is Difficult To Control What Happens. He Goes Further To Emphasize That In An Economic Downturn, Those Who Should Have Engaged In Productive Activities To Address The High Unemployment Rate Would Not Be Able To Access Foreign Exchange.And So In Such An Economy, Every Tier Of Government Finds It Difficult To Reflect On Service Delivery Let Alone Local Government Performance In This Regard, It Is An Extremely Complex Economic Condition For The Finance Institutions, Because It Is Characterized With Excess Liquidity (Henry , 2016).From The Foregoing Therefore, The Operation Of Any System Whatsoever And Government Be It Federal, State Or Local Government Is Hampered Due To Inadequate Funds Coupled With High Rate Of Foreign Exchange E.G Dollars Is Increasing, Inconsiderably Every Day. No Price Stability And The Mechanism To Achieve That Is Not Available For Imagination. It Is A Of Confusion. (Henry, 2016).

Since This Study Examines Local Government Administration In The Era Of Economic Downturn, The Grassroot People Suffer, Because Some Essential Projects That Could Benefit People And Provoke Comfortable Living Will Be Very Remote . Honestly , The Current Situation At The Local Government Level Has Justified This Assertion. In Ekiti State, Which Is The Central Focus Of This Paper, The Local Government Administration Has Become Next To Nothing Because Of The Fact Monthly Fiscal Allocation For The System Has Become Grossly Inadequate Which Cannot Propel Any Development Projects. Seven (7) To 8 Months Salaries For Local Government Workers Are Not Paid: Therefore Subjecting Them To A Technical Beggars” And It Is Getting Worse Everyday.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

This Study Has Been Able To Discuss The Effects Of Economic Meltdown On The Administration Of The Local Government In Ekiti State. The Following Conclusions And Recommendations Are Derivatives Of The Study. Firstly, When A Country Is In A Recession, It Means That Some Economic Calculation Are Wrong (Abimbola . 2016) What Must Be Done Is To Review Financial And Economic Strategies. There Is Also The Need To Review All Economic Parameters Like The Inflation Rate, Gross Domestic Product Interest Rate And The Employment Rate . If There “Holes” In Those Areas Attempt Must Be Intensified To Block Them.

Indeed, The Government Must Think Of Unorthodox Measures It Can Use To Address The Challenges, This Is Not The Time To Display Figures As Evidence Of Improvement. The Amount So Spent Does Not Matter As Much As There Is Greater Output Of The Investment. People Must Feel The Impact Of Every Naira Spent By The Government. Furthermore, Government Must Understand The Difference Between Growth And Development. It Must Begin To Explore Different Strategies To Boost Development. Economic Growth Emphasis Figures While Economic Growth Focuses On The Well- Being Of The People.(Abimbola, 2016). It Is Also Recommended That The Government Should Make Genuine Efforts To Address Challenges In Housing And Infrastructure Sectors. The Postulation Of Olanrewaju Abimbola (2016) Supports This Recommendation As He Posits Thus:*The Government Must Study How President Barrack Obama Handled The Economy Of The United States When He Came To Power Eight Years Ago. There Is Nothing Wrong In Replicating Template That Has Worked For Others.*In Another Development, Irtwange Simon In His Words Recommends That The Best Method To Address The Current Economic Downturn Is To Prioritise Expenditure*The Only Way Out Of The Challenges Of Economic Recession Is To Prioritise Our Spending. We Need To Identify Key Sectors Of The Economy That Have The Broadest Impacts On The People . Those Are The Areas The Government Should Focus On .*It Must Equally Be Recommended That Government Needs To Put The Right People In Strategic Positions If Indeed The Economic Challenges Are To Be Overcome. Friday Udo (2016) Holds Similar View As He Concludes And Recommends;*The Government Needs To Sustain The Growth We Have Recorded, After Which It Should Be Thinking About Growing The Economy. So The Focus Should Be On Sustaining The Achievements When Recorded In Key Sectors Of The Economy.*Also Investors Should Be Encouraged To Come Into The Country To Transact Their Businesses. This Is Very Imperative. Corroborating This Conclusion , Bismack Rewane (2016) Submits That; *If The Oil And Gas Production Does Not Come Back Up And We Do Not Bring Down The Interest Rate, The Economy Will Not Recover.*In Conclusion, The Government Should Endeavor To Cut Interest Rate To Encourage Borrowing , High Interest Rate Is An Anomaly During A Recession. And If All These Recommendations Are Faithfully Followed And Implemented. There Will Be Economic Boom That Will Boost The Effective Performance Of The Government And Its Agencies.

V. IMPLICATION OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN ON EKITI STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

From The Foregoing,Article 7 Of The 1999 Constitution Empowers State Governments To Enact Legislation With Regard To “*The Establishment, Structure, Composition And Functions*” Of Democratically Elected Local Government Councils. The Fourth Schedule Also Assigns Some Critical Functions To Local Government. However, These Provisions Only Exist On Paper. In Practice, State Governments Have Taken Over Most Local Government Functions In Order To Justify Spending Funds Earmarked For Councils In The Joint Revenue Account. For Example, Ubani Notes That: “*Lagos State Government Constructed Parks In Various Parts Of The State With Money Deducted From The State And Local Government Joint Revenue Account. In Ondo State, Government Constructed A Modern Motor Park In Akure, The State Capital*” (2012, P. 1). Actions Such As These Contradict The Provisions Of The 1999 Constitution, Which Provides That These Projects Ought To Have Been Executed By Local Government..The 1999 Constitution, Like The 1979 Constitution, Gives States Very Wide Powers To Manage Issues Of Local Government Organisation And Structure. This Provision Has Proved Confusing And Counter-Productive, For Example Leading To Prolonged Disputes Between The Federal Government And Lagos State Government. The Constitutional Neglect Suffered By Local Government Has Resulted In A Power Struggle Between The Federal And State Governments Over Control At The Local Level – A Situation That Has Seriously Hindered The Democratisation Process At The Grass Roots.This Changed When The 1999 Constitution Introduced The State Joint Local Government Account (Sjlgc) (Section 160, Sub-Sections (2) To (8)), Which Provides That:*The Amount Standing To The Credit Of Local Government Councils In The Federation Account Shall Be Allocated To The States For The Benefit Of Their Local Government Councils On Such Terms And In Such Manner As May Be Prescribed By The National Assembly; And That Each State Should Maintain A Special Account, To Be Called The State Joint Local Government Account, Into Which Shall Be Paid All Allocations To Local Government Councils Of The State From The Federation Account And From The Government Of The State.*

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