

The Role of Local Government Councils in Rural Development: A Case Study of Kirfi Local Government Area of Bauchi State (1996-2019)

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the role of local government councils in rural development, focusing on Kirfi local government area in Bauchi State from 1996 to 2019. It examines various developmental aspects such as road networks, water supply, educational infrastructures, electrification, agricultural facilities, and human capital development. Utilizing a historical research methodology involving primary and secondary sources, the study highlights the positive impact of Kirfi Local Government in improving road networks, providing electricity, supporting agriculture through fertilizer and loans, and enhancing education infrastructure. Between 1996 and 2015, the local government allocated over fifty million naira for human development, aiming to boost efficiency and productivity in both the civil service and educational sector. The provision of social and health facilities significantly improved health conditions and contributed to the reduction of mortality rates in the Local Government Area. Despite these achievements, the study identifies challenges faced by Kirfi LGA, including constitutional, financial, political, and inadequate public support. The research recommends prioritizing local government autonomy, ensuring proper funding, and emphasizing quality leadership for Kirfi LGA's development. In conclusion, the study summarizes the key findings and emphasizes the importance of addressing constitutional, financial, and political challenges to foster sustainable rural development.

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INTRODUCTION

The local government is viewed as a semi-autonomous area which is formed under the constitution or general laws of a state to carry out functions within specified geographical area. Agbakoba stated that the local government is an administrative and political unit that is vested with the powers under law to govern a specified locality. Its philosophy is entrenched on the idea of grassroots level participation in government. Scholars and practitioners have indicated that local governments are not only formed as representative arm of the state and federal

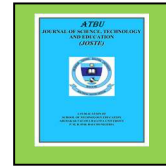
government but as a means by which goods and services are delivered to the people within the framework of enabling laws which established them. Consequently, it is the need to foster a balanced development in the rural areas and enhance the full participation of the rural dwellers that precipitate the establishment of the local government constitutes as a channel of administrative and political structure that facilitates national integration, rural commitment in governance and a channel of fostering development is viewed as a co-partner with the state and federal government.

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The political history and constitutional development of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized from the evolution and continual growth of local government in Nigeria. The introduction of the Indirect Rule System by Lord Fredrick Lugard in 1914 signaled the evolution of the Nigerian Local Authority that later transformed into local government areas and has been a continuous and growing process in Nigeria till today. Native Administration Ordinance No. 14 of 1916 by Lord Lugard spelt out the colonial system of administration in Nigeria in the early part of the 19th century. It was under this form that the use of Traditional Institution of Chiefs and Rulers to administer the natives, but under the strict supervision of the colonial administrators, was developed.

The Native Administration System in Nigeria resulted in the introduction of a modern local government system in Eastern Nigeria under the Local Government Ordinance of 1950. Furthermore, the Local Government Law No. 25 of 1950 suspended the 1950 Local Government Ordinance and, in 1960, after the Independence, the Nigeria Government replaced the 1955 laws and a new local government law No. 17 became effective. In Addition, Oluwatobi posited that amendments were made in 1961 and 1963. In this respect, a Ministry of Local Government was mandated to manage and direct the affairs of the New Local Government Councils created. This particular era witnessed the introduction of local government system based on the British Colonial model. The economic changes also affected the new direction. This also was the period of trial centered on the term "transformation," which is the function and powers that can be devolved from the center of regional governments to the local authorities to carry out certain assigned functions with some degree of autonomy. Research by Hector observed transformation as a capacity of a national economy that initially had been static for a long time but which now sustains an annual increase of its gross national product at rates of perhaps 5% to 7% or more.

However, the period of civil war witnessed a new introduction that departed conceptually from the previous system. It involved

the sole Administrator system. By this, a civil servant executive was appointed as the sole manager to oversee the affairs of the local government. However, a new system was also introduced in practice following the end of the civil war. In 1971, therefore, the government promulgated an edict establishing the Divisional Administration System, which created 39 Administrative Divisions in two categories: seven Urban and 32 Ordinary Divisions. This evolved a two-tier system of local administration. In Nigeria, the National Guidelines for Local Government Reform was published in August, 1976 with the intention of making local government an effective basis of rural transformation that bringing government administration closer to the populace to make the people interact effectively with government.

Interestingly, Oluwatobi defined local government as a political division of a country or (in a government framework) state, which comprises bylaw and has considerable organizing power over related issues, empowering the authorities to force charges or to apply work for endorsed reason. The overseeing body of such substance is chosen or something else is locally chosen. Contributing advance to the author viewed a more inclusive definition of local government, and the one that captures the important records of local government, is contained in the 1976 guidelines for local Government Change. Concurring to the reform, local government is defined as a government at the nearby level responsible to work out through agent chamber, built up by law to work out powers inside characterized zones. These powers sought to grant the board considerable control over local undertakings (counting staffing), organization and money-related powers to start and coordinate the arrangement of benefits, and to decide and actualize ventures so as to kind word the exercises of the state government in their ranges, and guarantee, through decentralization of capacities to the boards, dynamic cooperation throughout with individuals in local activity with maximum cooperation.

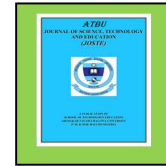
However, the Mohammed/Obasanjo administration, which overthrew Gowon regime in

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1975, noted that local government bodies were considerably nearer to the majority of citizens; for this, Oluwatobi asserted that the state and the federal governments should therefore allocate more statutory powers to the local government councils to perform certain functions and services that were of primary concern to the people. To further emphasize the importance attached to local government, the administration made the establishment of a dynamic national local government system one of its preconditions for reforming national government to elected civilians. Two of the unstated objectives, easily deductible from the content of the guidelines, are the uniformizing of local government and the integration of the emirate system into a Nigeria-wide modern democratic local government system.

During 1986, a five-man committee was appointed for each of the 301 local governments. The Buhari administration's concern, as cited by Nweke, to whittling, had sown the powers of local government in Nigeria and, at the same time, he set up the Dasuki committee to reconsider the local government administration in Nigeria. The Buhari administration was overthrown by Ibrahim Babangida. Under the Babangida Regime, some measures were taken to strengthen the local government system. Local government elections were also held throughout the federation in 1987 and the statutory allocation was increased from 10% to 15%; the payment of federal allocation to local governments was stopped and the allocation paid directly to local governments. Nweke and Sabina postulated that, under Babangida administration regime, more local governments were created. Finally, the Babangida administration was succeeded by the Abacha regime. However, the previous governments had focused their attention on the political gains rather than rural transformation, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. Therefore, the researcher' target in this study is how then to attest that rural transformation projects are actually being delivered or executed?

More so, this target is the brain behind this study. Basically, the objectives of local government in Nigeria, as posited by Nwankwo,

are as follows: to provide certain opportunities to practice democracy; to provide certain basic services for the citizens at the local level; to join the local citizens to solve their community problems and needs that could not be solved by the individuals alone; to become the nearest government to the local citizens at all levels of need, such as for reconstruction of roads and bridges in the rural area, supporting rural farmers through agricultural machineries, provision of recreation centers, construction of fish pond and public toilets, and building of hospitals, motor parks, and public library; and to become a useful instrument for the central and state government in the governance of the country. The functions of the local government, according to Ebonyi, are of two kinds as pointed out in 1976 local government reforms.

The first one was those in the exclusive list. The exclusive or mandatory functions of local government are those functions that they have to perform as a matter of right. On the contrary, the concurrent or permissive functions of local government are those they can perform in conjunction with the state and federal government. The author further posited that there is no local government that cannot execute its functions or responsibilities without resources needed to achieve community development projects such as human resources (staffing, development, compensation, safety and health, and employee and labor relations), financial resources (state and government grant), economic resources (labor, capital, and technology), material resources (stationeries, sourcing, purchasing, and storing), and technological resources.

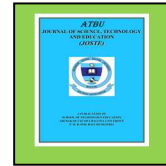
Nwankwo identified the problems of local government in rural transformation as follows: the local government is not fully effective and responsive in meeting the local citizens' demands with regard to their development; for community problems to be solved, more citizens are yet to be interested in seeking election into local government council; the local government finds it a heavy burden to finance the primary and adult education at the grassroots; and local governments now depend heavily on external sources for their finance. As a result, many do not

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work hard enough to collect revenue internally; the affiliation among the local, state, and federal governments is yet to be seen as effective for development of any local community; allegation of corruption of the local government level still obtains; and the quality of local government staff still needs to be improved and more frequent and better training is required.

Rural development in this setting can be said to be a government-directional effort of the people, by the people, and for the people. Eleberi et al. defined rural development as a legitimate process to foresee rural advancement, improvement, and instructive strategy to tackle social activity and development. Hills implied a facilitated approach whereby the rural individuals embrace programs and ventures in an arranged way to enhance the livelihood situation of the individuals dwelling in that society. The author further points out that enhancement within the physical and fabric prosperity, including livelihood of individuals within the settlement, is necessary.

Rural advancement, therefore, offers assistance individuals to recognize and create their capacity and potential needed to address their issues and needs which they share. Rural transformation is defined by Rahim and Asnarulkhadi as a process that leads to change in many aspects of rural living which include social, economic, cultural as well as environmental. It is about continual improvement, first with the help of change agents and later, by the people themselves to bring about change in their lives, which ultimately improve their quality of life. Thus, the focus of rural transformation process is the people's involvement whereby the rural area members come together to take action collectively to meet their shared goal(s) or to generate solutions overcoming a shared problem.

Nonetheless, Rubin and Rubin defined rural transformation as a process which occurs when rural people strengthen the bonds within their neighbourhoods, build social networks, and form their own organisations to provide a long-term capacity for problem solving. Rahim and Asnarulkhadi further stated that rural area members who have the capacity to do something to enhance their quality of life are portrayed as

having the ability to think, to decide, to plan, and to take action in determining their lives. Therefore, in any rural transformation program, both economic and individual growth must be given equal attention so as to ensure that the process of rural transformation achieves its due balance of continuing and sustainability. Operationally, rural transformation is viewed as the government and individuals' initiative to find resolution to their individual and popular struggle, dependence on their own possessions such as potential, and to be assisted on or after enhancing execution of developmental projects.

For effective rural transformation to take place in the society, rural transformation officers must be involved through collective effort. Basically, rural transformation projects do not support individuals to labour independently to recover the poor livelihood situation of their citizens in the rural areas without involving the local government administration who serve as a link between the community, state, and federal governments. rural transformation projects, in any case, energize individuals to continuously investigate the openings of coming collectively to work as a cluster to advance/alter that will offer assistance to address viably winning issues within the communities and society at large. Similarly, Nwagbala further posited that effective mutuality is not something that occurs consequently within the society, rather gets self-evident individuals within the rural communities to come together to identify problems militating against the implementation of rural transformation projects and proffer solutions to such identified problems. Mezirow and Taylor asserted that suitable achievement in this condition could arouse social action that could help to overcome the people's underprivileged livelihood circumstances in the society.

The study was carried out in Kirfi Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The local government area is one of the 20 local government areas in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Kirfi local government area had a population of 309, 633 as of the 2006 population census conducted across 774 local government areas in Nigeria. It is in favor of this background that rural

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transformation embarks upon different projects to raise the standard of living in the rural communities. The projects executed, or in process of execution, include good roads, water supply, health centers, maternity homes, town halls, libraries, and so on.

The demand for rural transformation projects arose due to the effort and ability of the government to adequately provide infrastructural facilities to rural communities in rural areas. There is a need to have rural transformation officers, with financial and technical resources, to encourage the advancement at the grassroots level. One of the problems that linger is the differential completion rates of projects, whereas, once started, some are completed at the scheduled time others are abandoned. However, there are numerous hindrances that hamper the effectiveness of local government contributions toward rural transformation projects, which include insufficient funds, economic and social inequality, and others.

In fact, the rural populace is confronted with numerous developmental needs such as education, water, health care facility, good roads, and electricity among others. This, resulted in lack of basic amenities has constituted serious challenge to the living standard of the people resulting in poverty, poor health and living standard. Consequently, the local government council was instituted to serve as a bridge between the state and federal government in executing government development programme at the local rural communities so as to enhance socio-economic development in the rural areas. Preliminary investigation showed that, the Kirfi local government has not made enough needed significant role towards the socio-economic development of the rural populace. It was also investigated that most of the problems lies in the lack provision of adequate funds to the local government. Also, study identifies factors constraining against the performance of the local government that include inadequate funding, poor executive capacity, inadequate working equipment, state government interfere with its internal operations leading to excessive delays

and bureaucracy for transformation of the rural areas.

In addition to the above factors, local government participation in rural transformation projects' planning and decision-making was found to be almost nonexistent. As part of their administrative autonomy, Kirfi local government area require to have a minimum set of supremacies and capabilities to set off regulatory legislation on critical issues affecting their control toward implementing rural transformation projects and regulate markets. Observance into explanation of the problem that hinders Kirfi local government in rural transformation projects, an effort was made to investigate the role of local government in community development projects. Furthermore, to substantiate that, in the situation of Nigeria in general and the study area in particular, examining the role of local government in rural transformation projects and how Kirfi local government council has helped to finance and execute rural transformation projects was found to be insufficient and thus this research study was an effort to fill the research and knowledge gap. The researcher examined some of these rural developmental projects and thereby identified constraints affecting the implementation of projects and recommended possible solutions where necessary.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study is aim at examining the role of local government councils in rural development: a case study of Kirfi local government area of Bauchi State. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following:

To find out the role of local government council in developing rural areas.

To determine the basic economic, social and political developments in Kirfi Local Government since 1996.

To identify the critical challenges facing Kirfi Local Government Area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

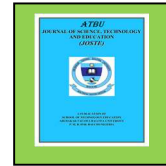
Based on the aforementioned objectives, the following research questions are formulated to guide the conduct of this study;

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1. What are the major roles of local government council in developing rural areas?
2. How has Kirfi Local Government Council helped in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of Kirfi Local Government Area since 1999?
3. What were some of the critical challenges facing Kirfi Local Government Area?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts historical research method, which relies on a wide variety of sources, both primary and secondary, including unpublished material. The primary sources include: eyewitness accounts of events, it can be oral or written testimony, can also be found in public records and legal documents, minutes of meetings, corporate records, recordings, letters, diaries, journals and drawings. They are located in institutional archives, libraries or privately run collections such as historical society. Secondary sources on the other hand can be oral or written, secondhand accounts of events, found in textbooks, encyclopedias, journal articles, newspapers, biographies and other media such as films or tape recordings. This section shall discuss the method and procedures employed in carrying out the research. Therefore, in carrying out this research, different methods of conducting research were employed in order to gather relevant data, specifically, the work depends on multiple sources of materials that include both primary and secondary sources.

Others involved physical observation and field work methods as well as internet and electronic sources of historical writing in modern days. Primary sources are the backbone of historical research, these include oral interviews conducted in the spatial scope covered by this study, Kirfi, Local Government, Bauchi State, thus; colonial monographs, reports and records kept in National Archive Kaduna, University of University library and its Archive in the History and International Studies Department. These consist of both published and unpublished materials such as Textbooks, Journals, Thesis, Dissertations,

among others. Information from these sources provided some valuable data for this study especially the conceptual and theoretical framework on rural development, the source is also vital in the aspect of literature review as it provided quality for this section which prop up the gap for this study.

This source of information enabled the researcher to arrive at a theoretical framework suitable for examining and analyzing local government in rural development in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Other secondary sources relied upon include magazines, newspapers, seminar papers, and workshop proceedings among others, which help in complementing and supplementing the primary sources. For useful correspondence and checks, the secondary sources helped to support or refute the oral source, thereby enriching the value of the research. Both the oral and written data collected were carefully and articulately used to read meanings and interpret them to generate tangible outcomes. The data gathered are objectively analyzed using historical and analytical approach. After assembling the entire data-written and oral- related to the study, the researcher used the different sources as complementary to one another. Thus, some of the sources either corroborate or contradict one another, they aided in describing and analyzing the role of Kirfi local government in improving the rural populace life and economy.

In addition, the researcher did not use mono-casual explanation, but definitely consider the various perspective or issues of historical analysis (descriptive and analytical). To also facilitate the analysis and interpretation, the researcher borrowed the insights of other disciplines particularly, the social sciences, which are cognate to the study.

CONCLUSION

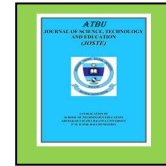
Based on the research study, the following conclusions were drawn. One of the fundamental aim and objectives of the 1976 local government reforms is the use of veritable vehicles for the transformation of community development projects in the rural areas through the provision of social services and other financial

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assistance for self-help projects, which can ultimately improve the people's standard of living. According to the recommendations to the guidelines for local government reforms, these reforms were cited on the certainty that, as from now, every stratum of Nigeria would benefit from the availability of self-help projects and other social services. The findings also indicate that the overall statement obtained from the various community development activities in the local government is not encouraging and this can be attributed to such factors that rural development projects have often developed and created much vested interest in politics that has today adversely affected community development projects. It would not be out of place to say that most of the problems militating against implementation of local government administration toward community development projects are lack of funds, mismanagement, embezzlement, and other related crimes among the chief executives and contractors, which seem to delay adequate provision of social services and amenities in the local government areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. A higher monitoring authority should be set aside to supervise the existence of checks and balances between the regulations of local government administrative duties and the department of works, housing, and social services.
2. Every new council that comes into power should be exposed to orientation workshops, which will enable them acquainted with the local government guidelines of the 1976 reforms.
3. The communities in the local governments should be informed of their obligations to initiate community development projects to implement and then call for government assistance whether state or federal.
4. Local government politicians should work hand in hand with career civil

servants to make every effort to motivate the worker. This is because without effective human resources management as organization conflict becomes imminent.

5. More self-help or community development projects should be initiated, financed, and executed by local governments to supplement their social services delivery.
6. The state or federal government should be sensitive to the allocation to the local government, thereby enabling it to execute more projects in the communities and also help recruit more qualified and experienced staff mostly needed in the personnel department.
7. The present system of local government, established to serve as a third-tier government, should be allowed by the state government to discharge its legitimate roles geared toward rural transformation without intimidation, truncation of tenure and political witch hunt.
8. Local governments should design an economic package that will enhance rural industrialization and, at the same time, create job opportunities through the same package.
9. There is also need to devise useful economic and social indicators that will assist the development planners and policy makers to monitor the extent of rural development. There is need to call for the autonomy of the local government to be free from state control.

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