



State, Governance And Regional Integration In Africa

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Intergovernmental Relations and Development in Nigeria: The Missing Link

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Abstract

This paper examined the nature of the Nigerian state and challenges of its constitutional provisions skewed in favour of the federal government as evidenced in the Exclusive Legislative List. It argues that this present arrangement inhibits the pace of development in the country. The study was qualitative in approach and gathered data through secondary sources that were content analyzed using the Structural Functional approach developed by Almond as framework of analysis. Because federal ascendancy defines the nature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria's federation, the observable functional co-operation is only a vertical pattern of relationship between the federal and state governments on the one hand, and amongst the federal, state and local governments on the other. It found out that in spite of the existence of informal structures like Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN) and Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), that should provide platforms for horizontal partnerships and co-operations between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils, there is no evidence of such functional collaborations in any sphere which is one of the links that is missing in the inward approach to development in the face of challenges posed by the country's constitution. In conclusion, the recently founded South-East/South-South Governors Forum is a further expansion of horizontal co-operation and integration of states and local government councils in the two regions, which is a potential viable platform for rapid development and transformation of states in the zones if pursued with sincerity of purpose. It recommends functional partnerships, collaborations and co-operation between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils in the following areas: tinkering with provisions of the 1999 constitution that are antithetical to development processes within its jurisdiction, recruitment of leaders, infrastructural development, capacity building, resource sharing, etc.

Keywords: Intergovernmental relations, Development partnership, Nigeria Governors' Forum, Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), Missing link

Introduction

Social contract theories especially by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau variously explain the evolution of society through surrendering of individual consent and how it metamorphosed and crystallized into state. The debate on the state is raging and in spite of the differences in the opinions of scholars, what appears certain irrespective of time, space and advancement, is that the state is an abstraction that cannot be seen and touched (Onwughalu, 2016). It is through government which impersonates the state that the latter's functions and activities are executed. In view of the foregoing, government of a state is structured into a number of organs and tiers for the smooth and effective performance of its functions, depending on the system of government that is in operation in a given place.

In Nigeria's federal presidential system, the government has three arms and three levels which interact to perform the functions of the state as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. Basically, how these organs and tiers of government relate and interact in the performance of government functions is known as intergovernmental relations.

The observable functional intergovernmental relations in the country are majorly vertical pattern of relationships between the federal and state governments and amongst the federal, state and local governments. Given the nature of Nigeria's federalism that ascribed so much functions and powers to the federal government in the Exclusive Legislative List, the vertical pattern of intergovernmental relationship holds sway in practice. The horizontal pattern of intergovernmental relations between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils merely exist only in theory as no two states or more have pulled resources together to provide common services to its citizens, or have any two or more local government councils collaborated to address certain challenges facing its people as development partners.

This paper reviewed briefly, the debate on development discourse to establish a premise that development partnerships, especially, amongst the informal structures of governance in horizontal intergovernmental relation can facilitates development process in states across the country.

Brief Literature Review

Development is a complex concept whose definition and meaning have experienced many changes overtime. In the early period, it was associated with what is regarded today, with the benefit of hindsight, as economic growth, characterized by increase in the per capita income or gross national product of a country. This narrow perspective of development attracted criticisms that changed the narrative and introduced crucial issues like poverty, unemployment, inequality, people, etc. as the crux or centre-piece of development (Ake, 2001; Torado & Smith, 2003; Seers, 1969; United Nations Development Programme, 2010). It equally led to the description of development with qualifiers like economic development, political development, socio-economic development, socio-cultural development, territorial development, human-centred development, participative development, endogenous development, sustainable development, etc. These changes in the discourse affected conceptualization of development that resulted in diverse perspectives and debate on

development theories, ideologies and strategies on how best countries can achieve development. Thus, Piefer (2014) aptly noted that geopolitics, power relations and normative orientations are also changing in the field of development cooperation.

The Modernization theory which emerged in the mid Nineteenth Century is one of the first serious development theories, developed by American scholars like Walt Whitman Rostow, Bert Hoselitz, Daniel Lerner, Seymour Martin Lipset, Neil Semelser, etc. The theory in summary is concerned with charting a pathway by western standard to be followed by all developing countries to attain development, without recourse to pointing out the effects of the contact or relationship amongst developed and developing countries in the processes of attaining modernity. This kind of relationship is characterized by dependence, which Osvaldo (1969) defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences - political, economic, and cultural - on national development policies.

The Dependency theory advanced by Raul Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Theotonio Dos Santos, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Paul Baran, Immanuel Wallerstein, etc. is a reaction to the modernization theory. It is a counter offence to the main stream proponents of modernization theory (So, 1990). It explains how western capitalist nations in particular have imposed external structure and set of conditions which in turn have created dependency of the developing countries to the western capitalism. In short, dependency theory attempts to explain the present underdeveloped state of many nations in the world by examining the patterns of contact and interactions among nations and arguing that inequality among nations is an intrinsic part of those interactions.

The Modernization and Dependency theories, irrespective of their nuances, are integral part of the mainstream analysis on development that centred on economic indices of growth as yardsticks to measuring development. These parameters have been overtaken by the 21st century standards. The debate on development discourse has equally led to a paradigm shift to a new and contemporary approach that centre on the people, co-operation and partnership as the crux and vehicle for achieving development. For instance, Alternative Development Approach and Development Partnership Approach are part of the new perspectives to development discourse analyzed in this study.

The Alternative Development approach argues that development is no longer simply viewed as GDP growth, rather human development is seen as a more appropriate goal and measure of development. According to the International Foundation for Alternative Development (1978) cited in Onwughalu (2017) the way to achieve alternative development is through new development strategies which cannot be conceived and carried out without the participation of social actors in all phases. The summary of the approach is a combination of basic needs and self-reliance in transforming people's lives by their own initiative through participation, empowerment and environmental sustainability for sustainable and endogenous development. Those associated with this approach are Mahbub ul Haq, Gita Sen, Amartya Sen, Akire, Jackkie Cliers, Sadako Ogata, etc.

The Development Partnership approach expanded the frontier on arguments canvassed by the Alternative Development approach. It introduced and emphasized partnership for development as very crucial element in development process in the 21st century. Kayizzi-Mugerwa (1998) observed that the concept of ‘partnership’ has emerged as the ‘new big idea’ in development discourses. However, the origin of Development Partnership approach is traced to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1996) Report entitled *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*. Furthermore, Tatge (2009) noted that in the last years, some regime theoretical approaches have evolved and looked at changing power relations in institutions –mainly the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee – through the rise of new development partners. The approach, Bailey and Dolan (2011) observed was popularized by the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005) and the *Accra Agenda for Action* (2008).

In summary, Lewis (2007) explained that development partnerships can be generally understood as an agreed relationship based on a set of linkages between two or more agencies within a development project, involving a division of roles and responsibilities, a sharing of risks, and the pursuit of joint objectives. Therefore, in contemporary time, development is viewed as the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values (Ake cited in Obi & Chukwuemeka, 2006:5-6). In other words, development seeks to restore or enhance basic human capabilities and freedoms and enables people to be the agents of their own development. Thus, a universally acceptable aim of development is that it should make for conditions that lead to a realization of the potentials of human personality (Shah, n.d). This perception of development suits the context of the study in the sense that it will make the people to rediscover themselves, realize their innate talents and potentials following the enabling environment that can be provided through the informal structures of governance in horizontal intergovernmental relations based on development partnership.

The indices of development chronicled in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) sustained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognize the place of partnership for development. Advancing reasons for development partnership Morse and McNamara (2006) observed that partners are driven by the desire to improve the results of development interventions. Brinkerhoff (2002) notes that the nature of the development challenges are often very complex making it impossible to address them in isolation.

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that development theories from modernization theory to dependency theory, alternative approaches of development and post-development to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and currently the post-2015 agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have all illustrated that understandings of development are dependent on trends in the discourse of the time, region and focus on the economy or the state as the main actors (Piefer, 2014).

In view of the foregoing exposition, it has become expedient that informal structures of governance like Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) and political parties (especially, the political party in power) can play vital roles in circumventing the challenges posed by constitutional provisions and federal ascendancy respectively to development in the country through horizontal intergovernmental relations. Accordingly, through these structures, functional partnerships and genuine co-operations between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils where roles and responsibilities will be divided, risks shared, in the pursuit of joint development objectives can be activated.

Theoretical framework

The paper utilized Almond's Structural-Functionalism in its analysis. The approach explains that every political system has some structures which are institutions (like legislature, executive, judiciary, political parties, pressure groups, etc) that perform certain functions which have effects on human beings and other human organizations. Importantly, Chikendu (n.d) pointed out that in various political systems, these functions may be performed by different kinds of political structures and sometimes, even by structures which are not overtly recognized as being primarily 'political.'

In application, the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN) and Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), etc. are examples of structures that could be regarded as not overtly recognized as being primarily 'political' in Nigeria. However, the way they influence the people and formal institutions of governance through their activities especially, during leadership recruitment (i.e. electioneering), policy formulation and implementation, projects conception, location and execution, etc, are crystal clear. Therefore, co-operation amongst these informal governance structures are example of horizontal intergovernmental relations the states and local government councils can leverage on respectively and/or collectively to circumvent the challenges posed by the 1999 constitution and ascendancy of the federal government to development through intergovernmental relations. Unfortunately, the Governors, Speakers of State Houses of Assembly and Local Government Council Chairmen are yet to activate positively these inward co-operation mechanisms that have huge potentials of driving development in the respective states and geo-political zones. The non-activation and non-functionality of the horizontal relations by these structures is one of the links missing in pursuing development through intergovernmental relations.

Theory and Practice of Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria

The definition and meaning of intergovernmental relations have been analyzed by Dare (1979), Wright (1988), Thornhill (2002) and Isioma (2010). Irrespective of the differences in their perspectives, how the organs and tiers of

government relate and interact in the performance of government functions is the core of intergovernmental relations.

There are different types of intergovernmental relations in a federal system. In Nigeria, Olugbemi (1980), Zimmerman (1992), Ikelegbe (2004), Adeyemo (2005), Ponnle (2011), Akume (2014) Adamolekun, Olopade, Nwatu and Okafor (2004) in Bello (2014) identified the following: (i) National/Federal-State-Local (ii) Federal-State (iii) Federal-Local (iv) State-State (v) State-Local (vi) Local-Local (vii) National/Federal-Civic groups (viii) State-Civic groups (ix) Local-Civic groups (x) Inter-Civic groups. These typologies captured in theory the diverse forms of vertical and horizontal co-operations and relationships between or/and amongst the three tiers of government, in addition to what is referred to here as the *'fourth tier'* popularly known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (both international and local) which are very important actors in development partnerships in the 21st century.

Furthermore, going by the typologies identified above, what are obtainable in practice are vertical intergovernmental relations amongst the (i) National/Federal-State-Local and between (ii) National/Federal-State (iii) National/Federal-Civic groups (iv) State-Civic groups (v) Local-Civic groups at the expense of horizontal co-operations and partnerships. The first two is characterized by tension and conflicts necessitated by provisions of the 1999 constitution and federal ascendancy, which constitute serious obstacles to development in the country. In similar vein, the last three relations amongst the tiers of government and development partners that are supposed to fill the gap created in the country's defective federal system do not exist. According to Onwughalu (2017) projects under their auspices are not done with sincerity of purpose as exhibited in lack of adequate consultations in conception and execution, which result in the challenge of sustaining executed projects beyond the period of development support. Aganga (2011) observed that international development agencies are in the same area doing different pilot programmes across the country. He argued that there has been a sort of communication gap between us and the international development partners. Therefore, he concluded that it is critical that if they are here to assist, it should be demand-driven; it should not be driven by what they want to do in the country, but by what we need in the country.

Connecting the missing link in intergovernmental relations for development in Nigeria: What should be done?

The formal and informal structures of intergovernmental relations that should synergize to drive development in the country are in existence. However, what is lacking are the political will, sincerity of purpose, vision-oriented and altruistic leadership, especially on the part of the State Governors, who control and regulate most of these formal and informal structures of governance in the states. Notably, the influence of state governors over administration and governance of political parties, recruitment and elections of would-be leaders into Local Government Councils, State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly respectively and how they choose to relate with those eventually recruited into these structures of governance are very obvious as he that pays the piper dictates the tune. Those eventually recruited become

members of formal governance structures that facilitate intergovernmental relations, either the executive or legislature as well as members of the informal structures like Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), caucuses at the National Assembly, that unite members, galvanize their interests and co-ordinate their activities.

Given the overbearing power of the Federal Government and the challenges of amending the 1999 Constitution to eliminate inherent provisions that constitute stumbling blocks to development, it behoves the governors of respective states to co-ordinate elected council officials, members of the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly in the states in thinking out of the box by redirecting attention and looking inwards. Accordingly Bulus (2012) argued that like the Governors' Forum, the Speakers' Conference is yet another political pressure group which seeks not only the progress of individual state houses of assembly but also the entrenchment of virtues and values that make democratic governance people-oriented. It requires activating healthy horizontal intergovernmental relations between or amongst states, on the one hand, and between or amongst local government councils in a state or more, on the other, through synergizing and synchronizing the instrumentalities of formal and informal structures of governance within their respective jurisdictions.

The government does not need to provide the people directly with white collar jobs, paid employment or handouts. It should concentrate on unlocking human capital potentials by removing obstacles to development through liberalizing access to functional education in rural and urban areas, quality health care services, providing regular power supply, free bandwidth service for unhindered access to the cyberspace to explore opportunities in the age of information technology, constructing intra-city and inter-states feeder roads, etc. The human capital and infrastructural development should be the primary focus and concern of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (and its regional branches), Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), and Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN) respectively and collectively. These can be approached through the following ways analyzed below.

Tinkering with certain constitutional provision within the purview of State Houses of Assembly: The state governors can effectively mobilize for the amendment of sections of the constitution considered to be antithetical to development through synergy created by instrumentalities of informal governance structures like the Nigeria Governors' Forum, Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), caucuses of National Assembly, political parties machineries and formal governance structure like the executive and legislature. However, given the fact that this may not be easily achieved because of diverse interests, state governors and State Houses of Assembly can work together positively to tinker with Section 7(1) by legislating on a fixed term of office for Local Government Chairmen and Councillors, bearing in mind a considerable period that will enable the elected local government council officials to formulate and implement policies, conceive and execute projects

in isolation and/or in partnerships with sister Council(s) within the state or neighbouring states.

Furthermore, the governors of states do not require approval from the federal government to conduct local government council elections as at and when due. When the State Houses of Assembly legislate to fix tenure of office of elected local government council officials, say for four years, and the governors ensure that the elections are conducted accordingly; the story of development will be different, especially, at the grassroot. Ekweremadu in Itodo (2017) explained that the autonomy of the local government is tied to the State Assemblies and understanding of the Governors.

Therefore to make the above scenario feasible, the state governors and State Houses of Assembly must tinker with Section 162(6) and (7) to guarantee direct federal allocation to the local government. Section 162(8) ascribed such powers to the State Houses of Assembly. This should be accompanied by legislation on stringent oversight of the funds in a manner that will enable the House Assembly, the people and civil society organizations to hold elected local government officials to account respectively. To cap it, the state government and its proxies should also refrain from encroaching into the sources of internally generated revenue reserved for local government.

Activating horizontal intergovernmental relations: Functional development partnerships and co-operations can exist between two or more states in strategic areas to drive development in the country. Incidentally, the state governors have created informal structure of governance at various levels that is supposed to encourage workable development alliances and co-operations between and amongst states. There are Nigeria Governors' Forum founded in 1999 (Nigeria Governors' Forum, 2016a) that unite all the governors in the country, and Governors Forum of each geo-political zone that unite governors of respective extractions. In addition to these, on July 9, 2017 (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, n.d) the South-East/South-South Governors Forum that unites governors from the two zones came into the fore.

Interestingly, the Nigeria Governors' Forum has a Secretariat, staff, experts that provide technical support as well as development partnerships with strategic local and international development partners. They include National Planning Commission, Federal Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, National Primary Health Care Development Agency, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Democratic Institute, World Bank, Department for International Development, GAVI Alliance, etc (Nigeria Governors' Forum, 2016b). In similar vein, the South West Governors' Forum has a Secretariat known as Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission established in 2013 (Premium Times, 2013) and that of the South East Governors' Forum established in 2017 (Adio, 2017). These are suggestive indicators that the Forum at different levels has administrative structure to articulate and co-ordinate its policies, programmes, projects on the one hand, as well as key local and international development partners that are favourably disposed to collaborating and co-operating with it in development partnerships.

Importantly, it will be recalled that the states as constituted presently were formerly together as one entity of respective regional governments before they were subsequently balkanized into the current thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory. Prior to the balkanization, they were strategic establishments owned collectively that are abandoned after the exercise. Furthermore, there are commercial and related activities that were going amongst people within a given region before the balkanization that are still maintained till date, however, they are confronted with challenges like haulage, regular power supply, etc that need urgent attention.

The Governors in Nigeria should change the mentality of depending solely on allocation from the federal account which they go cap in hand to beg to address development challenges in their states. Granted that states and local government are constitutionally entitled to such allocations, it is high time state governors started pulling resources together in financing joint development programmes and projects within their respective zones based on comparative advantage. For instance, the South East Governors' Forum can jointly resuscitate the government owned Nigeria Cement Company (Nigercem) at Nkalagu, Ebonyi State. When this is done, the number of employment it will generate, subsidiary of scale that will spring up, etc, cannot be overemphasized. In similar vein, the volume of haulage that go on among the five South Eastern states, Rivers and Cross River states, calls for collaborations amongst governors of these states in constructing inter-city rail transportation system, to curtail the enormous challenges associated with road transportation system. For instance, Anambra, Delta and Kogi states have short connecting routes around Aguleri Otu – Anwai – Okpalia - Ibaji axis, because of the absence of bridge to connect these routes, commuters are exposed to avoidable long distance journey with the attendant challenges. Successive governors of the three states have not considered it imperative to jointly fund the construction of bridges to connect these routes. The same thing is applicable to the Adani – Nsukka route connecting Anambra and Enugu states which is not in a good condition.

Furthermore, states in the South-East and South-South host large numbers of different manufacturing industries that function on power supply, therefore, construction of joint independent power generating plants at strategic locations is inevitable to sustain industries that are at verge of folding up and reactivating those that have folded. The multiplier effects of this singular project are better imagined than explained. It is very worrisome to note that, if private individuals involved in oil bunkering could construct improvised refineries to refine crude oil illegally, what stops governors of South-South to construct modular refineries across the region? What of the Calabar Seaport in Cross River State and the dredging of River Niger at Onitsha, Anambra State? What has the South-East/South-South Governors' Forum done respectively as a collectively to deal with these issues and more?

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (and its regional branches) has the potentials, structures, strategic international and local partners that could provide all the necessary and required support and funds to deal with all the issues above and more in their respective states through horizontal intergovernmental relations. The Nigeria Governors' Forum (2016a) notes that in practical terms, the NGF has become a major

link between government, development partners and private organizations as they seek to reach the 36 States. Zonal groupings, which mirror the Forum, are increasingly effective as they discuss ways of overcoming their commonly shared developmental challenges.

The role of local government council chairmen: Given the suggestions on tinkering with Section 162(6), (7) and (8), chairmen of local government council under the aegis of Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) should also imbibe the spirit and culture of development partnerships. They should embark on joint development programmes and projects between or amongst council areas in the same state or beyond on the one hand, and in partnerships with local and international development partners on the other. Owing to the fact that, it is government at the grassroot where a greater number of the people are employed in agriculture, therefore, they should focus more on initiating and funding modern agricultural and allied programmes and projects to change the narrative on agriculture. They should go beyond farming to all other areas of agriculture, making it attractive for young school leavers. In doing the above, it should not be a case where programmes and projects are conceived and initiated by consultants as development partners and chairmen of councils are invited to join as participants. For instance, with regards to the Comprehensive Local Agricultural Plan (C-LAP) international seminar, Kachikwu cited in Ibrahim and Onyeji (2017) noted that despite invitation to 774 local governments and the importance of the seminar to them, only one chairman showed up at the event.

The role of local and international development partners: Development partners are not direct organ or tier of government involved in intergovernmental relations. However, they play very crucial roles in the governance and development process of developing countries, like Nigeria. The nature of project or programme designed by a development partner, the target beneficiaries and expected outcomes define whether its gets involved with the federal, state or local government. Aganga (2011) and Onwughalu (2017) have pointed out the major challenges associated with the participation of development partners in the development process in the country; nevertheless, they should focus more on the states and local government areas. The state government is a conglomeration of the seven hundred and seventy-four (774) local government and six (6) area councils that constitute the thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory, which forms the federal government. In doing so, they should consult adequately with the state governors, relevant elected officials in the states, council areas, and other officials as well as stakeholders of would-be benefiting communities for synergy and proper co-ordination amongst all the parties and different development partners intervening on similar issues. As such, their activities are mainstreamed into the state and local government programmes and it becomes easier for the government and the people to take ownership of such programmes and projects beyond period of development support.

Conclusion

A cursory look at the expected roles of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (and its regional branches) that is supposed to drive development in states leaves much to be desired. What is glaring since its formation in 1999 is that it has been reduced to a pressure group for pursuing and advancing personal interests and ambitions of serving governors. The Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), and caucuses at the National Assembly are also caught in similar web. For instance, the timing on floating the South-East/South-South Governor's Forum supports the foregoing assertion. It shows that it is designed to shore up support for governors in the regions in view of 2019 general elections, as they play around issues that can stimulate the development of states in the regions and touch on the sensibilities of the people respectively without iota of practical demonstration, commitment and moves to actualizing them. However, it is not too late for the state governors through the instrumentality of its Forum to get back on the right track. Its requires sincerity of purpose and exhibition of political will by galvanizing all the formal and informal structures of governance like Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN), and caucuses at the National Assembly to drive development process in the states through horizontal intergovernmental relations.

Finally, when this study has stimulated further research and discourse on how informal governance structures and horizontal intergovernmental relations can drive development in states and it attracts the attention and commitment of leaders, stakeholders and the people to the approach and its practice, the objective of the study would have been achieved.

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