



Intergovernmental Relations and Social Service Delivery in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates intergovernmental relations and social service delivery in Nigeria. Nigeria's fiscal federalism involves the allocation of expenditure and tax-raising powers among the federal, state and local governments. The 1999 Constitution has outlined the revenue profile of each tier of government; the revenue sources of the state and local government only generate insubstantial amount of revenue that is not adequate to cater for the social responsibilities assigned to them by the Constitution. The structure of the revenue profile of the lower levels of governments in Nigeria clearly indicates that they heavily depend on statutory allocation for their survival since the internal revenue sources are insignificant. There is a clear mismatch between responsibilities and revenue powers at the lower tiers of government and this has greatly impaired the ability of states and local governments to deliver essential social services in their domains. This definitely is not a healthy situation given the fact that about seventy per cent of the population lives in regional areas and the only impact of government on their lives will be essential service delivery by these governments close to them. The paper formulated three research objectives and questions to guide the study. Based on the findings, the work recommends that the problems created by inter-governmental fiscal relationship can be resolved in a number of ways which includes, among others, strict adherence to the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as regards the powers and functions of each tier of government; the practice of State-Local Government Joint Account should be abolished so each tier of government receives its statutory monthly allocations directly from the Federation Account and recognising the relative autonomy of each tier of government within its lawful jurisdiction.

Keywords: Intergovernmental Relations, Fiscal Federalism, Social Service Delivery

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inter-governmental relations refers to the complex pattern of interactions and interdependency between two or more levels or stages of government (Freikman, 2012). Although intergovernmental relations (IGR) is widely associated and most popular with federal system like Nigeria, United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Germany and others, it is not exclusive to federal systems. Ogunna, (1996:350) opined that, in modern unitary systems, there are patterns of interactions and interdependence between the central and local governments. The intergovernmental relations involve legal, functional, administrative and financial interactions.

Nigeria operates a federal system which makes it imperative for the various levels of government to relate harmoniously in order to guarantee effective and efficient social service delivery to the citizenry irrespective of the jurisdiction of the government the denizens find themselves, be it federal, state or local government. Dike and Iwuamadi, (2005:8) observed that, "it is important to note that intergovernmental relations exist in every political system be it unitary, federal or con-federal". It has further been observed that federal systems have more levels of government with the division of governmental powers the constitution among the levels of government (Sapele, 2014:10). Each level of government is expected to act within the spheres of authority granted to it by the constitution. Besides, most federations are plural in nature.



Take for instance, the United States of America (USA), Canada, Nigeria, Russia and India, all have many groups that made up their federations inevitable. This in essence necessitates intense cross structural and cultural interactions which creates the need for intergovernmental relations (Okoli, 2004). Chukwujindu (2013) asserts that social services most frequently define various institutions and services whose primary purpose is to maintain and enhance the physical, social, intellectual or emotional wellbeing of people. The provision of social services to the citizenry is a responsibility that is saddled on the shoulders of all the three tiers of government. Each is expected to deliver basic social services to the people in line with functions and powers vested in it by the 1999 constitution of the Federation of Nigeria.

However, these essential social services can only be effectively and efficiently delivered when each tier of government is given its dues as regards the fiscal relations among the three levels of government. Thus, this work seeks to investigate intergovernmental relations and social services delivery in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Chapter two of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of the State Policy, which means that government at all levels is obliged to deliver essential social services to the people by virtue of the social contract entered into by the Nigerian State and her denizens. This obligation is often abdicated by the Nigerian government, particularly at the level of the federating units, especially the local government owing to Nigeria's skewed practice of fiscal federalism which has rendered the grassroots government ineffective and indolent to social service delivery.

The Second and Fourth Schedules to the 1999 Constitution provide for the establishment, powers and functions of states and of local governments extensively. However, the constitutional responsibilities assigned to the subordinate governments have suffered inadequate implementation as a result of the fact that the resources allocated for the discharge of the assigned functions and responsibilities are grossly not commiserate with the resources needed to cater for them which invariably hinders social service delivery at the more important levels of government being the state and local governments. Hence the need to investigate intergovernmental relations and social service delivery in Nigeria (Constitution FRN, 1999).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the extent of the powers and functions of each tier of government and how it affects social service delivery in Nigeria.
2. To examine fiscal federalism and its impact on social service delivery in Nigeria.
3. To evaluate the degree intergovernmental relations has enhanced social service delivery.



2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Intergovernmental Relations and Social Service Delivery in Nigeria

The relative roles of the three tiers of government—the federal government, the state governments, and the local government authorities (LGAs)—in public service delivery has emerged as one of the most important topics of open and vigorous debate in the new democratic climate in Nigeria Akpa (2008). There have been increasing calls for intergovernmental fiscal relations to be reassessed in light of a widespread belief that although the states and LGAs are assigned primary responsibilities for the delivery of basic social services, they are not equipped with adequate revenue resources to fulfil their expenditure obligations because the bulk of government revenue is retained by the federal government. The discussion is overwhelmingly centred on revenue sharing formula that allocates resources from the

Federation Account amongst the three tiers of government. The sub-national tiers of government are now demanding that their respective shares be substantially increased. However, there is palpable lack of discussion around whether the current practice of assuming expenditure responsibility and undertaking its implementation is such that a mere shift in resource allocation will achieve the desired objective of delivering better social services to the majority of Nigerians. A real issue at stake, which has not received much attention to date, is how effectively the different tiers of government use their existing resources to perform their functions. In fact, it may be argued that in the context of the Nigerian economy, states and LGAs receive substantial amount of resources with their total revenues amounting on average to over 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2000 and 2010.

2.2 Constitutional Powers and Functions of the Tiers of Government in Nigeria

The current distribution of responsibilities (powers and functions) is provided in the Second and Fourth Schedules of the 1999 Constitution—Part I of the Second Schedule contains the exclusive legislative list on which only the federal government can act; Part II contains the concurrent legislative list on which both the federal and state governments can act; the Fourth Schedule provides the list of powers and functions of the Local Government Councils. Hence, strictly speaking, the Constitution does not really provide the list of functions to be executed by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the states (as it does for the Local Government Councils), but only the subjects upon which they can legislate (Nwokedi, 2002). However, these legislative lists form the guidelines for other legal decrees and sector policy reports that lay out the specific expenditure responsibilities of the different tiers of government (Constitution FRN, 1999).

The exclusive responsibilities of the Federal Government of Nigeria are broadly in accordance with standard international practice, including matters of national concern such as defence, foreign affairs, regulation, and monetary policy. The responsibility of service delivery in the areas of education, health, infrastructure, agriculture and industry is concurrently shared with states and Local Government Authorities, with the respective assignments apparently derived from the considerations of inter-jurisdictional spill-over effects and economies of scale, although there is no formal reference to the underlying principles in the official literature. The allocation of functions among federating units is more of a political than an economic exercise and there may be no stated principles underlying such allocations in the Nigerian Federation (Okoli & Onah, 2002:100). The financial aspect of the affairs of the various levels of government could be said to be the cord that hold them together. This is why Okoli and Onah (2002:43) added that financial transactions are an important area where the various levels of government must come to agreement if development is to be enhanced. Ugwu (1998:45) believes that the argument over the fiscal policy in Nigeria has been hinged on the thorny issues of revenue allocations and the criteria upon which distribution of revenue should be based.



2.3 Fiscal Federalism and Social Service Delivery in Nigeria

Revenue sharing and related politics in Nigeria's fiscal federalism is anchored on economic, political, constitutional, local and cultural developments (Elaigwu, 2007). The country's federal structure currently consists of 36 States, 1 Federal Capital Territory and 774 Local Governments Areas and allocates 48.5 percent of her resources to the federal government, 24 percent to the state governments, and 20 percent to the LGAs respectively (Abonyi, 2005). In essence, intergovernmental relations in Nigeria has ensured the maintenance of political equilibrium by focusing on the factors that constitute threats to the system in order to maintain a stable political atmosphere in the country. This height was achieved through intervention programmes such as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) a programme designed by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to take care of the teaching and research needs of Nigerian universities academic staff.

Universal Basic Education (UBE), this is a programme marshalled out by the Federal Government for primary and basic secondary education with counterpart funding by state and local governments. Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP); this programme was initiated by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Administration to reduce the rate of poverty among the Nigerian populace, particularly those living in rural and suburban areas. Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP); under this Federal Government programme, the government is partnering with participating state governments to feed 5.5 million pupils in public primary schools nations wide for 200 school days per year. N-power Volunteer Corps ((N-Power) is a 500,000 jobs intervention scheme for university and college graduates in Nigeria. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), this is a direct transfer of N5, 000.00 monthly stipend to the extremely poor in Nigeria. Particularly at the state and local government levels. It is akin to social welfare schemes in place in most of the advance countries of the world. It is a safety net for the poorest of the poor in Nigeria. These and many more are the various areas intergovernmental relations have helped to enhance social service delivery in Nigeria.



3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 A Systems Approach to Intergovernmental Relations

This study adopts the System theory. A system is the interaction of interrelated and interdependent parts which function as a whole to attain the common goal. The theory depicts the political system which takes inputs from society (usually consisting of mandates, demands, etc.) and processes them, the outcome of which could be policies or programmes. These are then fed back to the community, through policy related activities and then, a series of new wants and needs trigger the system again. For the purpose of this research, the researcher views the Nigeria federal system as an integrated whole that consists of parts that can be likened to the analogy of the human body in a manner that reflects that parts are interrelated and interdependent, despite the fact that each body part may achieve functionality on its own and does impact on the activities of the entire body.

Similarly, the execution and management of social services delivery would require that the main elements of the systems theory which are; inputs, throughput, outputs and feedback are harnessed in a manner that promotes functionality as invariably, the activities of a sub-system (i.e. a part of government) affects the entire government.

4. Methodology

This study investigates intergovernmental relations and social service delivery in Nigeria. The study therefore, adopted Qualitative Research Method. Hence secondary data was used for the entire study.

5. Findings and Conclusion

The present inter-governmental fiscal relationship has impacted negatively on the ability of state and local governments to deliver essential social services in their domains where majority of Nigerians live. The intergovernmental relations has not made much positive impact in enhancing social service delivery in Nigeria. There is therefore an urgent need to carry out reforms that will address the situation. If the situation is undermined, the issues of fiscal federalism and inter-governmental relation with regards to social service delivery will continue to be controversial and will not promote the welfare of the citizens at all levels of government.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- ❖ There should be strict adherence to the provisions of the 1999 Constitution as regards the distribution of powers and functions of the various tiers of government, so that each level of government will be relatively autonomous.
- ❖ The financial relationship among the tiers of government should be reviewed with the aim of allocating more resources to the lower levels of government considering the fact that they have more social responsibilities to perform as evident in the higher number of denizens' residency in the regional areas.
- ❖ Every level of government should be made to get their monthly allocations directly from the federation account to avoid diversions, undue delays and misappropriations, or outright withholding of ones share by agents of one tier of government to undo the other tier(s).
- ❖ There should be active checks and balances amongst the three tiers of government for the purpose of enhancing effective and efficient social service delivery in Nigeria.
- ❖ There should also be regular intergovernmental forums and symposia in the management of intergovernmental relations to enhance social service delivery among the three tiers of government.



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