



Traditional Leadership and Rural Development in the Democratic Dispensation in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of traditional leadership and rural development on the democratic dispensation in Nigeria. It employed both adaptive approach and bottom-up approaches. Both primary and secondary data were collected. A total of 200 respondents comprising leaders and non-leaders were selected through stratified random sampling technique in the study. Simple percentage and mean scores were utilized in realizing the objectives. The major findings showed that, there was a significant relationship between traditional leadership and rural development. The most vital functions performed by traditional leaders in rural development include: decision-making liaison between government and non-governmental agencies and the community for financial and technical assistance; monitoring and evaluation of projects; and fund raising for projects. It also showed that (30%) source of information for rural development efforts were through the local leaders themselves. Incompatibility of government policies with community programs, insufficient sources of funds, poor implementation of programs, and gender bias constituted the major constraints to effective leadership in rural development programs in the country. It was recommended among others, that for sustainability to be achieved through rural development efforts, there is an urgent need for extension policy that will accommodate the traditional leaders in all the rural development initiatives of both governmental and non-government agencies; and also traditional leaders should be empowered adequately as this would go a long way influencing their effectiveness in grassroots mobilization for rural development.

Keywords: Traditional Leadership; Rural Development; Democratic Process; National Development; Adaptive Approach and Bottom-up Approach.

1. Introduction

National development has been one of the major problems confronting the post independent African states. Although Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material

resources, but mass poverty, ignorance, inflation, disease, and malnutrition, declining Gross National Product (GNP) among other dangerous signals have become the bane of the country. This is despite numerous development programmes initiated by the various government to improve the living standards of the citizenry.

Rural development in Nigeria has witnessed so many programme challenges. During the colonial period, the British colonizers were primarily concerned with how to get raw materials needed for running their industries back at home and in return, provide markets for same. Thus, rural development was not their priority; instead, emphasis was placed on agricultural research and extension services. It was the realization of this that post-colonial period witnessed a more purposeful approach toward rural development on the part of the post-colonial leaders. Even then, they initiated so many programmes that seemed not to have solved the problem of eliminating rural poverty and underdevelopment programmes with reference to Nigeria. The problems of development in Nigeria are against two policy objectives that of concentration of facilities and economic activities in designated urban area to achieve a high economic aggregate and that of deconcentration of same to achieve even development of all parts of the state. Against a background of failure of concentration policy to achieve a high economic aggregate and that of deconcentration to bring balanced development of all parts of the state, a liberal concentration policy is proposed.

Rural development according to Ajayi, (2006) is a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local conditions and the changing world. Sustainable community development cannot take place through force or order, but is most likely to happen when all actors participate and share their ideas, visions and responsibilities equally and democratically in steering and implementing their community or village development projects, Ajayi and Otuya, 2010). According to Orapin, (1996), one approach in creating sustainable rural development is through giving the main actors (villagers living in the community) an equal opportunity to think and plan their own future. This underpins the need for effective leadership at the local community levels in order to harness the efforts of the rural people towards their own development. Usually, rural development programmes aim at creating awareness of rural possibilities; providing information on resources, inputs and infrastructure; deploying technical assistance; skills acquisition and development; increasing literacy levels; improving productivity and productive systems; adapting appropriate technology in agriculture; sensitizing potential volunteers and donors among other things. Ideally, most rural development programmes in developing nations focus on peoples' felt needs and basic amenities such as the provision of good roads, electricity, health clinics, markets, school buildings, and farm settlements among others.

These goals can only be achieved through the combined and collective efforts of all those who share the conviction that rural community development must be accorded a high priority in our drive for poverty alleviation and national self-sufficiency. To help bring a rural community to action, it is necessary for individuals and groups to provide good leadership. When good leadership is provided, the people participate voluntarily in the accomplishment of stated objectives. The approach to rural development is always through traditional leaders who do not only act as pioneers of projects but also assist in influencing and motivating their people to action. For any rural development effort to be successful, influential local leaders must be involved else they might undermine the progress of such programmes.

Therefore, any agency or organization coming up with a development programme for the community must initially "clear" with these influential traditional leaders, a process

otherwise referred to as legitimization. It is saddening to recall that rural community development was neglected by successive governments since colonial rule in Nigeria. For instance, while the colonial government concentrated their development projects such as roads, schools, hospital, and pipe-borne water around the major cities and built network of roads to areas where they exploited our natural resources, the rural areas were completely left out. The post-independence governments are not equally left out in the practice of rural neglect as only communities whose sons and daughters were in government benefitted from development projects otherwise referred to as “national cake”. Even where good development programmes were designed for rural areas, they most of the time failed because there were no scientific and empirical studies of the target rural communities which should guide their implementation. Since the 1980’s, Nigeria and many African countries have experienced a rising wave of revolts and restiveness by some rural communities. Governments have not been able to tackle these crises because there were no reliable baseline studies on the problems of such rural people.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine tradition leadership and rural development in democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study is designed to:

- (i) Investigate the relationship between the traditional leadership and their host community citizen to analyzing the challenges hindering peace and harmony in which may pose as a threat to rural development.
- (j) Examine the caused effect of negligence by the government of the traditional leadership institution.
- (k) Ascertain the core challenges limiting the traditional institution in carrying out their basic functions on rural development.
- (l) Identify the roles and functions of traditional leaders towards rural development.

3. The Concept of Traditional Leadership

H.F. reading in his Glossary of Sociological Terms, defines a leader as (a) person initiating interaction with other members of a group, (b) person who initiates interaction more frequently than anyone else in a group, and (c) person who moves the group towards group goal, (Ekong, 2010). The simple dictionary definition of a leader is one who leads or goes first. in other words, one who first perceives the group’s needs. For ahead of other and therefore plan and in its implementation. A person is a leader in any social situation in which his ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behaviours of others.

The concept of a “leader” therefore implies role-playing for some time. To be styled a leader, one must be performing leading roles repeatedly under varying conditions. A headman may or may not be a leader. Thus it is possible to have a “headman” while the group is actually being directed or led by another person who is not styled “the head” such term as “figure head”, “ceremonial leader”, etc. are used to describe persons who through at the head of a group, are either incapable of leading that group or relegates the responsibility of leadership to others, (Ekong, 2010).

Leadership has been defined as the process whereby an individual directs, guides, influences or controls the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of other human beings (Ekpenyong, 2014). Thus, while the term “leader” refers to a person or an actor, “leadership”

is a process. Leadership is essentially a group phenomenon and occurs in a situation calling for interaction between a group of people, the leader or leaders, the problem or task and its possible solution. It is a function of personality and there can be no leadership without followership. As Haiman, (2013) observed, "...attempts at leadership must be responded to favourably by others before they can be described as acts of leadership. The follower(s) must move, to a small degree at least, in the direction indicated by the leader." Leading therefore occurs in a group situation with the leader occupying a position within the group.

Group leadership calls for readiness to accept responsibilities. Such responsibilities in turn, requires knowledge of the group and its objectives, the alternative means by which the objectives may be attained, and the general knowledge of the area in which the group operates. Leadership may be relative varying according to the nature and functions of the group led. However, leadership is essentially a process of mutual stimulation which by successful interplay of relevant individual differences, controls human energy in pursuit of a common cause (Chitamber, 2008).

According to Obikeze, (2004), leadership in general is characterized by prominence of personality, superiority, of ability, knowledge, experience, resourcefulness and courage, and the ability to generate coordination, stimulate initiative, exert positive influence and inspire others. Any country without efficient and dynamic leadership is usually doomed to exploitation, stagnation, chaos and a state of social dismay and the quality of life in such a society is dependent upon the quality and degree of efficiency of its leadership.

There are different opinions regarding the origins of traditional leaders and the institution of traditional leadership. There are also strong beliefs in a link between traditional leaders and God an opinion which traditional leaders appear to encourage and perpetuate. In this regard the Native Economic Commission, (1930), observed as follows:

"The hereditary Chief is the link between the living and the dead. He is a high priest, and with certain tribes, he may become a 'god' during his lifetime... The reverence for the Chief and his family is, therefore, a quality deeply engrained in the Abantu. D'Engelbronner-Kolff, Hintz and Sindano, (1998), stated that 'traditional leadership' refers to the authority that is based on the belief in "sacred traditions in force since time immemorial" and the legitimacy of those who are called to govern by said traditions. Oomen, (2005) supported this assertion when arguing that "traditional authority like any other (legitimate) authority is coming from God and without it Africans would not have a community."

The authority is bestowed upon traditional leaders to shepherd traditional communities against unorthodox and orthodox sieges directed at destroying African nations. In this vein, traditional leaders are leaders in charge of the lives of the people and the safety of the nation. They are leaders who rule and govern their societies on the basis of traditional practices and values of their respective societies (Ekpenyong, 2014). The fact that a traditional leader was the central feature of a tribe also indicates the extent of power that such leaders had at the time. Oomen, (2005) viewed the term "legitimacy" when presenting her arguments. This is done in spite of an uproar from various circles about the extent to which traditional leadership as an institution is legitimate.

Part of the uproar came about as a result of the Nigerian local government reform which gave the then Head of State the powers to appoint and depose traditional leaders as he deemed fit. In most instance these traditional leaders refused to be accountable to the colonial government, and they were often replaced by leaders who were seen to be co-operating with the government. On certain occasions persons who did not come from royal families were appointed as traditional leaders, and this led to questions such as 'How traditional is

traditional leadership?” which basically challenge the legitimacy of the institution. On the other hand, history claims that humans originally dwelt in caves and had no fixed home; they were vagabonds, and lived under conditions which dictated “the survival of the fittest” (Engelbronner-Kolff, Hintz and Sindano, 1998).

According to the theory of social contract, individuals decided to come together for protection and mutual co-operation to improve the quality of their lives (ibid.). Naturally, those more gifted in bravery and eloquence, and with greater skills for solving problems in the community, soon found themselves taking the lead. It would then be natural not only for the sons of those in power to wish to take the place of their fathers, but also for the community to prefer that the sons and grandsons of those who had proved themselves should take the lead. This is how Kings and Chiefs came into being (ibid.). Based on this theory it can be inferred that Kings or traditional leadership did not really come from God but were created by circumstances that prevailed at the time.

Traditional rulership in historical perspective in pre-colonial times, traditional rulers wielded maximum powers and were seen as the custodian of the custom of the people. Some of them even doubled as priests. Adesoji, (2010), observed that within pre-colonial Nigeria, traditional rulers, held tremendous power and exercised considerable influence.

Alagoa, (1985), noted that different political cultures created their own institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria. He posited that popular tradition presents the House heads or chiefs of the delta-city states as virtual despots and the Amanyanabo or kings as responsible and careful about the general welfare of the people. Lawal, (2010) while lending credence to the view that in pre-colonial Nigeria, traditional rulers were veritable custodians that deemed their executive, legislative and judicial functions from tradition cited in the work of Igbafe, P. A “The Role of Traditional Rulers in Local Government on the Benin Oba” where he observed that the socio-political organization of Benin during the pre-colonial years of its history was dominated by the special position occupied by the Oba, who was the pivot around which everything revolved: the supreme, religious as well as the civil authority in the land.

This special position of the Oba found expression in the physical separation of his settlement or palace (Eguse Oba) and those dependent on him or connected to him by specialties from the rest of the town and people. The Oba was by tradition the fountain of honour and the giver of titles, his position being surrounded by an aura of sacrosanctity on account of his priestly functions and as a representative of the long line of ancestors who had held the reins of power over the land before him. Ehindero, (2006), similarly observed that traditional rulers epitomized local administration before colonial administration was introduced into Nigeria and performed many of the functions of the modern Head of State before the advent of the Europeans’. In the same vein, the Ogbah people of Northern Niger Delta saw their Obaor Eze Ogbah as the embodiment of ancestral traditions before the advent of colonialism in about 1902 AD. Alogoa, (1985) demonstrated that in some political organizations in the old Eastern Region, some age grade groups combined with titled personnel in the rulership of their domains as was witnessed among the Asaba and Aguleri. The Urhobo, Itshekiri, Ikwere, Ekpeye, etc. had their peculiar experiences. The intrusion of colonialism dismantled the structures of traditional absolutism in virtually all the indigenous ethnic nationalities of Nigeria.

The use of gunboat diplomacy and brute force, cowered these paramount rulers into submission in the face of a more sophisticated weaponry and tactics of the West. Under Lord Lugard, the British colonialists pursued a system of indirect rule more effectively from 1914 when the Southern and North Protectorates were amalgamated. Ashini, (2010), defines

indirect rule as a British system of administrating or ruling over her colonies with the use of local chiefs or appointed intermediaries using traditional laws and customs with British officials merely supervising the administration. Put differently, indirect rule system meant ruling the native African people through their own native traditional authorities. Thus, either the chief or as the chief-in-council was under the system known as the Native Authority which was vested with enormous power to act on behalf of the colonial government. Afigbo, (2005) notes that, indirect Rule or Native. Administration was introduced to Nigeria before the imposition of direct taxation in 1928. This era, according to Sasime, (2008), necessitated the loss of their sovereignty of traditional rules even though their usefulness was still recognized. It is common knowledge that the practice of indirect rule met resounding success in the North that had an enduring structure of central administration under the sultanate and emirate councils.

In the West, mainly dominated by the Yorubas, indirect rule system was greeted with appreciable success as the Alafin and Obas had practiced centralized administration prior to advent of colonial rule. In the entire Eastern states that then accommodated the South- South zone the principle and practice of Indirect Rule left much to be desired. The British colonial administrators were forced to create an artificial institution to address the need for grassroot government. Crowther and Ikime, (2006) observed before the colonial period, chiefs derived their authority or the power to rule from a wide variety of sources whether right of conquest or membership of a particular ruling family, primogeniture, etc. but in every case their source of authority was an indigenous African one.

Under colonial rule, whether they had fulfilled all the traditional prerequisites for assumption of office, which would have allowed them to rule in pre-colonial times, their right to rule depended on the colonial authorities. One of the adverse consequences of the warrant chief process was the outbreak of the Aba Women Riot in 1929 with adverse consequences. It is worrisome to note that at independence in 1960, the status of traditional rulers in Nigeria has not changed significantly. To sum up their beleaguered state, Jaja, (2010) notes, today, traditional rulers, their institution, system and leadership are treated like outcasts in a democratic system. They are not mentioned in the Nigerian constitution of 1999; they have no compelling power or authority over their “sons” or the ability to help check and call them to order. As they are now constituted traditional rulers have no power or authority to act or help to check crimes or crises.

Rural development should aim at:

- (i) Reduction in under-employment.
 - (ii) Removal of unemployment.
 - (iii) Proper house to live in.
 - (iv) Improve the standard of living.
 - (v) Hygienic living condition.
 - (vi) Adequate income for nutritious food.
 - (vii) Adequate all-weather roads for better communication (Ekong, 2010).
- (i) To provide some of the basic needs of the people e.g. health care, rural roads, elementary education, clean drinking water etc.
 - (ii) To improve productivity.
 - (iii) To achieve the removal unemployment and a significant reduction in under-employment.

- (iv) To involve people in planning and development through participation in decision making and through centralization of administration.
- (v) Empower women and small scale farmers, and indigenous people, including through securing equitable land tenure supported by appropriate legal frameworks.
- (vi) To achieve the removal of unemployment and a significant reduction in under-employment.
- (vii) To undertake some income generation project for the sustainability of the society.
- (viii) To organize, promote, develop, improve, support and maintain rural development activities and management of balanced physical environment, (Ekong, 2010).

4. The Adaptive Approach / Bottom-Up Approach

The Adaptive Approach: It is a combination of selective approach and laissez-faire policy and any other approach. It gives the people the opportunity to decide on their own lives sometimes, under the guidance of the government. (Ekpenyong, 2014).

The Bottom-Up Approach: It is also called bottom-top approach or rurism strategy. This approach implies that development starts with the people. It is a new rural development approach. Rurism is a coherent national and social-value system in which human and material resources are mobilized and allocated from the lower echelon of the economic and social strata to the top. It is free from any foreign ideology and infection.

5. The Study Area

Nigeria is a federal constitutional republic comprising thirty-six states and one federal capital territory. Nigeria borders the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the East, and Niger in the North. Its coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea, part of the Atlantic Ocean, in the South. The capital of Nigeria is Abuja. The people of Nigeria have an extensive history, and archaeological evidence shows that human habitation of the area dates back to at least 9000 BC. The Benue-Cross River area is thought to be the original homeland of the Bantu migrants who spread across most of central and southern Africa in waves between the 1st millennium BC and the 2nd millennium. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eight most populous country in the world with a population of over 140 million. The country is listed among the “Next Eleven” economies, and is one the fastest growing in the world with the international monetary fund projecting of 9% in 2017 and 8.3% in 2018.

6. Patterns of Traditional Leadership Involvement in Nigeria Democratic Process

One important idea we can easily draw from the role of traditional rulers in Nigeria from the above school of thought is that political office holders either in their perpetual bid to hold no power or to contests and won electoral process realized the role the traditional institutions can play in providing supplementary support for their weak power bases. In Nigeria today, democratic government claims their legitimacy i.e. acceptance and recognition through general election, it is crystal clear also that despite the constitutional restriction of traditional leaders from matters of democratic governance, there is ample evidence to show that traditional leaders have been accomplices in election victimization and use of traditional institutions to manipulate the electoral processes. In Nigeria today, scholars and public policy makers has argued that traditional institution are facing a problem of relevance and recognition in modern democratic space. These relevance, survival and recognition issue is

measure in humiliation of the personality and individual authority of the traditional rulers, restriction from public policies and local administration, relegation of welfarism policies for traditional institution such as salary stoppage as well as salary reduction and suspension of salary payment. A vivid example is the suspension of the Ibeyanaowei of Oluasiri by the Bayelsa state government accusing him of flagrant abuse of state government directives (Sahara Reporters, 2018). In similar vein, scholars have argued that traditional leaders in Nigeria are not battling with issues of relevance but rather constitutional relevance in Nigeria political domain. This is because their subject still held them with high esteem Traditional institutions in Nigeria have been battling with the inability of Nigeria system of administration to incorporate the role of traditional institution not only in her constitution but also in her inability to possess a suitable system of administration that incorporate these institution towards a sustainable democratic structures. The modern democratic system according to the modernists has not been able to incorporate African social, economic and political realities as against the colonial and military imposed political structures of the colonial era and post-independence period respectively. From the foregoing discussion, traditional rulership institutions has continue to exercise a considerable influence and play active role in the political administration and electoral process at of tiers of government. In today Nigeria electoral process, traditional rulers in Nigeria plays an important role in the choice and emergence of electoral candidates in contemporary Nigeria in spite of their non-affiliation to any of the political parties. Political parties and candidatures seek for their royal blessing. During the period of election, political aspirant with their political party troop to the traditional ruler palace for an undeclared act of endorsement, (Ekpenyong, 2014).

Traditional rulers in Nigeria have continued to play prominent role in the political activities in contemporary Nigeria particularly in the mobilization of electorates and during electioneering processes like choice of political candidates and electoral success (Hamusa & Ofafuor, 2012). The essence of this is to solidify the argument that traditional institution does not lack societal relevance but rather constitutional relevance. A very clear example is the recent call of President Muhammadu Buhari on all traditional monarchs to advise their subject against vote buying and seeing which is a threat to a free, fair and credible election as well as Nigeria growing democracy. The pragmatic aspect is that Nigeria political holders after electioneering process endeavor to maintain their cordial relationship with the traditional leadership as the count is as a way of maintaining their legitimacy that is acceptance and recognition both in their constituency and among the traditional institution subjects. In a very visible manner, political office holder pays homage to the traditional rulers whether during tour in their jurisdiction. They invite traditional rulers as royal fathers of the day to important celebration or opening of a developmental project in the community. Political office holders and aspirant knows that all politics are local politics, therefore to ensure their acceptability; they align themselves with the traditional institutions to legislate their political will and acceptance. Even the greatest critics of the traditional chieftaincy ruler ship in Nigeria would agree that they remain the closest governments and most effective mobilizers of the people at the grassroots (Emordi and Osiki, 2008).

Having catalogued the historical antecedents that frame the present status of traditional rulers in the country, the next important area of examination is the extent to which traditional authorities and local governments co-exist in contemporary Nigerian government. Under the 1999 Constitution, it is obvious that local governments should play a leading role in the emergent order, as traditional rulers are still vital to the attainment of economic progress and political stability at the local level. The continued relevance of traditional

authorities to the local government system in contemporary Nigeria as Egwurube, (1985) rightly noted may be attributed to the following reasons.

First, participant political culture among the majority the citizens, especially in rural areas is still dormant. Second, traditional authorities are still legitimate in the eyes of many people. Third, attempts to institutionalize alternative rural leadership structures in modern, stable and elected local government institutions, that would eventually receive the overall acceptance of the citizenry, have largely failed. Thus institutions which essentially have a local base must complement the efforts of each other for effective governance at the local level. To ensure that this is achieved, efforts have been made to state the working relationship between traditional authorities and local government in the country. In spite of this, there are frictions, and the peaceful co-existence between both institutions is very much in doubt. Two major reasons are given. First, traditional rulers, especially those who were very powerful in the past, are disillusioned with the present political arrangement, which assigns them only nominal advisory roles in local government affairs. A number of traditional rulers have expressed their concern in seminars and conferences on traditional authorities and local government relations. Prominent traditional rulers such as the Oba of Benin and the Alafin of Oyo have vehemently expressed their dissatisfaction with how traditional institutions and their rulers have been relegated to the background over the years (Amadi, 2007). Unsurprisingly, concerted efforts by traditional rulers to enhance their role in the local government and macro-political affairs have pre-occupied them more than anything else. This posture has greatly affected their interest in and contribution to the effectiveness of local government under the present dispensation. Second, there is a great deal of insensitivity amongst modern elected local government councilors to the ego of tradition rulers. Even though they are assigned advisory roles, relevant provisions are not fully respected.

7. Traditional Rulers and Co-Operative Movement in Nigeria

Co-operative movement was one of the earliest rural development programmes adopted in Nigeria. Cooperatives all over the world have been accepted as possible alternative instruments for achieving development, as they have proven to be veritable agencies for tackling numerous problems of rural areas. Such as low productivity in agriculture, lack of employment opportunities and skills, weak infrastructures, political powerlessness and death of industries (Ijere, 1991). Ijere has argued that cooperative is superior to capitalism, socialism and a mixed economy in the creation and delivery of goods and services. This is because, unlike capitalism, cooperative places emphasis on the human factor rather than the capital, and unlike socialism, it gives due respect to personal property and ownership.

The traditional rulers adopted co-operatives as veritable instruments of achieving regional development in Nigeria through a sustained encouragement of formation and growth of co-operatives. Most of these cooperatives were involved in the production and sale of cocoa, rubber, palm oil and groundnut, among other agricultural producing associations. Writing on potentials of cooperatives in Nigeria as far back as 1934, Strickland observed thus:

Cooperative in Nigeria, therefore, is not only a matter of increased or improved crops, nor even of credit to cultivators who wish to change their farming method, valuable and necessary association for these purpose will be. It is also a question of urban and rural thrift, of cooperative building, of labour contracts, afforestation and the prevention of erosion, of the preservation and expansion of handicrafts, of the supply of electric light and power,

the organization of individuals for a better diet, for precautions against disease and for sanitary measure in town and country, of the extension of education and of group agreements for the removal of social evils and the spreading of better customs (Strickland cited in Ijere, 1991).

Apparently drawing from Strickland's recommendation, the traditional leaders enacted the 1935 Co-operatives Ordinance, which restructured cooperative societies and brought them under the control of a registrar. Before the ordinance, the department of agriculture was handling cooperative societies in the country. Cooperatives provide loan and other assistance to members that were involved in production and marketing of cash crops in the country.

Although the number of produce marketing cooperatives increased to 276 and 313 in Western and Eastern regions respectively by 1949, Major Haig, (1951) noted that farmers were persuaded to abandon the "Etibe", (traditional thrift) in favour of modern credit and thrift societies. The "Etibe" he further observed was backed by native vested interests and appealed strongly to the gambling and spend thrift elements in their mentality.

There were many co-operative societies in the former Eastern region where the present Akwa Ibom and Cross River State were carved out. Gbenebichie, (1986) noted that the co-operative movement since Strickland's report about five decades ago has come to stay. During the period, thousands of various types of agricultural and non-agricultural co-operative have sprung up. As at December 1982, there were about 8000 multi-purpose agricultural co-operatives societies of all types with membership of nearly 2.2 million individual small-scale farmers engaged in agricultural co-operative, food production, storage and processing, food marketing and distribution.

He opines further that as Nigerian agriculture is vast is characterized by very large numbers of small holders scattered over vast expanse of land throughout the country, co-operative organization offer the best machinery for reaching the masses of the small-scale farmers at the grassroots. Regional governments had realized that cooperative was for the straight path to the development of rural Nigeria. The desire for an alternative programmes gave rise to farm settlement schemes.

8. The Roles of Traditional Leadership to Rural Development and Local Governance in Nigeria

It is a truism that the sole aim of local government is for grassroot development but the question remains, how far has this objective been realized? Today, there are seven hundred and seventy four (774) Local Government Areas (L.G.As) in Nigeria. On a balance sheet, one can safely argue that the towns and cities housing the headquarters of this L.G.As have received some form of face-lift in the area of infrastructural development. In the South-South, a visit to L.G.A headquarters lends some credence to this claim. The same argument goes for state headquarters where rural towns become urbanized with trappings of a megacity. Still on a positive note the 774 L.G.As have created jobs and contributed meaningfully in the area of capacity building.

Closely allied to these is the issue of rural development which Ekpe, (2006) highlights the major components to include:

- Eradication of illiteracy through functional education.
- Boosting of food production through agriculture.

- Community development through provision of basic amenities.
- Rural transformation through water supply, housing, health centers, electricity and provision of rural infrastructure.
- Diversification of the economy through integrated rural development.
- The provision of equal opportunities to all through democratization process.

In the pursuit of rural development, various goals have been achieved in the banking sector such as the setting up of the people's Bank in 1992 under the chairmanship of Late Tai Solarin during the Babangida regime, the establishment of the Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, DFFRI and the setting up of mushroom micro-credit banks dotting many rural cities. On a balance sheet, it is disheartening that most Local Government Areas have not performed creditably as a result of the 'Nigerian factor'. Majority of Local Government Chairmen see public office as a conduit pipe for looting the national treasury at the expense of the masses they swore to serve.

In this regard Uya, (2012), noted though Nigeria has experimented with various models of local administration since the 1950s, including sole native authority; federal native authority, local government authority, district and local councils, development administration, and since 1976, the all-purpose single-tier local government, there is a frightening consensus among all concerned, that local governments have failed, especially as props for people centered democracy. Indeed, it has been forcefully argued that no Nigerian institution has been in greater need for review, reform, reorganization and revitalization than the local government system.

As critical assessment undertaken by Tamuno, (2012), revealed that local governance has failed in the provision of social defense; and he goes further to decry their level of non-performance even where the emoluments of an elected councilor who has the equivalent of a school certificate and is just out of school are higher than those of a Professor in the university or a Judge of the High Court of a State. Yet both entitlements come from the federation account. It is against this background that the call for local government autonomy needs to be taken with caution. The question is, is it autonomy meant for unfettered lootings, and enthronement of endemic corruption? On traditional rulership, the fact that the 1999 constitution is silent on its function begs the question. It is an obvious fact that two captains cannot steer one boat. Even at that, there are some functions like grassroot mobilization and sensitization that could be left solely for traditional rulers. More so, traditional rulership from their knowledge of hindsight could play advisory roles to government functionaries of all categories right from the presidency to the least councilor. It will be worthwhile if a traditional ruler of the status of the Amanyabo of Town Brass. Navy Captain Diette Spiff (Rtd) is statutorily appointed to function as a Special Adviser either at the State or Federal level.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The evolution of the institution of traditional leadership has over the years experienced a number of adjustments both in a positive and a negative manner. These adjustments emanate from the earlier colonization period, through the apartheid era, and up to the democratic Nigerian government or post-independence African State. The institution saw traditional leaders who were seen by the colonial government to be uncooperative, being dethroned. The institution was further manipulated by the colonial governments while ensuring that it carried out some of the government functions. Today, the Nigerian democratic government is doing everything in its power to transform the institution of

traditional leadership to be in line with the democratic principles. The process involves the passing of various pieces of legislation as well as implementing programmes to support the institution.

Finally, the future of the institution of traditional leadership is amongst the current debates pursued by various scholars and academics in the field of traditional leadership research. It is clear that the institution of traditional leadership cannot easily be destroyed, hence it is important for the Nigerian government to define the role to be played by this institution.

The following recommendations are hereby offered for better performance of traditional leaders in rural development:

- (a) Seminar and training programmes like workshop for leadership and development of skills should from time to time be organized to respond to self-help development project of the community.
- (b) Wealthy individuals in the community can support the traditional rulers embark on gigantic projects like construction of basic amenities e.g. good health centres, electricity, good roads etc. They should serve as the center of mobilization of the citizens for any collective responsibility and socio-economic development of the rural area; adequate consultation and considered for the formulation and execution of any public policy that will affect the grassroots people.
- (c) The spirit of honesty, transparency and accountability should be the watch word of any traditional rulers in the state.
- (d) Local government in Nigeria should provide enabling environment to communities to initiate, plan and execute projects that will be beneficial to them.
- (e) The entire population of community should be sensitized to respond to self-help development project of the community.
- (f) Political inclusion of the traditional administration will aid in the non-negligence of the institution and also draw the state government closer to the residents of these rural communities. In addition, adequate funding of the traditional administration will make the institution perform their primary functions and community obligations thereby making the institution to be relevant, respectful and workable.

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