

# DYNAMICS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS IN SOME SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*In some selected Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria, this study evaluates the training requirements for public administrators. For this study, a cross-sectional research design was chosen. In order to collect its data, this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. To assess the training needs of public administrators at the local government level in a few chosen Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria, it used both a questionnaire and an in-depth interview. Due to its suitability for ensuring systematic scientific discovery, this research design was chosen. The sample size of 400 was attained from the total of 803,300 populations eligible for this study using the sample size determination of Yamane's formula. Data collected from the questionnaire were collated, coded and imputed into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version 23.0, 2020) for data analysis. The study found that only one in three local governments train new hires in administrative law, information technology, organizational behavior, personnel management, public policymaking, research methodology, and public finance. Two local governments, on the other hand, offered training in budgeting and financial management, management studies, and public finance. Although chairpersons of local governments, the head of personnel management, and councilors stress the value of training and development for sustained growth, none of them allocate funds for it. The study makes several recommendations, one of which is that local government public administrators should make a significant effort to transition their level of government from an outdated, traditional mode to a new model of governance that fosters a culture of customer-focused service. The concern of the public will be greatly addressed by this new consumer-oriented service approach and partnership between public servants and community organizations.*

**Keywords:** *Local government, training needs, public administrators, sustainable growth*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In Nigeria, local government was established in the first half of the nineteenth century. Reviewing local government history reveals that there has been a protracted period of trial and error. Local governments have made an effort throughout history to balance the needs for an effective delivery of external services with the participation of indigenous people in their own administration. The British colonial administration's indirect rule system led to the development of local governments in Nigeria. The British colonial administration made an attempt to democratize the system in 1945 as a foundation for social and economic development, which marked the beginning of local government reform. This shift in local government responsibility stimulated the desire to bring the government closer to the people as well as involving the participation of the indigenous people at the grass root in the administration and development of their areas. Adamolekun (1999) asserts



that the most significant feature of local government reform was the recognition of that institution by the national government of Nigeria as the third level of government. The Nigerian guideline for local government reform (1976) stipulates the following functions for it: (1) To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representatives; (2) to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of Nigerian societies, and to encourage initiative and leadership potential; (3) to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development; (4) to provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government (Afonughe, Mukoro & Sokoh, 2023).

The guidelines for local government reform also distinguished between the national and state and local governments' responsibilities. According to Harris (1980), the Udoji Commission's main argument was that the distribution of duties should take into account the capacities of the various levels of government. Choosing a suitable unit is the other structural aspect of local government. Local governments in Nigeria have lost ground to state and federal governments between 1974 and the present. Financially speaking, local governments have suffered because they haven't been held to a high standard of accountability. Additionally, state and federal governments have hired many employees from local governments. The creation of more states by both Babangida and Abacha's regime galvanized a lot of local government public servants to seek positions in the newly established state governments. However, one of the major problems of local government is its inability to attract suitable and professional staff (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). Therefore, in an atmosphere of declining confidence in local government, reform factors have caused a virtual abolition of the notion of independent local government in Nigeria's federal system. This view is buttressed in the sense that local governments was expected to be democratically elected institutions with executive, legislative, taxation and spending powers. Unfortunately, some local governments in Nigeria have subordinated this role to their state government spelling out the distinction between the three levels of governments in the nation's federal system. During the military regimes (1966-1979) and (1983-1999) the Udoji Commissions recommendation for the democratization of local governments was rejected by the armed forces ruling council (Okereka, 2015). Instead, the military preferred the national government to handle the distribution of powers and resources between levels of government (national, state and local). In other word, the military regimes' policy makes preferred technical and administrative solutions rather than to deal with political decentralization matters.

The most ominous change that took place at the local government level during the military regimes includes functions such as water supply, prisons, and education. Other activities were considered for transfer from either local government to their respective states, or to the national military government (Humes & Ola, 1994). The number of roads and medical clinics maintained by local governments was significantly reduced. Revenue and expenditure, resources and staff decreased during the military regime. While the military opinion has been that this reduction of functions would free local government to concentrate its activities on community development, it became more difficult for local governments to develop community interest and support for functions that were wholly state responsibilities. Hulmes and Ola (1994) pointed out that the tax riots that took place in the Western State of Nigeria during the military were due to dissatisfaction over taxation and local administration. The creation of more states by the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha in the 1980s and 1990s to conform to the major ethnic groups in Nigeria was considered a positive step toward a democratically elected civilian government. However, the creation of more states did not help to solve the local government problems. General Abacha's regime also increased the number of local governments. There were thirty-six states and 589 local governments in 1996. The number of local governments was increased to 774 in January of 1997, excluding the mayoralty of Abuja, which has two mayoral districts (Agah & Ikenga, 2019).

Today, Nigeria has 777 local governments. This has been the way the military regime restructured the federal system periodically since 1966, when they took control from the civilian politicians. Since 1996, the local governments throughout Nigeria are now organized in an identical way. The



new arrangement calls for a single tier-system with 777 local governments. The structure provides for not only an elected chairperson but also elected councilors with portfolios (that are councilor charged with specific policy responsibility i.e., education, finance, health, works, etc. What is particularly significant about this development is that it demonstrates the extent to which the new national government intended to be involved in local affairs. It would appear that states will no longer act as autonomously as they have in the past with regards to either the system or the functions of local government (Okereka, 2015). On the one hand, this trend is significant for economic development in local governments. On the other hand, federal impact is also felt in terms of financial assistance and constitutional guarantee as never before in Nigeria's history. In this view, local governments' activities in Nigeria should not only involve policy making, implementation, and proactive public administrators. Public administration at the local government level in Nigeria should be construed not only as a managerial tool but also as a legitimate means for advancing the broader public concerns of equity and ethics (Ikenga, Efebeh & Agah, 2020).

This study assesses the training needs of public administrators at the local government's level in some selected Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria. It traced the development of local governments in Nigeria from 1945 to present times. It argues that the shift in the critical decision-making powers and functions of local government requires its public administrators to be more trained professionals. The study addressed the following questions: What is the status of staff training in local governments in Nigeria? Do local government public administrators in Nigeria need training? Are there opportunities for training provided by administrative leadership? The question of interests in this study is how public administration at the local government level can better serve Nigeria's communities and in so doing develop authentic relationship with, and equitable representation of, the majority of the people. The study contends that the new direct link between the federal and local governments is an ideal intergovernmental relations system that needs to be explored further for economic development at the grass root. The final section of the study suggests areas of training needs for local government public administrators and how Nigeria can best achieve development at the community and grass root levels.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Dynamics for Sustainable Growth in Local Government

The survey results discussed in the sections before have looked at a variety of unique ways that citizens can participate in local government affairs. After conducting this research, are there any general, conclusive recommendations we can make to enhance the performance of local government and citizen involvement in local affairs? First, the various forms of required citizen participation and the disparate goals of the three local governments chosen complicate the research findings. As the preceding section suggests, various formats are expected to produce various results. Different perspectives on what participatory democracy entails are also reflected in the degree of citizen involvement in local government affairs. This further complicated in Nigeria because the nation was under military regime for a long time. The citizens still do not understand the details of participatory democracy. Having said this, it will be nice to be optimistic and stress the view points as well as suggest that Nigeria's local governments need the following: (1) a viewpoint that stress the educative value of political participation for citizens; (2) a viewpoint that emphasizes the capacity of citizens participation in programs to force greater government responsiveness and accountability to citizens interests; and (3) a viewpoint that expect citizens participation to be a helpful tool for public administrators. These factors will serve as a means for gaining citizens cooperation and support (Sharp, 1990; Shiyanbade, 2020).

The colonial and post-independence administrative reforms in Nigeria have both followed straight and narrow paths, according to the history of local government there. These reforms have prioritized effectiveness and efficiency over other public concerns like morality; in the twenty-first century, ethics and equity call for a new strategy for sustainable development. Sadel (1996) presents a theory of democratic citizenship in which people put their moral ties to their communities and concerns for the greater good before their own interests. Haruna (2001) contends



that local governments in Nigeria must enact legislation based on the notion that their duty is to advance civic engagement and public discourse. Further, the public interest will require a democratic public administration that invites participation from and collaboration with citizens. Haruna (2001) contends that there is no doubt that dialogue among scholars, practitioners, and citizens will not only help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but also to explore and test new possibilities for a better understanding of public administration as a field - of study in Nigeria.

A local government should have a bottom line: the revenue side of the budget, which is finite. As taxes decline or the demand for more constricts. Often a local government has decreasing revenues at the same time it must increase its levels of service. When a need arise for newer or better ways of doing things. This need drives innovative thinking. That is, the introduction of new ideas or methods, or new ways of approaching old problems (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). At the local government's levels in Nigeria, the need for new programs in schools, new ways to provide training or new ways to build roads represent opportunities for innovative solutions. In the local government strategic plan, it is important to encourage innovation in addressing the problems and opportunities identified in the environmental scan. The objectives and strategies are areas in which innovative methods can be developed. Public sector planners and senior public administrators in local governments should ensure that an environment is provided in which innovative ideas are not just permitted, but encouraged and nurtured (Okereka & Okolie, 2022).

Local governments in Nigeria should not shy away from need assessments. Needs assessments are systematic efforts used to identify training and development necessities. Although some assessments are little more than quick managerial assertion many need assessment that will help to shaped the objectives of training and development programs in local governments. Evan Berman et al. (2001) contend that at the local government level, needs assessments often can help units identify and receive adequate training and development, ensuring that they meet their staffing qualifications and program objectives. Further, local government in Nigeria should conduct needs assessments prior to undertaking work process improvements. Local governments should reengineer their service delivery process to make them more citizens oriented and to take advantage of new information technology capabilities (Okereka, 2015). Local government should also involve employee in need assessment. By involving employees, it may be possible to identify those who are eager to learn new skills and to train at an early stage.

Senior public officials in local government, particularly those who are not political appointees, should routinely inquire of their staff about their needs for training and development. This proactive attitude would show a dedication to the workforce. The majority of the time, the training and development activity that followed would increase employees' contributions to unit goals. The survey results highlight the urgent need for senior local government officials to begin asking their staff members about any skill gaps they may have. Depending on the local government's financial situation, it might be necessary to split the cost of employees' training with them. Most State governments in Nigeria, however, have very liberal training and development budgets and offer public administrators almost unlimited education opportunities. The objectives in extending microeconomic reform to the local governments in Nigeria are explicit and in themselves not controversial. Greater accountability, increase effectiveness, improved efficiency and preventing capture of program funding by sectional interests are generally supported. What is debated, especially with the new legislative institution of the Nigerian government, are the means or strategies to achieve these objectives (Okereka, 2015).

Thus, what can the new civilian administration do to increase performance in the public sector in order to improve Nigeria's national development in the twenty-first century? Several authors have focused on the use of citizens/government comment loop as a means to improve government performance. For example, Carter (1989), Johnson and Lewin (1990), Johan Holmberg (1992) and Shiyabade (2020) have proposed that state and local government are required to publish an annual report to their residents similar to the annual report published by corporations for their shareholders. They argue that the various constituents of the state and local jurisdiction have a



legitimate need for information about the activities of their government. The rationale for requiring state and local governments to publish an annual report is based on the need to provide state and local investors with information equivalent to that received by their corporate counterparts and on the need to achieve greater accountability of them to their public.

Quality standards and performance indicators for all aspects of the public sector need to be defined and valid consumer satisfaction measures developed. Qualitative research methods have been proposed as solutions to these measurement concerns. Metcalfe and Richards (1990) used in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis to determine the relationship between patient expectations and their satisfaction with the health care service. They concluded that those expectations alone were not an adequate model for understanding patient satisfaction. They observe that the way in which patients evaluate care changed with additional contact, and that ultimately satisfaction was based on how well the practitioner assisted them (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). They argue that using a qualitative approach to customer evaluation and "surveying through customer's stories" can reveal a wealth of knowledge about how well public services are delivered. Many administrators face the challenge of maintaining or enhancing service quality as local governments continue to undergo extensive change. It's wise to start by creating appropriate quality indicators. Particularly, the current mission change in the public water and electricity systems "provides an opportunity for comprehensive organization re-engineering." Beginning these efforts with an understanding of the consumer's perspective on service delivery would be beneficial (Okereka, 2015; Shiyabade, 2020). As for people's rights, the commitment of governments and development agencies to popular participation as a necessary ingredient of sustainable development and accountability has been enshrined in the Arusha Declaration on Popular Participation in Development (1990) and the Manila Declaration on People's Participation and Sustainable Development (1989). Over and above these factors, there are arguments that are more fundamental for people now to be demanding their voice in the future. Both have to do with the physical limits to expansionism, which has historically been at the core of human development and which has provided an escape-valve when pressures have threatened to explore a society's stability (Holmberg, 1992). The independent audit of local government's performance offers another strategy based on the public disclosure mechanism to achieve accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness on the part of governmental systems. In Nigeria, these audits should be designed to examine all phases of management activities with respect to financial compliance, economy and efficiency, effectiveness of results, and propriety of goals and means to achieve these goals (Henry, 1999; Metcalfe 1993; Mayne 1994). Financial compliance should involve a determination of whether (1) financial operations are properly conducted; (2) the financial reports of the audited entity are presented fairly, and (3) the entity has complied with applicable laws and regulations.

A separation of policy and operations will help local governments to improve performance. This implies that objectives are clearly defined within firm policy frameworks, and are based on neutral, non-conflicting values which would provide unquestionable and fixed standards for public managers to work towards. Their duty should be to execute the decisions of others. According to many current administrative reforms in the United States, Canada and France, Nigeria's local government public administrators should be expected to focus on achieving specific results and their performances should be assessed in relation to anticipated values of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness under a fixed framework of reference (Metcalfe & Richards, 1990; ILO, Chikeleze, Chukwuemeka & Onele, 2023). The assumption is that policy and objectives are given parameters transmitted to public managers from political levels. In this view, effective performance from public managers requires effort in both achieving and defining goals: the relevance and feasibility of anticipated achievements is also the responsibility of public managers. Officials formally influence outcomes through policy advice. This influence along with other sorts of informal influence on political levels helps to define goals (Okereka, 2015). Senior local government public administrator's active participation in policy formulation is as important as the work they do on execution. Their role in reality should not just be to execute programs but also to help redesign them. Good performance might require redefining rather than achieving objectives. While this does





not reduce the central role of politicians in setting policy direction and defining policy objectives, it ensures that they are assisted in this process by public sector managers.

Current administrative reform to improve performance in the local government should pay attention to value diversity. Designing performance monitoring and accountability systems in Nigeria's public sector cannot neglect the existence of multiple, and often conflicting, sources of performance legitimacy. Whose expectations should public managers respond to? Trends in administrative reform should highlight the importance of client's type accountability from public managers to citizens, as consumers or users of public services (Metcafe & Richards 1990). The notion that civil servants should be political neutral anonymous and powerless agents of government ought to be removed from the administrative life. Further, it will be better for Nigeria to cling to the concept of a neutral and anonymous public servant or the need to have an involved, but still professional, public servant. Local government public administrators should also be encouraged to provide a stable environment in their various ministries or agencies (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). It should be clear that policies are built today within a very dynamic and uncertain framework. Public managers in Nigeria's local governments should therefore be concerned with designing and applying responses to new challenges. They should be responsible for improving the organizational capacity for adaptation: to do new things and work in different ways. Whether they realize it or not, they are finally responsible both for redefining problems they confront and for identifying the most relevant issues to be addressed, for example choosing priorities.

Finally, although most local government public administrators need to play the roles of administrator, producer, innovator, and integrator, the role they should be concerned with at each point in time should reflect the specific circumstances faced rather than be dictated by history or training. Performance monitoring and accountability in Nigeria in the twenty-first century for national development should be consistent and compatible with the public manager's roles and circumstances. Further improvements will depend on overcoming resistance to implementation within and outside public institutions, and adapting performance monitoring to accommodate organizational conditions, culture, and inter-organizational relations (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). Institutional infrastructure needs to cover a wide range of requirements, such as finance, training, development of quality standards, generation of necessary information, promotion of performance monitoring and development of applied research in appropriate fields for industrial development. (1) Government should take steps to prescribe stiff penalties for individual and corporate entities that conceal information or refuse to respond to data request from the federal office of statistics. (2) The federal office of statistics needs to reorganize its data collecting and analysis methods in order to overcome the problem of substantial lags both in published data and time of their release. (3) Activities and programs of the various statistical agencies and research institutions should be properly coordinated (ILO et al., 2023). In order to facilitate the meaningful aggregation of state and local government statistics into a national data bank, this will minimize duplication of effort, ensure optimal utilization of scarce statistical manpower and material resources, and develop nationally accepted standards of data collection, analysis, and presentation. (4) The federal office of statistics and other Nigerian data gathering organizations should be given sufficient funding to carry out their necessary field research and purchase equipment like modern computers to process their data.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

The lack of citizen participation in local decision-making and implementation is one aspect of Nigeria's local government reforms that must be addressed. What capacity for participation do citizens have in local government affairs? In the context of local public affairs in Nigeria, citizens participate in voting, the outcomes of which are frequently manipulated. Voting is still only one aspect of citizen participation, even then. One of the less significant ways that citizens can participate is by voting. Sharp (1990) provided four guidelines for citizens participation in the public affairs of local government as: (1) Open government policies like public hearings requirements and open meetings laws that pave the way for direct monitoring, oversight, and input into public decision-making by citizens; (2) Information gleaning devices such as citizen surveys and



government units for handling citizens complaints about individual concerns; (3) Neighborhood organization activity; and (4) Co-production strategies that brings the citizens into collaborative operations for services delivery along the side of public service professionals.

A critical analysis of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria will show a contradiction between populist notion of citizen involvement and actual patterns of local government practices. The evolution of local governments from the colonial era to the post-military state also reveals that citizen's participation efforts have often been limited and trivial. Thus, from the 1900s to the 1990s the core of colonial bureaucratic institutions has not only remained intact but has also been reinforced through contemporary management practices. Gboyega (1999) and Olowu (1999) contend that a real federal system and the form of intergovernmental structure that the system requires would seem in compatible with the uniform command structure of the armed forces. Therefore, like the colonial administration, the military was bound to establish a centralized control system that discourages citizens from participation in the public affairs of local governments.

The evolution of local governments in Nigeria has had long-term effects of eroding local autonomy. Local government functions have eroded over the years because citizens do not participate in the decisions that define the new role of the lower level of Nigeria's federal system. Adamolekun (1999) pointed that the highly centralized military regime has weakened the general-purpose local government in Nigeria. In the state and local government relations, a long-term centralization process that was established by the military regime also has eroded much of local government autonomy. The evolution of local governments in Nigeria has been that of continuous reform. Between the 1890 and 1990s the British colonial administration headed by Mc'Callum and MacGregor instituted reforms because they were dissatisfied with the protectorate kingdoms. When Lord Lugard was posted to head the colonial administration in 1910, he too changed the local government structure that Mc'Callum and MacGregor had created. Lugard established the Native Authorities. Continued concerned and dissatisfaction with the performance of local governments led British Governor-Generals such as Clifford in the 1920s, Cameroon in the 1930s, and MacPherson in the 1940s to established a British-style system of local government (Humes & Ola, 1994). Dismay with the British system led to the transformation of local governments in the 1960s. Local governments were emasculated in the 1970s by indigenous commissions who were set up by the federal military government to investigate and recommend measures that would helped improve the performance of local governments in Nigeria. Thus, the method of reform decisions in Nigeria has been from the top-down approach.

The outcome of the top-down decisions and reform of local governments in Nigeria during the military regime was based on the Udoji Report in 1974. The civil service reform in 1987 partially followed the Udoji pattern. The report raised major issues of administrative reform at the local government level. Unfortunately, the Federal military government rejected many of its recommendations. This action of the government contradicts the endorsement by newspapers, community organizations, and partisan groups. The history of local government in Nigeria shows that there has been minimal election turnout at the rural areas of the nation (Okereka, 2015). This low turnout and the limited research interpreting local voting patterns and the lack of distinctive theory of rural voting in West Africa suggest that electoral involvement cannot be a key focus in a discussion of citizen participation in local affairs. Further, there have been major contradictions between Nigeria's expectation of citizen involvement in democracy and actual levels of citizen involvement in complex, technical decision or heavily bureaucratized and strongly professionalized service delivery operations.

From this viewpoint, Adamolekun (1999) and Olowu (1999) contend that public sector managers in Africa have the responsibility of enhancing citizen's interest in local government. In a democratic setting, authentic public administration is said to require such responsibility for nurturing of civic involvement. Before local government public administrators would be able to perform these functions in Nigeria, they must be adequately trained. Studies on local government employees in Nigeria suggest that public administrators often begin their new job at the local government with



the expectation that they will receive sufficient training and information to learn the ropes and quickly become productive, successful members of the government. Many public administrators, however, show up on the first day of work and do not receive adequate formal instruction or assistance from colleague for dealing with their new assignments. Likewise, many longtime public administrators at the local government need to re-skill because of technological improvements, mandated changes, or new ways of conducting business. The leaders of Nigeria's local government administrators, which underestimate the learning challenges required, often insufficiently support such extensive and difficult changes. Why do local governments invest so little in the training of their public administrators?

#### **CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The survey carried out in Nigeria uncovered a number of unique forms of citizen involvement in local government affairs. After conducting this research, are there any general, conclusive recommendations we can make to enhance the performance of local government and citizen involvement in local public affairs? A 2000 World Bank report noted that governments are not solely responsible for good governance. To hold the government responsible, we also need a thriving and diverse civil society. Civic activism has increased across Nigeria as a result of the political transition that has resulted in the freedoms of association, information, and assembly. Organizations in the civil society have a crucial role to play in representing the interests of the public, keeping an eye on how well the government is performing, and encouraging participation in governance. According to Afonughe et al. (2023) among the most important roles of civil society organizations are public education and information dissemination. The likelihood of impartial, unbiased reporting of political news was also diminished by the continued state control of the media. In order to improve public access to information and change this practice at local governments in Nigeria, independent radio and television services should be expanded (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). Although newspapers and magazines have become an important source of information in the local governments, the difficulties in distribution couple with low literacy means that radio is still the primary way of reaching mass audience.

As for people's rights, the commitment of governments and development agencies to popular participation as a necessary ingredient of sustainable development and accountability (Holmberg, 1992). Accountability and transparency should be the heart of efforts to improve governance in Nigeria. Anti-corruption strategies must be realistic, achievable, and consistently implemented. Nigerian local governments should make progress by reforming tax laws and investment codes, eliminate price control, reduce permits and licenses, and revise public procurement procedures. Constitutional and legal requirements for assets disclosure by political leaders and senior officials should be demanded by the citizens to increase accountability and transparency. According to McCarney et al. (1995), the term "governance" is distinct from "government." According to this definition, it should encompass the private sector, civil associations, community organizations, and social movements in Nigeria. These are components, which are frequently thought of as existing outside the realm of public policy; It is important to encourage community-based organizations to take part in public affairs of the local government. Community-based organizations could act as a conduit for locals to help themselves maintain a clean environment and contribute to the expansion of infrastructure and services in their area. Residents and citizens could contribute in a variety of ways, both financially and in-kind. By participating in community base organization's decision-making and by helping to implement specific projects and other planned activities (Afonughe et al., 2023). This will help to empower the communities to improve their standard of living in many respects. In this way, the communities would have played a role in the management of their local government and, hence, in the governance of their respective communities in particular.

Finally, citizens groups and community based organizations must be seen as partners in development and therefore, local government public servants as well as service providing agencies must forge closer partnership with them in order to encourage them and support their efforts to bringing services to their communities. Local governments in Nigeria need to build bridges by which





it can effectively link up with community-based organizations in order to provide the necessary support for the many functions they perform in the broad area of sustainable development and governance. This is one area that the current decentralization reform of government needs to focus on in Nigeria. It is only by this that local government can come to grips with the solutions to all problems of development of their areas. While networking among local government public servants, citizens and community-based organizations is good, community based organizations and other associations will need to foster closed cooperation with the local government structures in their areas of operation (Chaskin & Garg, 1997). This associations and community-based organization must give meaning to local participation in decision-making, formulation of projects and in their implementation by carrying their local government communities with them (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). It is by this that they will become democratic indigenous institutions with a focus of equitably enhancing public trust, legitimacy, and performance of the public sector in Nigeria.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This study assesses the training needs of public administrators in some selected Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study. This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative techniques in gathering its data. In other words, it made use of both questionnaire and in-depth interview to assess the training needs of public administrators at the local government’s level in some selected Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria. This research design was chosen because of its adequacy in ensuring scientific discovery in a systematic way. The total projected population of this study was 803,300 made up of males and females. This is broken down as follows, as at the June 2022, the total population in Isoko South was 322,300, the total population in Ethiope East was (275,400) and the total population in Oshimili South was (205,600) (National Population Commission, 2022); making a total of 803,300 populations eligible for this study. The determination of the sample size of 400 was attained using the sample size determination of Yamane’s formula:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

- Where N = Population size,
- n = Sample sized,
- e = Sampling error

Given the population size and with a sampling error of 5 percent, the required sample size is computed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{803,300}{1 + 803,300 (0.05)^2} = 399.80 = 400 \text{ Approximately}$$

Consequently, a sample size of four hundred (400) was used.

**Table 1: Sample Selection**

Local Government Areas		Sample (No of questionnaire distributed)
Isoko South. (Delta-South Senatorial District).	$\frac{322,300 \times 400}{803,300} =$	160
Ethiope East. ( Delta-Central Senatorial District)	$\frac{275,400 \times 400}{803,300} =$	137
Oshimili South. (Delta-North Senatorial District)	$\frac{205,600 \times 400}{803,300} =$	103



	Total	400
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Source: Authors' compilation, 2023

Data collected from the questionnaire were collated, coded and imputed into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version 23.0, 2020) for data analysis.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

**Distribution of Questionnaire and Response Rate of Respondents**

This study assesses the training needs of public administrators in some selected Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria. To achieve this, four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered across the three selected local government areas in Delta State. The questionnaire administered consists of respondent's personal data and the subject matter.

**Table 2: Distribution of Questionnaire and Response Rate**

S/N	Local Government Areas	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Percentage %
1	Isoko South	160	129	32.3
2	Ethiope East	137	116	29.0
3	Oshimili South	103	72	18.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>79.3</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Thus, out of the four hundred (400) questionnaires distributed, only three hundred and seventeen (317) were retrieved from respondents, representing about seventy nine percent (79%) response rate.

**Table 3: Profile of Local Government Public Administrators that Responded**

Position in Organization	Gender								Total
	M	F	Training Received						
			Ph. D	M.sc	B.sc	HND	NCE	Ex-Army	
LG Chairperson	33	7	6	11	20	-	-	3	40
Councilors	27	14	-	5	27	8	1	-	41
Director of Personnel Mgt.	21	12	-	9	19	5	-	-	33
Treasurer	36	15	2	15	24	7	3	-	51
Engineer	31	11	-	-	22	8	11	1	42
Secretary to LG	22	2	-	5	19	-	-	-	24
Other LG Staff	54	32	-	-	57	19	8	2	235
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>317</b>

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 3 shows the profile of local government public administrators that was interviewed. A total of 317 out of 400 local government administrators responded to the questionnaire administered. Out of the 317 local public administrators that responded, 224 were male, while 93 were female.



Among the respondents 40 were local government chairperson; 41 were council members (Councilors). The head of the civil servants at the local government level in Nigeria is called “Head of Personnel Management.” 33 head of personnel management responded and out of that number, 12 were female. Among the local government engineers that responded 31 were men, while only 11 were female. The treasury department respondent (treasurers) constituted 36 male and 15 female, thus making a total of 51. It is interesting to note that the treasurer position was the only senior management position that has more than 14 female. Among the 24 secretary to local government that responded 22 were male while only 2 was a female.

Table 3 also shows that 27 out the 40 local government chairpersons had a bachelor degree. Other local government chairpersons either had a Ph.D, HND or were ex-army officers. Majority of the councilors who responded either held a Master’s of Science degree, Bachelor degree or a HND or was ex-military officers. The most qualified group at the local government was the treasurers. 15 of them had a mater degree, while 24 of them hold a bachelor degree. The engineers generally held a bachelor degree in either civil or mechanical engineering. Only 8 engineers held HND from polytechnic in Nigeria. One interesting findings of this study is that although the military regime handed over power to an elected civilian administration in 1999, retired military officers are still actively involved in the administration of public affairs in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Training Received by to Local Government Staff in Public Management**

Courses in Public Administration	Yes	No	LG that Conduct Training for New Staff	LG that Conduct Training for old Staff	Total
Administrative Law	97	220	1	0	317
Administrative Theories	137	180	0	0	317
Budgeting & Financial Mgt.	124	193	2	0	317
Development Administration	152	165	0	0	317
Information Technology	78	239	1	0	317
Local Govt. Administration	198	119	2	0	317
Management Studies	164	153	0	2	317
Programme Evaluation	88	229	0	0	317
Organizational Behavior	171	146	1	0	317
Personnel Management	183	134	1	0	317
Public Policy Analysis	85	232	0	0	317



Public Finance	96	221	0	2	317
Public Policy Making	74	243	1	0	317
Public Sector Ethics	87	230	0	0	317
Research Methods	93	224	1	0	317

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 4 shows the training received by local government public administrator in the three selected local government areas of Delta State, Nigeria. The table also shows the number of local governments that provide staff training for both new and old staff. This study asked the 317 respondents if they had received formal training in any of the fourteen Public Management courses listed. 164 respondents out 317 indicated that they received training in Management Studies. 93 respondents also indicated that they received formal training in Research Methods. Among the 317 respondents 198 indicated that they received training in local government administration. It is interesting to note that 137, 124 and 171 received training in Administrative Theories, Budgeting and Financial Management, Organizational Behavior respectively.

183 and 96 respondents out 317 indicated that they received training in personnel management and Public Finance respectively. 152 of the respondents indicated that they have received training in Development Administration. Only 78 respondents indicated that they had received training in Information Technology. An average of 82 respondents indicated that they have received training in Public Policy Analysis, Program Evaluation and Administrative Law respectively. The survey result also shows that only 74 of the 317 local government public administrators had received training in Public Policy Making. Another interesting finding of this survey is that, although, Nigeria is rated as one of the most corrupted nations in the world, nothing is done to train local government employees the importance of public ethics. Only 87 respondents out of 317 indicated that they had received some training in Public Sector Ethics.

This study was also interested in finding the number of local government that conduct training for both new and old staffs. Table 4 shows that only 1 out 3 local government's conduct training in administrative law, information technology, organizational behavior, personnel management, public policy making, research methods and procedure for new employees. Two local governments indicated that they provided training in budgeting and financial management, management studies and public finance. Although local government chairpersons, head of personnel management, and councilors emphasizes the importance of training and development for sustainable growth, non-of them budget money for the purpose. The survey finding shows that local governments in Nigeria do not train their public administrators as expected. Another paradox is that there is no evidence that training and development has taken place as expected. In some local governments where training of staff has taken place, there is no evidence that training and development has experienced an increase in resources or attention. In fact, the survey evidence seems to suggest that many governments are reducing such resources.

For sustainable development to take place at the local government level in Nigeria, basic technical skills, organizational operations skills, public ethics and general supervisory skills have to be very essential. It is essential for all local governments in Nigeria to increasingly start to apply new technology and new management philosophies. This study also found out that although, local governments provided jobs for these public administrator, the respondents do not think well of the administration and local public services. Majority of the public administrators gave negative ratings to their local government. Variations across communities were minimal and the local government's negative ratings were similar in the 3 local governments surveyed.



Although, respondents indicated that they would like to see improve service delivery system, non- of them called for performance measurement so that their local government and staffs can know how well they are really doing. The reality is that both state and their local governments are susceptible to becoming intolerable sweatshop, trying to use old- fashioned mass production methods even though citizens demand more customization and employees require more empowerment. Berman et al. (2001) pointed out that lack of training and development in any public sector often because of crush of immediate needs, means that current work environment needs for cross-training, job expansion, re-skilling, problem solving, team skill an so on will go unmet.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In some chosen Local Government areas of Delta State, Nigeria, this study evaluates the training requirements for public administrators. It makes the case that in order for local governments in Nigeria to achieve sustainable development; public administrators must receive effective training. It further argues that minor advancements in citizen involvement in local government affairs would only serve to support a framework that will encourage the emergence of true participatory democracy. In order to address the issues of poor administration and corruption in Nigeria's public sector, the study adopts the perspective of accountability and performance monitoring. The study makes the case that efficient performance monitoring is crucial to Nigeria's public policy objectives being met. We observed that while previous Nigerian military leaders had pushed for better performance data as part of their reform initiatives, this effort had not been carried out with enough vigor and common sense, taking organizational and situational contingencies into account. Thus, without an effective rule of law in Nigeria, local governments are unable to contribute to sustainable development.


According to the study, local government public administrators must work very hard to transition their level of government from an outdated, traditional mode of governance to a new model that fosters a culture of customer-focused service. The concern of the public will be greatly addressed by this new consumer-oriented service approach and partnership between public servants and community organizations. In addition, we contend that the current plans for public sector reform will fail if there is no effective performance monitoring system in place. Local government governance can produce the desired results by establishing effective links between public officials, citizens, and community-based organizations as well as by making efforts to support one another. Likewise, the provision of on-time information to workers and streamlined organizational reporting should be considered in the re-engineering of public services during this civilian administration. Addressing these concerns through performance standards and quality service indicators may result in better service delivery and outcomes in the public service of Nigeria. Indeed, these changes would improve consumer satisfaction ratings and redirect workers' efforts into more constructive areas.

The political will of the leaders and the encouragement of skilled manpower to carry out the policy objectives among Nigerians are key factors in the success or failure of the implementation of various policies and programs in Nigeria. We are aware that effective public sector reform in the twenty-first century requires additional conditions. These requirements include political will, capable leadership, and a practical plan. The study suggests that local government employees receive advanced learning opportunities in addition to basic training. Finally, the study suggests that in order to enhance government performance, it is necessary to investigate novel data collection, analysis, and computing techniques. These measures will help to shape accountability and redefine the limits of public sector performance in the new civilian administration so that Nigeria can be in the path of national development.

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