

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

In a bid to ensure an effective and democratic local government system in Nigeria, this paper takes a critical examination of the present state of Local Government and capacity building in Nigeria. This is because the issues bordering on the performance of local government administration in Nigeria has been at the front burner in the polity in recent times. The paper explores the militating factors and weaknesses in the system with the view to re-invigorating it to meet the challenges of governance in the 21st century through capacity building. Source of data collection are based on the participant observation method. This work will also benefit from secondary data such as manuals, textbooks, periodicals etc. the world view of the paper is to contribute to political re-engineering of Nigeria State through the viability of Local Government as a panacea for political growth, economic stability and overall well-being of the citizenry.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Challenges, Democratic Government, Local Government Social Service Delivery and Governance Stakeholders.

Introduction

The 1976 Local Government Reform marked a turning point in the historical development of local government administration in Nigeria. As asserted by (Ugwu, 2001), The 1976 Reform marked the end of sound experiment or model and gave way to a common national local government system in Nigeria. The major thrust of the reform in the word of Orewa and Adewumi (1983) "is to entrust political responsibility to where it is most crucial and beneficial, that is to the people". It also aimed at social and development of and the effective delivery of the respective local population scattered all over the country". Unlike previous reforms which were highly restricted in scope and range, the 1976 reform followed extensive consultations at all the levels of the federating units and among other stakeholders and experts.

The reform also conceptualised local government as the third tier of government operating with a common institutional framework with defined functions and responsibilities. As a third tier of government, local government gets its statutory share of allocation direct from the Federation account and it is empowered to exercise control over its spending. In addition, the reform provided for a democratically elected local government councils. All the provisions of the 1976 Reform were entrenched in the 1979 Constitution which anchored in the Second Republic.

However, the 1976 Reform invariably gave the Federal Government more domineering role. As Gboyega (2001) rightly observes, the consequences of Federal intervention and imposition of a common system of local government have been mixed - from a benign role that clearly retained State dominance of Local government policy-making, the federal role has gradually widened to the point where the Federal Government can initiate local government Policy reform. The Second Republic was a turbulent period in the history of local government administration. It was a period in which to put to practice the provision of the 1976 Local Government Reform as contained in the 1979 Constitution. It was a testing period in which the State and the Federal

Government contested the control of Local Government Policy with each other. Attempts by the State to re-establish their primacy in local government policy-making not only created conflict with the Federal Government, but also weakened the power of the local government. The States, especially, abused some provisions of the 1979 Constitution to suit their selfish desires. State governments neglected or voided aspects of the 1976 Reforms that they were displeased with and distorted those that were merely inconvenient.

Over the years, successive post-military administrations in Nigeria have made various attempts to create a governance structure that would give room for decentralization through different levels of government with differing degrees of success. Unfortunately, the local government system has not achieved its purpose since creation following its marginalization by state governments.

The implication of these provisions is that local government cannot exercise the functions assigned to it in section 1 schedule 4 of the Constitution until the State House of Assembly had passed a law. The same Fourth Schedule of the Constitution also provides for "the functions of the Local government Council to also include participation of such Council in government of a state as in respect of the following matters, education, agricultural materials resources, healthcare and any other function assigned to it by the State House of Assembly. Another area of confusion is in terms of electing the Local government Council and their tenure. 2nd section 7(6) of the 1999 Constitution provides for a democratically elected Local government Council. While the Constitution provides for four year tenure for Federal and State political office holders, it was silent on the tenure of the Local government political office holders. The Constitution in the concurrent legislative list gives the National Assembly the power to make laws "with respect to the registration of voters and the procedures regulating election to a Local Government Council. The same Constitution gave the powers to the State House of Assembly to make "laws with respect of election into a Local Government Council. For instance, in preparation for the Fourth Republic in 1999, local government elections were held on 5th December, 1998. The elected officers however did not assume office until six months later in May, 1999. The electoral law under which the local government officials were elected (Basic Constitutional and transitional provisions Decree No. 36 of 1998) provides for tenure of three years. The local government officials later went to the Supreme Court to ask for the increase of the tenure to four years. In collaboration with

National Assembly, the Supreme Court however ruled that the National Assembly did not have the power to increase or alter the tenure of elected officers of local government.

At the expiration of the three years which supposed to end in May, 2002, the State Governments appointed Caretaker Committees for all the Local Government Councils in their states to serve until another date of election was agreed upon. Subsequently, the election did not take place as and when due as it was postponed twice due to the tussle between the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) and the Independent Electoral Commission. In order to maintain the local government as an institution that is amenable to perform well, there is the need to strengthen the capacity of such institution in terms of awareness creation and enlightenment. This is the essence of this paper. To achieve this objective, the next section of the paper deals with conceptual issues. The next segment addresses the militating factors against capacity building in the Nigeria local government system. The final section offers recommendations and concludes the paper.

Conceptualizing Capacity Building

To begin with, we can define **capacity** as the capability of a person, an institution or organization to perform a given task effectively, efficiently, and on a continuing basis and on a continuing basis and with reduced dependence on external resources. The Canadian Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) defined capacity building as: “addressing the interrelationships between institutions and organizations” (AKF, undated, p. 5). AKF suggested that the focus on capacity building has produced only a few broad operational guidelines to assist practitioners.

Another prominent Northern NGO (NNGO) defined capacity as “what makes an organization strong” (CRWRC, 1997). In the fall 1996 in Washington, DC, the Framework Development Task Force was created to assess capabilities of civil society, state and market organizations. This group gave a third definition of capacity as “the degree to which an organization can marshal human, financial, material and informational resources to accomplish clearly defined goals and objectives” (Framework Development Task Force, 1996, p. 2). The above examples demonstrated the striking disparity and the lack of rigor among

current definitions. Unless the term “capacity building” is given more rigor and credibility, its role as the “missing link” in development is likely to be short-lived. By definition, the concept of capacity building is a process designed to allow an organization to attain its vision, mission and goals, and sustain itself. In the context of this study, capacity building is a dynamic social process. It is dynamic because it continuously seeks to develop the organization and its stakeholders to higher and higher levels of capacity. It is social because the driving force of any organization is its people, and people are the builders of capacity.

Capacity building has typically been defined as the development and strengthening of human and institutional resources. It is acknowledged that the process needs to go beyond the public sector, as it is also influenced by entities in the private sector including commercial enterprises and nongovernmental organisations. Capacity development is the process by which individuals, organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, set and achieve objectives. It needs to be addressed at three inter-related levels: individual, institutional and societal. “Specifically, capacity-building encompasses the country’s human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional and resources capabilities. A fundamental goal or capacity-building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environment potentials and limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned” (UNO, 1992).

The United Nations Development Programme (1996) defines capacity as the ability to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives at three levels: individual, institutional and societal. The expected outcome of building national capacity is a comprehensive and sustainable national strategy for multi-sectoral programmes and policies. From the above thesis, UNDP recognizes that capacity-building is a long-term, continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and service users, professional associations, academics and others). In 1991, UNDP and the International Institute for Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering organized a symposium entitled “A strategy for water sector capacity-building”

in Delft, the Netherlands, during which delegates from developing countries and supporting institutes defined capacity-building as: (a) the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; (b) institutional development, including community participation (of women in particular); and (c) human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems (UNDP, 1992).

At the individual level, capacity-building involves establishing the conditions under which public servants are able to embark on a continuous process of learning and adapting to change – building on existing knowledge and skills and enhancing and using them in new directions. This requires a new approach to human resources management and also points to the importance of knowledge management as the new vehicle for increased learning. At the institutional level, a similar approach needs to be applied. Rather than creating new institutions, often based on foreign blueprints, support should focus on the modernization of their machinery, with a priority on systems and processes. In this process, capacity development for policy support, organizational effectiveness and revenue and expenditure management is crucial. Finally, capacity development at the social level is required to support the paradigm of a more interactive public administration that learns equally from its actions and from the feedback it receives from the population at large. In order for public administration to be seen as a responsive and accountable service provider, whose performance needs to be monitored, societal change is required (UNDP, 1996).

Philbin (1996) conceptualizes it as a process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adopt, and thrive in the fast changing world. In organizational sense according to her, capacity building can encompass governance, policy-centric leadership choice, vision and mission of the organization, strategies to accomplish them and the administration of human and financial resources. More often than not it may include revenue generation, i.e. taxation, fundraising, appeal funds, advocacy, partnerships among others.

For Egonmwan (2002) capacity building could be viewed from three perspective namely: (a) Human resources development (b) Institutional development and (c) Policy environment within which organizations operate and interact. Three

above variables are continuous, dynamic, and can be held in a water tight compartment. That is to say that they are independent on one another. Awotokun (2013) adds that the human resources (personnel) are meant to determine the performance or otherwise of the institution i.e. (local government as third tier in Nigerian federation). Reacting to the notion of capacity building at the Local Government level in Nigeria, he posited that the performance or lack of performance by the local government is implacably reflected on the people as recipient of the outcome of decision (performance) of local government. How the people react to local government of course is contingent on its performance. The performance of local government in turn is affected by the quality and quantum of human resources infused into it.

Indeed, it can be said that human resources development or management is all it takes to strengthen the capacity of local government to perform its constitutional assigned functions. Indeed (Egonmwan: 2002) graphically capture it thus: (1) The organization, (a) It enhances performance and increase productivity (b) It heightens moral among staff (c) It brings about organizational stability and flexibility to adapt to changes in technology, techniques and methods and other motivations. (2) To the individual employees: (a) It leads to the acquisition of more knowledge skills and appropriate attitudes (b) It enhances the chances of advancement within the organization and (c) It leads to more job satisfaction, increased earning and greater security. (3) To the society. It enhances overall productivity leading to increase in national income.

Linnell (2003) conceive capacity building in relation to leadership development, advocacy skills, training / speaking abilities, technical skills, and other areas of personal and professional development. Finally, capacity building must respond to the changing needs of individuals, organizations and Local Governments, as a third tier in Nigeria Federation.

Capacity building according to Awotokun (2013:12) can be conceived as activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behaviour of individuals and improve institutional structures and process such that the organization can efficiently meet its mission and goals in a sustainable way. Be that as it may, it is instructive to consider the principles that govern community capacity building. In a large measure, capacity building more than training includes the following

elements: (a) Human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enable them to perform effectively. (b) Organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community) (c) Institutional and legal framework development, making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacity (an.org.).

Capacity building is, therefore, concerned with human resource development (people), institutional development (local government system) and the overall policy environment within which the local governments (as public service organizations) operate and interact. Capacity building can also help to determine the efficient utilization and allocation of human resources among competing demand. Finally, there are two critical issues related to capacity building at the local government level for accelerated and sustainable rural development namely:- Capacity Retention and Capacity Retrieval. Capacity Retention involves keeping those trained in critical areas in the local government; curtailing 'loss' through 'brain-drain'; keeping them constantly exposed to new knowledge, tools and techniques in their various fields and providing conducive work environment as well as the tools to work. Capacity Retrieval entails making concerted efforts through policy measures to retrieve or bring back home those who have out migrated.

Local Government and Appropriate Capacity Building: the Militating Factors

The local government reforms initially had the following lofty objectives: (i) to make appropriate service and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative bodies; (ii) to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society, and to encourage initiative and leadership potentials; (iii) to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of member of the public in their local development potentials; and (iv) to provide a two way channel of communication between local communities and government (both state and federal). Since the above objectives of local government reforms, the 1979, 1989

and 1999 Constitutions had ensured its continuity as tier of government in the federation. Section 7(1) (13) of the above Constitutions state:

The system of local government by democratically elected local government council is under this constitution guaranteed and accordingly the government of every state shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, composition, finance and functions of such councils (FGN, 1999).

Put differently, the 1976 Reform and the Constitutions firmly established Local Government throughout the Federation as the third-tier of government. The structure and functions of the local government are contained in Section 7 of the Fourth schedule of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Accordingly, local government is seen as the first level in the National rural development process. Any rural development activity that ignores the first level (local government) is doomed to failure. From the provision in the 1979 Constitution, it can be seen that local government is assigned wide ranging responsibilities in the areas of Education (UPE), Health Care (PHC, NPI), Social and Community Development, Sanitation, Agriculture, Rural Water Supply and Economic Development. Besides the constraint of finance, these responsibilities demand from the local government system a high level of its present level of competence. This then, is the reason being the growing concern and urgent need for capacity building at the local government level.

From past experience, it is common knowledge that the local government has the weakest capacity to initiate and manage rural development programme. This is due to the fact that the quality and quantity of human resources available at the local government level is seriously insufficient. Most of the officials are performing their functions without the relevant qualifications to perform effectively. As a result, available resources for accelerated and sustainable rural development are inefficiently utilized for the purposes intended, thus leaving the local governments today without a reasonable number of qualified Accountants, Engineers, Medical Doctors, Property Values and even Economists.

More analysts and scholars believe that the non-conduct of council elections in most states is partly responsible for the inability of local governments to thrive. For instance, a state like Anambra did not conducted council election for over a decade while the local government system in over 23 other states are being run by transition chairmen appointed by state governors. Yet, as the closest tier of government to the people, the local government is saddled with such responsibilities that directly affect the lives of the grassroots people. It is also believed that local government is fundamental to building a stable government not just at the state but also at the federal level through representative councils established by law with specific responsibilities within defined areas.

Eme (2011, 2014), who had conducted research about the local government system, noted that in a democracy, local governance is conceived as necessary condition to engender participatory governance as well as foster development at the local level. As the third-tier of government, he posited was to ensure effective participation of the local people in their affairs as well as bring development and good governance to local communities. But such a change, he added, can only come through in two ways. First is to effect necessary amendment of adjustments to the existing legal framework governing local government administration in Nigeria. Second is by ensuring credible local government elections devoid of any form of manipulation which often characterize elections in Nigeria.

Supporting the above thesis, participants at the one-day workshop organized by Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) for stakeholders in Local Governance, proposed that the National Assembly should entrench an effective and democratic local government system in Nigeria in the just concluded Constitution Review. The workshop traced some of the challenges of local governance to constitutional ambiguity in responsibility for creating local government areas, clearly delineated areas of responsibilities between states and local governments in some concurrent areas; lack of clarity of roles in governing urban centres; continual encroachment of state governments on responsibilities of councils and inoperability of LGA autonomy due to inordinate state controls.

If local government must be functional, the group concluded that institutions of governance should undertake all development initiatives in participatory manner with special consideration for women, the poor and other vulnerable

groups. In this wise, budget formulation, project identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be done participatory. Formal institutions, the group also noted, must be transparent in undertaking their functions and also accountable to the citizenry. This could be through regular dialogue sessions like town hall meetings when scorecards are presented to the people. The use of publicly displayed information/bulletin boards have also been found useful.

The Fiscal resources availability to Local Councils constitutes another challenge to capacity building. The disposable (financial) resources are germane to human resources development, institutional development as well as environmental policy output. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the authors of the 1976 local government reform conceded a substantial amount of (₦100,000,000) for the take off of about 299 (and later 301) local governments created across the Nigerian Federation, between 1976 and 1977. This was a colossal amount of money as at the time when compared with a grant of ₦1 million and ₦1.5million made to each state of the existing twelve states in the previous years (1973 - 1975) fiscal years (Ola 1984). It is instructive to note that the financial fortune of the local government rose steadily from 1977/78 with a sum ₦250million, 1978/79 ₦300million etc. Local government currently enjoys 20.60% of the federation account but to what extent has this strengthened the capacity building at the local level? (Awotokun, 2013: 12) queried.

Head of Democratic Governance Department of CDD, Idayat Hassan, in her contribution noted that the spirit and letter of the 1999 Constitution recognize the principle of fiscal federalism meant to guarantee effective decentralization. As a result, the Constitution implicitly acknowledges the need for fiscal, administrative and political decentralization in the management of Nigeria. These efforts, she said, are exemplified in the use of regional authorities or governments, native and district authorities and the introduction of a parliamentary system of government with the independence constitution. Similarly, the creation of states, that rose from initial 12 to the present 36 (include the Federal Capital territory), as well as the creation of 300 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in 1976, which progressively rose to the present day 774 LGAs, were also aimed at creating an administrative environment for grassroots development through decentralization.

Hassan explained that experience with the application of this Constitutional provision has been varied over the years. For instance, decentralization of administrative power during the military era was highly whittled down because of the command and control structure of the regimes, adding that by the time the military finally left government in 1999, the country was left with three main issues related to decentralization which are still the objects of debate, *vis-avis*, failure of the present constitution to articulate a clear delegation of authority between the states and local government in some areas of concurrent responsibilities, the ambiguity in the responsibility for creation of councils which remains inchoate and included in the fourth schedule of the constitution as well as the problems relating to the equitable allocation of federal revenues amongst the three tiers of government (Okolie, 2012).

According to her, with the advent of the present democratic dispensation in 1999, effective decentralization received a boost as the state governments began to enjoy high level autonomy in a number of areas. The same was not however reproduced at the local government level. Indeed, a carry-over of the military era has continued and political power at the councils remains subservient to the state government. Consequently, Hassan said there was over dependence on federally allocated revenue. Most local governments rely on the Federation Account for more than 90% of their financial needs, adding that non-participation of stakeholders in governance over the years has made councils accountable to the state and federal governments rather than their communities.

As articulated by Awotokun (2013:14) Institutional capacity of particular importance to this discourse is the institutionalization of presidential system of government in the local government level in Nigeria. Presidentialism as a form of governance, as witnessed especially in the United States of America, is hinged on good governance. Good governance in turn is contingent on successful operationalisation of the machinery of government, which presidential democracy has foisted on the legislative institution, the executive and the judiciary. This is what aptly described in the literature as tripartite system of governance. For good governance to be engendered at the local government level, it must focus on the effective and efficient management of the public affairs at the local level. The Local Government Council which constitutes the legislative institution must make good laws, control the executive activities and safeguard

the interest of the people. The extent to which the office of the chairman of local government executes or performs the will of the people as enacted in the laws, determines to a large extent what constitute good governance.

In the main, elections are seldom held in legislative and executive branches of government at the local level. As stated earlier, state governments do handpick, their surrogates as care-takers of local government. Under this arrangement emergence of strong and virile legislative-executive institutions that can confront local challenges will be difficult if not impossible. The effect is that across the federation, most leadership at local government does not derive their legitimacy from the people they claim to represent. This has implication for revenue sharing formula of the monies distributed from the federation accounts, otherwise known as the state-local government joint account. Specifically, Lack of Political Will and Management challenge constitute big challenges to Capacity building in the local government. This is because despite pronouncements to the contrary, central governments often do not want to devolve power to the local level. National political leaders and civil servants may resist decentralization for any number of reasons, from the narrow, parochial interest of retaining power to the broader concern of maintaining national oversight in the interest of uniformity.

The Management Challenges posits that as the process of decentralization, it will not take that long for reality to sink in that many local governments have limited financial and human resources and inadequate governance capacity to fulfill the mandate thrust upon them. Many of our municipal governments lack the necessary institutional capacity to manage their rapidly growing populations. As central administration shifts to untested local governments responsibility for, say, public health, education, shelter, waste management, and so on, few of them are equipped with the technical and managerial expertise needed to take on these new responsibilities.

Supporting the above thesis, Olisa Agbakoba, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 2014 sent a private bill to the National Assembly advocating power devolution which is akin to what political decentralization. Mr. Agbakoba is right to posit that devolution of power will not mean disintegration of Nigeria. This is because as Agbakoba corrently pointed out that there are 68 items in the Exclusive list of the 1999 Constitution where only the federal government can exercise power.

Water, education, healthcare, natural resources, good roads and electricity can be best delivered at the state, local and municipal level if granted devolution. An In-depth analysis of current aspect of Nigeria political, social and economic index shows that the Federal Government has made limited impact in service delivery and infrastructural development. The evaluation of federal government management of postal service, power, healthcare, education, security, natural resources and infrastructure are below par.

Effective decentralization can be deterred by weak administration and lack of or insufficient capacity at the local level which could impair or delay service delivery. Administrative responsibilities could be assigned to authorities at the local level without sufficient funds and technical expertise thus making service delivery challenging at the local level (Owusu, 2005). Citing Razin and Obiri as quoted by Owusu (2005) service delivery at local level is substandard as budget allocation tends not to favour local government. Meaning that although decentralization has improved governance, funds allocation which tends to be rigid and delayed, deters service delivery thus growth insignificant (Owusu, 2005). Simultaneously, government at the local level is usually not in the best position to comprehend the true scenario of the position of things from the national standpoints which could bred conflicting priorities between the central and local government. Also, the lack of reliable data could mean that government at the local level would make decisions without a clear picture of the effects of such decisions to the national government.

Furthermore, dismantling of political powers to local authority could make harmonizing national policies challenging as individual localities would have different opinions and priorities based on their individual analyses. Likewise, supporting the argument by Crook and Sverrisson (2001) decentralization in most cases could be used as a means to promote the interest of local elites as a result of the rigging and lack of transparency in the way elections are conducted and won in Nigeria. This could mean that the decisions in most cases fail to reflect the needs of the poor as it seeks to satisfy the elites coupled with the lack of proper checks and balances from the top-down therefore, cannot create tangible impact for the poor.

Finally, the central government could be predisposed to preserving as much political authority as possible, sometimes while assigning major responsibilities to the local authorities in an attempt to promote a decentralized administration; it is often without adequate resources required to providing such service. For example, we believe the reason why primary education which is under the local governments is substandard as a result of inadequate resources allocated, corruption, and lack of technical expertise required. But these opportunities can only be exploited only when the necessary conditions for creating more transparent, accountable, responsive and effective local governments are in place. That is: An appropriate legal and regulatory framework, especially one that supports market-oriented municipal finance. Allows access to private sector borrowing facilities becomes necessary when public sector resources are insufficient to meet all infrastructure investment needs; A strong civil society, and increased opportunities for participation in the governance process, creating capacity for Local Governments to manage, finance and deliver services. At the end of the day, what matters most is that the local government is able to deliver services to its residents and that citizens have recourse through democratic means should their local government be unwilling or unable to delivery those services.

Strategies for Capacity Building in Local Government

It has become imperative to adopt urgent measures aimed at raising the executive capacity profile of local governments if they are to fulfill the rural development role which has been assigned to this level of government. These measure include that Local Government system that Nigeria deserves is one that promotes the existence of a decentralized national structure of governance. That is the one whereby certain levels of power (political and economic), authority (financial and administrative) and responsibility legally reside with the lowest tier of government. The local government institutions must be amenable to periodic monitoring of their activities by the civil society and the media and there lies the need to strengthen the capacity of such monitoring groups in terms of awareness creation and enlightenment.

Also to be stressed is the fact that it is the responsibility of the government all levels to take care of the needs of its people, especially under political dispensation. Both executive and legislative arm of the government owe the

society a responsibility to take care of their women and children. While calling on the three tiers of Governments', the Federal, State and Local Government to initiate policies toward strengthening the capacity of various stakeholders, especially the local government staff and the media through an enabling platform to engage capacity building and accountability in the country, it also imperative that Civil Society Organizations, Community Based Organisations and the other stakeholders to put more efforts towards capacity building in the country. Checklists of these strategies include:

- ❖ Staff development at local government and community level must be intensified.
- ❖ Training in planning and management of rural development must be hastened as this will form the basis upon which the local government human capacity will be strengthened.
- ❖ Training to be undertaken through on-the-job, in-service and academic methods through joint collaboration between the federal, state and local governments, donor agencies, foundations, NGOs, CBOs, SMOs, etc.
- ❖ Conduct of a staff audit as a first step with a view to determining areas where there is excess capacity and shortfalls which are to be addressed.
- ❖ Utilize critical expertise that is available from the pool of retired state and federal officers in designated professional areas for specified periods on contract basis.
- ❖ Carry out recruitment of suitably qualified persons to improve the quality of staff available at the local government level.

Conclusion

This paper set out to interpret the relevance of capacity building in the Nigerian local government. However, this study is more than just an interpretation of capacity building. It attempts to offer insights and guidelines into a new way of understanding capacity building and suggest ways in which the Nigerian local government can revitalize their organizations. The challenge experiences in capacity building in relation to accelerated and sustainable development at the local government level in the past have shown the following characteristics:

- ❖ Failure to build capacity which can be sustained
- ❖ Failure to address critical national/local objectives
- ❖ Capacity building not treated as a priority, which must be continuous process/efforts

❖ Lack of formulation of coherent strategies with a realistic time frame. Consequently, for capacity building to improve at the local government to ensure accelerated and sustainable development the following measures must be adopted as a way forward:

- ❖ Capacity assessment/profile
- ❖ Analysis of the existing capacity problems
- ❖ Assessment of past approaches to capacity building
- ❖ Strengthening the existing system

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