

An Assessment of the Conduct of Democracy in the Local Government Councils in Nigeria: A Focus on Anambra and Imo States (1999-2018).

Offiah, Anthony

Political Science Department, Imo State University, Owerri.
e-mail: toffiah@yahoo.com

Okoroafor, George I.

Public Administration Department, Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo,
e-mail: georgeokoroafor@gmail.com

Abstract

Local government in Nigeria is designed to promote grassroots' democracy and to ensure that the elected representatives of the people manage the local government councils. However, state governments have been accused for the inability to accomplish this objective due to unnecessary delay in the conduct of election in the local government, deliberate dissolution and suspension of some elected representatives of the people, and incessant use of appointed caretaker committee or sole administrator in the management of local government affairs. This paper seeks to assess the conduct of local government democracy in Nigeria, with reference to Anambra and Imo States. The study relies on the use of secondary data and personal oral interviews. It utilizes democratic-participatory theory as a framework of analysis, as the findings reveal that the delay in the conduct of local government elections, the incessant dissolution and suspension of elected local government officials (Chairmen and Councilors) and continuous use of appointed caretaker/sole administrator in the management of local government councils have grossly impacted negatively on the conduct and development of democracy at the grassroots level. Against the ills observed above, the paper recommends the amendment of the constitution to ensure regular and periodic election, popular consultation and participation in local government affairs and the management of local government elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Keywords: Democracy, Elections, Local Government, Anambra and Imo States

Introduction

The 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) states in Section 7(1) that "the system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed" (FRN, 1999). This provision apparently places emphasis on democratization of local government system; implying that the elected representatives of the people should be saddled with the responsibility of managing local government affairs. Promoting democracy at the local government level engenders local development, greater participation in the process of governance as well as increases political interest and awareness in the conduct of local democracy and politics (Ogunna, 1996). Complementing the above, Akindele (1996, p. 112), writing on Nigerian federalism and local government autonomy adds that "democratic elected local government leadership is a surer means of moving the local government forward as it is a mechanism for participatorily integrating the grassroots into the fold of democratic governance within the global community".

Essentially, election is one of the cardinal features of democracy at the local government level. It is a medium through which all eligible electorates choose their representatives (Abada & Elijah, 2006), in fulfillment of the constitutional requirement. Given

the indispensability of election in the local government democracy as a gateway to political power, elections are often irregular, unstable and sometimes absent or not conducted. This has continued to undermine the potentials for democratization process in the local government (Eme, Iheanacho & Okoroafor, 2016). Commenting on the above scenario, Eme, Idike & Onuigbo (2017, p. 62) note that "the absence of elected councilors and chairmen is paralyzing the local government policy in the country. This is because, it is only administrative activities that are taking place in the local government currently while governance functions have been stalled, thereby paralyzing the policies that provide for these functions.

In spite of the high expectations of the local populace in institutionalizing representative democracy, elections in the local governments remain doubtful and shaky (Obamwonyi & Aibieyi, 2015) as the state governors continued to manage and decide the local government affairs in Nigeria particularly in Anambra and Imo States. The reluctance and delay in the conduct of local government elections, the use of political appointees (caretaker committees and sole administrators) to manage local government system are major challenges that local governments have continued to contain with since 1999 that democratic governance was restored in Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, this study is aimed at assessing the conduct of democracy in the local government system in Nigeria with emphasis on Anambra and Imo State.

Conceptual Issues

Democracy

There seems to be an open-ended definitions and meanings of democracy. From onset, scholars such as Bryce (1921), Ranney & Kendall (1956), Appadorai (1968), Tocqueville (1998) would have us believe that democracy is a system of either government featuring by the people directly or indirectly through elected representative. It ultimately guarantees active participation of the people in governance and in decision-making process in order to meet their peculiar needs (Agagu, 1997 cited in Oruonye, 2013). Nwabueze (1993) summarizes that democracy at any level must be founded upon freedom, justice, equality, ordered and stable society and rule of law.

In relation to democracy at the grassroots level, Ojo & Ihumeje (2014) see local democracy as shifting democratic traditions to the periphery level through peoples' mobilization and electoral participation in determining who is to govern. This is because local people will appreciate a political representative, who dwells among the local community members rather than being governed from afar. This explicates the government of the people which democracy presages.

From the foregoing definitions and explanations, democracy is government that is driven by public welfare. It is peoples' inspired and oriented. This is because, no democracy can become dynamic, acceptable and sustainable if the system of government at the grassroots level is not people oriented, friendly, participatory and accountable (Adedeyi, 1999 cited in Egbefo, 2014).

Election

Election as a concept is not limited in its definition and meaning. For Sharfritz (1988, cited in Eme, 2011), it is the process of selecting one person or more for an office, public or private, from a wider field of candidates. It involves the process of aggregating the individual preferences and occurs whenever a selection is not the will of a single decision maker. Similarly, Ogunna (2003) sees it as a process in which the citizens vote for their candidates who would serve as their representatives in governance. From these definitions, election, particularly in the local government level is the process, which allows the grassroots people to freely choose or select those who will represent them in the management of local government affairs. As a core institution of representative democracy, election is a pre-condition for local democracy. It is supposedly the most popular and acceptable means to decide who hold legislative or executive power (Lindberg, 2007, cited in Ahmed & Alhaji, 2017) particularly in the local government councils in Nigeria.

Local Government

The guidelines for the implementation of 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria refers local government as government at local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within. One major highlight of this definition is that local government is grassroots government that is based on democratic elected leaders. It is not only an act of the law but constitutionally empowered. Similarly, Ogunna (1996, p.1) defines local government as "a political authority which is purposely created by law or constitution of a state for local communities by which they manage their local public affairs within the law/constitution. Ogunna's definition implies that local government is a political authority. It is created by the constitution with some objectives. It operates in a local community and manages the affairs of the grassroot within the limit provided by the constitution. Accordingly, Adeyemi (2013) avers that local government in the Nigerian context is a third tier of governance, protected by the constitution, which comprises of democratically elected representatives whose purpose is to provide basic services to the people at the grassroots.

The foregoing definitions revealed the features of local government as: (i) Local government is government at the local level; (ii) It operates within a geographical location; (iii) It is a creation of the law or constitution of the state; (iv) It performs specific functions provided by the constitution; (v) It is administered by the democratically elected bodies who are the representatives of the local people, (vi) It operates with substantial autonomy within the limit defined by the constitution; (vii) It is a product of decentralized political arrangement; (viii) It is a political authority. Notwithstanding the features of local government, the experience in Nigeria seems to show that local government is the government that is created by the constitution to serve the rural communities for the purpose of social, economic and political development, under the supervision and regulation of the state government. This poses a question on the so-called autonomy of the local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra and Imo States.

Methodology

This study is descriptive in methodology and relies on secondary sources of data such as academic articles, journals, textbooks, online materials and official government documents. To complement the secondary data, the study considers the use of personal oral interviews with the intention to get in-depth information about issues relating to the conduct of democracy in the local government councils in Anambra and Imo States.

Theoretical Framework

This study would be discussed within the framework of democratic participatory theory. The theory is traceable to the works of J.S. Mill, Robert Dahl, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and Alexis de-Tocqueville, among others. Democratic participatory theory revolves around active participation of people in governance. It entails that the people should exercise ultimate power in selecting periodically, in free and fair elections, their representatives who are charged with the responsibility of managing their own affairs (Ogunna, 1996). The proponent of democratic participatory theory argues that local government is a harbinger of participatory grassroot democracy. Through this process, people take part in the political, democratic and decision-making process (Ezeani, 2004; Eme, Iheanacho & Okoroafor, 2016). In this light, Tocqueville (1998) advocates community sovereignty in decisions that affect only those within the community without impinging on the freedom of others. Recognizing the above, the legitimacy of democracy at the local government system is based on local participatory governance. As acknowledged by Lord James Bryce, local government is the best school of democracy, and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self-government (Eme, Idike & Onuigbo, 2017).

Democratic participatory theory is germane to this study. Its relevance lies in securing liberty, equality and welfare of the local people. As Mass (1957) puts it, it protects the citizens from the excessive control and arbitrariness of the central government by allowing local government significant degree of autonomy to operate. It protects the citizens from the excessive control and arbitrariness of the higher government by allowing local government significant degree of autonomy to operate. It affords the citizens the opportunity of political participation in governance. Lastly, it bothers on the welfare of the people through provision of public goods and services. In other words, democratic participatory theory will give a voice to people in local governance, ensures active participation of people in the political process as well as add value to the life of the local populace (Bolaji, 2008). Hence, the failure of local democracy automatically translates into the total failure of local government system in Nigeria particularly in Anambra and Imo States.

Empirical Studies

Basher & Muhammed (2012) examined the challenges of democratization at the grassroot level in Nigeria with emphasis on Taraba State. The paper argued that the major factors undermining local democracy in Taraba are poor legal framework, unrestricted control and influence of state governments and political parties over the local government affairs. Furthermore, the authors posited that the prevailing democratic practice in the local government system in Nigeria especially in Taraba State is detrimental to the efforts towards grassroot development and expectations of the local people. The authors discovered that the

practice of unrestricted state government control over the local government undermines the development of grassroot democracy and contravenes the provision of Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In the same vein, Wilson (2013) was concerned with local government reforms and democratic governance in Nigerian local government system. The paper was qualitative in nature and depended on secondary sources of data. It maintained that the various local government reforms carried out before 1976 only encouraged the existence of a mere local administration without operational autonomy. The paper further argued that the 1976 local government reforms and the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria were significant as they provided for the existence of local government as a third tier government in Nigeria, but failed to protect their autonomous political powers which accounts for the failure of grassroot democracy. The paper uncovered that the relationship existing between local governments and state/central government is that of servant-master relationship. It therefore, recommended reform of local government system and the amendment of the constitution to ensure that local governments operate as politically autonomous levels of government and to guarantee local democracy.

Similarly, Ozohu-Suleiman & Chima (2015) studied the relevance of local government democracy in Nigeria. The authors adopted historical approach. They posited that the combined effects of constitutional gaps and reform contradiction have rendered Nigerian local government an unfortunate orphan in terms of performance. The authors also argued that the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria did not provide strong backing and protection to the local government democracy, which made local governments very vulnerable. The paper called for the amendment of the Nigerian Constitution in a manner that the operational autonomy and powers of the local government could be enhanced and protected. Egbefo (2015) assessed the fifteen years of democracy in Nigeria, between 1999 and 2014 in the light of national integration. The author submitted that the inability to establish a strong foundation for democratic institution in Nigeria was responsible for poor development and integration. He established that poor democratic institution in Nigeria has strong correlation with corruption, poor service delivery, poverty and disunity in the system. The paper recommended strong democratic institutional reform.

LaMonica (2015) focused on how to move local democracy in the sub-Saharan Africa forward. The author argued that the developmental history of today's liberal democratic state demonstrates a clear parallel between liberal state practice and functioning local government institutions. The author demonstrated that the newly declared democracies of sub-Saharan Africa are consistently ranked among the lowest in the world in the yearly indexes on political freedom compiled by Freedom House. The study concluded that if political liberalism is to be realized within these newly declared democracies of sub-Saharan Africa, a renewed emphasis on the role of local government institution must be considered.

Babatope & Egunjobi (2016) focused on the state governors as impediment towards democratic composition of local government councils in Nigeria. The paper maintained that the Guideline of the 1976 Local Government Reform and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) envisaged a local government system that would ensure the participation of the people of the local communities in electing their councils through the process of democratic principle. The reason for this is consequent on the belief that democracy

drives development and gives opportunity to the people to participate in the political process through their elected representatives. Furthermore, the authors recalled that over the years, lack of democratization of local government councils has grossly undermined the ability of local government councils to perform. This is largely because of the disregard the state governors had for constitutional provision as it concerns local government administration.

The paper concluded that local government has roundly been turned into a 'spoils' to be shared among party loyalists by state governors resulting in flagrant abuse and subversion of the constitution. The paper recommended reorientation of Nigerians especially the political elite to submit to democratic norms.

Onyekachi (2016) examined at the structural defect in local government re-organization in Ebonyi State Nigeria and its implications on grassroots democratic development. The author posited that local governments are required to participate in election and to select or chose their leaders. Instead of maintaining the electioneering procedure of democratic governance, it is being challenged by the appointment of caretaker committee. This denies the rural people the opportunity of exercising their democratic rights. The study revealed that the local governments have serious problem in the promotion and sustenance of democracy due to the absence of elective principles. Also, the appointment of the caretaker officials to manage local government has eroded the political sovereignty of the people to choose their leaders, among others. The paper recommended the incorporation of town union leaders and traditional institutions in the management of local affairs, improvement of local democracy and encouragement of leadership training.

In fact, Eme, Idike & Onuigbo (2017), which appraised the South East local government and democracy in Nigeria since 1999, carried out another study. The paper maintained that most Nigerians have over time craved for the change of the status quo in the local government system in order to conform to the present realities and to meet with the expectations of the people for who yearn for grassroots development. This is because the local government is the closest government to the people, but the inability of the local government councils to meet the primary objectives spelled out in the hallmark of 1976, which are to promote participatory democracy and rapid socio-economic development at the grassroots has made the citizens to lose trust in the local government. The paper, which employed development and democratic theories to justify its arguments, sourced its data through focus group discussion, interviews and documentary sources. It utilized content analysis as the analytical method. The findings of the study indicated that because of poor understanding of the operation of the constitution and excessive control by state governments, corruption and the flows in the 1999 Constitution, local governments remained handicapped.

In his work, 'Local government and democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Kwasau (2017) argued that in the Nigerian context, the basic philosophy surrounding the existence of local government, among others, encompasses the need to foster the existence of democratic self-government, which was captured by the 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms. Since then, the successive Nigerian constitutions have been amplifying the democratic imperatives of local government, and this informed the series of reforms that have been carried out with a view to making local government a veritable tool for democracy. The study uncovered that the democratic institution in the local government in Nigeria is a

failure as it is in the continuous search for a viable and result oriented local government system. The paper equally showed that the politics of local-state or central governments relations has continued to weaken the capacity of local government. It recommended among others, the institutionalization of the culture of democracy in the local government through legal framework.

Dode & Ita (2017) anchored their study on local government and grassroots democratization in Nigeria with the purpose of identifying the challenges and the way forward. The paper posited that local government as a third tier of government in Nigeria is very critical and crucial because of its closeness to the people at the grassroots, and has made positive and meaningful contribution to the political, social and economic development of the country and its citizens by providing opportunities for political education and participation, citizenship and political leadership as well as economic development of the rural areas. The authors relied on secondary data, employed decentralization theory as its theoretical framework and utilized content analytical tool in the analysis of data. The paper discovered that local people are rendered irrelevant in the political process as the political elite as objects of manipulation rather than substantially mobilizing, educating and empowering them to participate in grassroots politics use them. The paper recommended effective mobilization, adequate education and empowerment of the local people to participate in the process of governance at the grassroots.

Constitutionalization of Local Government Democracy

The term constitutionalization of local government democracy refers to the recognition of the local government democracy by the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), Section 7 (1) states: "the system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed" (FRN, 1999). This immediately implies that the local government council's officials should be recruited through "popular election" (Ogunna, 1996) or mandate theory. In continuation, the constitution provides that "the government of every state shall subject to Section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law, which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such council" (FRN, 1999).

It should, however, be noted from the foregoing that elected representatives of the people should be at the helm of affairs at the local government council. This is intended to ensure that local government functions as a political authority with the power to freely choose representatives without any unnecessary interference and undue influence from either state or central government. Unfortunately, and regrettably too, the state governors capitalize on the latter provision to override the powers of the local government in relation to local democracy. Recently, the Supreme Court of Nigeria in its landmark ruling of December 9, 2016, annulled the powers of the state governors to dissolve elected local government councils before the duration of the tenure of the officials. Despite this development, the state governors have continued to disregard with impunity the provision of the constitution and the ruling of the Supreme Court. Such seems prevalent in Anambra and Imo States. This has caused a lot of confusion, and therefore, calls for constitutional amendments/clarifications to ensure that local government operates fully as a third tier of government.

The Conduct of Local Democracy in Anambra and Imo States (1999-2019)

Promoting democratic process in the local government system is aimed at bringing government closer to the people and ensuring grassroots development. Based on the backdrop, we would discuss this in relation to Anambra and Imo States.

Anambra State

There were apparently no functional elected local government councils in Anambra State. In 2000, local government election was conducted by the administration of the former Governor, Chinwoke Mbadinuju. The elected council ended in 2002. During this time, the state government demonstrated excessive control over the local governments as manifested in the suspension of the Aguata Local Government Chairman, Hon. Godwin Oselu. The successor of Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju, Dr. Chris Ngige settled on caretaker committee in the running of local government affairs. This lasted between 2003 and 2006, during which he served as the Governor of the state. Ngige's administration could not concentrate to conduct local government election due to numerous court cases that bothered on the governorship election. Unfortunately, Chris Ngige's administration was short-lived due to the court order that sacked him from office.

When Governor Peter Obi, the successor of Dr. Chris Ngige, took over the mantle of leadership through court ruling, expectations were so high that local government elections would be conducted having emerged from the opposition party, (All Progressive Grand Alliance). Sadly, people's expectations were dashed, as there were no elections. Rather, he employed caretaker committee in the management of local governments. This spanned between 2006 and 2012. When the Anambra State House of Assembly directed Governor Peter Obi to organize local government elections, his actions suggested that there was no platform for such exercise. The government was equally adamant to conduct election, even when after the Chairman of Conference of Nigerian Political Parties, in Anambra State, Jude Ezenwafor threatened to take the Governor, Peter Obi to court to compel him to do the needful (Eme, 2011, p.360). Expressing his disappointment with the Governor, the CNPP Chairman of Anambra State, Jude Ezenwafor (cited in Eme, 2011, p.360) has this to say:

We will urge the court to compel the government to conduct local government elections in the state. It is wrong for the state government to continue to manage the allocations of the local government councils. This has been hampering grassroots development. The government should immediately put the necessary machineries in motion to conduct local government elections so that the grassroots people will feel the real impact of government. The above remarks condemned the delay orchestrated by Governor Peter Obi's administration in conducting local government election in Anambra State. Within these periods, the state government managed and utilized the statutory allocations of the 21 local government councils. However, the member representing Nnewi South II Constituency in the Anambra House of Assembly, Hon. Ikenna Amaechi expressed deep concern over Governor Peter Obi's administration unnecessary prolonged of the local government election. According to him, Obi's government thrived on subterfuge in the issue of local government elections. He accused the government of preaching the adherence to the rule of law but practiced direct opposite that was a gross illegality.

The long period of non-democratization of local government system in Anambra State was temporarily brought to an end in January 2014 at the twilight of the Peter Obi's administration when the local government elections were held. Since January 2016 when the two-year tenure of the 21 Local Government Chairmen and their 326 Councilors expired, the state local government councils under Governor Obiano has for so long remained under caretaker committee. There has been pressure from some quarters for local government elections to be conducted. The letter written by the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law, totally condemned Governor William Obiano, and other Governors of the South East geopolitical zone for muzzling democratic process in their local government system by using caretaker committee in place of democratically elected government system. Governor Obiano was called to immediately dissolve the existing caretaker committees in the local governments and direct the Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission (ANSIEC) to conduct election into the state's local governments without further delay, and in full compliance with the provision of the law. Unfortunately, the status quo has remained unchanged, as caretaker committee has been used to manage local government affairs.

Imo State

In Imo State, particularly during the era of Governor Achike Udenwa (between 1999 and 2007), local government elections were held two times in two consecutive tenures of the Governor. Within this period, local governments were treated as offshoots of the state government. There was unrestricted control of the local governments by the state government. The suspension of two local government chairmen, Hon. Abed Anyadike and Charles Okeke of Mbaitoli and Orsu Local Governments respectively spoke volume of that. In the case of Governor Ikedi Ohakim who was the successor of Governor Achike Udenwa, instead of conducting local government elections, he was very comfortable working with caretaker chairmen. He later set up the Local Government Electoral Law Reform Panel, headed by Bon Nwakamma (SAN) to ascertain if the citizenry would opt for parliamentary or presidential system of government. The panel was to work out how candidates for election would emerge. The Chairman, Bon Nwakamma, averred that "whichever system the people choose, the committee must ensure that we get the people that would positively run the local government system".

While acknowledging the receipt of the report and in preparation to put it into effect, the Governor, Ikedi Ohakim observed that in the past few years, local government had witnessed a lot of bastardization because of the absence of monitoring package on the performance of the administration, and he concluded that without any effort to repackage the system, it would be heading for total collapse. The disclosure made by Martin Nnadozie, the former Security Adviser to the Ex-governor, Achike Udenwa revealed that the delay in conducting the council polls would benefit Imo citizens on the long run. He was of the view that reformation of the local government system would further enhance efficiency in administration at the local level of governance. According to him, Ohakim's government would no longer tolerate a haphazard plan or the pervading poverty and hopelessness in the local government as government was ready to do an election after all necessary arrangements had been put in place.

Despite the clarifications of Governor Ikedi Ohakim and his advocate, Martin Nnadozie, analysts believed that the delay was deliberated and contemplated. They maintained that Governor Ikedi Ohakim's administration was only buying time pending the outcome of his case at the Appeal Court in Port Harcourt. The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) candidate in the April 28, 2007 governorship election, Senator Ifeanyi Ararume had appealed against the verdict of the tribunals on the issue. The clear message is that during Governor Ikedi Ohakim's administration, local government democracy was neglected. While the governor was about leaving office, he quickly conducted election in August 2010 in which all the chairmen emerged from the ruling People's Democratic Party.

Local government was not fairly treated following the emergence of Governor Rochas Okorochoa (from All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and later to All Progressive Congress (APC)), the successor of Ikedi Ohakim. Without regard to the rule of law, the Governor dissolved the duly elected Chairmen and Councilors of the 27 local governments in Imo State on 6th June, 2011. Since then till date, Governor Rochas Okorochoa's administration had appointed five different sets of caretaker committees to oversee the management of local governments. This action, which was conceived as unlawful, was challenged by the ousted local government Chairmen and Councilors, and has remained in the court. Condemning the unlawful dissolution of elected local government councils by State Governors, the Supreme Court in its landmark judgment described the action of the Governors as "executive recklessness" as it concerns their acts of dissolving democratically elected local government councils in their states and replacing them with caretaker committees. A five-man panel of the Apex Court led by Justice Olabode Rhodes-Vivour, made the pronouncement in a unanimous judgment it delivered on Friday 9th December 2016, following an appeal arising from the dissolution of 16 local government councils in Ekiti State on 29th of October 2010 by the former Governor, Kayode Fayemi.

Unfortunately, the use of caretaker committees in running the local government councils has not yielded any significant impact in the grassroot development and democracy in Imo State. According to one of the caretaker committee chairmen, we have little or no job to do in the council due to lack of funds. Whenever the federal government releases local government allocation, the state government would only release money that would be good enough to settle the salaries of the staff of the local governments. To make matter worse, the administration of Governor Rochas Okorochoa went ahead to create the fourth tier system of government (known as Community Government Council) at the expense of the local governments, which he hoped, would boost local governance and transform local communities. However, the fourth tier system of government was not clearly defined in terms of its structure, powers and functions (Ezeanyika & Okoroafor, 2019).

Recently, before his exit, the Imo State Governor, Rochas Okorochoa, indicated his readiness and willingness to conduct local government elections in July 14th 2018, which he finally did on Saturday 25th August, 2018. The so-called election was surrounded by controversies and disputes. Some major political stakeholders within the state revealed that almost all the political parties boycotted the election apart from All Progressive Congress; the ruling party in the state. The legality and credibility of the elections was in question in view of the subsisting suit that was pending in the Supreme Court involving the dissolved local

government elected officials and Governor Rochas Okorocha's administration. In view of the foregoing, it is pertinent to observe that democracy in the local government councils in Anambra and Imo States are under serious threat.

Conclusion

It is an undisputed fact that the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, which created local government as a third tier of government, guaranteed its democracy to enable it function effectively. From the findings of this work, it has been disclosed that just as local government promotes democracy, democracy is required for the sustenance of local government system in Nigeria. However, it has been observed that democracy has not been sustained in the local government councils in Anambra and Imo States due to certain factors like unnecessary delay in the conduct of local government election, illegal dissolution and suspension of the democratically elected representatives of the people (i.e. Chairman and Councilors) and the use of appointed caretakers and sole administrators in the management of local government affairs. As a result, the political rights of the people to participate and control the political process in the local level is denied and deprived. More so, the people adopt the culture of political apathy and indifference just as the appointed officials face the challenge of legitimacy and acceptance by the people.

The paper called for constitutional amendments, accountability and the diversification of the economy. It therefore concludes that the state governments in Anambra and Imo States without restriction unduly interfere in the local government democracy to the detriment of the people. To stem this tide, there is an overriding need and reason to review and amend the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria to guarantee political and democratic autonomy of the local government councils. More so, elections should be regularly and periodically conducted to avoid any lacuna in administration. As a corollary, the elections should be conducted and managed by Independent National Electoral Commission rather than the Independent State Electoral Commission.

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