

Escape of Town Union Administration and Community Development in Anambra State

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Abstract— Escape of Town Union Administration and Community Development in Anambra State: A study of Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State (2010-2017). This study utilized a survey research design with population of 120,166 and sample size of 399 persons. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Data collected were analyzed with simple percentage formula, hypotheses were tested with chi-square (χ^2), test of degree of freedom of (16) were used with significance level of 5% (0.05). The major findings revealed that town union administration does embark on developmental projects in their communities, raise fund for the development of their communities and does encounter some challenges in the cause of development of their communities. It was concluded that town union administration is quite desirable to improve the quality of lives of people at the community level irrespective of the challenges confronting it. It was recommended that community members should be actively involved in bringing credible personalities into town union administrative offices, town union leaders should focus their efforts towards elevating the developmental plight of their community and projects town union administration should embark upon have to be among community project felt need.

Index Terms— Administrative Offices, Developmental Projects, Launching, OECD.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Nigeria operates federal system of government that has three tiers of governments which are the Federal, State and Local Governments. These tiers of government have not performed creditably well in development at the community level, thereby leaving the communities with no option than to come together and form a union called 'Town Union' for sole overall welfare of their communities. Unarguably, poor performance of government development programmes in meeting the socio-economic needs of the citizens was the reasons behind the proliferation of town in Nigeria during these periods. (Humphrey, N.N and Anthony, 1.2017)

The most prominent where these tiers of government have performed poorly includes lack of well-equipped health centers, Poor primary and secondary schools system, insecurity of lives and properties and non-involvement of community members in initiation and implementation of projects that concerns them in their community. Often times

these governments embark on projects and programmes that are not felt need of the community which will make them not to own them.

Town union administration has been seen to mean the coordination of human, financial and material resources to actualize the town union aims and goals. Town union governments are powerful agents of development through promoting peace, economic and environmental protection activities at the village/community level in Eastern Nigeria. Igbo communities organize town unions as indigenous self-help community development associations without government influence as a platform for implementing development projects in their towns/villages. Recently State governments from South East have begun recognizing town unions as an important tier of their governments along with the Council of Chiefs. (Nweke, 2017).

Aroh (1997), saw community as a place in which people live, it could be urban or rural. It is a smaller unit of the society where people live together and interact to solve their common identified problems.

Nkwede (2009) sees community as that collectivity, the members which share a common territorial area as their base of operation for daily activities. By this definition, a community may be both rural and urban; hence, a person can belong to too many and different associations but cannot belong to or become a member of all communities at the same time.

The United Nations defines community development as “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It is a broad term given to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities.

Community development as a term has taken off widely in Anglophone countries i.e. the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand and other countries in the Commonwealth of Nations. It is also used in some countries in Eastern Europe with active community development associations in Hungary and Romania. The Community Development Journal, published by Oxford University Press, since 1966 has aimed to be the major forum for research and dissemination of international community development theory and practice.

Community development approaches are recognized internationally. These methods and approaches have been acknowledged as significant for local social, economic, cultural, environmental and political development by such organizations as the UN, WHO, OECD, World Bank,

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Council of Europe and EU. Darby and Morris (2007) in Nkwede (2009), defines community development as "an education which would raise levels of local awareness and increase the confidence and ability of community groups to identify and tackle their own problems.

Town union administration is established to bridge the developmental gap created by non-performance of government in developing communities. It is expected that town union administration shall be a body instituted by the people where their views, opinions and choices of action prevails with limited external influence from the government in power. Town union administration is also expected to be a body instituted by the people for the purpose of their well-being, by identifying and solving the basic problems that can hinder community development.

Regrettably, reverse is the case. It is surprising to know that once most town union leaders are either elected or appointed by the community members, they began to hunt for contact of those in corridor of political power for one personal gains or the other. This ugly trend has made most of them to achieve poor results in area of community development which ought to be their core responsibilities. Town/traditional administration were created because of the failure of other government structures.

The formal structures of government in Nigeria have increasingly become a fiction in governance. The services they provide have declined sharply in quality and quantity. In several respects, these services are no longer being delivered by government agencies - either because of long strikes arising from workers' protests at their poor pay or because of the lack of essential equipment's (e.g. health care) or the loss or absence of the culture of public service (e.g. the police, the military, postal and civil services). Poor quality service or absence of service, has led to the development of alternative institutional structures for providing essential services either in terms of security, improvement/maintenance of roads, water facilities, etc. These alternatives come either as private provision or community based provision. The latter are usually based on traditional structures (Olowu and Erero 1995, P.3).

The communities in Awka South local Government Areas are still in abject need denials from the government like Well-equipped Health centers, clean drinking water, Electricity, quality education, reduction of poverty, Clean environment, proper and adequate housing, security etc, which should be the focus of the town union administration to provide through mobilization of community members for such task.

Today town union administration is bedeviled with internal crises which are resultant effect of man's inability to relinquish power, misappropriation of public fund, political rift and other inconsequential issues. Some government projects at the communities failed largely, because of non-involvement of community members by the government to ascertain if that is their felt need while initiating such projects. The community members in turn do fail to own such projects, thereby resulting to waste of government scarce resources. In the views of Udu and Onwe (2016), most of the community development efforts failed to yield the desired

results due to such factors as lack of background studies aimed at understanding the social and demographic characteristics of their target communities and groups, literacy level, pervasive poverty prevalent in those communities, hunger and disease; to mention but a few. In view of the aforementioned issues, this study seeks to investigate the extent at which town union administration have impacted in community development in Awka South Local Government of Anambra State.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The above objectives will guide the study.

1. To ascertain if town union administration embarks on developmental project in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
2. To determine the extent to which town union administration raises fund for the development of communities in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
3. To examine the challenges town union administration encounters in the cause of development of their communities in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

III. CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATIONS

Town Union Administration

Town have no universally accepted definition, Cambridge dictionary saw town as a place where people live and work, containing many houses, shops, places of work, places of entertainment etc, and usually larger than a city. In our setting, town is a place where people of homogenous culture reside within defined boundaries. A union in this context means an association formed by people with common interest or purpose (Oxford English dictionary). Business dictionary defined union as a group of workers joined together in a specific type of organization for the purpose of improving their working conditions as well as help in promoting the common interest of the group. Administration is seen as pulling together the efforts and resources of men who are working together with intent to achieve a goal. Adebayo (1981) simply defined administration as the organization and direction of persons in order to accomplish a specific end.

Town union administration is therefore seen as the mobilization, organization and direction of members of a town towards the actualization of goals that will improve their standard of living. Erne et al. (2012) in Nwobashi and Itumo, (2017) asserts that the idea of town union started as means of taking care of the welfare of their, members far from home. Against this spirit many Africans that moved into the urban areas involved themselves in social relations to serve as the traditional society. They also attached themselves to their homes which made them believed they will come back to their ancestral home someday. Furthermore, they felt that the diverse infrastructural facilities and services these unions enjoyed in the urban centers; they would want to have and enjoy in their home Towns. This nostalgic feeling may be

regarded as the magic wand that some communities have used in placing town unions as a useful instrument for achieving self-reliance and development in rural areas in Nigeria (Ugwu, 2013) cited in Nwobashi and Itumo,(2017).Town union administration has come to stay looking at the constant demand by the masses to restructure the country, with much emphasis on devolution of powers and responsibilities from the federal government to her federating unit.

This, is in line with the current position of most South Eastern Governors who have adopted or about to adopt town union administration as a fourth tier of government. To buttress this claim further the Enugu State Government says it will adopt town unions as fourth tier of government in its efforts to develop the rural communities. The Commissioner for Human Capital Development and Poverty Reduction, Mr Obinna Mbaeke, made this known in an interview in Enugu on Friday February 10th 2017 (vanguard newspaper of 10th February 2017). Governor RochasOkorochoa of Imo State, introduced what could be called the fourth tier government system known as Community Council Government according to his then Deputy Governor Jude Agbasu, this is a structural way of reaching the people in the communities or rural areas for the purpose of unlocking the resources there. If we want to make these communities to be economically viable, we must go back to the land, that is, go back to agriculture and the easiest way to go back to agriculture is through community government, where people will now be empowered to unravel the resources that are there (vanguard newspaper of July 15th 2012). In the word of Chief Diwe (2014), the objective of town unionism is grass root development which all levels of government should partner with for the welfare of people (Nations newspaper of May 8th 2014). Ejezie (2015), in Anambra state broadcasting service "ABS" interview remarked that Town Union executives are instruments for rural development.

Community Development

The term community could be viewed as a place in which people live, it could be urban or rural (Aroh, 1997). Community could also be viewed in terms of social relations characterized by personal intimacy, emotional depth and social cohesion continuity (Nibste 1969). Nkwede, (2009) as cited in Udu and Onwe (2016), sees community as that collectivity, the members who share a common territorial area as their base of operation for daily activities. By this definition, a community may be both rural and urban; hence, a person can belong to too many and different associations but cannot belong to or become a member of all communities at the same time.

Community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Community wellbeing (economic, social, environmental and cultural) often evolves from this type of collective action being taken at a grass root level. See peernetbc.com. The site went further to emphasis what effective community development should be like having: A long-term endeavor, well planned, holistic and integrated into the bigger picture, initiated and supported by

community members, to be of benefit to the community and grounded in experience that leads to best practices. According to fao.org features of the community can give clues to the degree of its social cohesion and anticipated problems that may arise. These characteristics include the history of the community, and its relation with others, its present social structure, its cultural values and the way it governs itself. Darby and Morris (2007) in Nkwede (2009), defines community development as "an education which would raise levels of local awareness and increase the confidence and ability of community groups to identify and tackle their own problems. Ogunna (1989) believes that most writers on community development are influenced by their fields of study in their definition of the concept. Thus, some economists would consider it in terms of encouraging some local material development, while some political scientists emphasize such value as "enlargement of individual freedom and mass democratic process". On the other hand, some Sociologists stress "group development and group action". Rubin and Rubin (2001) in Udensi, Udoh, Daasi and Igbara (2012) opined that community development occurs when people strengthen the bounds within their neighborhoods, build social networks and form their own organizations to provide a long term capacity for problem solving.

Developmental Projects of Town Union Administration

Due to failure of all level of government in provision of the basic infrastructural development for the well-being of her citizenry, town union administration are left with no option than to embark on some projects within their communities to alleviate the level of suffering of their people. In the opinion of the researcher, the sizes of projects they embark upon depend on some of these factors; the financial strength of the community, the political strength of the leadership of the community, the personality profile of the community, the topographical nature of the community, and the natural endowment of the community etc.

In reference to the above factors, some communities could build markets, borehole, primary and secondary schools simultaneously, whereas others could be struggling with the maintenance of their village stream water which serves as a source of their only drinking water. Beginning from mid 1980s, academics and policy commentators have demonstrated profaned interest in the role town unions play in the social and economic development and local governance of communities in the third world countries (Ugwu, 2013). There have been multiplier consciousness' of the people to see the need to place a more robust organization and administrative bodies which can provide and foster stable self-reliant development in their local communities. In the time past, much emphasis are laid on building community primary and secondary schools; because education has intrinsic and extrinsic values to both the individuals and the society at large as stressed by Ohaeri, (2009) in Emenalo and Ibekwe (2013).That no element of national life is more worthy of attention, support and concern than education, for no element has greater impact on the careers, personal growth and happiness of many citizens.

No element is of greater Importance in improving the

knowledge and leadership on which the vitality of democracy and strength of national economy depends. Erne et al, (2012) in Okigwe, Ohafia, the Okpatemba being their age grade has constructed a state of the art two upstairs building, town unions have achieve great development activities and are still doing more in their various communities. In another study, Oladepo (1996) as cited in Nwobashi and Itumo (2017) examined how town unions contribute to funding of basic education in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The researcher applied survey method and distributed questionnaires to 55 primary schools in Kajola Local Government Area of the state. The data were analyzed with the instrumentality of chi square. After the analysis the researcher reported that out of the 55 primary schools in Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State, only 7 are Local Government-owned while the larger proportion (48) schools were established by the Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Eje (1988) as cited in Nwosu (1990) and also cited in Ugwu (2013), has emphasized the crucial role which Town unions played in the massive reconstruction of facilities and infrastructure in Eastern Nigeria following the end of the civil war. Health institutions, roads, bridges market and other projects were constructed by the communities.

Town Union and Fund Raising for Community Development

Much resource have been spent by various communities in Nigeria to develop their communities, according to Education Sector support programme in Nigeria ESSPIN (2017), A School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) resource mobilization validation study commissioned by ESSPIN in 2016 found that communities contributed the equivalent of £4.3m to support improvement in their schools. According to the work of Udensi et al (2012), the levels of community leader's participation were obtained through careful computation, the various aspects of participation identified include: decision making, community mobilization, financial contribution, project legitimization, planning the project, monitoring and evaluating the project, raising funds for the project, and organizing skilled and unskilled labor for the project. Results obtained showed that participation by community leaders in community development project in the study area was significantly high in raising funds for the project which ranks first (25.9%).

In another study, Agboola, Ifesanya and Akanmu (2012) as cited in Nwobashi and Itumo, (2017) examined the contributions of town unions to funding of rural roads projects in rural communities in Akinyele and Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study made use of descriptive survey and applied the instrumentality of questionnaire in the generation of data while chi square analytical technique was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the town unions in Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State carried more of roads rehabilitation project between 1996 and 2011. Onyeozu (2010) in Nwobashi and Itumo (2017) carried out a study that focused on analysis of contributions of town unions to the development of social amenities such as rural roads in Rivers State, Nigeria. The data for study were collected with the aid of structured

questionnaire from 960 randomly selected respondents in the study of European Journal of Social Sciences - Volume 55, Issued on 4th December (2017), 442 area and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that town unions in Rivers State contributed significantly to the building and renovation of community roads.

Challenges of Town Union Administration in Development of their Communities

Finance is likened to play in every organization the role blood plays in human body system. That is why most persons have come to agree that finance is the life wire of any organization. For an association like town union administration to succeed financial resources must play critical role. This was supported in the work of Udensi, et al (2012) in table 3 and it outlays some of the crucial challenges identified as hindering community leaders from achieving results in the course of a community development project. The result show that out of the seven challenges considered, respondents perceived 5 as major challenge and two as not a challenge. The most important of the challenges perceived by respondents include, lack of fund which ranked first (80.7), lack of interest in community development project by the leader was ranked second (75.8), disagreement between community leaders and community members was ranked third (75.3), non-inclusion of the community members in the planning and execution of the project by community leaders was ranked fourth (74.7) and women discrimination in leadership position was ranked fifth (70.4). Conversely, the result shows that low level of education of community leaders was not a challenge to community leaders in the course of achieving a successful community development project as it was ranked sixth (58.6) and lastly, community tradition or culture was also indicated as not posing any challenge to achieving success.

Finance ranked first above, because most communities rely on taxing themselves to raise fund for their projects implementation and they also organize fund raising functions to solicit for financial assistance from their wealthy friends, in-laws, philanthropist, governmental and nongovernmental organizations and good spirited individual in the society. Most scholars have emphasized the need for communities to establish income generating investment that could solve to a reasonable extent the challenges of poor finance in community development. Akpan (1967) as cited in Ugwu (2013) expressing the need for local authorities to look for more avenues to augment their financial resources has this to say. "Indeed the complexity, diversity and great expensiveness of modern need, local authorities anywhere in the world rely on their local resources to meet their responsibilities. They must depend on external sources, on the state and the loan market for a decisive position of their need to carrying out expensive capital projects". There are also challenges of having some greed and selfish leaders in charge of the affairs of some town union administration. The major interest of such leaders is to siphon the fund meant for community projects.

Maxwell (2004), as cited in Ugwu and Bako (2014), while explaining development maintains that the success of development depends on; the attitude of the people towards

projects, the people's commitment to the projects, the people's character (integrity) towards the projects, the standard for people i.e. the expectation of the people towards their living condition and the influence over the people i.e. leadership. Which inferred that the absent of these above points will result to a challenge for project development in a community.

IV. COMMUNITY ACTION THEORY

This study is based on "community action theoretical model" as the theoretical framework of analysis. The community action theoretical model was propounded by Paulo Freire in 1973. He is a Brazilian born in the North East in 1921. He came to realize that the ignorance and lethargy of the poor people in his country was the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social and political domination. He conceives human being in two views. One view conceives of humans as objects: they are moldable and adaptable. The other view sees humans as subjects, independent beings, able to transcend and recreate the world. The theory emphasizes the need for communities to collectively strengthen their capacity to develop through education (Kulig, 2000). Implicit in this theory is that residents in poor communities can team together to attain socio economic development (Boreham, 2004) through knowledge of town union administration. This means that community action model involves participatory action approaches. That is to say that it builds on the strengths of a community to create changes from within (Racher, 2007). Its intention is to change by building community capacity, working in collaboration with communities and providing a framework for residents to acquire skills and resources necessary for assessing their socio economic conditions (Lavery, 2005). When they have done this, they can plan, implement and evaluate actions designed to improve their conditions.

V. RELEVANCE OF THE THEORY TO THE STUDY

This theory is relevant to this study because it is designed to increase the capacity of community members and town union leaders in addressing their socio-economic conditions which is a factor that will positively influence development in their rural communities. The theory emphasizes the need for communities to collectively strengthen their capacity to develop through education (Kulig, 2000). The community members come together by way of sensitization and mobilization before they can agree to embark on any project that will develop their community for the overall wellbeing of community members in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Town union administration does embark on developmental project in their communities.
2. Town union administration does raise fund for the development of their Communities. The findings of the study show that funds are raised from launching, levies and government grants to the communities.

3. Town union administration does encounter some challenges in the cause of development of their various communities.

VII. CONCLUSION

Town union administration being the type of administration instituted by the community is meant to bridge developmental gap at the community level. It is quiet desirable to improve the quality of life at the community level knowing fully well that government at all level have performed below expectation in infrastructural development at the community level. Though desirable to be sustained, town union administration is faced with series of problems ranging from development of community being depended on the efficiency of town union administration to the development of community being challenged by internal crises among town union leaders amongst others challenges as captured in questionnaire no 11-15.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the research. To guarantee acceptable and even development of communities in Awka South Local Government Area via town union administration, the community members should be actively involved in bringing credible personality into town union administrative offices. Town union Leaders should also focused their efforts towards elevation of the developmental plight of their community by being transparent and accountable to the community members whose interest they are representing. They should also strive to eschew rancor by accepting wise criticism and not trying to perpetuate themselves into such offices. Lastly, projects town union administration should embark upon have to be among community felt need so that the community members can be actively involved to ensure its completion and proper utilization.

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