Democratic Practices and Local Government Elections in Nigeria: Demystifying the Emerging Issues

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Abstract

The local government administration is no doubt central to the democratic process in Nigeria. It provides the training grounds for grassroots mobilization, socio-economic development, and the cardinal philosophy of representation and political participation in the overall political system of the country. A periodic election, which is the core feature of democracy through which the people at the grassroots freely participate in the process of selection of their leaders and to ensure the legitimacy of the local government council, unfortunately, remains elusive in Nigeria. Thus, this work focuses on the reasons and implications of the near absence of local government elections in most states of Nigeria. Secondary data were used and content analysis was equally adopted for the work, while democratic participatory theory was employed. The research found that most of the state governors prefer the use of caretaker committees, which is not recognized by the constitution of the country rather than conducting a periodic election for people at the grassroots because of economic benefit and to accord themselves a political advantage over their perceived opponents. The work established that deliberate neglect of election into the local government councils, unfortunately, promotes a lack of accountability and corruption in the councils. Hence, the work recommends the amendment of the Nigerian constitution to ensure a compulsory and periodic election into local government councils, as it remains the sure means of guaranteeing democratic participation of the grassroots in the selection of the leaders.

Key Words: Democracy; Election; Grassroots; Local Government; Political Participation

1. Introduction

The local government council is the third tier of the Nigerian federal system of government. The country at present has 36 states and the Federal Character Territory and 774 local government councils with its administrative apparatus. The local government or the native authority as it was then called was formally recognized as the tier of government in Nigeria in 1976 with the Local Reforms, and the introduction and application of a federal system of government in the country, although under the control of the regional assembly/regional government without functional constitutional responsibilities during the pre-independent period (Olaniyi, 2017).

According to Ojofeitimi (2000), the Nigerian local government evolved in phases, beginning with a democratization attempt immediately after the indirect rule system where the traditional institutions played the role of grassroots mobilization, thus laying the foundation for the second phase, which began in the 1960s. Then during the second phase of the scholar, the actualization of democratization in the local government was distorted by the country civil war in the 1970s, largely because of the political structure administrative and economic development projection which was destructed. The phase that followed according to the scholar witnessed a major reform in the local government council, which was a concise effort of the government at the center toward the repositioning of the third tier of government. The next phase, which was between 1979 and 1983 saw the local government administration in Nigeria retrogressing due to the state of dependent overall federal system of the country. The phase that follows the scholar believed witness sincerely efforts aim at reviving the local government through the conduct of local government councils, a great reduction of the state government influence, and an increase in revenue allocation to the council. These measures were taken between 1984 and 1993 under military administrations. The current phase of the scholar believed is focused on the revitalization of the local government council from the political issues that it presently faces. Besides the creation of more local government areas and the provision to create subordinate councils in the country the 1979 reform importantly introduced elective principles in local government administration in the country (Olaniyi, 2017).

The local government provides ground for grassroots mobilization and socio-economic development. The local government is central to the democratic process in Nigeria because the cardinal philosophy of representation and political participation is inherent in the local

government system practiced in Nigeria (Ovwasa, 2014). The participation of the grassroots people in democracy remains an ideal means of mobilization and development of democratic tenets at the local government as communities' issues or problems would best resolved by the member of the communities themselves to a certain extent (Aliyu and Koehn, 1982).

An election is one of the core features of democracy through which candidates for an elective position are elected to represent and participate in the administration of the affair of the country and the people who elected them. To strengthen this visible characteristic of democracy in Nigeria the military, via Degree No. 23 of 1991 the legislative arm of the government was established at the local government across the country (Ovwasa, 2014). The legislative arm of the local government in Nigeria in which councilors emerged with the constitutional responsibility of making bye-laws for the local councils and ensuring a smooth running of the day-to-day activities of the council was to be elected through democratic means (Ovwasa, 2014).

Election as the main feature of democracy principles helps to nurture and sustain democratic culture and it provides the citizens the right to freely choose and participate in the selection of their leaders and ensure legitimacy to the local government councils in Nigeria (Nwanna, 2017). The election remains the most acceptable means of effecting a change of government at both local and national levels. Thus, public officials must be accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizen, while citizens have constitutional rights and privileges to participate in their affairs (Ovwasa, 2014). Unfortunately, elections into the local government council in Nigeria over the years has been a charade of the democratic system. Thus, this paper dissects the various local government elections held in Nigeria, especially in the fourth republic. The paper is subsequently organized into introduction, conceptualization, theoretical framework, constitutional provision, and nature of local government elections in Nigeria, the implication of absence of local government elections in Nigeria, as well as the conclusion and recommendation.

2. Conceptualization

Local Government:

Local government is that territorial non-sovereign entity that possesses the needed regulatory mechanism over its immediate affairs and acts independently and ensures maximum participation of the local community in the day-to-day running and the overall administration

of its affairs (Ayo, 1986). The local government councils in Nigeria had not established constitutional recognition until the 1979 constitution, which provided the legal framework for the implementation of the 1976 reforms. The 1976 Guideline for Local Government Reform in Nigeria defines it as:

Government at the local level exercised through representative council, established by law to exercise powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs (including staffing) and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of service and to determine and implement projects to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and ensure, through devolution of these functions to these councils and the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (FGN, 1976)

The 1976 local government Guideline for Local Government Reform provides the distinguishing characteristic of local government that mainly centered on control and management over local affairs of their respective areas. According to Ovwasa (1996), local government is an effective and workable grassroots administration and developmental strategy through which national development can get to the rural populace and subsequently enhancing their social and infrastructural amenities and self-sufficiency. Local government is that tier of government that is closer to the people both in the rural and urban areas where issues that affect the socio-economic, political, infrastructural amenities, and most importantly human development of the people are handled some level of independence. According to McLean and McMillan (2009), local government is that governing body or institution with constitutional authority over a subnational territory within a defined area. While Appadorai (2004) sees the local government beyond the occupation of a given territory it responsibility of administering and conducting duties that affect the inhabitant through the elected officials. Egonmwan (1990) in an elaborate explanation of the concept of local government sees it as a pivotal system of government that assists the central government in the provision of services, basic amenities, catering for the customs and traditions of the people, promoting the spirit of healthy competition and ensuring the security of its inhabitant. Most so, the United Nations Office of the Public Administration as cited in Ola & Tonwe (2009, p4) sees the local government thus:

A political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such as an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.

Thus, local government is the closest constitutionally recognized branch of government saddled with the responsibility of providing administrative and political governance and development to people at the grassroots due to their proximity in their geography area (Sunday & Chinedum, 2014). The local government is that tier of government whose responsibility to serve the needs of the people at the grassroots since they are close to all the tiers of government to the people at the grassroots.

Election:

An election is an important aspect of any democratic system (Onimisi, 2015). An election provides an avenue in which eligible voters indicate their preference for a candidate from the competing candidates for a leadership position whom they perceived worthy of providing good policy direction and good governance for specific an office (Ovwasa, 2014). An election is a cardinal aspect of democracy because it provides the means for popular participation of the citizens in the overall selection process of political leaders from various candidates after deliberate scrutiny of the policy guidelines of the available candidates for the citizenry to determine who best they provide the needed good governance. The election provides the electorate the leverage to pick from the competing candidates who have presented themselves for political offices. Olaniyi (2017) views the election as the most pivotal phase of an electoral process where public functionaries are elected into different strata of public offices and the decision making the arm of government. He expresses the importance of the election to the electoral process itself and the democratic system of government. An election is a deliberate selection of persons to represent the interest of a particular section of the people in either the executive or in the legislative arm of government.

Democracy

The term Democracy lacks an acceptable definition globally, thus, even autocratic regimes tend to brand themselves to be democratic or practicing a democratic form of government. Abraham Lincoln (1863), provided the commonest definition of democracy when he sees it as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy focusses on the sovereignty of the citizens, for effective representation, accountability, through which the rule of law, free and fair periodic elections is allowed, and the provisions of basic

infrastructure and social security of the public are ensured, and transparency in the management of commonwealth (Abah, D., & Tanko, 2015). Democracy is the system of government that allows the citizens of a particular jurisdiction to participate in electing the representative, and where the citizens' involvement on issues that relate to their affairs is guaranteed. Similarly, Fadakinte (2013) defines it as the concern democracy as that form of government that allows the citizens to get involved via free and open institutional arrangements in choosing and removing their leaders and representative in a peaceful but competitive struggle through a veto. Dahl, Shapiro& Cheibub, (2003) the scholars see democracy as a form of government that promotes equality and freedom in an egalitarian system form were all the citizens with a certain qualification of a nation, who comes together to determine public policy, and the laws and actions of their respective states.

3. Theoretical Framework

The democratic participatory theory best underpin the study of local government council elections in Nigeria. Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed the theory, for J.S. Mill and G. D. H. Cole later promoted it. The theory of participatory democracy has undoubtedly had a long history in the social sciences. Participatory democracy school of thought suits the study of local government election because of its emphases and re-emphasize the core role of grassroots citizens' involvement in the democratic participation in any form. The work uses participatory democratic theory because the theory centered it on both representative and direct democratic practices. The theory presence collective decision making, where the political class takes over the role of policy implementation while the citizens reserve the right to decide who govern them (Aragones & Sánchez-Pagés, 2009). It allows for the comprehensive participation of the citizen in their affairs, where the performance of the political class is compared to their policy agenda and implementation (Aragones & Sánchez-Pagés, 2009).

The theory shows that participation of the citizens in the selection of leaders and the involvement of the people in the policy process remains the hallmark of the democracy. Unfortunately, most state governors in Nigeria, especially in the current fourth republic, have chosen to deny the grassroots people the right to democratic participation. The governors prefer the imposition of caretaker committees rather than conducting elections in the local government councils. The state governors settle for caretaker committee system instead of a democratically elected representation because they want to assume total control of the political and economic activities of the local government council in Nigeria (Alao, Osakede,

& Owolabi, 2015). Participatory democratic theory although have issues such as the lack of empirical evidence to back political education as emphasized by the theory (Hilmer, 2010). However, the major tenets of the theory, which allows it to be interacted into the democratic structure in explaining issues such as the local government elections in Nigeria. The theory also promote and ensure the possibility of democratic participation, as well as changes in the social and political life of the citizen. It equally provides the citizens the opportunities to participate in decision making (Pateman, 2012).

4. Constitutional Provision for Election at Local Government Level in Nigeria

Considering the importance of election in a democratic system at various level, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has made provision for election of officials into the local government councils. For example, the Nigerian constitution of 1979, Section 7 (1)

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

Furthermore, Section 15, Third Schedules of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution as amended, provides the functions and responsibilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). These functions include supervising, organized and undertake elections into the office of the President, State governor, Senate, as well as the House of Representatives and House of Assembly. Meanwhile, Section 3 (Part II) of the same Constitution provides for the State Independent Electoral Commissions to organize local government council elections. The State Independent Electoral Commission have the responsibility to organize local government council election (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999). The power to constitute the State Independent Electoral Commissions rests on the state governors, as stated in Section 3 Part II. This power to constitute the membership of the State Independent Electoral Commission by the state governors invariably put these electoral bodies in the state under the control of the governors.

5. The Nature of Local Government Election in Nigeria

Local government election was not given preeminence under colonial administration in Nigeria because democratic political process was not the priority of the colonists at the grass-

root levels as they are more concerned with political stability, which will ensure the smooth exploitation of numerous human and natural resources in the country (Ovwasa, 2014). The pre-independent Nigeria some changes occur at the instance the government of Eastern region headed by Nnamdi Azikiwe and Western region headed by Obafemi Awolowo attempted democratizing the local government authorities, while the Northern region headed by Ahmadu Bello ran an anachronistic local government system, during this time the functions and duties of the local government were taking with regard prompting these prominent politicians to be at the font front in the representation of the local and of course their respective regional governments (Ovwasa, 2014). In 1950, in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria, 80% of the councilors were elected by the electorate due to the promulgation of the Local Government Ordinance at the time, while in the Western Region 75% of the councilors were equally elected by the electorate due to the promulgation of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1952, while in the northern region was more focused on the maintenance of the existing status (Kwasau, 2017).

During the country's first republic the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, especially into the local government council was over shallowed by the Native Authorities and Local Government Ordinance of the regional government as well as lack of labor, corruption as the local council coupled with the collapse of democratic system because of the Nigeria first military coup in 1967 (Kwasau, 2017). Thus, the complex situation in the country the first republic did not help in achieving and conducting free, fair and credible elections in the Nigerian local government council. According to Ovwasa (2014:61), free, fair and credible elections into Nigerian local government have been difficult to achieve because of the action and inaction of the state government in the country,the scholar stated thus:

…free, fair and credible elections into local government councils have been elusive due to the deliberate attitude of the state governments to keep out the local government from participating in the election of their representatives which is against the 1979 constitution that provided for periodic, free and fair elections into the councils.

The democratization and indeed periodic elections in the local government council in Nigeria's Second Republic could not be sustained because many states did not conduct elections upon the expiration of the tenure of the council member, which invariably resulted in the use of caretaker committees, which assumed the position of leaders of the local government council (Kwasau, 2017). Thus, in the Nigerian 2nd republic election into the

local government council occurred concurrently with each phase of general elections in the country, while the 1987 local government elections during the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida were held during this and it occurred separately which observers confirmed to be free and fair although under the supervision of the military regime (Ovwasa, 2014). The 1976 local government council election was conducted by Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) under the supervision of the military and it was contested on a nonparty basis as the military did not allow candidates to contest under a political party platform (Olaniyi, 2017). Immediately after the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida and the subsequent regimes that came to administration of local government was mainly carried out by Directors of Personnel Management of the local government council while four (4) additional persons were appointed by the respective state military administrators to assist the appointed chairman of the council (Aluko, 2010), thus no major local government elections occurred in Nigeria between 1994 and 1999 when the military regime hand over the power to a democratically elected government. Despite an existing provision in the constitution for Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to supervise and organize elections into the local government council various regimes during this period opted for non-elected caretaker committees to consolidate and have optimum control of the local government and silence the opposition in their respective areas (Olaniyi, 2017).

Local government elections are rarely held in Nigeria these days despite the constitutional provision for such because the state governors now prefer the use of local administrators or appointed care-taker committees even when this act is a violation of the constitution of Nigeria. Since the beginning of Nigeria's fourth republic in 1999, local government election on the political will the state governors and even when it suits them to conduct the election almost often than not they are manipulated in favor of the state governor party or the ruling party, which controls the state as when the election occurs (Ovwasa, 2014). As of the 2012 majority of the states in Nigeria had no elected local government councils in place. The report from Thisday News Paper (2012) forward showed that states like Abia, Bayelsa, Edo, Yobe, Kano, Katsina, Ondo, Imo, Anambra, Delta to mention a few had gone years without elected local government councils in place. This act of these respective states to deny the people at the grassroots their right to participation in governance does not represent the democratic tenets that the country claims to be practicing. And even when the elections are had the core tenets of a democratic system of government, Nigeria claims to be practicing are neglected (Ovwasa, 2014). Ondo state, for instance, no local government election occurred under the

administration of Dr. Olusegun Mimiko until 23rd April 2016 the first in seven years even after assuming the position of the governor of the state since 2008 (Olaniyi, 2017).

While in Oyo state under the then governor of Isiaka Ajimobi, local government council officials were appointed instead of elections. Caretaker Committees were undemocratically and unconstitutionally appointed to take charge of the affairs of the council for close to a decade. And even when local government elections were held the state governors ensure that the electoral outcome tilt toward the ruling party. This is clearly shown in the Kwara, Ogun and few other states were local government elections were held. The local government election outcome tilted toward the governor's interest and the ruling party at the state level (Olaniyi, 2017). Anambra and Imo states in South-Eastern Nigeria are not different, as the then executive governor Peter Obi and Rochas Okorocha did not conduct local government elections close to a decade for political reasons. According to Olaniyi (2017), state governors in the north-eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria, such as Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Yola, and Taraba, attributed to the absence of local government election in their respective states to heighten insecurity because of the Boko Haram terrorists' activities. People at the grassroots in Nigeria have most often denied their democratically right in choosing their representatives through free, fair, and credible election into the local government council. And exercises carried in the name of elections in councils often take appointment and selection of individuals by the state governors, thus making it difficult to see opposition parties elected into the local government council (Omar, 2012).

Table 1: States' Records of Election into Local Government Councils since the Inception of 4th Republic (1999)

	State	Years Elections Were Conducted	No. of Times Elections were Conducted
1	Anambra	2013, 2017	2
2	Ebonyi	2004, 2010, 12013, 2017	4
3	Oyo	2004, 2007, 2018	3
4	Osun	2004, 2007, 2018	3
5	Ondo	2004, *2007, 2016, 2018	4
6	Ekiti	2004, 2009, 2015, 2018	4
7	Ogun	2004, 2007, 2012, 2016	4
8	Kwara	2004, 2007, 2012, 2017	4
9	Lagos	2004, 2008, 2012, 2017	4
10	Akwa	2004, 2008, 2012, 2017	4
11	Cross	2004, 2010, 2013, 2017	4
12	Edo	2004, *2007, 2013, 2018	4
13	Abia	2004, 2008, 2016	3
14	Bayelsa	2004, *2010, 2017	3
15	Rivers	2004, 2011, 2015, 2018	4
16	Delta	2004, *2008, 2014, 2018	4
17	Imo	2004, *2008, 2018	3
18	Benue	2004, 2007, 2012, 2017	4
19	Enugu	2004, 2007, 2011, 2013, 2017	5
20	Nasarawa	2004, 2009, 2014, 2018	4
21	Kano	2004, 2007, 2009, 2014, 2018	5
22	Kastina	2004, 2010, 2018	3
23	Sokoto	2004, 2008, 2011, 2016	4
24	Kebbi	2004, 2008, 2012, 2017	4
25	Kogi	2004, 2008, 2013	3
26	Taraba	2004, 2007, 2012, 2017	4
27	Zamfara	2004,2012	2
28	Bauchi	2004, 2008, 2018	3
29	Yobe	2004, 2009, 2013, 2017	4
30	Borno	2004,2007	2
31	Plateau	2004, 2008, 2014, 2018	4
32	Kaduna	2004, 2012, 2018	3
33	Jigawa	2004, 2011, 2014, 2017	4
34	Niger	2004, 2008, 2011, 2016	4
35	Adamawa	2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	4
36	Gombe	2004, 2013, 2017	3
37	Abuja	2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016	5

Source: Adeyemi, 2019:175

Table 1 shows the level of inconsistency in the local government councils' election in Nigeria since 1999. apparently shows the violation of the provision of section 7 (1) and 8 of the

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It further shows states intermittent dissolution of the local government councils as against the three-year tenure recognized by Electoral Law as stated in Decree 36 of 1998 (Adeyeye, 2016; Adeyemi, 2019). Those asterisks represent the years in which local government elections were held in the place but was later dissolved, nullified by the authority or court of law in the land (Adeyemi, 2019). The table shows that Anambra and Borno conducted the least number of local government elections since 1999. While states like Enugu and the Federal Capital Territorial, Abuja conducted 5 each. Other states in the country have been conducted between 3 and 4 local government elections since 1999.

6. Implications of the Near Absence of Local Government Elections in Nigeria

Among the fundamental effects of the absence of elected local government council in Nigeria is that it promotes a lack of accountability and corruption. The continuous use of unconstitutional caretaker committee members in place of elected local government councils in Nigeria basic promotes corruption and lack of accountability in the council. The caretaker's committee members account for state governors who put them at the various local government councils, rather than being accountable to the people at the grassroots. Corruption is a fundamental problem in the local government and its progressives and flourished in the councils unabated, it thrived to point of being institutionalized in the running of the daily activities of the local council (Adeyemi, 2012). Unfortunately, corruption remains the greatest calamity that has befallen the Nigerian local government system, which ironically has been celebrated, entertained, accommodated, promoted and encouraged by the absence of local council election (Adeyemi, 2012). Due to the corrupt tendency of the caretaker committee instituted by the respective state governors' development at the grassroots is often neglected, fiscal indiscipline increases, mismanagement of public resources increases, while the misappropriation of fund of the council through contract inflation and reckless embezzlement remains the order of the day (Agbo 2010). The imperative to note the local government payroll is becomes filled with names that have not business with the council. Democratic values such as the participation of citizens in choosing their leaders, accountability, and responsiveness to the inspiration the grassroots populace and promotion of human development in the Nigerian local government remain absence due to thriving corruption (Adeyemi, 2012).

Local government which was created to ensure political participation of the people at grassroots level in Nigeria by electing a preferred candidate to leadership position as prescribing by constituting the land has been hijacked by most state governors for economic aggrandizement and political elongation of their tenure in office through the creation of caretaker committee (Sunday & Chinedum, 2014). Thus, an absence of election at local government council in Nigeria encourages economic aggrandizement and an undue political advantage to the ruling party at the state. One fundamental implication of unabated imposition of caretakers committees the respective states governors on the local government councils in Nigeria is that economic fraud becomes the order of the day because they are accountable to the citizens but to those who appointed them. Local government councils in Nigeria render services that will ensure greater socio-economic development of the citizens at the grassroots through which rural transformation and communities' development. These services, which include providing infrastructural amenities have been hampered because of the activities of the political elite in the state (Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013).

The absence of local government council elections in Nigeria has led to a great setback in the accomplishments of the primary role of the council that to ensure grassroots participation in the political and economic development of the area and importantly drawing government more closely to the citizen. The promotion of local help, sense of belonging, unity, and self-reliance through the activities of this grassroots, which are the primary local government is absent (Nwanna, 2017). The absence of elected local government executives and council elections has led to the neglect of the basic of the grassroots people in Nigeria as aggrandizement and self-prioritization and that of that appointment and those who recommended them to appoint are placed over and above the collective demand of the local citizen.

Obviously, the primary responsibility of the local government in Nigeria will suffer a series of setbacks due to lack of elected local government council. The responsibility of the local government councils, such as primary education to the rural populace, refuse disposal at designated area, primary health care, street drainage/light, taking of the destitute, clean and hygienic market place, potable water and security (Nwanna, 2017), which would have been effectively tackled by an elected local government council would be unachievable by the absence of election into the council. Thus, the efficiency of the local government is reduced to the minimum. The implication of this act is that the performance of local government council in Nigeria would be affected negatively and embezzlement of the collective resource

of the people has hampered the dream of developing the grassroots and the provision of basic amenities (Adeyemi, 2012).

Another fundamental implication of absence of local government council elections in Nigeria is that hindrance effective grassroots mobilization, and democratic participation of the citizens at the rural area. Local government which is supposed to provide grassroots political mobilization and education that would ensure direct participation of the citizens at that level, especially in the happening or issues that immediately affect their lives through democratic means is affected due to the absence of council elections (Lawal & Oladunjoye, 2010). And the nearness of local administration council to the citizens at grassroots affords them the rare chances to meet and interact with their local representative in person, and present their basic problems for immediate and possible solutions, however, this might be impossible at the other level of basic governments because of the absence of periodic elections (Lawal & Oladunjoye, 2010). The socio-economic development, and the provision of social services which core to local government development remains affected due to the absence of periodic elections, because the singular act brings out lawlessness and impunity at the local government area. The major purpose of local government creation in Nigeria that is which ensure massive development impetus to the grassroots suffers whenever their absence of local government council elections (Adeyemo, 1995).

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The local government election in Nigeria, especially during the fourth republic rarely follows the constitutional provision of the country. The neglect of the constitutional provisions in the conduct of local elections in Nigeria is a deliberate act of the ruling parties and state governors in their respective states to ensure that their party wins all the available positions through the instrumentality of the state, manipulation and electoral fraud. The local government election in Nigeria over the years has failed to make the required standard of the electoral process in the country that claims to practice a democratic system of government. This is because I and electoral fraud the order of the day in the Nigerian government elections, thus denying the citizen at the grassroots fundamental right of choosing the candidate of their choice. The fundamental right to political participation, especially through voting and to be voted in Nigeria's local government is nearly absent, as most state governors have deliberately refused to organized local council elections for reasons best known to them. The activities of some state governors negate the idea behind the creation of local

government council in Nigeria. The local government council, which was created to ensure development/infrastructural needs of the grassroots are met and importantly ensuring the participation of the people in the democratic process especially in the elections of the leaders, political mobilization and governance in their areas happen to far from what is ground.

Thus, to ensure that democratic tenets are adhered to the local governments in Nigeria there is the need for genuine amendment of the current constitution in Nigeria. The provision in the constitution that gives the exclusive right to the State Independent Electoral Commission to organize elections into the local government council needs to be expunged. Since, the State Independent Electoral Commission in most cases is unruly independent and cannot conduct free and fair elections without the interference of their respective states governors the need to the conduct of local government elections in the country the central Independent National Electoral Commission through the amendments of the relevant selections of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. This would ensure and enable the country Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct credible elections into the local government councils as it presently does in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The local governments' election in Nigeria should be periodic. The local government election should be conducted every four years across the country through the amendment of the relevant sections of the country, as this will guarantee democratic in the grassroots.

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