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ABSTRACT
The 1999 Nigerian Constitution recognizes the local governments as the third tier of government with assigned responsibilities. In order to be able to discharge these responsibilities, the same 1999 Constitution also grants allocations from the federation account to the local governments on monthly basis, but these allocations are paid into an account created by law called the State Joint Local Government account. The paper is aimed at finding out how the management of this Joint account affected the service delivery functions of the selected local governments in Kaduna state during the first and second terms of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration from 1999 to 2007. Data for the study were generated from both primary and secondary sources and their contents analyzed qualitatively. The finding of the study is that the Joint account posed a very serious challenged to the selected local governments during the first eight years of the fourth republic as the state government mismanaged the federal allocations to the these local governments. In view of the finding, it is recommended that the 1999 constitutional review currently going on in the National Assembly should abolish or review the provisions of the State Joint Local Government Account system to enable local government access their federal allocations directly.

Key Words: Service Delivery, Joint Account, Mismanagement, 1999 Constitution

Preamble
Local government is the third tier of government according to the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and its roles are critical in terms of identifying local or rural needs and mobilizing resources to meeting those needs. In fact, the crucial role which local governments could play in bringing development to the grassroots was what informed the 1976 Local Government Reforms according to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who was then the military Head of State. The objectives of the reforms according to him were:
(a) To increase the responsibilities of the local authorities by a process of decentralization that ensures appropriate divisions of functions between State and Local Governments and those local authorities thereby play a significant role in the development process. (b) To ensure that participation and involvement begin at the grassroots level. Since local authorities are very close to the people, they are most favourably placed to understand and appreciate the people’s demands. Local authorities should hence, serve both input and output functions within the system. They should articulate the demands of the masses and when these are satisfied within the limits of available resources, they should provide authorities with feedback. (c) To ensure that both in the short-run and long-run, both the staffing and financial requirement of local authorities are satisfied to enable them perform their statutorily assigned functions (1976 Local Government Reform Guidelines).
The importance of this development objective was incorporated into the 1999 constitution and the local government council was specifically said to have a duty to participate in economic planning and development of the nation. According to the 1979 and 1999 constitutions, local governments are a third tier of government in Nigeria with their own identity, powers and sources of revenue established under state legislation and with functions for which they are responsible to the state. A cursory look at the functions assigned to the local governments as contained in the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution brings to the fore the that those functions are meant to improve the general living standard of the local people by the provision of essential services such as good drinking water, building boreholes in the rural and urban communities to complement the efforts of the water boards, electricity supply, an efficient waste disposal system, recreational facilities, construction, reconstruction and maintenance of local and other access roads, bridges and culverts, quality and affordable primary healthcare and educational services, etc. The aforementioned services will address the felt needs of the rural dwellers and their qualitative and effective delivery is what is referred to as local or rural development. The performances of these local governments during the eight years of Obasanjo's administration in the provision of the above-mentioned services were very low. And one of the reasons usually advanced for the dismal performance of the selected local governments and local governments in Nigeria is the issue of State Joint Local Government Account and how its management constituted a serious obstacle to the fiscal operations or service delivery functions of the local government during the period under study.

Local Government and Service Delivery – A Vital Nexus

The 1999 Constitution specifically assigns some functions to the local government like construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refusal disposal, the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education, health services, etc. The selected local governments scored very low during the period under review in the provision of the above services according to Ibrahim (2007), Tersur (2008) and Ukwueze (2009). After many years of military rule with its attendant problems, a democratically elected government was put in place in 1999 in this political entity called Nigeria headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Even though there were serious problems with the elections which ushered in the new civilian government, the way and manner Nigerians came out en masse for the elections showed their yearnings and aspirations for a government which would improve their standard of living and impact their lives positively. People were filled with excitement and anticipation that their saviour had come with the transfer of power from military to civilian. Their expectations could not be said to be misplaced because government whether at the federal, state or local level exists to provide some beneficial goods and services to the population in their jurisdiction. The quantity and quality of these goods and services are what constitute development whether at the national, regional or local level. For an effective and efficient provision of these goods and services, most federal countries of the world including Nigeria practice fiscal federalism. Fiscal federalism is a system whereby the functions and finances of the public sector of a country are shared between the central and regional governments; in the case of Nigeria, between the federal, states and local governments. The rationale behind this division of public functions and finances according to Tamuno (1998) is to enable each unit of government to deliver services to the citizens in the areas they are competent. But studies by Ibrahim (2007), Tersur (2008) and Ukwueze (2009) show that the selected local governments’ performances in the provisions of the above-mentioned services were very poor during the first and second terms of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration which lasted for eight years. The reason for this state of affairs during the period under review is attributable to the management of State Joint Local Government Account and the way it was used to starve the local governments of the needed funds to discharge their statutory fiscal functions. This paper therefore seeks to find out whether or not the argument that the Joint Account system was accountable for the poor performance of local governments during the period under study is tenable.

The core objective of this paper is to assess how the management of the State/ Local Government Joint account affected the service delivery of the selected local governments in Kaduna state from 1999 to 2007. However, this core objective is further divided to include:

a. To find out the statutory abuses of the Joint Account system by the state government which constituted a hindrance to the fiscal operations of the selected local governments during the period under review.
b. To recommend the ways in which the operation of this account will facilitate rather constitute a hindrance to the effective service delivery or fiscal functions of local governments in Nigeria.

In pursuance to the issues raised above, this paper will attempt to find answers to the following research questions:

a. What role did the State Joint Local Government account play in the fiscal functions of the selected local governments during the first eight years of the Fourth Republic?

b. Should the 1999 constitutional provision of the State Joint Local Government Account be reviewed or be abolished to allow for some level of fiscal autonomy for the local government?

As this paper was being put together, the Senate Committee on the Review of the 1999 Constitution was meeting on 20th July 2012 in Asaba, Delta State to consider some areas of the 1999 Constitution that need to be reviewed to meet the current challenges of governance in Nigeria. One of the submissions by eminent scholars was that of Professor Elaigwu who made presentation to the gathering on the challenges being faced by the third tier of government especially through the Joint Account system. This study is confined to assessing the impact of the State Joint Local Government account on the fiscal operations of the following local governments of Kaduna state: Zaria, Kaduna North, Jema’a, Zangon-Kataf, Kajuru and Makarfi local governments. Zaria, Kaduna North and Jema’a represent urban local governments while Zangon-Kataf, Kajuru and Makarfi represent rural local governments. 1976 Local Government Reform Guidelines define rural local government as one having a population below 150,000 and especially lacking in some infrastructural facilities which big or urban local governments have. Aside from population parameter, Zangon-Kataf, Kajuru and Makarfi local governments do not have the types of infrastructural facilities which big local governments like Kaduna North, Zaria, and Jema’a have and so they are referred to in this study as rural local governments. The time frame used for analysis for this study is the first and second terms of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration. This time frame represents a period when after a long military rule with its attendant problems, Nigerians had a civilian government which they expected to impact their living conditions positively.

Methodology
The data for this paper was generated from the primary source through interview and observation and secondary source through documents drawn from government and non-governmental publications, journals and papers, and other published materials and materials from the internet. These data were explored to draw inferences and conclusion on the outcome of the study. The study adopts a qualitative approach to data analysis to examine the challenges being posed by the way and manner the Joint Account system was used to constitute a hindrance to the effective service delivery function of the selected local governments.

Local Government Service Delivery – A Review of the Politics of State Joint Local Government Account
Local government in Nigeria is a product of decentralization and is established by law. As a federate state, Nigeria has three tiers of government (federal, state and local government) whose intergovernmental relations (which include political, financial, judicial and administrative) are mainly established by the constitution. Each tier is required to operate within its area of jurisdiction, and any action to the contrary is null and void to the extent of its inconsistency with the law. This is meant to guarantee the autonomy of each tier as it discharges its statutory duties to the people its territory. Intergovernmental relations may be defined as ‘a complex pattern of interactions, co-operations and interdependence between two or more levels of government’ (Ogunna 1996). According to Adamolekun (2002), intergovernmental relation is the term commonly used to describe the interactions between the different levels of government within the state. It can also be seen as important interactions occurring between governmental institutions of all types and in all spheres (Okafor, 2010). It exists in all types of states but is more pronounced, complex, controversial and contentious in federal states. The level of development or the quantity and quality of service delivery in a given state tends to be determined by the structure and quality of its intergovernmental relations.

In the intergovernmental relations in Nigeria, 1999 Constitution stipulates the fiscal relations between the tiers of government. Section 162 sub-sections 1 to 8 especially state thus:
1. The Federation shall maintain a special account to be called ‘the Federation Account’ into which shall be paid all revenues collected by the Government of the Federation…

2. The President, upon the receipt of advice from the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission, shall table before the National Assembly proposals from the Federation Account and in determining the formula, the National Assembly shall take into account, the allocation principles especially those of population, equality of states, internal revenue generation, landmass terrain as well as population density. Provided that the principle of derivation shall be constantly reflected in the any approved formula as being not less than thirteen percent of the revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any natural resources.

3. Any amount standing to the credit of the Federation Account shall be distributed among the Federal and State governments and the local government councils in each state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

4. Any amount standing to the credit of the states in the Federation Account shall be distributed among the states on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

5. The amount standing to credit of the local government councils in the Federation Account shall also be allocated to the States for the benefit of their local governments on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

6. Each State shall maintain a special account to be called ‘State Joint Local Government Account’ into which shall be paid all allocations to the local government councils of the state from the Federation Account and from the Government of the state.

7. Each state shall pay to local government councils in its area of jurisdiction such proportion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

8. The amount standing to the credit of local government councils of a state shall be distributed among the local government councils of that state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the state.

A close examination of the above provisions of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution especially as it concerns fiscal relations among the tiers of government brings to the fore the following facts. First, federally collected revenues are paid in an account called the Federation Account to be distributed among the three tiers of government. Before the advent of Obasanjo administration in 1999 the formula for sharing the revenue from this Account was: Federal Government – 54.68%; State Government – 25.32% and Local Government – 20%. This sharing arrangement was further adjusted by the Obasanjo administration in 2002 and 2004 to reflect: Federal Government – 52.68%; State Government 26.72 and Local Government – 20.60%. This revenue formula is still in force till today. Thus it can be seen that besides, several deductions from the federally collected revenues before the monies are paid into the Federal Account, the federal government still has the lion’s share to the disadvantage of other tiers in the intergovernmental relations.

Second, the monies standing to the credit of the federal and state governments are paid directly to them while the monies meant for the fiscal operations of the local governments are to be paid into a designated account called ‘State Joint Local Government Account’ for onward distribution to all local councils of the state. In Kaduna state, the monies are distributed on the principles of population, equality, landmass and terrain, internal revenue effort and social development factor according to an unpublished official document from the Kaduna State Ministry of Finance.

Third, the 1999 also stipulated that each state should pay a certain percent of its total revenue to the local government councils and presently the percentage is put at 10 percent of the internally generated revenue of the state.

Many authors and researchers have attributed the poor and ineffective performance and service delivery problems of Nigerian local governments to the highlighted facts emanating from the provisions of the 1999 Constitution as identified above. For instance, Okafor (2010) posited that a research carried out by the Department of Local Government Studies, Ahmadu Bello University as far as back 1982 pointed out the problems which this Joint Account was causing the service delivery function of the Nigerian Local governments especially in the northern states. Okafor said the research stated that:

Very few of the states in our catchments (northern states) have prescribed legal formula for disbursing funds from the Joint Account. As a result... the effect has been some degree of mismanagement. For example, statutory allocations to local government which should go into this Account
sometimes are diverted into objectives other than local government (Okafor, 2010).

The obstacles which the State Joint Local Government Account were posing to the effective operation and administration of local government highlighted by the research conducted by the Department of Local Government Studies of Ahmadu Bello University in 1982 are still prevalent and have worsened since when that research was carried out. Kurfi (2008) submitted that principal among fiscal factors which have hamstrung the discharge of local government service delivery are states’ refusal to contribute their share into the Joint Account, interference, abuse and mismanagement. He went further to say that local governments have become thoroughly under-funded while effective planning and budgeting have become impossible. That in some cases, local governments were made to shoulder responsibilities that are not constitutionally theirs and in some cases they are denied access to the fund released to them from the Federation Account. This implies that the idea of Joint Account has paved the way for mismanagement, corruption and constitutional abuses by the state and has therefore placed a marked limitation on the extent to which local governments can positively impact the lives of the citizens in their constituencies.

In a paper presented at the 2nd EFCC - ALGON National Workshop on Accountability and Transparency in Local Government Administration, 2008, Korfi gave descriptive illustration of the precarious situation local governments find themselves through the Joint Account system. According to him, the statutory allocation to the 23 local governments in Kaduna state in April 2004 was N999,084,103.30 but the deductions from this amount were as follows:

a. Contribution to Primary Education - 316,076,641.40
b. 15% Pension Fund - 40,769,185.40
c. Training Fund - 9,220,841.08
d. Internet Connectivity - 29,249,641.64
e. Severance Allowance - 28,133,317.35
f. Fertilizer Deduction - 167,400,000.00
g. Bank and Administrative Charges - 1,844,168.22
i. Miscellaneous Deductions - 88,979,643.34

Total Deductions - 680,175,438.43

From the above, it becomes clear that the net statutory allocation to the 23 local governments in the said month after all the above listed deductions amounted to N214,908,669.88. This shows that the statutory allocation that eventually got to the local government councils in that month and year was about 24 percent of the total federal allocation. In fact, for ‘Miscellaneous deductions’ to have gulped N88 million is very curious indeed. It should be noted that the statutory deductions allowed are the first three items; the other deductions are extraneous to the Account according to Kurfi (2008). Such deductions and interferences have been common in many states. News are rife about how some state governments virtually annexed the Joint Account to their party electioneering funds and just barely paid salaries of local government staff during this period.

In the Technical Committee Report from the Department of Local Government Studies, Ahmadu Bello University cited in Kurfi (2008) above, the tampering with the Joint Account by the state government led to a gap between the figures released by the Ministry of Local Government as the allocation and what actually got down to the local government. The question is why should be there be such a disparity and what happened to the difference. This is the problem of the Joint Account and the deductions cited above are a confirmation of the abuses of the Account. From the figures submitted to the Technical Committee from every state of the federation, the figures at the local government level and that of the Ministry for Local government hardly agreed.

The funding of the Primary School education by the local government as stipulated in the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions is also a major challenge to local governments’ inability to engage in developmental activities as could be seen from the example of deductions above. One third of the allocation for a month went to Primary Education Fund in addition to several other deductions. One could imagine the percentage of monthly allocation available for capital projects like provision of scholarship and bursaries, public libraries and reading rooms, home for the destitute, the insane and orphans, support for arts and culture, lighting and drainage and other local social, economic and administrative services.

The following tables show the summary of income and expenditure of the selected local governments during the period under study.
As could be seen from the Table 1 above, the sources of funds available to the selected Local Governments in Kaduna state and indeed Nigerian Local Governments are statutory allocations from the Federation Account, 10% of Internally Generated Revenue from the state government, VAT, Shares from Excess Crude Oil, and locally generated revenue. Table 1 also brings to the fore the fact that 90% of their total revenue is from the Federal allocations. This means being able to access this money is critical to local governments’ financial ability to discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

Table 2 also indicates that a sizeable percentage of the federal allocation to these local governments is retained by the state government as deductions. Their expenditure pattern also shows that personnel and overhead costs gulped large chunk of the money eventually released to the local governments as obvious from the figures in table 2. This leaves little or nothing for developmental and capital projects and programmes which could directly touch the living conditions of the rural or local dwellers. Personal interviews with senior staff of some of the local governments and the Ministry of the Local Government also revealed that part of the figures appearing under capital expenditure above are sometimes projects which the state government executed on behalf of the respective local governments. It was also learnt that some projects are imposed on the local governments not minding whether such projects are needed at that time or not.

Dlakwa (2004) has further outlined the problems being posed to local governments’ service delivery using Borno state as a case study. He states that under the Borno State Joint Local Government Account and Fiscal Committee Law 2002, a committee was set up to administer the Account. It comprised:

a. The Commissioner of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs who serves as Chairman of the Committee.
b. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.
c. Accountant-General of the State
d. All Local Government Councils’ Chairmen in the State
e. A Representative of the Board of Internal Revenue, and
f. The Director of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs who serves as the Secretary.

It should be observed that the key officers of the committee are state government officials and, in the view of Dlakwa, the committee was structured from the outset to the disadvantage of the Local government Councils. Moreover, according to Dlakwa, the Borno State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) Law 2002 empowers the committee to effect the following deductions, among other, before distributing funds from the Account to Local Government Councils:

a. 3% of the fund to each council to the emirate councils

Source: Researcher’s Survey (2012)

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Table 1: SUMMARY OF INCOME BETWEEN 1999 – 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Local Govt</th>
<th>Internally Generated Revenue</th>
<th>Statutory Allocation</th>
<th>10% of IGR from State</th>
<th>VAT</th>
<th>Excess Crude Oil</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>530,777,395</td>
<td>8,412,452,047</td>
<td>140,278,932</td>
<td>1,126,596,207</td>
<td>10,210,077,581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>KD/North</td>
<td>1,663,367,749</td>
<td>10,336,576,310</td>
<td>186,032,811</td>
<td>1,495,240,602</td>
<td>14,334,345,198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jema’a</td>
<td>291,041,488</td>
<td>7,716,479,719</td>
<td>132,659,227</td>
<td>1,137,498,010</td>
<td>679,287,021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zangon Kataf</td>
<td>152,025,940</td>
<td>8,673,465,658</td>
<td>131,310,299</td>
<td>1,077,778,851</td>
<td>1,477,353,228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kajuru</td>
<td>229,203,699</td>
<td>6,360,359,079</td>
<td>100,081,917</td>
<td>838,638,648</td>
<td>538,030,289</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Makarfi</td>
<td>256,867,439</td>
<td>6,658,542,725</td>
<td>112,081,888</td>
<td>977,796,456</td>
<td>1,140,424,205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s Survey (2012)

Table 2: SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE BETWEEN 1999 - 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>L/Govt</th>
<th>Statutory Deductions</th>
<th>Personnel Cost</th>
<th>Overhead Cost</th>
<th>Capital Cost</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>2,400,093,567</td>
<td>2,170,905,856</td>
<td>4,104,888,163</td>
<td>4,688,958,850</td>
<td>12,364,446,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>KD/North</td>
<td>4,561,395,979</td>
<td>2,629,138,982</td>
<td>7,005,135,883</td>
<td>4,546,672,147</td>
<td>18,742,342,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jema’a</td>
<td>3,127,538,014</td>
<td>1,878,186,801</td>
<td>2,796,633,007</td>
<td>2,932,036,115</td>
<td>10,734,393,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zangon Kataf</td>
<td>2,512,718,059</td>
<td>1,347,002,949</td>
<td>2,031,881,702</td>
<td>3,215,261,114</td>
<td>9,088,863,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kajuru</td>
<td>1,884,015,297</td>
<td>1,566,220,472</td>
<td>2,469,251,532</td>
<td>3,579,952,798</td>
<td>9,499,440,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Makarfi</td>
<td>1,510,764,067</td>
<td>1,617,793,179</td>
<td>2,534,195,643</td>
<td>3,480,440,663</td>
<td>9,143,193,552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s Survey (2012)
b. 15% of the total personnel emolument to those retired in each council

c. 1% as a training fund

d. 5% of the total allocation of each council as a stabilization account

e. 2% of the total allocation of each council as an administrative charge

f. 1.5% of the allocation of each council to the department of local government

g. 0.5% of the allocation to the local government audit department.

Thus the Borno state government effectively deducted and diverted funds meant for development of local areas, contributing significantly to the abysmal performance of local governments in providing good governance for the community. According to Dlakwa (2004), between March 2002 and March 2003 a total of ₦13.3 billion was available for councils in Borno State. Out of this amount the state government deducted 48 percent of the total amount. Aggrieved by this incessant interference in local government’s financial autonomy, 26 Local Government Council Chairmen (with the exception of Maiduguri Metropolitan Council) sued the Borno state government for passage of the SJLGA Law 2002, challenging the right of the government to deduct local government funds at source. The High Court ruled that the state government has power to pass the law under section 162(8) of the 1999 Constitution, but declared unconstitutional the specific provisions that empower the committee to deduct funds at source. This judgment was delivered in June 2002, however, the deductions continue till today (Dlakwa, 2004). The Borno example is a reflection of the situation affecting other local government councils across Nigeria.

Intergovernmental relations are supposed to play a bridge building to bring a degree of coordination and cooperation to the federating units. Following this, the operation of the State Joint Local Government Account as provided for in the 1999 Constitution should contribute to cooperative administration, accountability and transparency in the local governance within the principle of separation of powers and the rule of law. However, the reality in Nigerian local government indicates the opposite. As evident from the Kaduna and Borno examples, state governments interfere with the financial autonomy of local governments through the instrument of the State Joint Local Government Account. This has greatly hampered the developmental efforts and service delivery of local government councils. Currently, there is a bill before the National Assembly as regards state governments’ interference with local governments’ funds. This study sees the review of Section 162(6) and (8) as a remedy to this most unsatisfactory situation.

Theoretical Framework

Theory deals with a body of knowledge which has been developed to explain a given phenomena. The theory which will serve as a base for this study is Efficiency Service Theory postulated by Mills and Bricks (1974). The central thesis of Efficiency Service Theory is that the main justification and functional responsibility of local governments is to efficiently carry out local duties allocated to it at the highest efficiency rate. The theory further posited that the quantity and quality of the provision of these services represent local or rural development. Mackenzie (1979), Ola (1984) and Odoh (1990) supported this argument when they asserted that local governments exist essentially to bring government closer to the grassroots by way of provision of basic amenities and infrastructure of local nature and that it is when local governments are seen to be doing just this that they can be said to be justifying the purpose of their existence. The 1979 Local Government Reform Guidelines, the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions agree with the above theory in that they concurred with the fact that local governments in Nigeria exist to efficiently provide goods and services of local nature to those at the local level.

The relevance of this theory to the study is that since local governments are established basically to meet the yearnings and aspirations of rural dwellers by way of providing goods and services to local people which only they can competently provide because of their knowledge and proximity to the people, the Joint Account system which constitutes an obstacle to the purpose of local government should be reviewed.

Major Findings

The following findings are discernible from the study:

a. That the State/Local Government Joint account was used by the state government to place a serious limitation on the extent to which the selected local governments could go in making their presence felt by way of providing social amenities and services which could meet the felt needs of the local and rural dwellers during the period under review as could be seen from the large deductions from their statutory allocations.
b. That the operation of this Joint Account also gave room for corruption and mismanagement of funds meant for local and rural development. Rather than being a means of fostering and facilitating the service delivery functions of the selected local governments, the Joint Account system was used to the contrary.

Conclusion

This paper on the management of State Joint Local Government Account and how it affected the service delivery functions of the selected local government was undertaken to find out whether the argument that the selected local governments could not perform statutory functions well during the eight years of Obasanjo administration is tenable. The study revealed that the way and manner the Joint Account was managed affected the local governments in the discharge of their responsibilities. This is not to say that corruption by local governments was not also responsible for low performance.

Recommendations

Seeing the important and critical role which the local governments could play in making the local people to feel the presence of government by providing goods and services which will meet the yearnings and aspirations of the population of that level of government, this paper makes the following recommendations arising from the findings of the study:

a. That the time is ripe for either outright abolition of State Joint Local Government Account law or a major review of some its provisions especially Sections 162(6) and (8) to allow the selected governments and indeed the Nigerian local governments access their federal allocations directly.

b. That there should be an establishment of an independent audit agency comprising federal, state, local government and private representatives. The members of this agency must have a proven track record of financial management to supervise, inspect and audit the use of statutory allocations by local government councils. This would provide ‘checks and balances’ on local government officials’ administration of finance matters to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of local government funds.

It is the belief of this study that if the above recommendations are adhered to, then a new dawn definable in terms of quantitative and qualitative service delivery by local governments would have come to Nigeria.
References