**SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVOLUTION IN THE CURRENT SOCIETY**

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**SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVOLUTION IN THE CURRENT SOCIETY**

Devolution is the delegation of power from the national government to the county government. It can also mean the division of power from the central government of a sovereign state to a local level. Service delivery is moved from the central region to the grassroots people whom they tend to serve. Devolution usually occurs through the constitution. Devolution started in the United Kingdom parliament in the year 1921 which was then affected due to public endorsement. Their parliament passed three devolution acts; the north Ireland Act 1998, the Scotland Act 1998 and the Government of Wales Act 2006. Examples of unitary states with devolution are; south Korea with 8 provinces and 6 cities, Spain with 17 communities of which 2 raise degree tax, Sri Lanka has 9 provinces, Sweden has 21 regions and 290 municipalities and Kenya with 8 provinces and 47 counties,

The constitution of Kenya 2010 in Article 215 advocated for the decentralization of governance hence leading to the establishment of the county governments. The forty-seven counties came into operation in the year 2013 with seven leadership positions: governor, deputy governor, senator, women representative and ward representatives. This marked the end of national government systems since independence and the start of a new era.

 The merits of devolution are increased public participation, heterogeneity of policy, equal distribution of national resources, customized policies, reduced delay in implementation of policies, minimisation of autocratic tendencies and promotion of national unity. Despite the advantages, there are also cons to devolution such as incompetency, conflicting policies, unequal representation, its cost, embezzlement of funds and preventing uniform development.

**ADVANTAGES OF DEVOLUTION**

**Increased public participation**

Devolution has increased the involvement of the citizens in government decision-making and also allowed the interaction of people with their elected leaders. It has sought to change the imbalances in development that occurred in the past by enhancing accountability, service delivery, equality and inclusivity. According to Williamson and Scicchitano (2014) citizens would not engage in public meetings if their ideas are not appreciated and considered in decision making and McComas (2003) share the same perception that their input would have some influence on the decision-making process.

**Equal distribution of natural resources**

Before devolution came into play, most resources were allocated to the urban areas and cities leaving the rural areas with nothing but with the presence of local government, there is a sharing of resources equally (kimenyi 2013). There is an equal amount called basic equal shares then they consider population size, poverty rate, land area and the responsibilities carried by the specific county. This has enabled the different countries to generate their revenue and benefit from the natural resources found in the area.

**Customized policies**

All people including the marginalized can benefit from self-governance since they can make and amend policies made by the national government through the collection of public votes and public participation. The policies will be in favour of the locals since they take part in decision-making and thus bring a sense of belonging. According to Hope (2014), participation in decision-making can result in more flexible and effective administration since the county government can tailor their services to the needs of the various groups in the county.

**Reduced delay in implementation of policies**

Due to the presence of the government at the grassroots level, there will be no delay in implementing the policies laid out by the central government. The leaders in the county can always be messengers and ambassadors of goodwill. This will speed up the economic growth of a country since government programmers are up and running.

**Minimizes autocratic tendencies**

Devolution has given the voters a voice hence if a leader tries to be dictatorial, they have a hard time. The presence of the government at the local level and the active participation of the locals in decision-making do not give room for tyrannical leadership. The people become politically wiser and are always on the watch to enhance fair leadership. This has promoted accountability and transparency.

**Promote national unity**

The delegation and distribution of power fairly have enhanced national unity and this has led to an appreciation of the different cultures of a country, for example, in Kenya national celebrations are done in different parts of the county unlike in the past when they were only celebrated in the capital city of Nairobi. This is per Cornell and D’Arcy (2016), the explicit goals of devolution reforms in the constitution include inculcating a sense of Kenyan identity and strengthening national unity by recognizing diversity, ensuring equitable allocation of resources and providing justice for marginalized communities and regions. This has led to equal representation of the different tribes in the national and county government leaders.

**Demerits of devolution**

**Incompetence**

This is the inability to perform a task assigned due to a lack of skills. This is currently affecting devolved government due to the availability of many vacant positions in the local government. A leader tends to employ his/ her relatives, campaigners and friends as a sign of gratitude for the votes. The absence of qualified personnel leads to poor performance in different sectors. Also, the leaders may not understand how devolution works generating a lot of conflicts among the stakeholders.

**Gender inequalities**

Despite the constitution advocating for a 2/3 gender rule, the African mind can’t allow a girl to lead hence the gender imbalance. This affects leaders when passing gender sensitive bills since the party will the highest number of votes tends to win. The marginalized communities are not also represented thus making it hard for one to present people’s grievances.

**It's costly**

The increase in more seats means that the taxpayer has to feel the pinch since the wage budget increases significantly this is due to the process of devolving political structures, administration and resources. The country tends to spend more since responsibilities have increased as the projects.

**Embezzlement of funds**

The counties mismanage funds by looting, buying inappropriate things and even spending funds on personal missions. This affects the workers since they go without pay for several months in the name of the accounts are empty, hospitals lack drugs and services since the money allocated is in someone’s pockets and the roads are impassible since there are no funds to maintain them.

**Prevents uniform developments**

Some counties develop faster than others because of the budget allocation formula and the presence of natural resources which create revenue for the counties. Those who lack other sources of earning revenue tend to fall behind in terms of development. Also compared to the counties with cities, they tend to start from zero while the other has developed infrastructure and good social amenities. These other countries will have to struggle to catch up.

In conclusion, the decentralization of power is good but the county government has to work extra hard to ensure the constitution is followed to the later. It should employ competent personnel who are qualified in different fields, and it should mobilize the females and marginalized communities to vie for political positions and not only wait for nomination, the cost of running the government should not only be shouldered on the taxpayers but also the government should source other forms of funding to ease the tax payer’s burden, the people who misappropriate funds should face the law and the government should ensure there are fair developments in all parts of the country.

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