Determinants of rural-urban variability in the implementation of educational decentralisation programmes in developing countries

The Nigeria experience

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research is to identify some determinants of rural-urban disparity in the implementation of decentralised educational management programmes in Nigeria.

Design/methodology/approach – The study examines how political leadership's disposition to decentralised educational management, allocation of funds and physical facilities established for decentralised educational management programmes differ in rural, suburban and urban communitites of Nigeria. Employing a survey design, the study uses national survey data on educational statistics and planning of the Federal Ministry of Statistics, in addition to the administration of questionnaires to 200 key stakeholders in educational management. Sampled groups included political leaders, policy makers in educational administration, traditional rulers, women leaders, leaders of different unions and the youths.

Findings – Data collected were analysed using comparative means and findings show that several facts are responsible for the reported disparity between rural, suburban and urban communities in the implementation of educational decentralization programmes. These factors ranged from inequitable distribution of physical facilities, to poor leadership disposition, to decentralised educational management functions.

Practical implications – The implication of the findings from this study is that in spite of the rhetorics of universalisation of educational developments, national policies and attitude towards implementation of decentralised management reform programmes is still low, particularly in rural and suburban communities.

Originality/value – Hopefully, findings from this study would provide practical solutions to existing disparity between rural, suburban and urban communities in the implementation of educational decentralization programmes in Nigeria, since some of the impending factors for current disparity have been identified in this study.

Keywords Nigeria, Educational planning and administration, Decentralized control, Rural areas, Urban areas, Developing countries

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Several studies (El education, 2003; Ornelas, 2000; Hanson, 2000) have linked educational development (Burki *et al.*, 1999), pupils' access to equal educational opportunity (Dike, 2000) and efficiency in the management of educational systems (Arubayi, 2003) to effective decentralisation of educational management. Predictably, many independent African countries have embarked upon one form of decentralisation process or the other, of their educational systems, to enhance educational development. In regions where the political will to decentralise has been sustained, appreciable success (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2000) has been recorded in educational improvements. What is however worrisome, is the apparent imbalance in the successes recorded between rural and urban communities in the outcomes of the benefits of educational decentralisation.

Findings from several empirical and similar studies (Adesina, 1987; Jibunoh, 1998) show urban-rural variability in the implementation of educational decentralisation provisions in many African states. These findings, regrettably, have not been to the advantage of the rural communities, where more than 70 per cent of the entire population reside. For example, in a joint UNESCO-Ford Foundation initiative on decentralisation of educational programmes involving four English-speaking West African Countries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Liberia, (Adesina, 1987), less than 10 per cent of local representation was reported in each case. More recent studies (Ikoya, 1999a) on devolution of school personnel management functions to local government areas (counties) in Nigeria revealed similar findings, as less than 12 per cent of the rural communities were represented (Ikoya, 2003).

These and other related findings show why the issue of inadequate rural community participation in decentralisation programmes, has been of major concern to stakeholders of education in many regions of the continent, particularly now that the political pendulum is swinging towards democracy in all of Africa. Clarion calls are being made to educators, legal luminaries, social scientists as well as political party leaders to examine ways of effectively implementing provisions of decentralized management programmes in rural African communities. However, these authors agree with Rondinelli (1983) that identifying the constraints to decentralization of educational management is of necessity fundamentally to proffering solutions to non-effective implementation of the provision in rural communities. Attempt was therefore made in this study to examine the impediment to equity in the implementation of educational decentralization programmes in rural and urban communities of Africa using Nigeria as a case study.

Theoretical links to educational decentralisation

Decentralisation, as it is perceived is a general concept, which includes a number of management and administrative alternatives. The definition of decentralisation provided by Conyers (1981) and later modified by Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) is closely related to those suggested by Chau (1985) and Hanson(1997). These authors generally recognise that authority is simply the degree of discretion conferred on managers of education to make it possible for them to use their judgement. The extent to which this authority is distributed in the school organisation, according to Adesina (1987) and Peretomode, (1990), determines the degree of decentralisation. Decentralisation of educational management, therefore, means shifting decision

making powers and administrative activities from the central (national) ministry of education to several regional bodies and offices, in carrying out educational activities. In recent times, other authors (Bray, 2003; Hawkins, 2004; Tatto, 1999) have examined educational decentralisation from more dynamic and variable perspectives. In a comparative review of the issues and tensions of education control in different communities, Bray (2003) stated that in some nations, educational management could shift from very highly centralised in one region to very highly decentralised in another region. Adeogun (2003) agreed with Bray that the level of decentralisation in school systems ranged from those that were not decentralised, to those that were decentralised, and are now becoming more decentralised. The concepts of functional and territorial decentralisation (Bray, 2003) is also relatively new in educational management. Explaining these concepts, Bray conceptualised that functional decentralisation as shift in the distribution of power between various authorities that operate in parallel. For instance, in some countries, a central ministry of education could be responsible for all levels of education, from pre-primary through primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. In Nigeria, between 1966 and 1979, when the military was ruling, the government was totally responsible for the establishment, control and management of all levels of education. When changes occur, and different ministries are now charged with the responsibility of managing different levels of education, a functional decentralisation is said to have occurred.

In another instance, the change could occur in the establishment of additional examination bodies. Again, the Nigerian educational system provides a good example. Until very recently, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) was the only recognised examination body for graduating secondary school students in the country. Today, other examination bodies such as the National Examination Council (NECO) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have been established through functional decentralisation.

Territorial decentralisation (Bray, 2003) refers to a redistribution of the control of educational authority among different tiers of government, such as stated in the provisions of the Federal republic of Nigeria, where primary education is supposed to be a local government function; and secondary education a state government function, while higher education is a National Government function. Based on the amount of power shifted to regional and local units, decentralisation of educational management has been separated into four distinct types. These are deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation.

Deconcentration, according to Rondinelli (1983), Hanson (1995), Cheng (1997), Tatto (1999) and Bray (2003), is the handing over of some amount of administrative authority or responsibility to lower levels within the national ministry of education. A World Bank (1979) study on decentralisation in developing countries shows that deconcentration has been the most frequently adopted form of decentralisation. Boodhoo (1976), also pointed out that in Morocco, Tunisia and Sri Lanka, deconcentration was encouraged through financial grants from the national governments to the regional, district, local and village administrative units. Other governments have similarly been shown to deconcentrate operations by creating coordinating units at the sub-national level, through incentives or contract arrangements. The World Bank (1984) reported that in Thailand, between 1979 and 1982, some per centage of the national budget was earmarked to assist village councils

identify, formulate and implement projects that further the national governments' objectives towards democratisation of education. A joint study by MacAndrews *et al.* (1981) produced identical results, indicating that deconcentration enabled local planning committees to undertake programmes that enhanced productivity and income in rural areas.

In some districts and villages, deconcentration programmes were embarked upon to encourage provincial development. A study by Landau (1980) indicated that in the Philippines, deconcentration was embarked upon by creating regional development councils and staff planning as subordinate units of the national economic development authority. These regional planning units, according to Iglesias, (1997), translated national development policies into provincial and local projects and coordinated the activities of national ministries and agencies within the regional, district and local levels. Among the most notable experiments and workshops on decentralisation in Africa, have been those reported by Rondinelli (1983), UNICEF (2004), Wolf, and Strickland (1997), Bray (1996), Boyle (1996), Chedial *et al.* (2000) in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania; and the ones recorded by Adesina (1987), Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), Schwarz *et al.* (1998) in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania. These and other related studies show that in each instance the distinctive phenomenon about deconcentration has been shifting of the authority and responsibility for specific schools management functions from the national government to a lower level administrative unit, but such a unit still remains within the national government structure. Thus, deconcentration differs from delegation.

In delegation of educational management, managerial responsibility for specifically defined education function is shifted to organisations, outside the direct control of the national government. There is ample evidence (Barajas and Norma, 2000; Bray, 2003) to show that delegation in educational management has been used extensively in both developed and developing countries. In actual fact, delegation has not been limited to educational management alone. King (1967) in some of the earliest reported cases of delegation, declared that in Kenya, public corporations and special authorities were used to finance, construct and manage both physical and infrastructural projects and social service activities. Later on, Khalil (1970) recorded a successful national experiment in Sudan, where, large-scale agricultural activities in the growing of cotton was delegated by the national government.

In the management of education, Graham (1980) reported that in Mexico, mixed enterprises were used in priority educational development ventures. A World Bank (1979) study on decentralisation in Third World countries indicated that responsibilities are generally delegated to regional and local government development agencies. In many instances (Nor Ghani, 1982; Fabrikant, 1975; Ornelas, 2000; Astiz, 2004), devolution enhanced effective implementation of educational decentralisation in rural communities, but in Nigeria and some other African countries, rural and suburban communities have not enjoyed much of delegated authority in educational management. In addition to delegation, devolution of schools management function is also embarked upon as a way of embracing rural community participation in educational management (Janowitz, 1959). Ejiogu (1987) observed that in Nigeria the decentralisation procedure embarked upon, was more of devolution.

In an extensive review of literature on devolution in industrialised nations, Deland (1969) concluded that with devolution, local governments are seen as autonomous and independent bodies therefore, their legal status makes them separate or distinct from the central or regional government. As a result of demand for this autonomy, Conyers (1981) observed that in Papau New Guinea provincial governments receive annual unconditional grants from the national government to effect cost of administration of education functions devolved to them. Stohr and Taylor's (1981) study also show that local rural units have clear and legally recognised geographical boundaries within which they exercise exclusive authority to perform explicitly granted or reserved functions. The level of autonomy enjoyed by rural and suburban units, from findings in the cited studies, still depended on the benevolence of national and regional governments.

In some instances, decentralisation may involve shifting responsibility for producing materials and educational services to privately owned or controlled enterprise. This form of decentralisation is referred to as privatisation (Bray, 2003; Hawkins, 2004; Tatto, 1999; Astiz, 2004). Several studies show that privatisation is a popular method of educational management in rural communities of developing third world countries. In Sri Lanka, a study by James (1982) revealed that voluntary organisations ran day-care centres, nursery schools, vocational training and non-formal educational institutions. Similarly, in Asia, Cheema (1982) reported that corporative organisations provided a wide range of productive and social services. In Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, Uphoff and Esman (1974) recorded successful experiments, with corporate organisations financing, managing and administering educational institutions.

In Nigeria (Ikoya, 1999b) the establishment, control and management of day-care and nursery schools are completely privatised. Privately-owned primary and post-primary institutions are established and functional in both rural and urban communities of the country. The common complain by rural community members about privatisation, is the high cost of education for private institutions. The per capita income of the rural dweller is so low that only an insignificant number of rural dwellers can conveniently afford private education fees for their children and wards. Therefore, privatisation appears not to be effective in enhancing rural community participation in educational management.

Historical development of educational decentralisation in Nigeria
Decentralization of educational management in Nigeria has some very significant historical, legal as well as political frameworks. Nigeria is a large African country located in the west coast of Africa with an estimated population of 120 million people. It occupies a landmass of about 970,000 sq.km (Ejiogu, 2004). The country is bounded on the west by the Republic of Benin, on the east by the Republic of Cameroon and north by Niger and Chad republics.

Nigeria is a country of many independent nationalities with approximately 350 different tribes. These regions and kingdoms were involved in national and international trade and treaties before they were colonised by the British in the 1840s. The colonisation of the territory began when the British sponsored trading expedition in the Niger Delta. By 1840, John Beecrott was appointed by the British government to regulate commercial activities within the different nationalities in the region. His

interference in the international affairs of the indigenous people because of military backing Beecrott received from the British government laid the foundation to colonial rule.

By 1900, both the north and southern regions of Nigeria were British protectorates, and by 1914, the two regions were merged into what, today is called Nigeria. The period 1830-1960 witnessed important political activities with strong implications on educational management policies in Nigeria today.

Nigerian educational policies: 1830-1960

The period of colonial administration also saw early missionary activities in southern Nigeria and Islamic activities in northern Nigeria. These early Christian missionaries introduced western education into Nigeria in 1842. The colonial government at this time paid little attention to education, therefore the different missionaries bodies established and managed their schools without intervention. Fafunwa (1974) affirmed that the absence of an official education policy resulted in the lack of:

- a common syllabus;
- adequate supervision;
- centralised examination system;
- uniform foundation of teachers; and
- adequate financial support and control.

By 1882, educational policies were developed to control the establishment and management of education in Nigeria. The major policies that were established since then that have implications for educational management include:

- The 1882 Educational Ordinance.
- The 1887 Education Ordinance.
- The 1908 Education Ordinance.
- The 1916 Education Code.
- The 1925 Memorandum on Education in British Colonial Territories.
- Phelps-Stokes Report on Education in Africa.
- The 1952 Education Ordinance.
- The National Policy on Education (Itedjere, 1997).

These policies and ordinances made for centralised and decentralised forms of educational management at different periods. For example, the 1882 Education Ordinance had a central management board with local boards whose functions were merely advisory. The 1827 Ordinance was not different from the 1882 policy in its centralised approach to educational management. Both Ordinances however permitted the establishment of missionary and private institutions with government schools.

The 1908 Education Ordinance made the first official attempt to decentralise the educational management through regionalisation of educational development. The Ordinance, for the first time, made provision for the establishment of three Provincial Educational Boards in the east, west and central regions of the country. Each board enjoyed a good measure of autonomy in the management of education in the regions.

This autonomy in regional and later, local management of education, laid the foundation for currently observed variability in the implementation of decentralisation programme in Nigeria.

By 1960, when Nigeria gained political independence, and until 1970 when the military government promulgated the decree establishing the state school system, inherited colonial policy of regional autonomy in the management of education was well maintained. Several political crisis which culminated into a civil war enhanced the Nigerian military into governance, and for the first time; educational management in Nigeria became very highly centralised. The government assumed full responsibility for the establishment, control, management and supervision of *all* schools.

As at 1970, there were 14,902 primary schools, 1,155 secondary schools and six Universities Ejiogu (2004), that were owned and managed by both government and private individuals or missions. Prior to the establishment of the state school system, 27 per cent of the primary schools belonged to the government, 39 per cent were under local authorities, while the remaining 34 per cent were owned by private proprietors. The Public Education Edict however stripped all private proprietors of their schools, without compensation. As Ejiogu (2004) pointed out, the Third National Development Plan asked government to take full control of secondary schools to rectify what was then described as variability in standards of the various secondary schools.

The federal government also acquired all the universities and established a centralized Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, whose functions include:

- conducting of entrance examinations into all universities and other higher institutions; and
- placement of qualified candidates into all universities and other higher institutions.

In addition, the Federal government established the National Universities Commission, whose functions include:

- accreditation of all universities' programmes;
- advising government on the establishment of new universities; and
- developing general programmes for all universities to ensure that they are fully adequate for national needs and objectives ... (Egwunyenga, 2000, p. 75).

Many have argued (Ogunsanwo, 2003; Okunola, 2004; Ayanniyi, 2004) that Nigerian education made little progress during the military era because of the high level of centralisation. Ejiogu (2004, p. 293), for example demanded "... how reasonable is it for one central body to control administration into all the universities numbering over 40 in a federation with a landmass of over 970,000 sq.km ...". He went further in his criticism of a centralised body for all universities and declared that "... without doubt, having the National Universities Commission as the sole monitoring and accreditation body for all the universities in Nigeria and their numerous programmes is inelegant and dysfunctional ..." (Ejiogu, 2004, p. 296). Many (Ogunsanwo, 2003; Okobiah, 1999; Durojaiye, 1987) believe that Nigerian educational system was characterised by academic, moral and infrastructural decadence due to centralisation of educational management. They argued that classrooms were overcrowded, with poor hostel and

classroom accommodations, ill-equipped teachers' offices, poorly maintained physical facilities and absence of meaningful human capital development programme.

These arguments and perceptions were probably instrumental in the development of new policies, encouraging more active participation of other stakeholders in the management of education, beginning from 1979. Today, educational management is still a mixture of centralised and decentralised forms. The rate of decentralisation has been slow, in spite of the rhetorics, because the national fund is controlled at the centre. When functions are devolved to local, and district units, the federal government, in most cases is unwilling to provide the required funds to perform these functions. Such has been the case of primary schools' teachers salaries, which function was devolved to the local education authorities, but appropriate fund is not being regularly provided by the federal government to meet these obligations.

Statement of problem

Many developing nations, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, have since post-political independence enacted different laws on decentralisation of educational management. Indeed in Nigeria, the process could be traced to the 1889 Education Ordinance (Ikoya, 1999c). But despite these early efforts, which were backed by constitutional provisions, the powers of local and rural communities in education management have continued to suffer fervent whittling down. National and state functionaries continue to encroach upon statutory educational functions devolved to rural communities (Olowu, 1989).

The question often asked is why are local, district and village education units, to whom specific school management functions were devolved, not allowed to perform their statutory functions in rural communities. Empirical studies have revealed acute disparity between rural and urban communities in the implementation of educational decentralisation programmes. Similar findings were unveiled in a study by Ikoya (2003) on the implementation of legal provisions of educational decentralization in selected African states.

The missing link from findings reported in these studies is very fundamental and it is the determinant(s) of observed rural-urban variability in the implementation of the provisions, of educational decentralisation. In other words, what factors account for the observed disparity between rural and urban communities in the implementation of educational decentralization programme. Attempt was made in this study to provide answer to this fundamental question. Seven research questions were asked in an attempt to elucidate the stated fundamental problem. The questions were:

RQ1. What difference exists between rural, suburban and urban African communities in the implementation of educational decentralisation programme?

RQ2. To what extent do ruling political parties favour the implementation of educational decentralisation programmes, in rural, suburban and urban communities?

RQ3. Do national governments of African States release proportionate funds for the implementation of educational decentralisation in rural, suburban and urban communities?

RQ4. Do rural, suburban and urban community leaders have sufficient political clout to enhance the implementation of decentralisation programme in their communities?

RQ5. Has the economic potentials of rural, suburban and urban communities of Africa any influence on the level of implementation of decentralisation programmes?

RQ6. Are rural, suburban and urban community members themselves favourably disposed to implementation of decentralised educational management programmes?

RQ7. What factors account for the difference in the implementation of educational decentralisation programmes in rural, suburban and urban communities of Africa?

Study objectives and related issues

The purpose of this study was to determine impediments to equity in the implementation of educational decentralisation programmes in rural, suburban and urban African communities. The objectives of the study are manifold. First, the authors argued that the extent to which the ruling political class favour decentralisation in rural, suburban and urban communities is pivotal to successful implementation of the programme. When the ruling political class at the national level is sceptical that decentralisation, could weaken the central government control over the regions (Nellis, 1983) existing provisions and policies on decentralisation, including those affecting rural communities, are most likely to remain poorly implemented or not implemented at all.

The second issue examined, which is closely related to the first objective, has to do with funding. It was predicted in the study that adequate funds would not be made available to rural African communities for decentralised educational management functions for two principal reasons. One being non-availability of sufficient funds, and the second reason being poor management of available funds. Most sub-Saharan African countries are generally poor, monocultural economically, relying on one or two natural resource-export commodities. In Nigeria, for example, the national economy is sustained by crude oil export earnings. In Ghana, it is cocoa and Tanzania, ivory. Earnings from these export commodities are generally controlled by the national government, and their willingness to disburse funds to lower administrative units, particularly for devolved schools management functions, depends on their favourable disposition to decentralisation. It was also hypothesized that because of the prevalent high level of official corruption, misappropriation of funds, and poor accountability, funds budgeted for decentralised schools' management functions for rural and suburban communities would usually not reach the end-users.

The third issue examined was regarding the political clout of rural and suburban community members, and their collective ability to influence national government policies to their own advantages. Merit has different colouration in the context of African culture and tradition. And this includes the ability to wield power and influence. Thus, many are appointed, promoted or deployed into lucrative positions just because they have friends, relatives or tribesmen in high positions of authority. This same political influence is used to attract development to communities, where

members are influential. The investigators again felt that the absence of people with such political clout in rural and suburban communities could stifle effective implementation of decentralised schools' management programmes.

Closely related to the third objective is that of rural community members' disposition to decentralisation. Are rural, suburban and urban dwellers favourably disposed to decentralisation of educational management? Western education came to most African states through the early Christian missionaries, and as Itedjere (1997) pointed out, for a long time, the establishment, control and management of education was done by the missionaries. Thus, education then was perceived as a "whiteman" activity. This thinking, unfortunately was reinforced by the creation of the state school system, by post-colonial African leaders who felt education was too important to be left in the hands of rural dwellers. Thus, for several decades, the average African citizen as excluded from every aspect of educational development. In fact, the change in educational management at independence was seen as moving from the "whiteman school" to "government school". Now that most national economies are failing and calls are being made to citizens and communities to participate in educational management through decentralisation, many are sceptical and are not interested. Thus, poor community attitude towards decentralisation of educational management could also restrain effective programmes' implementation in rural, suburban and urban communities.

Finally, the economic potential of the federating communities to which schools management functions were devolved was again predicted to influence the level of programmes implementation. One significant dividend of emerging democratic governance among African states is rural communities new-found privilege to demand active participation in decisions relating to exploration, processing, distribution and marketing of natural resources, explored in their communities. In the crude oil producing states of the Niger Delta, the term "resource control" has become synonymous with the struggle/agitation for active community participation in decisions regarding the distribution of the oil wealth. While the battle for resource control rages through legal means in the court and Congress, by violence, through youth restiveness, intra-community strife, or pipeline vandalisation, rural leaders from these oil-rich communities use their vantage positions to advance their demands for better deals in other sectors such as health, education and welfare. Accordingly it was predicted that the level of decentralised management programme would be higher in rural communities with higher economic potential.

These variables were empirically examined to enable the researcher to ascertain whether or not they influence implementation of education decentralisation programme in rural, and suburban communities of African states.

Methods
This research used national survey data on educational statistics and planning (2002 edition) of the Federal Ministry of Statistics. In addition to this, 200 key stakeholders in educational decentralisation, such as policy makers, political leaders, top public servants in education, as well as traditional rulers and chiefs, were interviewed. Subjects comprised male and female adults drawn from rural, suburban and urban communities. In our quest to ensure adequate representation of all groups, the sample drawn included public service workers, employees in the private sector,

representatives of women organisations, leaders of religious bodies and members of relevant unions and civil organisations as enshrined in the educational decentralisation provision.

Procedure

The principal investigator, working with trained assistants, visited the federal and state ministries of education, the primary schools management boards, local district and village education committees, to obtain information from existing records about decentralisation of educational management. The researchers set out to gather information in the following order:

(1) Were structures for decentralised educational management established in rural, suburban and urban communities visited?

(2) If they were established, are they functioning well?

(3) And if they are functioning well, are the interests of the local communities where the structures are established adequately represented?

In addition to collecting these data, attempts were also made to physically examine these structures, interview workers, community leaders and party chairmen in the areas of established structures to ascertain their functionality. This was the procedure adopted, using validated questionnaire/check list to gather data on the number of local, district and village education committees established in rural, suburban and urban communities.

Measures

Decentralisation structures. Decentralisation structure was assessed by a three-item subscale on total number of functional local, district and village education committees established. The response categories were awarded the following points. One point for an established local education committee, two points for a district education committee and three points for one village education committee. The choice of this "bottoms up" scale was based on the assumption that the higher the level of regional decentralisation, the greater the number of smaller units of education committees, particularly the village education committees that would be established.

Community representation. Community representation was also assessed using a three-item subscale. These were drawn strictly from political appointees from these committees into education committees. The first question sought for the number of community members holding chairmanship positions in any education committee within the locality. The second question in the subscale asked respondents to indicate the number of their community members who were secretaries, while the third question was related to board membership.

Funding. Funding was measured by the amount of fund provided for capital and recurrent projects to enhance educational decentralisation. For example, question 1 in the subscale asked for the amount of take-off grant provided for the establishment of their village education committees. The higher the amount, the higher the points scored. Thus, communities having 30 per cent and above, in the amount provided, scored three points, those provided with between 10 and 29 per cent of regional funds scored two points, while those that got below 10 per cent scored only one point.

Political clout. Community political clout was measured by five questions in that subscale, which examined governorship, minister, senator, commissioner and chairmanship of local government. The different weights given were: governor (five points); federal minister (four points); senator (three points); commissioner (two points); and local government chairman (one point).

The ratees saw the state governor as the most influential political office holder who could enhance devolved education functions in his community, followed by the federal minister, while the local government chairman was least perceived to be influential.

Economic potential. Economic potential of the community was assessed by crude oil availability, seaport activities and cash crop export potentials of the community. The rating was done as follows: crude oil producing communities – three points; communities with seaports – two points; communities with cash crops – one point.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Comparative means for all tested variables for rural, suburban and urban communities are displayed in Table I, as are mean scores for all study variables. The scores ranged widely across each of the six dimensions, but with a clear pattern. More of the tested variables were available in urban than suburban and rural areas.

Charts of the mean scores are displayed in Figure 1 for clarity and easy comparison.

Findings

Findings presented in Figure 1 show disparity between rural, suburban and urban communities on impediments to effective implementation of decentralise educational management programmes. But what is quite interesting is that the identified variables for effective programme implementation were consistently lower in rural and suburban areas than in urban communities. For example, availability of adequate structures for implementation of decentralised educational management programmes were constraints more in the rural and suburban areas than in the urban areas. Availability of educational structures for decentralisation in urban communities was almost 35 per cent higher than those in suburban areas and over 39 per cent more than those located in rural communities.

S/N	Tested variables	Rural	Mean scores Suburban	Urban
1.	Availability of decentralisation structures for programme implementation	1.69	1.82	2.78
2.	Leadership disposition to decentralisation	1.68	1.87	3.20
3.	Provision of sufficient fund for decentralisation	0.99	1.71	3.04
4.	Political clout of community leader to enhance educational decentralisation	0.87	1.66	3.15
5.	Economic potential of community to enhance decentralised education programme	2.95	1.09	2.06
6.	Community members' disposition to educational decentralisation	1.23	1.78	2.05

Table I.
Comparative means for tested variables on decentralisation of educational management in rural, suburban and urban communities
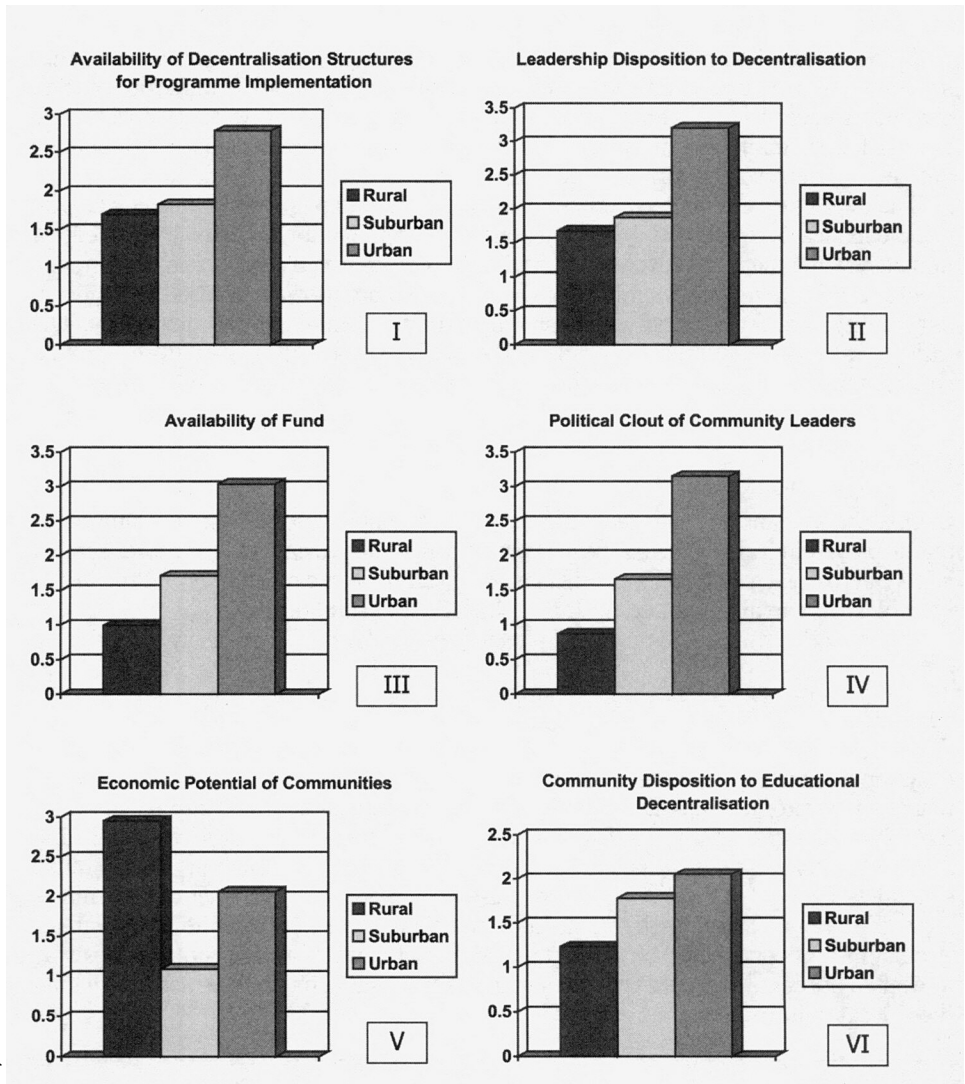
512

Figure 1.
Implementation of
decentralised educational
management programme
in rural, suburban and
urban communities

Political leadership disposition to educational decentralisation was also found to be lowest in rural communities. The level of favourable disposition of political leaders to decentralisation in urban areas is more than 41 per cent higher than suburban areas, and over 47 per cent than their rural counterparts. On the provision of adequate fund, findings show that almost 28 per cent of devolved fund was used in urban communities, 15.6 per cent in suburban and 9.02 per cent made available in rural communities. It could be observed from the findings, that the amount of fund devolved to rural communities is low and thus, an impediment in implementation of education programmes.

Again, the political clout of rural communities leadership was found to be a constraint to effective implementation of education programmes. Rural community

leaders were not found to occupy the tested prominent political, social and economic positions, such as those of governors, ministers or party chairmen. Whereas more than 55 per cent of urban community leaders occupy these plum positions, 27.2 per cent of suburban community leaders were found to occupy these positions, but only 15 per cent of rural community leaders occupy these influential positions. Naturally, their absence or marginal presence in these powerful positions translates to inability to influence political decisions, including those affecting education programmes as reported in this study. This again has been shown as another probable reason for poorer implementation of decentralised educational management programmes in rural and suburban areas than in urban communities.

Findings from data analysed on economic potentials of rural, suburban and urban communities revealed that the economic potentials of rural communities were higher than those of urban and suburban communities. However, it would appear that rural community leaders have not been able to translate this potential into something tangible and concrete that could enhance effective implementation of educational programmes in their communities.

Community disposition to decentralized educational management programmes was reported higher among urban dwellers than with suburban and rural dwellers. The level of community support for educational programmes is 24.2 per cent in rural, 35 per cent in suburban and 40.3 per cent in urban area. These findings are consistent with our predictions. We predicted that community disposition to decentralized educational management programs would be lower in rural communities because of two fundamental issues. First, the rural poor in many developing countries have always been marginalized and seldom called upon in advisory capacity. These long years of discrimination suffered by rural dwellers has created a wide gulf between them and government policies and programmes, including those of education, which they perceive in negative light. The second reason why rural community dwellers may not be favourably disposed to educational programmes in general and in particular to those of decentralization, is their level of literacy. The quality of education in the rural areas is generally low, and so the level of illiteracy is high. Thus, many rural dwellers are unable to interpret education programmes to enable them make the right choice as to whether they should support such programmes. The easiest choice, which in most cases they make is just to exclude themselves from active participation in government policies, and programmes. These are the probable reasons for the observed poor disposition of rural community members to decentralized educational management programmes. And these have translated to poor implementation of decentralized educational management programmes in rural communities.

Discussion

Several studies have addressed rural-urban disparity in the implementation of decentralized educational management programmes in developing countries, but most of these studies have failed to ascertain the sources of these differences. In the present study, we sought to begin filling the void by specifying those variables, that we conjecture would be associated with effective implementation of decentralized educational management programmes, and to ascertain whether or not such variables were present, in equal proportions in rural, suburban and urban communities. For the

present study, six variables were predicted to enhance effective implementation of decentralized educational management programmes. These variables are:

(1) availability of structures for programmes implementation;

(2) availability of adequate fund for procurement of needed resources for programme implementation;

(3) economic potentials of communities to enhance their participation in policies and programmes;

(4) political leadership and its disposition to decentralisation;

(5) political clout of community members and their abilities to favourably influence educational programmes; and

(6) community disposition to educational decentralisation.

The first variable tested predicted that availability of decentralised management structure in a community would enhance effective implementation of decentralised management programme. Based on this assumption, the researchers tested for these structures in rural, suburban and urban communities of Nigeria.

Findings revealed that most of the school structures established to enhance decentralised educational management were located in urban communities. Only few were found in the rural areas and most of them were not functioning effectively. Thus, non-availability of sufficient structures is impeding implementation of decentralised management programmes more in rural and suburban areas than in urban communities.

Second, we postulated that non-availability of adequate funds to procure educational resources would stifle programmes implementation. Again, we tested this hypothesis by examining earmarked funds made available for decentralised educational management programmes in rural, suburban and urban areas. Findings similarly revealed that more funds were made available to urban communities than rural and suburban areas. Previous studies by Durosaro (2002), Ajayi and Adesina(1998) have reported similar findings. Non-availability of adequate funds for the implementation of educational decentralisation is therefore an impediment to programmes implementation more in rural and suburban than in urban communities.

It was predicted that the economic potential of the different communities would influence the level of implementation of devolved educational management programmes. The basic assumption here was that communities with abundant natural resources such as crude oil, gas, and other export commodities would be in a better position to positively influence implementation of education programmes in their communities. Contrary to our predictions, findings from data analysed revealed that although more of the resources for generating national wealth were located in the rural communities, they (rural community members) still lacked the potential to either control this wealth or influence government policies on education programmes. Urban community members with less resources still possessed the highest potentials for influencing government policies on decentralised educational management programmes.

Rondinelli (1983), Von Freyhold (1976) and Ibiam (2003) have previously shown that political leadership's disposition to educational decentralisation has impact on programmes implementation. Based on these previous works we, in the current study,

predicted that political leadership would be more positively disposed to decentralisation in rural communities. Again, contrary to our expectations, political leadership was more favourably disposed to decentralisation in urban areas than in rural and suburban areas. Thus, political leadership's unfavourable disposition to decentralisation in rural communities is also constraining effective implementation of decentralised management programmes more in rural and suburban communities than in urban areas.

Our fifth hypothesis predicted that urban dwellers would have more political clout to influence implementation of educational programmes; consequently the level of impediment of programmes implementation would be lower in urban areas. Our findings in consonance with our prediction revealed that urban community members had more political clout, consequently the level of programmes implementation was higher in urban than rural and suburban communities. We predicted that because of the long years of rural community marginalisation in educational management, they would be unfavourably disposed to educational decentralisation, which would negatively impact on programmes implementation. Our finding, in consonance with previous studies by Babarinde (1998), Jibunoh (1998), Young (2000), show that urban community members were more favourably disposed to implementation of decentralised management programmes than rural and suburban community members.

Conclusion and recommendation

This study identified some determinants of reported rural-urban disparity in the implementation of decentralised education management programmes. Using data from observed physical facilities, official national and regional education statistics, including interview of community chiefs and leaders, the present study revealed that implementation of decentralised educational management programme was lower in rural than urban communities because:

- political leadership disposition to decentralised educational management programme was more favourable to urban than rural and suburban communities;
- consequently, the amount of funds allocated to urban communities was higher than those given to rural and suburban communities;
- available physical structures established for decentralised management programmes were found to be more in urban than rural and suburban communities; and
- community disposition to decentralised management programmes was higher in urban than rural and suburban communities.

On the whole, the level of implementation of decentralised educational management programmes was generally low for urban, suburban and rural communities, but lowest among rural communities.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were proposed.

Decentralisation of educational management could enhance the much desired community participation in education. Therefore it was recommended that political leadership disposition to decentralised management programmes be more favourable,

particularly to rural community dwellers. More funds should also be provided to rural community, for devolved educational management programmes.

Finally, adequate physical facilities should be established in rural, suburban and urban communities to enhance effective implementation of decentralised educational management programmes.

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