

Determinants of Rural-Urban Disparity in Private Sector Participation in the Provision and Management of Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This research identified factors associated with urban-rural difference in private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. Using data gathered from existing official records, including interviews of community leaders, private school proprietors and other stakeholders in education, our findings revealed that private sector participation in the provision and management of education was higher in urban than rural communities, because the indices on levels of community disposition, and host community contributions to private sector participation in educational development were all higher for rural than urban communities. It was accordingly recommended that a more effective enlightenment programme be carried out in rural communities, to enhance private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical and other related studies by Ajayi and Adesina (1997), Omolayole (1997), Ikoya (1999a), Goulet (2003) have, within the last decade, carefully examined private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries. Findings from majority of these studies (Yoloye 1996; Peretomode 1998; Ikoya 1999b; Aremo 2002) reveal urban-rural variability in private sector participation in the provision and management of education, in Nigeria. Some of these reports (Ikoya 2000; Bock 2004) indicated that the level of private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education was higher in urban than rural communities. Attempts have not been made to provide empirical data on probable factors accounting for the low private sector participation in the provision and management of education in rural Nigerian communities. These authors seek to begin filling this gap by examining the factors accounting for reported rural-urban disparity in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria.

In explaining the concept of privatisation, Rolston (1981) stated that in some instances, national and regional ministries of education may decentralise by shifting the responsibilities for the provision and management of education to individuals, privately owned or controlled enterprises. Exploring the concept further,

Babarinde (1997), Omolayole (1997), and Ikoya (2004) separately affirmed that privatisation enhances individuals or corporate bodies' involvement in educational management.

In Sri Lanka, for example, James (1982) reports that individuals and voluntary organisations established and managed day-care centres, nursery schools, vocational training and non-formal educational institutions. Similarly, Cheema (1982), Ikoya (2003) stated that Non-Governmental Organisational (NGOS) provided a wide range of educational services at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels in many Sub-Saharan African Countries. In Mexico, the Pacific and Latin American, Burki (1999), Hanson (2000) and Ornelas (2000), recorded successful experiments with cooperative societies establishing, funding and managing lower level educational institutions. Private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria began with the Missionary schools established in 1843, Fafunwa (1974). Between 1951 and 1975 however, private sector participation in the provision and management of education increased, incorporating, individuals, other corporate organisations and different missionary societies. By 1976, the public school edict, which originated in 1970, enabled the government to compulsorily acquire all the schools from their original owners. By this edict, all forms of private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria ceased.

Private sector participation in educational management, however, resurfaced in the 1980s as government's financial muscles began to atrophy, and could no longer solely fund education. Today, clarion calls are being made to individuals, communities, missionaries, as well as NGOs to participate in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. Citizens, communities and corporate bodies were initially hesitant at answering the call because of bitter experiences they had with the centralisation policy of 1970. The question now is, what is the current status particularly when considered that current research findings on privatisation of educational management revealed that privatisation enhance the overall development of the host community (Rural or Urban) not only intellectually, but also morally, socially and economically.

Study Objectives

The study objectives are manifold. First, the authors looked into the level of private sector participation in the provision and management of education in both urban and rural communities to ascertain whether or not a difference actually exists, then, the measure of its magnitude. The second, third and fourth objectives explored possible determinants of rural-urban difference in private sector participation in the provision and management of education. The authors in their second submission argued that the level of community's favourable disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education, would, to a large extent, determine the level of private sector investment in educational management in that community.

The third objective, which is related to the second, sought for host community's contributions towards private sector participation in educational management. Previous authors posited that the level of private sector participation would be high in communities where land, labour and education resources are freely given and the environment conducive for private sector investment. Communities should be able to control youth restiveness, protect school personnel and properties from assault and vandalization.

The fourth objective examined private sector willingness to participate (invest) in education, in a particular community. The private sector is

profit oriented; therefore investors prefer an environment where their investments are secured and profitable. We predicted that private investors would be more willing to invest in the rural areas because of available relatively inexpensive land, labour, and also for the hospitable nature of rural dwellers. Finally, based on data generated, several key factors were identified as probable determinants of Urban-Rural difference in private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria. In line with these objectives, five research questions were raised:

1. What is the level of private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria?
2. Are rural and urban community members equally disposed to private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria?
3. What are the contributions of rural and urban communities to enhance private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria?
4. Is the private sector willing to equally participate in the provision and management of primary education in rural and urban communities of Nigeria?
5. What factors account for urban-rural difference in private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria?

METHOD

Data for the present study were generated as part of a larger ongoing survey design on private sector participation in educational development in Nigeria. Eighty rural and urban community members were each randomly sampled from population of teachers, school administrators, parents, local chiefs and private school operators. Participants included males and females from different economic, political, social and religious backgrounds, within the 21 to 60 years age bracket. More importantly they were people directly or indirectly involved with school activities. The survey was done using a previously validated and vigorously pilot tested questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.76.

In addition to the survey of local community members, current data on existing private primary schools, established in the study areas were

collected from the Ministry of Education to enable the researchers provide answers to questions. A validated checklist was used to collect data on existing structures such as classrooms, water boreholes, electricity generators, toilet facilities, school bus etc.

RESULTS

Bar charts on comparative means for all tested variables in urban and rural communities are displayed in figure 1, It could be observed that the data show

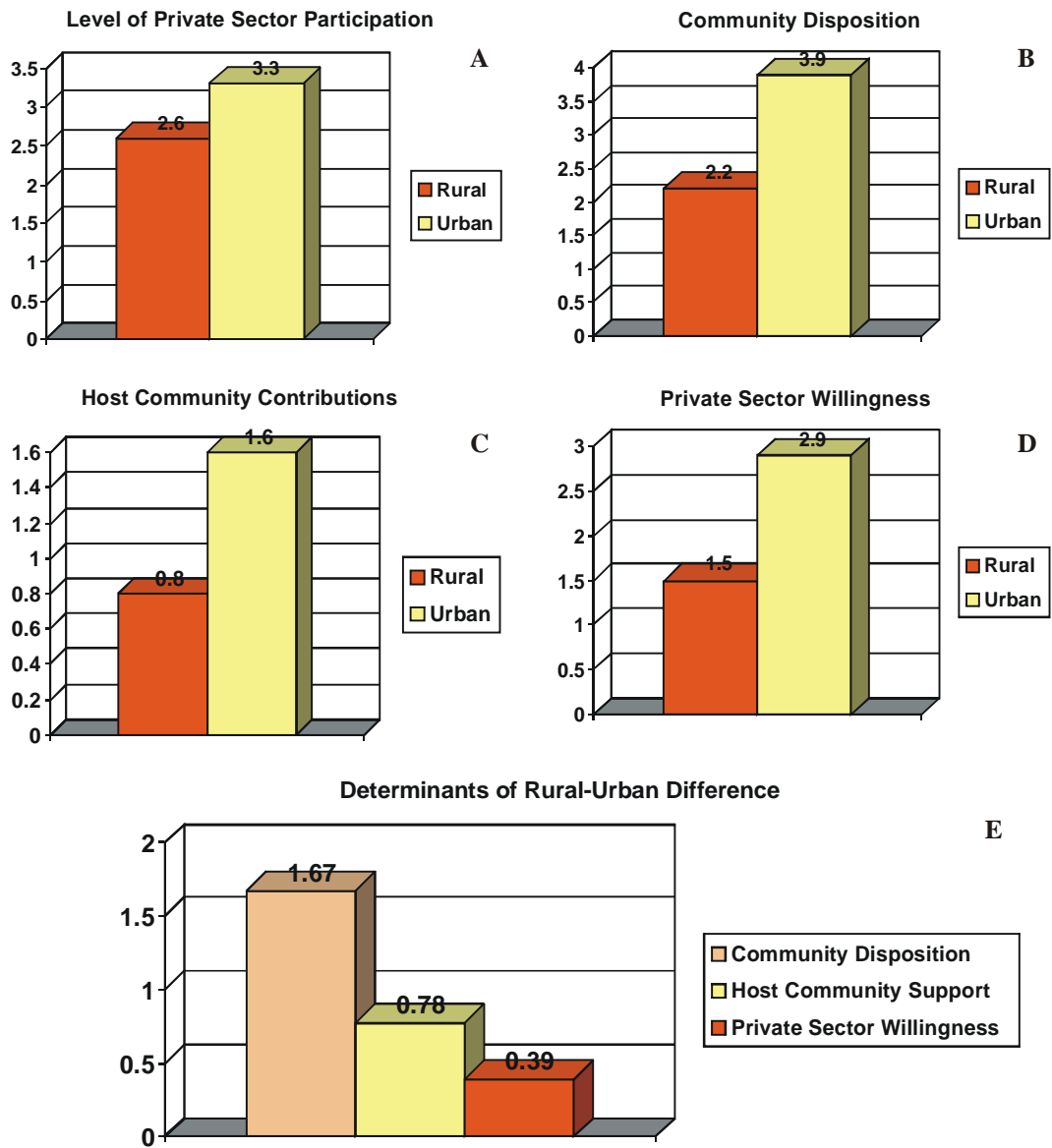


Fig. 1. Urban-rural difference on private sector participation in educational management.

moderate ranges between rural and urban communities in most of the tested variables, but with clear and consistent pattern. In all of the tested factors, the level of community disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education was higher among urban than rural community dwellers. On the whole, the level of community disposition towards private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria is relatively high. A mean score of 2.5 was the accepted score for determining communities with 50 percent of the requirements for effective support. Data presented show that urban communities scored 3.9 or 78%, while their rural community counterparts scored 2.2 or 44%. This could be why there are more privately owned primary schools in urban than rural areas. But caution should be exercised in the interpretation as there could be other limitations.

Findings from data analysed on community contributions to private sector support for education were more revealing. Contributions in the forms of land, provision of buildings, mobilization of community members to accept private sector participation in educational management, protecting educational facilities from vandalism, safeguarding the lives and properties of school personnel were very low for both rural and urban communities. Data presented in figure 1B show that urban communities provided only 32% of the expected contributions, while a meagre 16% assistance come from rural communities. Apart from their unwillingness to make the required contributions of free land, labour and skills, sampled communities scored low in their abilities and willingness to protect school facilities from vandalism as well as school personnel from being attacked. Even when lands were purchased at very high costs for school building purposes, the proprietors of private schools were constantly harassed and made to pay unending illegal development levies. These illegal activities by community members hinder development of education projects and discourage private sector participants in the provision and management of primary education. Results from data analysed on the fourth question show that private sector investors in education were more willing to invest in urban than rural communities. We predicted that because of existing infrastructures such as pipe borne water, electricity and fairly good network of roads,

private sector participants would be more willing to invest in urban communities. Findings show that 30% of private sector investors were willing to invest in the education sector in rural communities, while 58% were willing to invest in urban areas.

Some significant findings were revealed from this study, on factors accounting for urban-rural differences in private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education. First, the study revealed that private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria was above average. Secondly, the level of private sector participation in educational management was higher in urban than rural communities because urban community members were more favourably disposed to private sector participation in the provision and management of education in the state. Their contributions in terms of free land, labour and skills were also higher than those of rural communities. It would appear that because of the enabling environment, private sector investors in education were more willing to invest in urban than rural communities.

DISCUSSION

Several studies have addressed the issue of urban-rural difference in private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. Many of these studies have however failed to ascertain the sources of the observed differences. This research sought to begin filling the existing gap by identifying those variables conceived to be associated with private sector participation in the provision and management of education in rural and urban communities of Nigeria. In the present study, three variables were conjectured to be associated with reported difference between rural and urban communities in private sector participation in the provision and management of primary education in Nigeria. These were:

1. Community disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education;
2. Community contributions towards enhancing private sector participation in the provision and management of education; and
3. Private sector's willingness to invest in rural or urban communities in their participation in the provision and management of education.

Empirical reports on the subject show that several factors account for the level of communities' favourable disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education. These include historical antecedents to educational development, level of importance attached to western education, level of poverty of the community and the quantum of power devolved to local units by the national government (Durosaro 2003; Igun 2004). When the level of decentralization is high, local community members have opportunities to participate in policies affecting private sector involvement in the provision and management of education.

These variables were examined on community disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education in both rural and urban communities of Nigeria. Our findings show that urban communities were consistently higher than their rural counterparts in the mean scores of the tested variables, thus showing that, urban dwellers were more favourably disposed to private sector participation in the provision and management of education. These results are in consonance with those reported by Enang (2000) and Awata (2002). Private sector participation in the provision and management of education is higher in urban than rural communities probably because of inequality in urban-rural disposition to private sector involvement in educational development.

Our second hypothesis predicted that community contributions to enhance private sector participation in the provision and management of education would be higher among rural than urban community members. This assumption was hinged on the age long history of unity, co-operation and hospitality among African rural dwellers. Community contribution was assessed by donations of free land and labour, protection of school personnel and properties as well as community involvement in school discipline. Findings show that contrary to our predictions, private school proprietors, their teachers and administrators encountered more administrative and social problems in rural than urban communities. It would appear that because of the "on and off" ethnic crisis and youth restiveness in the region (Jike 2002), the rural villagers have become suddenly hostile and either unable to or unwilling to restrain their youths from vandalizing school properties

(Dalhatu 2003). This could be a major reason why private investors in education shy away from rural communities.

The private sector whether in health, education and welfare is profit oriented. Therefore, private investors in education would prefer an environment where their investments are safe as well as profitable. Based on this assumption, we predicted that private investors would prefer urban to rural communities because of better law enforcement agents for security, good road, water, electricity and higher student population with ability to pay for a more expensive private education. The results were consistent with our predictions and findings by previous authors (Nwadiani 2000; Jike 2002) that private investors in education are more willing to invest in an environment where returns for their investment in education are guaranteed. The urban areas of Nigeria appear less hostile, today, to private investors in the provision and management of education than rural communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research identified factors associated with reported urban-rural variability in private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. Using data gathered from existing official records, including survey of community members, school proprietors, administrators and teachers, our findings revealed that private sector participation in the provision and management of education was higher in urban than rural communities because:

The level of community disposition to private sector participation in the provision and management of education was higher among urban than rural dwellers. Host communities' contributions towards enhancing private sector participation in the provision and management of education was higher among urban than rural dwellers; and private investors in primary education were more willing to establish schools in urban than rural communities because the former have less hostile environments. In spite of these problems unveiled in this study, the level of private sector participation in the provision and management of education is gradually rising, particularly in urban areas. Based on these findings, it was recommended that:

More effective enlightenment programme be

carried out in rural communities to educate their members about the benefits of privatization of educational management, so that, they can be more favourably disposed to private sector participation, in the provision and management of education. Host communities, particularly the rural ones also need attitudinal change in their contributions towards effective private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria. Community dwellers should be highly committed to securing life of school personnel and prevent vandalism of school properties.

Private sector investors on the other hand should not shy away from the rural communities where almost 70% of the people reside. Several studies (Ubong 2002; Igun, 2004) have shown that the rural populace in many developing nations are "chronically disadvantaged" (Igun 2004) in opportunities to participate in human development. Arubayi (2004) has also pointed out that rural primary pupils have less access to primary education. Based on these problems weighing against the rural child, it is recommended that all stakeholders in education, particularly, the private investors, should devise a more appropriate strategy for reaching the millions of helpless, innocent children, in rural communities, currently marginalized, to gain access to quality education through effective and efficient private sector participation in the provision and management of education in Nigeria.

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