

Educational Development in Nigeria: How Far can it be Managed to Incorporate The Rural Areas?

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ABSTRACT The paper examines the place of rural areas in educational development in Nigeria. It employs the analytical approach and the survey as its research methods of study. It concludes that the rural areas have been neglected in the scheme of things with regards to educational advancement and recommends that there should be a better coverage of the rural areas in educational programmes. This is considered necessary so that available educational statistics would reflect on both urban and rural areas in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing awareness that research reports on educational development in Nigeria has traditionally focused on studies carried out in the cities. Statistics available on educational development are mainly on enrolment in schools in the urban centers. A substantial literature focuses on the nature of educational provisions in the urban towns in the country. It is easy to talk of the number of primary and secondary schools in towns like Yenegoa, Calabar, Benin city, Kaduna and Kano, to mention but a few. Such statistics are hardly available about educational development in the rural areas. In contrast to the traditional approach of using the provided educational statistics about schools located in the urban centers in Nigeria to generalize for the urban and rural areas, whose figures are never really available, there has arisen therefore the need for a broader conceptualization of educational development in Nigeria to incorporate the much neglected rural areas. This, too, has necessitated the prescription of multi-level analysis and micro approach as more comprehensive models of research that can integrate insights gleaned from macro approaches to the educational development in Nigeria (Bray and Thomas, 1995). Consequently, there is a growing awareness of the importance of having an understanding of the differences within territories, since only an analysis of these differences will allow for an understanding of the inequalities in educational development between the urban towns and the rural areas, which do not show up in national statistics and analysis.

In view of the above, this paper attempts to investigate why rural areas have often been neglected in educational provisions and in records made available for public utilization in conducting further researches.

The paper employs the analytical approach and the survey research method as its research methods in explaining the extent to which rural areas have been neglected in educational provisions and programmes for educational advancement in Nigeria. The method of analysis was considered most appropriate to use in this study because it enabled the researcher to actually analyse and discuss in details how national educational provisions and programmes pay much attention to the urban towns, while the rural areas are often neglected. This method was considered because it will also allow the reader to understand the procedure the researcher adopted in arriving at his conclusion. This method was preferred particularly as it emphasizes clarity. However, when it was discovered that this analytical approach was ineffective in identifying the rural areas that have been neglected in the scheme of things in educational development in Nigeria, the survey research method was introduced. The survey research method helped in identifying the actual rural areas that have been neglected in the provision of educational facilities, programmes and in educational advancement in Nigeria.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

With the passage of time, settlements grow in

size and complexity. All present day cities were once villages or small towns or countryside. Their growth to urban status is due largely to a combination of factors which includes availability of social facilities such as good roads, electricity, health facility, communication network, industries that provide employment opportunities and easy means of transportation. The availability of these facilities have often made the large towns and cities places of great excitement to rural folk who often move in from near and distant villages to increase the population of the urban centers. At the same time there is the depopulation of the rural areas (Hornby, 2000; Adeleke and Leong, 1981). The implication of this settlement pattern for educational advancement in Nigeria is that the urban centers began to attract the establishment of schools because of the teeming population. The urban areas also began to attract teachers who liked to settle in towns to enjoy the social amenities that are provided in the urban areas.

On the contrary, rural areas witnessed lack of establishment of schools. Where schools are available, teachers either resist or refuse transfers to those rural areas for lack of social amenities. Ezewu and Tahir (1997) gave a clearer explanation of the common situations in rural and riverine areas with regards to educational development. This is considered appropriate here because the situations are common in Nigeria. There has been

highly inadequate quantity and quality of infrastructures. Facilities such as market, health centers and recreational centers, which affect settlements, are not available in the rural areas.

Other facilities, which includes, good source of water supply, housing and transportation are also not available in the rural areas. Ezewu and Tahir went further to analyze the effect of the lack of these facilities in an area to include inability to retain qualified and experienced teachers to man the few secondary and primary schools where they exist. It should also be noted, that this factor is responsible for lack of official records and statistics about educational development in the rural areas, particularly as school supervisors appointed by the state and other local government officials, appointed to monitor educational development are highly infrequent in the places they are assigned to monitor. In worse cases government monitoring officials are non-existent in some rural areas. The effect of this is that there are no records about educational development in many rural areas in Nigeria.

From the table 1, it is clear that towns such as Kano, Kaduna, Calabar, Yenegoa and Benin City have social amenities. The facilities available are such that they could attract much population, good buildings and teachers. Communication facilities are available and schools are often supervised. Educational statistics are easy to get

Table 1: Levels of disparity between urban and rural areas.

Towns / villages	Good roads	Electri-city	Telephone service	Health facilities	Easy means of transportation	Good water supply	Recreation centers	Good houses	Schools	Educational records and statistics
Calabar	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Agbokin	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Water fall										
Ekugha Tai	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Okosarah	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Yenegoa	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Poloako	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Zarama	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tombai	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kano	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Tsanyawa	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Albasuo	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kunchi	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kaduna	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Kujama	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kanfanchan	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	NA
Zonkwa	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	A	NA
Benin City	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Emunekhwa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ugbomighan Erah	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Olinlin uzea	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: R.O.A. Aluede (2005) Field trips reports. Unpublished reports from field trips to Kano, Kaduna, Calabar, Yenegoa and Benin city.

and there is flow of information between the schools and local monitoring educational units. But in the rural areas, most of the facilities are not available hence they could not attract population, teachers and government officials. In the riverine areas such as Agbokin waterfall, Poloako, Zarama and Tombia, transportation is difficult. Sometimes, it is difficult, to get boats. Moreover weather is also a strong factor in determining accessibility. All these affect school attendance in areas where they are available (Aluede, 2005). The implication of this for education is that the rural areas stand disadvantaged in educational provision, supervision and with regards to educational data available to researchers.

It should be noted that these disparities in educational development between urban and rural areas are often not noticed or neglected when noticed. This has at times resulted in serious national crisis because the rural areas that constitute the minorities have occasionally felt neglected in the scheme of things within the nation state. The fact that most readily available information are not adapted to the regional question or rural settings since they have been collected at the request of a central administration, they tend to be representative of the areas not covered. For these reasons, ratios of illiteracy are frequently presented as averages; the actual distribution of illiteracy is either underestimated or unknown. This has serious consequences on the minorities or those in the rural areas because it often results in the inability of the nation- state to solve the problems of those in the rural areas, particularly as their levels of deprivation are not known (Furter, 1980).

WHAT COULD BE DONE

Much is required to be done to help the plight of those in the rural areas in Nigeria. Many years after, in fact, ten years after the introduction of the 6-3-3-4, system of education in Nigeria (that is six years in the primary school, three years in the junior secondary school, three years in the senior secondary school and four years in the tertiary level school structure.) Olinlin-Uzea, Ugbomighan- Erah and Tombia are yet to have schools with electricity with which to operate machines that should have been used in the teaching of introductory technology. The educational problems, of the people living in the rural settings of Nigeria, require a great attention.

In fact their needs are beyond that of expanding educational facilities. They need special attention.

It has been noted above that teachers and supervisors need good houses to stay in the rural areas and these are not readily available. Government should build modern schools in rural areas and provide staff quarters with electricity, good water and communication network to attract teachers to the rural areas. There should be some forms of inducements granted by the government to staff posted to the rural areas in Nigeria. Government could run a different pay structure for teachers and other staffs in the rural areas. To retain the population in the rural areas, government should provide social amenities that are available in the towns or urban centers in the rural areas. This will make the urban centers less attractive.

CONCLUSION

It is basic that urban centers will continue to attract rural settlers. Deliberate efforts should be made to balance the level of development in urban and rural areas. Educational statistics should now be provided at ward levels so that the true picture of educational development can be seen. The current practice where figures from state head quarters are used to draw conclusions about the level of educational development in the entire state, do not always reflect the true positions. There should be a greater concern for those in the rural and riverine areas, whose problem appears to be terrible in Nigeria.

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