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DECENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The extent to which the policy of decentralization of education in Nigeria has provided satisfactory outcome in providing educational services has not been well investigated. This study, therefore, investigated the delivery of educational services due to the decentralization of education in Nigeria. The study is descriptive survey type. Structure questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 200 teachers selected from fifteen (15) secondary schools in Lagos State, using stratified random sampling. Percentages were used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that the policy of decentralization of education in Nigeria enhances effective instruction of education in secondary schools as it equips the teachers to prepare adequately for classroom instruction. It also enhances financing of education by encouraging parents to participate in the funding of education. Furthermore, It enhances acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for individual student and community development. However, it does not guarantee regular payment of teachers' salary and the provision of relevant textbooks in secondary schools. Even though the policy enhances gender equality in secondary schools, the rate of drop-out of school in secondary schools still affects both sexes of students. The study therefore recommends that the educational policy reform on decentralization of education in Nigeria should lay emphasis on regular payment of teachers' salary and provision of relevant textbooks in secondary schools so as to improve the quality of education. Also, the policy should introduce giving incentives to students in secondary schools so as to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Key words: Education decentralization, Education deconcentration, Education delegation, Staff Education

Introduction

There has been a consensus on the importance of education in economic performance for many decades. Globally, education has gained

attention due to the two Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that are directly related to education: achieving universal primary

education and promoting gender equality. Education is argued to also help promote achievement of several other MDG goals, such as reducing poverty, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, lowering the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and ensuring environmental sustainability (Deny, Harmon, and Redmon 2000; Ranis, Stewart, and Ramirez 2000). Similarly, World Bank (1995a) asserted that education not only helps to improve the income-earning potential but it also has the ability to empower individuals; education enables individuals to participate in local and national government, it provides skills and knowledge to improve quality of life, and to become more productive.

The decentralization of public services such as education has been one of the most common governance reforms implemented by developing countries like Nigeria. Education decentralization occurs in the context of severe deficiencies in educational access (and quality) but growing financial resources for basic education, strong country commitments to use additional resources towards that end, and rigorous monitoring by donor countries (in the context of the Millenium Development Goals [MDGs] and the Education for All [EFA] initiatives) to ensure that both funding for basic education increases and access improves (Gershberg and Winkler, 2003). The additional funding, the new and serious commitments, and the continuous international monitoring translate into a demand that countries find more effective and cost-effective means of delivering basic education. Based on international experience, decentralization is viewed by many as offering the promise of a new and more effective mode for organizing the delivery of education—under certain conditions (Gershberg and Winkler, 2003).

In Nigeria, there is tremendous overlap between the roles of the three levels of government and duplications of functions. The multiplicity of organizations in schooling suggests an abundance of administrative and technical staff.

The decentralization/recentralization process has resulted in a larger, not smaller, public sector. Thus, governance in the education sector includes institutions that deliver education services. The primary motivation for governance reform in the education sector in developing countries like Nigeria is to provide high quality education at the lowest cost to a growing number of students. However, two governance arrangements favoured by the World Bank to achieve this goal include decentralisation and privatisation. Proponents of privatisation and decentralisation argue that centralised, bureaucratic control of education results in significant inefficiencies and waste of public funds (Chubb and Moe, 1990).

Decentralization in education can range from de-concentration of administrative authority to more comprehensive regulatory and financial control, and it can extend across all education functions. The rationale for education decentralization involves improving efficiency and effectiveness. In this study, the term "education decentralization" is viewed as the process of devolution of fiscal and decision-making authority, from higher to lower levels of government and organizational units, affecting the way school systems make policy about resource generation and spending; organization of instruction (curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, schedule); personnel management (hiring/firing, pay scales, assigning teaching responsibilities, training); and planning and managing schools.

While education continues to receive great attention in policy debates, reforming

education to provide adequate access, equity, and quality education, involves redefining the roles of government in education management and finance. Proponents of fiscal decentralization and decentralized education argue that decision-making in the delivery of education services that are closer to the people, at lower levels of government, may translate into better education service delivery and improved output (Fiske, 1996).

Thus, over the past two decades, decentralization has moved to the forefront of policy discussions in developed, developing, and transitional countries. Decentralization of the provision of education, as a component of overall decentralization, has often been viewed as one of the first functions to be assigned to lower levels of government. According to Gershberg and Winkler (2003), improved equity, too, is a rationale for decentralization.

Nigeria is a Federation, with 36 States and 774 Local government areas. It has a history of significant involvement of both State and Local Government in the provision of primary education. A set of 1976 Federal guidelines and the 1979 Constitution established primary education as a Local Government responsibility. These 1970s' reforms took place in the context of an effort to increase revenue sharing funds to State and Local governments (Hincheliffe, 2002). Decentralization of education was first launched in 1986 by the then Head of State, Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to Hincheliffe (2002), in 1988, the Federal government established the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) to coordinate and supervise the development of primary education across the country, and to contribute 65 percent of the estimated total cost of primary teachers' salaries. The intention was that the local governments would contribute a further 20 percent with the State Governments providing

the rest. At the same time, the Federal Government's share of the Federation Account was reduced from 55 to 50 percent and that of Local Government rose from 10 to 15 percent.

Moreover, during the 1980s and 1990s, the central military government sought to recentralize and otherwise control the system that was officially decentralized, in part because of declining oil revenues, which led in turn to declining revenue sharing funds. Hincheliffe (2002) explained that in 1991, full responsibility for primary schooling was transferred to the Local Governments and their share of the Federation Account was increased to 20 percent and that of the States reduced to 25 percent, NPEC was abolished, and Federal financial support withdrawn. In 1993, NPEC was re-established and the actual cost of teacher salaries began to be deducted at source from the Federation Account allocation to each local government. However, there were some obstacles to the success of decentralization reform. One of the major obstacles involves the greater susceptibility of the local governments to being captured by local elites, in the sense that service provision was designed to cater for the interests of local special interest groups (Madeira, 2007). This threat is believed to be particularly relevant for unequal and poor communities. It has also been argued that Local Governments do not have the necessary administrative competence to provide efficient public services such as education.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the many advantages of education, including the potential to lift people out of poverty, in many countries education provision has failed in terms of affordable access, technical quality, client responsiveness and output. Millions of children around the world fail to gain access to schooling, and an even

larger number of those who enroll leave prematurely, dropping out before basic skills of literacy and numeracy are achieved (World Bank, 2003). These, have negative implications to economic growth and development in a country like Nigeria.

Decentralization reforms are commonly justified by the belief that Local Governments are more accountable and responsive to the needs of their local communities. It is believed that the proximity of elected local officials to their communities gives them an informational advantage over higher-level governments concerning the local communities' preferences, thus enhancing their ability to tailor public services delivery such as education to the communities' demand. Moreover it is contended that as a result of political competition among the lower levels of government, decentralization may promote innovation, experimentation and learning about service delivery policies (Madeira, 2007). The question is: does decentralization translate to better education services delivery in Nigeria, especially Lagos State, the study area? Satisfactory studies have not been conducted to investigate decentralization of education in the study area. Therefore, investigating whether or not decentralization of education in Nigeria provides improved outcomes associated with the provision of education is of primary importance. This is very necessary in order to obtain better governance, quality of life, and overall economic growth. It is as result of this that this study was conducted to investigate decentralization of education in Nigeria so as to know the extents to which the policy helps or otherwise in the accomplishments of the overall goal of education in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate decentralization of education in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives were to:

- i. assess the effect of decentralisation of education on instructions in secondary schools in Nigeria;
- ii. investigate the effect of decentralization on quality of education in Nigeria;
- iii. ascertain the extent to which decentralization of education affects funding of education in Nigeria;
- iv. ascertain if decentralization of education has significant effect on gender equality in schools and
- v. examine the effect of decentralization of education on community development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. How could decentralisation of education affect instructions in secondary schools in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does decentralization affect the quality of education in Nigeria?
- iii. What is the effect of decentralization of education on the funding of education in Nigeria?
- iv. To what extent does decentralization of education has effect on gender equality in
 - b. secondary schools in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of Decentralization of education on community development in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. Decentralization of education has no significant effect on instruction in schools in Nigeria.
2. Decentralization of education has no significant effect on quality of education in Nigeria in Nigeria.
3. Decentralization of education has no significant effect on funding of education in Nigeria in Nigeria.
4. Decentralization of education has no significant effect on gender equality in schools in Nigeria.
5. Decentralization of education has no significant effect on community development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey which involves the collection of data for the purpose of reviewing the existing conditions of decentralization of education in Nigeria.

The target population for this study was the entire teachers of public and private schools in Lagos State.

Stratified simple random sampling technique was used for this study. Fifteen secondary schools comprising ten private schools and five public schools were randomly

selected from Lagos State, Nigeria. The State has more number of private secondary schools with less number of teachers than in the public secondary schools. In each of the private schools, ten teachers were selected while in each of the public schools, twenty teachers were selected. However, only 191 respondents provided reliable data that were finally used for the analysis.

Questionnaire was administered to collect primary data from 191 teachers in the study area.

Analysis of the collected data was carried out using percentage and chi square.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How could decentralization of education affect instructions in schools?

The result Table 1 shows that most respondents (91.1%) agreed that decentralization of education enhances development of appropriate curriculum for schools, enhances effective teaching in schools (74.3%) and also, the supervision of instructions by the school heads (85.9%).

Table 1: Decentralization of Education and Instructions in Schools

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total	X ² Cal	X ² Tab
Decentralization of education enhances development of appropriate curriculum for schools.	174 91.1%	14 7.3%	3 1.6%	191 100%	149.944*	15.507
Teaching effectiveness in schools is enhanced						

through decentralization of education.	142 74.3%	17 8.9%	32 16.8%	191 100%
Decentralization of education enhances supervision of instructions by the school heads.	164 85.9%	14 7.3%	13 6.8%	191 100%
Utilisation of appropriate instructional materials for teaching in schools is encouraged through decentralisation of education	110 57.6%	65 34.0%	16 8.4%	191 100%
Decentralisation of education encourages the teachers to prepare adequately for classroom instructions.	131 68.6%	15 7.9%	45 23.6%	191 100%

Source: Field Study, 2013.

The result further revealed that most respondents (57.6%) agreed that utilisation of appropriate instructional materials for teaching in schools is encouraged through decentralisation of education and also encourages the teachers to prepare adequately for classroom instruction (68.6%).

Hypothesis 1: Decentralization of education has no significant effect on instruction in schools in Nigeria.

Table showed that the calculated value of X^2 (149.944) was greater than the table value of X^2 (15.507) at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom 8. In view of this, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between decentralisation of education and effective instruction in schools was rejected. Thus, decentralisation of education has significant effect on instruction in schools.

Research Question 2: To what extent does decentralization affect the quality of education in

Nigeria?

Concerning the quality of education in Nigeria, the result, (Table 2) shows that most respondents (88.5%) agreed that decentralization of education leads to provision of better education for the students, enhances students' academic achievement (75.9%) and has tendency to influence parent's behaviour especially in assisting children with their homework (64.9%). The result further indicates

that majority of the respondents (79.6%) agreed that decentralization of education encourages teachers to perform their duties diligently and also enhances acquisition of appropriate teaching skills and knowledge in schools (68.1). Based on these results, it can be concluded that decentralization has positive effect on the quality of education in Nigeria.

Table 2: Decentralization and Quality of Education in Nigeria

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total	X ² Cal	X ² Tab
Decentralization of education leads to provision of better education for the students.	169 88.5%	13 6.8%	9 4.7%	191 100%	70.891*	15.507
Decentralization of education enhances students' academic achievement.	145 75.9%	9 4.7%	37 19.4%	191 100%		
Decentralisation of education has tendency to influence parent's behaviour especially in assisting children with their homework.	124 64.9%	42 22.0%	25 13.1%	191 100%		
Decentralisation of education encourages teachers to perform their duties diligently.	152 79.6%	24 12.6%	15 7.9%	191 100%		
Acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge in schools is enhanced through decentralisation of education.	130 68.1%	18 9.4%	43 22.5%	191 100%		

Source: Field Study, October, 2013.

Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis 2: Decentralization of education has no significant effect on quality of education in Nigeria.

Table 8 showed that the table value of X² (15.507) is less than the calculated value of X²

(70.891). Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between decentralization and quality of education in Nigeria was rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between decentralization

and quality of education in Nigeria. Therefore, decentralization has significant effect on quality of education.

Research Question 3: To what extent does decentralization of education affect funding of education in Nigeria?

The result indicates that most respondents (75.9%) agreed that decentralization

of education enhances adequate funding of instructional materials in schools. However, majority (58.6) disagreed that decentralization of education guarantee regular and prompt payment of school staff salaries and provision of adequate and relevant textbooks in schools (51.3%).

Table 3: Decentralization of Education and Funding of Education in Nigeria

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total	X ² Cal	X ² Tab
Decentralization of education enhances adequate funding of instructional materials in schools.	145 75.9%	30 15.7%	16 8.4%	191 100%	179.331*	15.507
Regular and prompt payment of school staff's salaries is guaranteed through decentralization of education	56 29.3%	112 58.6%	23 12.0%	191 100%		
Decentralization of education enhances provision of adequate and relevant textbooks in schools.	93 48.7%	86 45.0%	12 6.3%	191 100%		
Decentralization of education has tendency to improve funding of schools' infrastructure.	155 81.2%	21 11.0%	15 7.9%	191 100%		
Decentralisation of education encourages parents to participate in funding of education.	143 74.9%	33 17.3%	15 7.9%	191 100%		

Source: Field Study, October, 2013

The result also indicates that most respondents (81.2%) agreed that decentralization of education has tendency to improve funding of schools' infrastructure as the policy encourages parents to participate in the funding of education in Nigeria (74.9%). Thus, it can be concluded that decentralization of education enhances funding of education in Nigeria. However, regular payment of teachers' salary and provision of adequate and relevant textbooks in schools are not yet guaranteed.

Hypothesis 3: Decentralization of education has no significant effect on funding of education in Nigeria.

Table 3 showed that the calculated value of X^2 (179.331) is greater than the table value of X^2 (15.507) at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom 8. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between decentralisation

of education and funding of education in Nigeria was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between decentralisation of education and funding of education in Nigeria. Therefore, decentralisation of education has significant effect on funding of education.

Research Question 4: To what extent does decentralization of education has effect on gender equality in schools?

The result (Table 5) shows the responses on the decentralization of Education and Gender Equality in Schools. Most respondents (58.1%) agreed that decentralization of education improves girl child's education in Nigeria as it leads to increase in female students' enrolment (54.4%) since it provides an opportunity for both boys and girls to perform well in their academic activities (82.2%).

Table 4: Decentralization of Education and Gender Equality in Schools

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total	X^2 Cal	X^2 Tab
Decentralization of education improves girl child's education in Nigeria.	111 58.1%	36 18.9%	44 23.0%	191 100%	174.51 ^{a*}	15.507
Decentralization of education leads to increase in female students' enrolment.	87 45.5%	78 40.8%	26 13.6%	191 100%		
Decentralization of education provides platform for both boys and girls to perform well in their academic activities.	157 82.2%	26 13.6%	8 4.2%	191 100%		

Decentralization of education improves gender equity in schools.	146	26	19	191
	76.4%	13.6%	9.9%	100%
The drop out rates among both boys and girls in schools are reduced through decentralisation of education.	65	97	29	191
	34.0%	50.8%	15.2%	100%

Source: Field Study, October, 2013

Also, the decentralization of education policy improves gender equity in schools (76.4%). However, majority disagreed that the drop out rates among both boys and girls in schools are reduced through the policy (50.8%). This is contrary to the findings of Raguet and Sanchez (2008) in Bolivia that decentralization of educational finance improved enrolment rates in public schools.

Hypothesis 4: Decentralisation of education has no significant effect on gender equality in schools in Nigeria.

Table 10 showed that the calculated value of X^2 (174.519) is greater than the table value of X^2 (15.507) at 0.05 level of significance with degree

of freedom 8. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between decentralisation of education and gender equality in schools was rejected. Therefore, decentralisation of education has significant effect on gender equality in schools.

Research Question 5: What are the effects of decentralization of education on community development in Nigeria?

The result table 5 shows that most respondents (86.9%) agreed that decentralization of education promotes community participation in the provision of education and ensures the delivery of educational services that are useful to people (84.3%).

Table 5: Decentralization of Education and Community Development

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total	X^2 Cr ¹	X^2 Tab
Decentralisation of education promotes community participation in the provision of education.	166	18	7	191	96.939*	15.507
	86.9%	9.4%	3.7%	100%		
Delivery of educational services that are useful to the people is ensured through decentralisation of education.	161	22	8	191		
	84.3%	11.5%	4.2%	100%		

Decentralisation of education promotes mobilization of resources among the community members	114	47	30	191
	59.7%	24.6%	15.7%	100%
Decentralisation of education enables the community to engage in construction of schools.	154	29	8	191
	80.6%	15.2%	4.2%	100%
Acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for individual student and community development is enhanced through decentralisation of education.	131	15	45	191
	68.6%	7.9%	23.6%	100%

Source: Field Study, October, 2013

It also promotes mobilization of resources among the community members (59.7%). The result further showed that majority (80.6%) of the respondents agreed that decentralisation of education enables the community to engage in construction of schools. Most respondents (68.6%) agreed that acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for individual student and community development is enhanced through decentralisation of education.

Hypothesis 5: The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between decentralization of education and community development was rejected as the calculated (X^2) of 96.939 is greater than the table value of X^2 (15.507) at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom 8. Based on this result. Therefore, decentralization of education has significant effect on community development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

- The government should ensure the allocation of at least 26% of the annual budget to education as suggested by the UNESCO.
- Government should ensure that financial transfers to schools and local governments be done regularly to ensure good funding of education.
- The educational policy on education in Nigeria should lay emphasis on regular payment of teachers' salary.
- Parents/Communities should help in mobilization of resources (financial and materials) among the community members for provision of relevant textbooks and instructional materials for effective teaching and learning in schools.
- The policy should also provide incentives to secondary school students to prevent drop out from schools.

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