

Redistributing Public Institutions to Rural Areas: A Case of the University of Rwanda College of Education, Rukara

NDIHOKUBWAYO KIZITO

ndihokubwayokizito@gmail.com

BYUSA EDWIN

byedwin@yahoo.fr

University of Rwanda – College of Education

YUTAKA ITO

Akita University, Japan

utaka.ito@gipc.akita-u.ac.jp

Abstract

Redistributing some public institutions to rural areas and developing secondary cities to support the capital city of Rwanda, Kigali, constitutes governmental policies. This paper identifies the opportunities and challenges of redistributing the University of Rwanda College of Education (UR-CE) to Rukara. The study used a mixed method involving 61 students randomly selected from UR-CE and 69 residents from around the UR-CE. Using a t-test, there was a highly statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) between students and residents, with residents benefiting most from UR-CE. A statistically significant difference ($p < .05$ at 95% confidence interval) also appeared for gender, which showed that male students preferred to study in a rural area. The opportunities and challenges brought by UR-CE to residents were found to be different from those brought to students. For instance, job opportunities are found by residents near the university, and concentration on studies is an opportunity gained by most students. However, hygiene, water and sanitation were considered the top challenges faced by students, while the rising cost of food and accommodation were claimed by residents of Rukara.

Keywords: redistributing public institutions, rural area, urban area, UR-CE, Rwanda

Introduction

Middle-class people and people living below the poverty line constitute over 10.7% worldwide (World Bank, 2016). In Rwanda, over 74% of the population of 11.3 million (by 2015 census) live in the countryside, and 16.3% are below the poverty line nationwide (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2017). According to Witola, Baboo, Siziya, and Chanda-kapata (2011), poverty is defined as the lack of access to basic needs of life such as income, employment, services, and shelter. Poverty is shown by various economic indexes. For instance, when you consider the human development index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that explores the education, economy, and lifestyle of a country, Rwanda has a low HDI score of 0.524, and it is positioned at 158 of 189 countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). In the fourth quarter of 2017 (as reported by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2018), the gross domestic product (GDP) at then current market prices was 1 985 billion Rwandan francs. Additionally, GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) was USD 2 090, while the difference between the rich and poor (Gini) index was 51.3 (United Nations Development Programme, 2016), showing how rich people get richer while poor and middle-class people continue to decline.

Sub-Saharan Africa is most affected by slow rural development, even though many countries welcome foreign investors to exploit natural resources and produce finished goods (Jackson, 2015). Several developmental policies, such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015, were replaced with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 agenda (Third World Network, 2016), the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), and Vision 2020 (Government of Rwanda, 2013), which were developed to fight against poverty. From those policies, the Rwandan government decided to develop and rehabilitate some major cities that will support the capital city of Kigali (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2012) to accommodate and service the majority of the population in the rural areas. Doyle (2012) explains that rural development has been constrained by policies and regulations that lack convincing evidence and fail to acknowledge and exploit rural strengths and opportunities for sustainable development. The policy of redistributing public institutions to rural areas supports rural development and reduces demographic issues in Kigali. Consequently, redistributing some public institutions will allow those rehabilitated cities to strengthen rural development and help nearby communities with several needed services. Currently, in Rwanda, there are reserved areas in each district for manufacturing industries (economic zones), helping communities to obtain jobs from these industries; the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) helps residents to obtain jobs near their homes while building their needed infrastructures such as generating and rehabilitating ready-made roads, schools, and health centres (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2012). Furthermore, according to the Rwanda Housing Authority (RHA), the relocation of public institutions aims to boost economic activity in secondary cities that have been denoted in different regions of the country (Ntiringanya, 2017). In addition, this will raise economic growth for the country by using the improved roads and water networks, electricity, tourism development, schools and health centres.

Nevertheless, according to Trollip and Boshoff (2001), there is a perception from policymakers



that rural-urban migration challenges the stability and lifestyles of citizens. Therefore, this is the reason why the government should do as much as possible to equilibrate these areas and bring opportunities to rural areas too. For instance, Mutandwa, Taremwa and Uwimana (2011) revealed three factors that are important in explaining rural to urban migration as follows: the availability of social services, including roads and communication networks; the availability of stable jobs in rural areas; and the unfavourable social environment, as shown by high poverty levels, high population density and abusive family environments. This implies that providing the necessary infrastructure in rural areas is highly important. The idea of approaching rural residents about redistributing some of the public institutions is good and supportive. According to Gautam and Andersen (2016), the vulnerable rural citizens most need the global poverty reduction interventions targeted at their rural livelihoods. The public investment priorities in rural areas should change according to the emerging change of rural areas and they should be determined within the region. What works for one region does not necessarily work for another, however, an emphasis should be made on how to prioritise those investments that will most improve a region's economy (OECD, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Since there is high migration from rural to urban areas in most countries, rural development theory, which aims at maintaining the living standards of the rural population to allow residents to enjoy life and satisfy their needs from where they are while demotivating them from moving to urban areas, will guide the present study. It is clear that rural residents are the motor accelerating the development of urban areas because they are the ones maintaining resources such as agriculture and livestock needed to feed the urban residents. Therefore, governments should reduce the urban migration by redistributing some institutions to rural areas. This strategy brings people who migrated to cities back to the rural areas. This theory is a regulator of urban movement and moderation of the population in both urban and rural areas. When this regulation happens, it solves the problem of the low density of the rural population, hence improving the market services (Green & Zinda, 2013). Though difficult to maintain resource dependence on rural development, policymakers have to invest in infrastructure and human capital to reduce exclusion of rural residents compared to urban residents (Jackson, 2015).

Problem Statement

Since the development in rural areas of developing countries is a low priority compared to urban cities, there are challenges in creating employment opportunities to join economic growth and poverty reduction through reducing the large income gap. Therefore, in Rwanda, there is a need to focus on rural development (Abbott, Murenzi & Musana, 2012). One way of fulfilling this economic gap is by redistributing public institutions, industrial factories and other emerging businesses in cities to the countryside. However, citizens around the institutions deployed in the countryside may have different perceptions and attitudes compared to people inside the institution. Understanding the opportunities and challenges for students studying at UR-CE and the perspective of residents of Rukara is critical for the present study.



The Objective of the Research

The study examines whether the government of Rwanda's policy direction aimed at redistributing public institutions as a means of advancing rural development is faring well concerning the relocation of UR-CE.

The questions guiding the research are as follows:

1. Are the students and citizens aware of the reason why the Rwandan government relocated UR-CE to a rural area?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges faced by students studying in the rural area and brought to the rural citizens by UR-CE?
3. How do the students and rural citizens evaluate the distribution of public institutions like UR-CE to rural areas?
4. To what extent do the students and rural citizens appreciate having the UR-CE located in the rural area?

The Significance of the Study

The study will significantly contribute to the literature on countries' policy directions aimed at redistributing public institutions as a means of advancing rural development. It will also help the government of Rwanda to understand the challenges faced by the stakeholders to review the policy and formulate new strategies to reduce these challenges.

Methodology Used

Description of the Study Area

The present study was conducted at UR-CE in Rukara. This campus is in a rural area; it is located in the Kayonza district, one of seven districts comprising the Eastern province of Rwanda. The campus is a product of unifying all high public institutions and universities in 2013 (Hitimana, 2013). In the beginning, the former Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), established in 1999, was based in Kigali city and aimed to meet the demand for adequately qualified primary and secondary school teachers (Winne, 2003). In 2007, twin campuses, Rukara College of Education for Social Studies and Languages Fields in the Eastern province, Kayonza district and Kavumu College of Education for Mathematics and Science in the Southern province, Muhanga district were introduced to support the Nine Years' Basic Education policy implementation (Tumwebaze, 2014). The UR-CE in Rukara – previously called Rukara campus – did not start from scratch because a primary teacher training college (TTC Rukara) was on the ground functioning. This made TTC Rukara move to the Nyagatare district, becoming TTC Matimba. In 2014, the Kavumu campus merged with the Rukara campus (Ngendahimana, 2014), and in 2017, the main campus in Kigali (KIE) also merged with the Rukara campus to make the current UR-CE. This study examines whether the government of Rwanda's policy direction is coping well concerning the relocation of UR-CE.



Study Design

The study used both qualitative and quantitative designs employing a total of 130 participants comprising 61 students (30 males and 31 female) from UR-CE and 69 citizens (34 males and 35 female) living around UR-CE. The study aimed to reveal the impact of redistributing public institutions to rural areas and challenges met by benefactors. To achieve this, the focus was on UR-CE students and residents of Rukara, who host the institution; they represent immediate benefactors of the government move in this regard. A focus group discussion was used to collect data and small groups of participants were randomly gathered for discussion. The focus group discussion was used because, according to Bogere and Gesa (2015), it gives insight into diverse views and not just what participants think because it involves real people who are directly affected. Qualitative data was organised and discussed thematically to understand the experiences, perceptions and attitudes as explained by Ndayambaje (2013), while quantitative aspects of the responses were presented in forms of percentages and p-values. The evaluation of redistributing public institutions to the rural areas used a five-point Likert scale, where 1-strongly agreed, 2-agreed, 3-were neutral, 4-disagreed and 5-strongly disagreed, as a common type of attitude scale where respondents indicated their relative feelings (Mutandwa *et al.*, 2011). The quantitative data is first presented and qualitative data in the form of paraphrases and direct quotations support the quantitative data in the results and discussion.

Results Presentation

Table 1: Awareness of Why the Rwandan Government Relocated UR-CE to a Rural Area

1. Why did the Rwandan government relocate public institutions in a rural area like UR-CE in rural Rukara?			
s/n	Policy	Students	Citizens
1	Develop rural areas	54	29
2	More space than in an urban area	19	3
3	Learning environment	9	

Table 2: Opportunities of Studying in the Rural Area (students)/Opportunities brought by UR-CE to Rukara (Citizens)

2. What are the opportunities for studying in a rural area/opportunities brought by UR-CE to Rukara?			
s/n	Opportunities Provided by Studying in a Rural Area	Students	Citizens
1	Concentration on studies	52	
2	Integration into and inspiring the community	25	4
3	Availability of food, easy to obtain accommodation at a low price	21	

4	Security, as when the area is developed, the government also increases security	9	3
5	Opportunity to find a job after graduation	5	
6	It helps children from the rural area to study near their homes	5	
7	Help girls maintain good conduct	5	
8	Jobs and work opportunities		54
9	Recognition and development		33

Table 3: Challenges of Studying in a Rural Area (Students)/Challenges brought by UR-CE in Rukara (citizens)

What are the challenges faced by studying in a rural area?/Challenges brought by UR-CE to Rukara?			
s/n	Challenges Faced by Studying in a Rural Area	Students	Citizens
1	Hygiene, water and sanitation	50	
2	Not enough infrastructure	32	
3	No opportunities to work	32	
4	Transportation facilities	25	4
5	No market (where to shop)	8	7
6	Loose update because of living with rural people	5	
7	Hard life (expensive groceries and accommodations)		39
8	Bad conduct: prostitution, drugs, drunkenness and robbery		31

Table 4: Evaluation of Redistributing Public Institutions to Rural Areas

3. How do you evaluate the distribution of public institutions in rural areas?					
Evaluation of Redistributing Public Institutions to Rural Areas		Students		Citizens	
		%	Decision	%	Decision
1.	Studying in cities is good because cities have more opportunities than rural areas	86	Agree		
2.	Studying in a rural area is good because I can concentrate on my studies better than in cities that have many disturbances	80	Agree		
3.	It is good to bring a university to our community; we can find jobs			95	Agree
4.	It is bad to bring a university to our community; it makes us hungry			79	Disagree



Table 5: Appreciation for having the UR-CE Located in the Rural Area

4. At what percentage do you appreciate the UR-CE being located in a rural area?						
Appreciation for having the UR-CE Located in the Rural Area	Df	Mean (%)		t Stat	t Critical	p (t Stat<t Critical) Two-tail
		Students	Citizens			
Students and citizens	70	50	81	6.248473	1.994437	0.000***
		Male	Female			
Students	42	58	44	2.049494	2.018082	0.046693*
Citizens	26	83	77	0.95446	2.055529	0.348641

* = significance at 95% confidence interval of the difference (this means that female students do not like to study in a rural area)

*** = very strong statistical significance in favour of citizens at a 95% confidence interval of the difference

df = degrees of freedom

Results and Discussion

Policy Point of View

There are three key priority fields – the public service needs of rural areas, the government’s investment to promote rural innovation, and the investments geared toward exploiting rural-urban linkages – for public rural investments, as suggested by OECD (2006). One of them is the public service needs of rural areas as citizens’ rights, for instance in mobility, especially for public transportation availability. The provision of services to rural regions will enable them to participate in national development. Second, governments should invest to promote rural innovation to do traditional activities in a new way, to start up new businesses or to change the way the government interacts with citizens. Lastly, investments should be geared toward exploiting rural-urban linkages because the rural and urban areas cannot be discussed as separate items. In the present study, from the policy point of view, the awareness of why the Rwandan government relocates public institutions to rural areas is not very different between students studying on campus and citizens living around the campus (see Table 1). Approximately 54 students and 29 citizens think the reason for the above policy is to develop rural areas.

“... the government relocates public institutions in order to develop the rural area. It is a policy of bringing public institutions nearby and close to the community, developing the countryside and helping people to do business.” “The learning environment is good; the government thought teachers should be safe in a rural area to concentrate on their studies; that is why UR-CE relocated to this countryside” (students’ thoughts). “There is enough land; there is also a motivation to complete a diploma programme for students who were already there.” “...Developing a remote area by building infrastructure like roads so that citizens who shift to the Videwo centre are



attracted by the university” (citizens’ thoughts). According to Arthur and Dawda (2015), in order for the local government system under the decentralisation to work to achieve the target of promoting development, policymakers need to be more innovative and resourceful so that they can take advantage of the community values, norms, traditions and chieftaincy institutions to support the state-sponsored programmes to promote rural development.

Opportunities for Redistributing UR-CE in Rukara

Rural development has many opportunities such as agriculture and husbandry, forestry, small business, tourism, educational environment, hydropower plantation and renewable energy, including solar plants, among others (OECD, 2006). Depending on interest, students stated various opportunities of studying in a rural area; most of them (52 of 61 students, as Table 2 shows) compromised ‘concentration on studies’. “This is really a good place for study; there are no disturbances, we can excel in our studies.” “...it has a good climate, environment for study, good life and health” (students’ opinions).

Studying in a rural area forces students to integrate into the community, therefore, they can stimulate the community. For instance, students have to be role models for the rural citizens’ children (as stated by students). They also make friends and build relationships within the community; in the city, it is difficult to build relationships. Since most people wish to work in cities, students think that they can find a job after graduation because in a rural area there are many schools with scarce teachers. The rural areas also would help girls to maintain good behaviour (self-control) as in cities there are many factors that may induce prostitution. Nevertheless, the opportunities brought by UR-CE to citizens are far different from those brought to students (see Table 2). For instance, because of the increase of students, people around the campus find jobs (54 of 69 citizens confirmed). Additionally, the landlords and businessmen profit and motorcyclists and bicyclists obtain job opportunities in the transportation sector.

Improving economic infrastructure such as roads and electricity in rural areas, extending social services, including schools, hospitals, television and radio accessibility and entertainment facilities to rural areas, and opening up new areas where the population is still low to settle people from land shortage areas are keys to reducing rural-urban migration (Mutandwa *et al.*, 2011). The citizens living around the UR-CE in Rukara think the campus brought development, including the construction of roads and houses. “We increased hours to work! The Videwo centre is now fire burning and emerging. Business and agriculture have increased. Rukara is now known, and we have the development of infrastructure like laterite roads, and electrical power is now abundant...” (as stated by the citizens). The improvement of rural trading centres will enable people to obtain commodities from their surrounding areas (Mutandwa *et al.*, 2011). In this regard, Abbott *et al.* (2012) found that household enterprises should be supported, provided they create more jobs to enable individuals and households to escape or reduce their level of poverty. This will be facilitated if public institutions are distributed to rural areas. For instance, the labour market is very different in the capital city and the other urban areas compared to rural areas (Abbott *et al.*, 2012).



Challenges of Redistributing UR-CE to Rukara

The challenges of studying in a rural area and the challenges brought by UR-CE are also different from the perspectives of the students and citizens (see Table 3). Most of the students do not like to study in a rural area, but the citizens profit from the campus being in their region. Hygiene, water, and sanitation ranked number one for challenges faced by students (50 of 61) studying in a rural area, while expensive groceries and accommodations ranked number one for challenges brought by the same campus to citizens (39 of 69 claimed). “Ha hah (laughing), there are a lot of challenges! Like, ... you see, transport is a problem. To get to the nearby city, let’s say to buy some stuff, it takes us 700 Rwf by motorbike, so go and back, double cost, so it is tough!” “There is no hygiene, like when it rained! Oh my God, mud (no pavement)! There are no medicines in the campus medical clinic, and the hospital is far. Imagine a student seriously gets sick in the middle of the night; this is really bad service. In cities, hospitals are nearby everywhere” (students’ quotes). In a similar way, the rural areas offer solutions to some of the most pressing policy challenges of today’s cities: congestion, increasing housing prices, lower quality of life, air, water and soil pollution, energy production, waste disposal, services to the elderly and the shortage of space for leisure (OECD, 2006).

There is not enough infrastructure (scarcity and crowded classrooms), students added. For instance, “...over 200 students study in one classroom; therefore, there is minimal and expensive accommodation and in poor condition (not clean). Mud and security, especially for students living outside campus, are really boring us.” This may be the reason why people like living in cities. For instance, according to Mutandwa *et al.* (2011), the social services gap between the rural and urban areas, e.g., good roads, schools and hospitals, are concentrated in urban areas, and this attracts people to move to towns. “...Transportation facilities, for instance travel to Kayonza, is very difficult. Kigali is the centre, so it is difficult to go home; we have minibuses, but they do not help students.” Students also claimed that there is no opportunity to work, as in the city they can coach children to add to the bursary they receive. This may be explained by a study conducted by Mutandwa *et al.* (2011) where two districts in western Rwanda found that youth who migrate to urban areas to seek part-time employment are at 9.1%. According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 60% of those migrate to cities due to easy access to infrastructure, investment opportunities, and other socio-economic aspects (Ntirenganya, 2017). Therefore, the government policy of redistributing public institutions can manage this migration challenge. Citizens around the relocated institution will benefit from opportunities afforded by that institution.

When the population increases, grocery and housing prices also increase. For instance, the low demand for commodities in rural areas makes business people shift to the town where demand for commodities is very high (Mutandwa *et al.*, 2011).

Although citizens receive benefits from institutions relocated in their region, they also face some challenges (see Table 3). “The University brought us an opportunity, but the market is limited; self-entrepreneurs are still few” (claimed by citizens). Additionally, bad conduct was mentioned by 31 of 39 citizens’ responses. Regarding prostitution, community members argue that university’s

male students tempt and impregnate the secondary school girls around the area because these girls are proud to have university students as boyfriends. Drugs and drunkenness occur at the time students are paid monthly allowances, and robbery, such as scamming and refusing to pay back restaurants, was also claimed to occur by residents of Rukara. "Robbery has increased because thieves got what to steal and who to sell, while the increase in prostitution is a result of an increase of youth population" (stated by residents of Rukara).

Evaluation and Appreciation for Redistributing UR-CE in Rukara

The results found in the present study confirm the rural development theory that guided this study. Table 4 shows that approximately 86% of students agree that study in cities is good because cities have more opportunities than a rural area; 80% agree that study in a rural area is good because students can concentrate on their studies more than in cities that have many disturbances. Ninety-five percent of citizens agree that it is good to bring a university to their community because citizens can find a job; however, 79% disagree, saying that bringing a university to their community increases the cost of living. When comparing students and citizens in terms of appreciation for having the UR-CE in a rural area, a t-test was used. There was a very strong, statistically significant difference in the percentage of means in favour of UR-CE for citizens, and a statistically significant difference was observed in favour of UR-CE for male students ($t_{Stat} > t_{Crit}$). However, there was no difference found between male and female citizens (see Table 5). Therefore, the results clearly show that governments may redistribute public institutions to rural areas in order to fight against rural-urban migration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A very strong statistical significance was found regarding citizens appreciating the presence of UR-CE in Rukara at a 95% confidence interval of the difference. Significance at a 95% confidence interval of the difference also showed that female students do not like to study in a rural area; however, there were no statistically significant differences for citizens in terms of gender regarding appreciating the presence of UR-CE in Rukara. Approximately 86% of students agree that studying in cities is good because cities have more opportunities than rural areas, while 80% agree that studying in a rural areas is good because students can concentrate on their studies more than in cities, which have many disturbances. In addition, 95% of citizens agree that relocating a university to their community is good because they can find a job, while 79% disagree, stating that redistributing a university in the rural area increases the cost of living. Not only the government but also development partners can intervene to maintain rural development. For instance, according to Goldman *et al.* (2000), the private sector, parastatal operators, and churches provided many basic services, such as agricultural and marketing and finance at the district level in Zimbabwe at the time of decentralisation, as would happen in Rwanda. Therefore, the government of Rwanda is highly encouraged to establish public tertiary education institutions to remote areas in order for rural residents to benefit from opportunities brought about by these institutions.



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