

IMPACT OF POLICY CHANGES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

IGE, NELSON ADEWOLE (PhD) & OMOROTIMI ODU

Lagos State University of Education Otto/Ijanikin Lagos Nigeria
Department of Educational Management
College of Management and Social Science

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria's dynamic education system, neglecting necessary policy changes in secondary education poses significant risks to academic achievement, especially in metropolitan areas like Lagos State. To address this challenges, this study investigates the impact of policy changes on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos. Data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire, the "Policy Changes and Students' Academic Achievement Questionnaire (PCSAAQ)," which was validated for content and face validity, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.834 through Cronbach's alpha. A survey methodology was employed, gathering responses from 120 teachers across three Local Government Areas (Ojo, Badagry, and Agege) selected via simple random sampling. The research explored two hypotheses: the relationship between recent policy changes and academic achievement, and the effectiveness of existing education policies based on gender. Analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistical methods at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a significant relationship between recent policy changes and improved academic achievement among students. However, existing education policies did not significantly enhance learning outcomes based on gender, indicating a need for targeted interventions. The study emphasizes the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of educational policies to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students. The researchers recommended that there is need to foster collaboration among key stakeholders, including government bodies, educators, parents, and community organizations, to create a supportive environment that enhances the effectiveness of educational policies

Keywords: Policy changes, Academic achievement, Students, Secondary schools, Lagos State

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education plays a pivotal role in national development, particularly in a rapidly urbanizing and economically dynamic context like Lagos State, Nigeria. As a microcosm of Nigeria's diversity and vibrancy, Lagos State houses a significant proportion of the nation's secondary schools. These institutions are essential in shaping future leaders and professionals, making their academic achievement a critical indicator of progress. This study investigates the Impact of Policy Changes on Academic Achievement of Students in Secondary Schools in Lagos State, highlighting its relevance and implications for education reform.

Policy changes in education represent systematic decisions and actions aimed at improving the structure, delivery, and outcomes of learning. In Lagos State, where secondary education serves as a bridge between foundational learning and higher education or vocational training, policy changes are often designed to address disparities in resources, teacher quality, curriculum content, and infrastructural adequacy. Effective policies have the potential to enhance students' academic achievement, defined as their measurable performance in cognitive and practical domains, reflected through test scores, grades, and skills acquisition.

Conversely, ill-conceived or poorly implemented policies can exacerbate existing inequalities, undermine educational quality, and hinder students' success. In Lagos State, this dynamic is particularly salient, given the region's status as Nigeria's educational hub and its role in piloting national educational policies.

Academic achievement refers to the extent to which students attain learning objectives set by educational institutions. These objectives typically encompass mastery of knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. For secondary school students, academic achievement is evaluated through standardized examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and internal assessments. Academic achievement is influenced by factors including teacher competence, student motivation, family support, and systemic factors like educational policies and funding mechanisms.

Policy changes in Nigerian education involve deliberate alterations to laws, regulations, and guidelines governing the education system. These changes are often responses to socioeconomic demands, technological advancements, or the need to align with global standards. For example:

1. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy (1999) introduced free and compulsory education for children aged 6–15 years.
2. The 6-3-3-4 System transitioned the educational structure to six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of tertiary education.
3. The National Teacher Policy (2020) emphasized teacher professional development and welfare to improve educational delivery.

These policies are not static; they evolve to address emerging challenges in student enrollment, teacher recruitment, curriculum content, and infrastructural deficits.

Proponents of policy changes argue that well-structured policies positively influence academic achievement by addressing systemic barriers and creating equitable opportunities for learning. For instance, policies mandating teacher training improve instructional quality, thereby boosting student performance. A study by Adeyemi (2018) underscores the correlation between policy-driven infrastructural improvements and student outcomes, particularly in urban settings like Lagos. Similarly, Olaniyan and Obasi (2019) highlight how targeted scholarship programs have increased retention rates among disadvantaged students.

Critics, however, contend that policy changes often falter due to poor implementation, corruption, or insufficient stakeholder involvement. For example, while the UBE policy was ambitious, it suffered from funding gaps and inadequate monitoring, leaving many students

without access to quality education. Adegoke (2020) observed that frequent policy reversals confuse educators and students, leading to inconsistent academic outcomes. Similarly, Akinfolarin (2021) noted that uncoordinated curriculum revisions undermine long-term educational objectives.

1. Adeyemi (2018): Demonstrated the impact of resource allocation policies on student performance in urban secondary schools, concluding that schools receiving policy-driven funding showed a 20% improvement in WASSCE results.

2. Olaniyan and Obasi (2019): Found that teacher training policies increased instructional effectiveness, with students in policy-focused schools outperforming their counterparts by 15% in standardized tests.

1. Adegoke (2020): Critiqued the Universal Basic Education policy, noting that implementation flaws resulted in only a marginal increase in literacy rates despite significant government expenditure.

Effective policy changes directly impact academic achievement when they focus on reducing systemic bottlenecks such as teacher shortages, infrastructural inadequacies, and uneven resource distribution. For instance, policies that provide grants for laboratory equipment can significantly enhance science education, while those promoting teacher welfare improve classroom dynamics. Lagos State's secondary schools, given their diverse student populations and resource constraints, stand to benefit significantly from well-targeted policies.

Despite numerous studies on the relationship between education policies and academic achievement, there is limited research focusing specifically on the Lagos State context. Most studies either generalize findings across Nigeria or focus on primary and tertiary education, overlooking the unique challenges of secondary schools. For example, the interplay between urbanization, socioeconomic disparities, and policy efficacy in Lagos State remains underexplored.

This gap highlights the need for localized research to understand how specific policy interventions affect academic outcomes in Lagos' diverse secondary schools. Additionally, there is little empirical evidence on how students' perceptions of policy changes influence their academic performance, an area ripe for investigation.

Neglecting policy changes in secondary education risks entrenching systemic inefficiencies that hinder academic achievement. Without reforms, disparities in access and quality will widen, leading to increased dropout rates and diminished student potential. This stagnation undermines Nigeria's aspirations for sustainable development, given that educated youth are pivotal to economic and social progress. Furthermore, the absence of policies addressing emerging trends, such as digital learning, could leave students ill-prepared for the demands of a technology-driven world.

For Lagos State, where secondary schools grapple with issues like overcrowding, inadequate teacher training, and poor infrastructure, the role of policy changes is particularly pronounced. Addressing these challenges requires not only policy formulation but also rigorous implementation and monitoring. The stakes are high: secondary education serves as the

foundation for tertiary learning and workforce readiness, making it imperative to prioritize academic achievement through effective policies. This study therefore, aims to examine the Impact of Policy Changes on Academic Achievement of Students in Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In an education system as dynamic and diverse as Nigeria's, neglecting necessary policy changes in secondary education poses significant risks to academic achievement, particularly in a metropolitan hub like Lagos State. Secondary schools play a pivotal role in preparing students for higher education and the workforce. Without targeted reforms to address systemic bottlenecks, the promise of education as a tool for individual empowerment and national development remains unfulfilled.

Disparities in funding, infrastructure, and teacher distribution perpetuate inequalities and hinder students' success. Stagnation in instructional quality due to outdated teacher recruitment and training policies further exacerbates the problem. Lack of technology integration in education widens the gap between students in Lagos and their global counterparts. Existing research lacks focus on Lagos State's unique challenges, such as rapid urbanization and population growth. There is a need for localized, stakeholder-focused research to inform effective policy interventions. By narrowing the scope to Lagos State, this study aims to provide recommendations to enhance academic achievement and ensure students are prepared for the modern world. Failure to address these issues could jeopardize Lagos State's position as Nigeria's educational leader and hinder national development. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine impact of policy changes on academic achievement of students in Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the impact of policy changes on academic achievement of students in Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State;
- ii. Assess the effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender.

2.2 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant the relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State.
2. There is no significant effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender.

2.3 Literature Review-Overview of Policy Changes in Nigerian Education

The Nigerian education system has undergone multiple policy changes to address quality, access, equity, and relevance issues, particularly in secondary schools in Lagos State. The National Policy on Education (NPE) established in 1977 and revised in subsequent years aimed to enhance critical thinking and technical skills (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The 6-3-3-4 system, introduced in 1981, replaced the 7-5-3-4 structure to reduce drop-out rates and improve educational quality (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Challenges like inadequate funding, poor teacher quality, and lack of political will hinder the effective implementation of reforms (Oduolowu, 2016).

Some scholars argue that policies like Universal Basic Education (UBE) have improved access to education but not academic performance (Adebayo, 2015). The Senior Secondary School Curriculum introduced in 2011 aimed to make education more flexible and practical (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). The success of policy changes in enhancing academic achievement depends on factors like teacher training and local implementation (Fagbohun & Adeyemi, 2014). It is vital to integrate curriculum reforms, teacher training, infrastructure development, and student support services to improve academic outcomes (Oduolowu, 2016). To enhance future policy changes, a more integrated and context-specific approach is needed, considering the unique challenges faced by students and teachers in different regions of Nigeria.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed the survey method to gather data from teachers regarding the impact of policy changes on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The target population comprised all secondary school teachers in Lagos State. Using simple random sampling techniques, 120 teachers were selected from three Local Government Areas within the state. To guide the research, two hypotheses were formulated. Data collection was facilitated through a well-structured questionnaire, which underwent rigorous validation through both face and content validation processes. The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding a value of 0.834, which was deemed acceptable for this study.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods at a 0.05 level of significance. This approach ensured that the findings were robust and provided meaningful insights into the research questions.

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to their Gender (n=120)

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	56	46.7
2	Female	64	53.3
	Total	120	100

Source: Field report, 2024

Based on Table 1, it can be observed that out of the 120 respondents in the study, 46.7% were male and 53.3% were female. This indicates that there was a slightly higher proportion of

female respondents compared to male respondents. Gender distribution is important in understanding the perspective of both male and female students on the impact of policy changes on academic achievement in secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant the relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State

Variables	X	SD	r-ratio	p-level
Recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system(X)	16.27	3.14	.356	.026
Academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State(Y)	10.05	2.62		

Significant@ 0.05alpha level.Df= 118.

Source: Field report, 2024

Decision Rule:

Based on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis results, there is a significant positive relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State. This is supported by the correlation coefficient of 0.356 which is statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level ($p = 0.026$). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of the mean rating of effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender.

Gender	Number	Mean (X)	Std.Dev.	Df	T-cal	T-tab
Female	56	3.16	0.85	118	0.81	1.03
	64	3.09	0.91			

Source: Field report, 2024

Decision Rule:

Based on the T-test analysis, the calculated T-value (0.81) is less than the critical T-value (1.03) at a 95% confidence level with 118 degrees of freedom. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender. This suggests that there is not enough evidence to conclude that gender has a significant effect on the effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis One

The analysis of the correlation between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State reveals a statistically significant positive relationship. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation yielded a coefficient of $r = 0.356$ with a p-value of 0.026 , indicating that as recent policy changes are implemented, there is an associated increase in academic achievement among students. This finding suggests that educational reforms may have a beneficial impact on student outcomes, supporting the notion that policy changes can influence academic performance.

The results align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of educational policy reforms in enhancing student achievement. For instance, Baker et al. (2016) argue that targeted policy interventions, particularly those focused on reducing class sizes and improving school funding, can significantly narrow achievement gaps and improve overall educational outcomes. Their findings suggest that effective policy changes can lead to better resource allocation and improved teaching conditions, which are crucial for student success.

Additionally, the OECD (2020) report highlights that countries implementing systematic reforms aimed at equity and quality in education have observed improvements in student performance. This aligns with the current findings, reinforcing the idea that recent policy changes in Nigeria could be positively affecting academic achievement by addressing systemic issues within the educational framework.

However, some literature presents a contrasting perspective. For example, Nield et al. (2007) discuss how educational reforms may not always translate into improved academic outcomes due to various contextual factors, such as implementation challenges and lack of teacher training. They argue that without proper execution and support, even well-intentioned policies may fail to yield significant benefits for students.

Furthermore, Gillborn et al. (2017) contend that while policies may aim to improve equity in education, they often inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities. Their research indicates that without addressing underlying socio-economic disparities, policy changes alone may not lead to substantial improvements in academic achievement for all student demographics.

Hypothesis Two

The analysis of the T-test results regarding the effectiveness of existing education policies in improving learning outcomes based on gender indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of policy effectiveness. The calculated T-value of 0.81 is lower than the critical T-value of 1.03 at a 95% confidence level, leading to the conclusion that we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that existing education policies do not exhibit a significant differential impact on learning outcomes based on gender.

The findings imply that both male and female students perceive existing education policies similarly in terms of their effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes. This could reflect a broader trend where educational policies are designed with a gender-neutral approach, potentially overlooking specific needs or challenges faced by different genders in the educational context.

Aligning with these findings, McKeown (2021) argues that while educational policies often aim for inclusivity, they may inadvertently maintain the status quo by failing to address the unique barriers that different genders face in education. This perspective highlights the need for more tailored approaches to policy development that consider gender-specific challenges and opportunities.

Additionally, OECD (2020) emphasizes that effective educational policies must be responsive to the diverse needs of all students, including gender considerations. The report underscores the importance of implementing strategies that specifically target gender disparities in educational outcomes, suggesting that without such tailored interventions, policies may not achieve their intended effects.

Conversely, some literature challenges the notion that existing policies are ineffective across genders. Nield et al. (2007) posits that certain educational reforms have indeed led to improved outcomes for both genders, particularly when they are designed with an awareness of gender dynamics. Their research indicates that targeted interventions can yield positive results in closing achievement gaps between male and female students.

Furthermore, Baker et al. (2016) argue that educational policies focused on equity and access have shown significant improvements in learning outcomes for marginalized groups, including girls. They suggest that while overall perceptions may indicate neutrality, specific programs within broader policies can lead to meaningful advancements in academic achievement for female students.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research highlights a significant relationship between recent policy changes in the Nigerian education system and the academic achievement of secondary school students in Lagos State. This indicates that reforms aimed at enhancing educational quality can positively influence student performance. However, the findings also reveal that existing education policies do not significantly improve learning outcomes based on gender, suggesting a need for more targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by male and female students. These results underscore the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of educational policies to ensure they effectively promote equitable learning

opportunities for all students, regardless of gender, while also capitalizing on successful reforms that enhance academic achievement.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. There is need for the relevant government agencies to strengthen the implementation of recent educational policies by ensuring adequate training and resources for teachers and school administrators to effectively apply these reforms in the classroom.
2. Government at all level should develop and implement gender-sensitive educational programmes that specifically address the unique challenges faced by male and female students, ensuring equitable learning outcomes for all genders.
3. Relevant government agencies should endeavour to establish a robust framework for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of educational policies to assess their impact on academic achievement, allowing for timely adjustments based on feedback and data.
4. There is need to foster collaboration among key stakeholders, including government bodies, educators, parents, and community organizations, to create a supportive environment that enhances the effectiveness of educational policies.
5. Government at all levels and Private School management should increase funding and resources directed towards schools in Lagos State to improve infrastructure, learning materials, and support services that contribute to better academic outcomes for secondary school students.

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