



Extended School Time Policy and Students Academic Performance in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined extended school time policy and students' academic performance in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the extent to which students' gender significantly differs in students' academic performance before and after extended school time policy. The academic performance was the results of the students' in West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination for eight years. The results between 2006 and 2009 were considered as students' academic performance before extended school time policy while that of 2010 to 2013 were considered as the students' academic performance after extended school time policy. The design used for this study was the *ex-post facto* design. Stratified random technique was utilized. The sample size consisted of 300 students drawn using a well-structured questionnaire. Instrument used was the correlation of past WASSCE results for eight (8) years. i.e., four (4) years - (from 2006 to 2009) before and four (4) years - (from 2010 to 2013) after the extended school time policy. The one hypothesis was analyzed using a Univariate Analysis of Variance (UNIANOVA), and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed no significant difference between gender and students' academic performance before and after extended time policy.

Keywords: Policy, before extended time, after extended time, gender, academic performance

Introduction

The issue of extra classes is an educational, economic and social one, since all children do not learn at the same rate and have different levels of understanding. Some children are slow while others are fast. The essence of

these classes is to see how all students master learning contents to boost their academic achievement, goals or target. Extra classes provide a means towards this end. An individual simply cannot become more proficient in any given area without committing a certain amount of time to grasping new contents, practicing and mastering the skills and then applying knowledge and skills for realizing specific aims.

The Cross River State Government introduced the extended school time policy in 2009 by adding two (2) extra hours on instruction every school day at the secondary school level. This policy was introduced with the intention of improving students' academic performance. The policy brought a change in the schools' time table which usually starts at 8:00am and end at 2:00pm, extended to 4:00pm. The duration for the normal instructional time is 40 minutes, while the extended school time has 30 minutes giving the teachers an ample opportunity to teach and students sufficient chance to learn. The teachers have an extra time to engage the students, mostly those in the examination classes. The examination classes are the highest beneficiaries of the policy. The timetable obtained from schools indicate that Junior Secondary School three (JSS3) and Senior Secondary two and three (SS2 & 3) are taught for the extra two hours added by the government. The remaining classes are more or less left to themselves to read, though guided by teachers. The government hoped that teachers will use this extended time to adequately prepare students for their various examinations.

The Junior Secondary School three (JSS3) students write Basic Examination Certificate in Education (BECE), the Senior Secondary school two (2) write Mock Examination which is conducted by State Secondary Education Board while Senior Secondary three (3) students write West African School Certificate Examination(WASCE) and National Examination Council (NECO). This implies that the extended school time policy is of more benefit to students in the examination classes. This policy came up without any new incentive programmes to encourage education authorities or teachers who are the main facilitators of learning activities. How these well-intentioned efforts play out remains to be seen. The relationship of time to learning is neither as direct nor as simple as it might initially be seen. This has posed a major threat to the success of the policy.

Many attempts have been made by educators as they strive to educate all categories of students, including those labelled slow learners or hard to educate. It has been acknowledged that this generation of students is faced

with tough issues and come with its own unique set of problems that may directly affect their ability to succeed (Fortune, Padgett & Fickle, 2005). Although the available support has changed, educators are still charged with the responsibility of handling various situations that may occur among students in the classroom. Blankstem (2004) asserts that most educators have had minimal experience and training in dealing with the problems of ineffectively or misinterpreting students' abilities to learn. Although they may attempt to educate all students in the midst of societal circumstances, educators may not be equipped to handle the demands placed on them by the youth of today, who see time as an indispensable resource in any all their endeavour.

Students' gender is said to be one of the factors used in determining their academic performance in the extended school time policy. "There has been a renewed debate on the controversial issue of gender differences on students' academic achievement. The most comprehensive reviews of the research in the area of gender differences have shown very few true differences between male and female academic achievement" (Halpern, 2000: 35). "Academic performance is affected by a host of factors. These include individual and household characteristics such as student ability, student time, the quality of education obtained and the like. The gender of the student may also be a factor in determining student performance. Gender differences in attitude and behaviours, differential course taking and biological differences between the sexes may all be instrumental in giving rise to gender differences in achievement" (Feingold, 2002: 96). "The rather high gender disparity in various spheres of public life and social structure in Nigeria may also lead to poorer academic performance among female and male secondary school students" (p.98).

For educational attainment, women lag behind men in Nigeria. The 2006 population census records the illiteracy rate among men at 6.1%, while that of women was pegged at 19.4% (NPC, 2006). Gender disparity in schooling is also observed among the younger population, where female school enrollment in primary and secondary education falls behind male children (Tansel, 2002). Despite the numerous studies that analyzed the disadvantage position of women as adults and children, there is almost, no work on the educational experiences of women. The paucity of such work has been one of the motivations for this study.

Extended school time is a programme designed to increase the time students stay in school for extra instructions. Like any strategy worth trying, extending school time is not a silver-bullet but faced with many challenges. Helping students achieve high levels at the same time as closing persistent gaps in achievement and graduation rates defies simple solution. The importance of extended school time cannot be over emphasized. According to Massachusetts (2005) extended school time holds numerous benefits for students in that the longer (and differentiated) time spans allow for greater opportunity for interaction with the integration of hands on experiential projects, such as science laboratory. Secondly, it enriches opportunities for students for learning: These enrichment classes, which in recent years have too often been squeezed out to school schedules, are designed to furnish students with a fuller educational experience. Through participation in a wide variety of activities, students gain new skills, build self-confidence, and become more deeply engaged in learning.

One of the great challenges of extending learning time is the cost of doing so. For instance, in Massachusetts the school profile have figured out ways to extend learning time without a higher per school allocation. They have combined funds from a number of different sources, including after school dollar summer and private fund raising (Steinberg, 1998). This situation is different in Nigeria. Government does not provide extra budget for extending school time, neither do they encourage schools to raise funds or collaborate with private institutions to raise funds.

The fact that increasing allocated time offers no guarantee of improvement in students' learning, policy makers are still drawn to increasing time as a lever for reform (Aronson, Zimmerman & Carlos 1998). They highlighted that the "high cost of extending allocated time has been one of the primary reasons that most states have not substantially increased the length of their schools day or year" (p. 80). This is observed in states such as Akwa-Ibom, Abia, Imo, Rivers etcetera. In the Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T.), extended school time is mostly observed in examination classes. The essence of this policy is to enable students writing various qualifying examinations more time for learning and reading while the teachers' role is that of supervision. One of the thrust of this policy was the proposed provision of lunch for students. These have not been implemented. It is against this background that the researchers seek to carry out a research on extended school time policy and secondary school students' academic performance in Cross River State, Nigeria.

In 2009 when this policy was introduced, the performance of students in West African Examination Council (WAEC) improved and Cross River state was ranked 7th position in the country as against 21st position before the extended school time policy. The students' performance in WAEC dropped in subsequent years. The academic performance of students obtained from the Ministry of Education, Calabar indicates that the performance of students did not change comparing the performance before and after the introduction of extended school time policy. Research findings already show that allocated time does not appear to be linearly related to academic improvement simply because a student is engaged in instructional activities does not necessarily mean he or she is learning. For example, an advanced student who is asked to spend 30 minutes going over material he has already fully mastered, will not be learning because there is nothing for him to learn. Farbman (2011) asserts that; extended time holds the potential to activate or accelerate higher academic performance, other organizational and human capital component also must be in place for the additional time to generate its intended effect. He further asserted that there are two underlying and interrelated reasons why school time maintains a complicated relationship to learning, and why extended time must be considered an integral component of a broader aspect of interconnected school improvement strategy.

That is, how students spend their time matters as much as the amount of time they have to spend. The second and related issues, concern the hard-to-measure, but still powerful matter of learning quality.

Statement of the problem

The standard of education at the secondary school level in Cross River State has declined (Bassey & Archibong, 2001; Okey & Archibong 2006). It is falling freely and this is a worrying situation to every Cross Riverian that believes in securing a greater future for the next generation (Inyali, 2017). Various factors have been attributed to this decline. Among them are students' poor attitude to study time, poor motivation of teachers/ students, gender differences among students, inadequate funding, and teachers' attitude to extra time management, improper use of academic learning and instructional time.

The amount of time scheduled for instruction/teaching is one factor that has remained constant for decades in Nigerian school system. Cross River State by policy extended school time by two (2) hours to create room for extra instructions and in turn improve overall academic achievement. The fact that, the more time students spend in the classroom, the more they will learn is the

mindset of most parents and teachers at school. A pertinent question is does students' achievement commensurate the extra time added? This State is of interest to the researcher because much work has not been carried out in this area of research and more so, since the State considers students' academic performance very seriously, they should be an empirical research data which this work intends to provide for such a laudable exercise in extended school time policy.

Research questions

What is the influence of gender on students' academic performance in Cross River State before and after extended school time policy?

Statement of hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female secondary school students before and after extended school time policy in Cross River State.

Method

The design used for this study was the ex-post facto design.

Population of the study

The targeted population includes senior secondary school three (SSS 3) students in public secondary schools in Cross River State. Table 1 shows number of public secondary schools, and SSS 3 students who are the respondents of the study.

TABLE 1
Distribution of study population in Cross River State

S/N	LGA	No of public schools	No of SS3 students (male)	No of SS3 students (female)
1	Abi	11	578	523
2	Akamkpa	18	574	558
3	Akpabuyo	6	260	256
4	Bakassi	3	60	72
5	Bekwara	5	177	139
6	Biase	16	428	519
7	Boki	27	658	601

8	Cal. Mun.	15	321	495
9	Cal. South	7	205	251
10	Etung	10	187	175
11	Ikom	16	602	547
12	Obanliku	12	245	220
13	Obubra	15	533	559
14	Odukpani	15	323	328
15	Ogoja	15	363	328
16	Obudu	21	575	547
17	Yakurr	15	842	713
18	Yala	19	616	414
	Total	246	7547	7145

Sampling technique

In this study the stratified random technique was utilized. 100 (one hundred) students were picked from earlier randomly selected 3 zones; each zone, making a total of 300 students drawn from the three education zones. 30 students were drawn from school 1 (one) while 35 students were drawn from schools 2 and 3 (two and three) respectively in the various zones through the same sampling technique.

Sample

Sample size for this study consists of 300 students. The focus was to examine SS3 students that additional school time is added to in order to see the effectiveness of this extended time.

Results

TABLE 6
UNIANOVA of academic performance of male and female secondary school students' before and after extended school time policy

Source	Type III sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Converted	924.259 ^a	3	308.084	.745	.520
Intercept	297619.69	1	297619.69	728.22	.000
Period	367.10	1	367.10	.898	.343
Gender	187.06	1	187.06	.458	.499

Period + gender	354.119	1	354.11	.866	.352
Error	431578.97	1056	408.692		
Total	729732.00	1060			
Corrected total	432503.22	1059			

a. R squared = .002 (Adjusted R Squared = -.001), P > 0.05

There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female secondary school students before and after extended school time policy.

The result of the tested hypothesis is provided in Table 6 Univariate Analysis of variance (UNIANOVA) was used for the analysis because there are two independent categorical variables and one dependent variable. The result shows that the interaction effect of period of policy and gender has no significant difference at $F = 0.866, P > 0.05$. Hence, we conclude that there is no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the performance of male and female SS3 students at WASSCE is not different both before and after extended school time policy. So, the interaction of gender and extended school time policy has no significant effect on the academic performance of secondary school students' in WASSCE.

Discussion

The result shows no significant difference between gender and students' academic performance before and after extended school time policy. This implies that the extended school time policy introduced by Cross River State Government does not improve the academic performance of students on the basis of gender simply because they stay longer in school. This result agrees with Fakeye (2010) who discovered that the difference between female and male students' academic achievement in English language was not significant. Tella, Indoshi and Othuon (2010) found "no significant difference in students' academic achievement in English in Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination between male and female students" (p.55).

Abdu-Raheem (2010) studied the "influence of gender on secondary schools students' academic performance in South-West, Nigeria" (p. 25). The results of the West African Certificate Examination (WACE) from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008 were obtained in science and arts subjects from 10 secondary

schools selected from 5 states in Nigeria. The study revealed that male and female students perform equally in English language. Similarly, Bassey, Joshua and Asim (2004) found that the average gender gap is statistically non-significant. Therefore, they concluded that the gender difference tends to decline with time.

Conclusion

Extended school time policy introduced by Cross River State has no significant impact on students' academic performance. There is no significant difference before and after extended school time policy in academic performance of students in schools. The time students invest in studying does not really matter, but how effective it is. This implies that how long the learning time students engage in, but how effective it is used.

Recommendation

Effective monitoring by government and school administrators of teachers' instruction of students during the extended time was recommended

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