THE IMPACT OF CLASS REPETITION ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of the study on the impact of class repetition on academic achievement of junior secondary school students (JSS) in Anambra State, Nigeria from 2004/2005 to 2006/2007 academic sessions. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided this study, which adopted the Ex-Post-Facto research design. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 149 failed JSS1 students in 2004/2005 session who repeated JSS1 in 2005/2006. A researcher designed inventory was used to collect data on these students' results which were analysed using frequency counts, range of scores, percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) for answering the research questions. t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses. The result of analysis showed that the repeated students performed well in their repeated JSS1 and did even better in their JSS2. Based on the results, it was recommended amongst others that the school administrators adopt an eclectic class promotion policy that would not rigidly apply mass promotion of all failed students.

Keywords:

Introduction

The policy of class repetition as a response to the problem of poor academic achievement is considered wasteful, especially as the Federal Government of Nigeria is currently pursuing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in line with the declarations of the Jomtein Conference of 1990 and the Dakar framework for action on Education For All (EFA). World Bank (2006), Nduka (1996), Psacharopolous (1985) posit that class

repetition as a measure of inefficiency in the educational system, uses up limited public resources and blocks access to educating more children. Class repetition is, in addition, an educational management issue because it can lead to large class sizes which are difficult to teach, assess and supervise effectively. In Anambra State, repetition and other dropout rates were reported as high as 19.34% and 9.42% respectively (Eboatu, 2014). To reduce wastage in the educational system, Dominguez (1980) suggested that a little increase in the flow rate of students through the system would free a lot of funds for education and make it possible for more students to be enrolled in schools.

The Federal Government of Nigeria launched the UBE programme in September 1999 and in consonance with the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004), put in place measures aimed at reducing school dropout rates, as well as to improve the quality and relevance of educational programmes. The programme prescribes that every Nigerian child be given nine (9) years of continuous primary and junior secondary school education. It also abolished the qualifying entrance examination into junior secondary schools, and adopted the automatic promotion policy of failed students.

Though observation shows that most teachers, parents and even students believe that class repetition has a remedial effect on students' academic achievements, this viewpoint is not backed by any known empirical studies in Anambra State, nay Nigeria. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, 1999) Forum on Class Repetition lamented the dearth of studies on this subject and called for more attention to be given to it, especially in the area of its efficacy in improving academic achievement.

The practice of class repetition as a means of improving academic achievement is rooted in the Behaviourist and Cognitive principles of learning which holds that knowledge or behaviour acquired must be perfected before any new information could be meaningfully absorbed (Mergel 1989). But class repetition is a contentious issue among educationists. While some argue that class repetition is effective for improving the academic achievement and emotional adjustment of students (Chansky, 1984; Chase, 1968), others maintain that it is a waste of time and valuable resources (Haddad, 1979; Kenny, 1985). At the extreme end of the argument, some surveys on the psychological effect of class repetition report that it could be emotionally damaging and stressful (Yamamoto, 1980) and repeaters could develop poor self-concept which in effect decreases learning (Haddad, 1979).

Against the backdrop of high failure rate, the high opportunity cost of class repetition and the deadline given to provide basic education for all children by 2015, most countries, including Nigeria, have opted for the mass

promotion policy which eliminates selective examinations such as the Common Entrance examination into secondary schools (IIEP, 1999). Though in practice schools implement the policy of mass promotion of all students, some school principals still repeat students either on the request of parents/ guardians or at the insistence of the school authority. These principals who advocate class repetition and practice it are of the opinion that the promotion of failed students to the next higher class kills their incentive to study hard in order to excel. This situation makes it possible for some students to repeat failed class while others are promoted on trial in the same school.

Programme evaluation is a basic management function which affords an organisation the opportunity to assess its success or otherwise. In view of this fact, the Federal Government, through the National Policy on Education (2004) provides that educational planning is a continuous process of obtaining and analysing facts and should be the empirical basis for providing information to decision makers on how well the educational system is achieving its goals. This is the basis of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Repeating failed students has been an age-old response to the problem of failures in examinations. Teachers, parents and most students believe that it has a remedial effect on academic achievement of students. This view however is not backed up by any known survey or research work in Anambra State or Nigeria generally. It is an intelligent guess that needs to be systematically verified. The problem of this study was therefore to establish the impact of class repetition on students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of class repetition on the academic achievement of failed JSS1 students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The work compared the results of these students in their year of failure, their repeated JSS1 and in the year after repetition (JSS2); and in addition established if the differences in achievement was statistically significant. The study further examined the relationship between the students' achievements in their year of failure (JSS1 in 2004/2005), and their year of repetition (JSS1 in 2005/2006)

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of class repetition on the academic achievement of the repeated students in their repeated JSS1?
2. What is the effect of class repetition on the academic achievement of the repeated students in their JSS2?

3. To what extent do the repeated students' JSS1 examination scores relate to their JSS2 examination scores?

Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the mean academic achievement scores of students in their repeated JSS1 and JSS2.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of female repeated students and male repeated students in their JSS2.

Methods

This study adopted the Ex-Post facto research design which was judged appropriate for investigating occurrences, outcomes, conditions or types of behaviour by analysis of past events or already existing conditions (Agu & Akuezuilo, 2003).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consisted of 636 failed JSS1 students from the six Education Zones enrolled during the 2004/2005 academic session. These were purposively selected from 52 schools in the State. Of the 636 failed students, 145 repeated JSS1 while 491 were promoted to JSS2.

Instrument for Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument for data collection is a researcher designed format which was duly validated by two experts in the Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability test for the instrument was not necessary because the information needed was given and factual.

The researchers, with the aid of three assistants used the pro-forma to collect the students' scores in their failed JSS1 (2004/2005), their repeated JSS1 (2005/2006) and their JSS2 (2006/2007). The state-wide end of session examination is conducted by the Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) and is considered an objective measure of a student's academic achievement.

Results

Descriptive Analysis:

Research Question 1: What is the effect of class repetition on the academic achievements of the repeated students in their repeated JSS1 in 2005/2006?

Table 1: Range of Scores, Frequency and Percentage Scores of Repeated Students in JSS1 in 2005/2006.

Range of Scores	Repeated Group	
	N	%
Failed 0 - 39%	105	72.41
Passed 40 - 100%	40	27.59

Table 1 shows that 40 (27.59%) of the 145 repeated students were able to improve their performance during the repeated year by having scores ranging from 40 to 100%. However 105 (representing 72.41%) of the repeaters were still unable to pass JSS1, even after repetition.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of class repetition on the academic achievements of the repeated students in their JSS2 in 2006/2007?

Table 2: Frequency Counts, Range of Scores and Percentage Scores of Repeated Students in their JSS2 in 2006/2007.

Range of Scores	Repeated Group	
	N	%
Failed 0 - 39%	75	51.73
Passed 40 - 100%	0	48.27
Total	145	100%

The analysis of results in Table 2 shows that 70 (48.27%) of the cohort of 145 students who failed JSS1 in 2004/2005 and repeated JSS1 in 2005/2006 before moving to JSS2 in 2006/2007 improved their academic achievements by having scores ranging from 40 to 100%. This result confirms teachers' and parents' views that class repetition has a remedial effect on students' academic performance. Their achievement changed from 20.59% pass during their repeated year, to 48.27% in the year after repetition (JSS2).

Research Question 3: To what extent do the repeated students' JSS1 examination scores relate to their JSS2 examination scores?

Table 3: Pearson (r) of the Repeated Students in their Repeated JSS1 and JSS2 Examination Scores.

Source of Variation	N	JSS1(r)	JSS2(r)
Repeated JSS1	145	1.00	0.20
JSS2	145	0.50	1.00

Table 3 indicates the analysis of the degree of correlation in students' achievement scores during their repeated JSS1 and their JSS2 using Pearson Product moment correlation. There is an average positive relationship of 0.50

Inferential Analysis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean academic achievement scores of students in their repeated JSS1 and JSS2.

Table 4: t-test of the Significant Difference between the Mean Academic Scores of Students in their Repeated JSS1 and their JSS2 Results.

Source of Variation	N	□	sd	Df	cal.t	Critical t	≤
Repeated JSS1	145	36.96	9.26				
				144	3.32	1.96	rejected at 0.5
JSS2	145	40.96	11.12				

Table 4 shows the t-test analysis of the mean achievement scores of the repeated group of students in their repeated JSS1 and JSS2. The figures indicate that the calculated t-value of 3.32 was obtained while the critical t-value is 1.96. With 144 degree of freedom, and at 0.005 level of significance, Ho_1 stands rejected because the calculated value is higher. This study, therefore established that a significant difference exists between the academic achievement of the repeated students in their repeated JSS1 and JSS2.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of female repeated students and male repeated students in their JSS2.

Table 5: t-test of Significant Difference between the Achievements of Female Repeaters and Male Repeaters in their JSS1 and JSS2.

Source of Variation	N	□	sd	df	cal.t	Critical t	≤
Male	55	37.00	5.95				
				143	2.99	1.96	rejected at 0.05
Female	90	42.6	12.87				

The critical t-value is 1.96, while the calculated t-value is 2.99. The calculated value is higher than the Table value, and on that basis the null hypothesis is rejected. The female repeaters performed significantly better than the male repeaters, with average scores of 42.57% and 37% respectively.

Discussion

The results of this study support the views of most teachers, parents and students, that class repetition has a positive impact on students' academic achievement. By the implication of this result, the students learned from their previous mistakes and put in more effort to improve their performance by 27.59% in their repeated JSS1 and 48.25% in their JSS2. This survey compares favourably with an earlier study by Kenny (1985)

which investigated 122 subjects: 74 repeaters and 48 promoted failed primary school pupils in Australia; and in which the repeated students were found to have improved by an average of 27 percent.

Another study by Karweit & Wasik (1992) which used Kindergarten children, showed a favourable result of class repetition on the children's academic achievement in their repeated year, but unlike the result of the present study, the improvement did not persist.

It is pertinent to note that the students in this study did not receive extra coaching in their various schools, but were taught in mainstream classes. Inferential analysis further revealed that these differences or improvements in the students' academic achievements were statistically significant and that the female students amongst them did better than the male ones. This might imply that the female students were more serious at their studies.

Implication for Policy Making

This study buttresses the belief of some educational practitioners that class repetition has a remedial impact on students' academic outcome (IIEP, 1999) and therefore has implications on policy as well as the administration and practice of education. Policy makers should devise an eclectic class promotion policy that does not rigidly apply the mass promotion of all failed students. The Federal Government of Nigeria subscribes to Education For All (EFA) policy and encourages the promotion of failed students as a measure for extending educational access. As a result, public schools in Nigeria now practise mass promotion of students at the primary and junior secondary levels of education as contained in the FGN National Policy on Education (2004). The Federal Government, through its Universal Basic Education (UBE) prescribes and expects 100% transition rate from the primary to junior secondary school for every cohort of students.

Further, to support the practice of class repetition, some educators argue that class repetition is an effective way of allowing late developers to catch up in their studies. Teachers effectively use the threat of class repetition to call their students to order (IIEP, 1999). This is because the implicit punishment in sharing the same class with one's juniors and losing one's friends due to failure makes students sit up and take their studies seriously.

Conclusion

Class repetition made a significant positive impact on the academic performance of the repeated JSS1 students. There was significant positive change in the academic performance for both repeated and mass promoted groups but the improvement was higher with repeaters. Class repetition has a

more positive correlation with the students' performance than did mass promotion. Finally, the female repeaters and mass promoted students did significantly better than the male repeated and mass promoted students in academic performance.

Recommendations

1. The schools management should be encouraged by the result of this study to form School Promotion Committees whose function would include examining all cases of failure, bearing in mind the peculiar circumstances of each student, and making appropriate recommendations.
2. Since the increasing demand for education makes it expedient for failed students to be mass-promoted and rules out ability grouping of students in classrooms, the school management should strive to provide adequate facilities and materials for effective teaching and learning. This is important because in the views of Epstein & Yuthas (2012), although access to education has improved, the quality of education is often poor in developing nations and indigent parents are unable to keep their children school. Tuition is free and enrolment has improved, but other costs of schooling such as cost of books, uniforms, examination fees, school lunch and education levies are still paid by parents, majority of whom are poor.

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