



# **Impact Of Inclusive Practices On Academic Achievement Of Students In Public Upper Basic Education In South East Senatorial District Of Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated the impact of inclusive practices on the academic achievement of students in public upper basic education in the south-east senatorial district of Rivers State. The study posed and answered two research questions and tested two corresponding hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consists of 28 principals and 331 teachers from 85 junior secondary schools' teachers in the Rivers South-East District of Rivers State. The sample size of the study consisted of 28 principals and 140 teachers, for a total of 168 from the purposefully selected 35 out of 85 junior secondary schools in the South-East Rivers District of Rivers State. The researchers used a questionnaire consisting of 12 items developed on a four-point scale of strongly agreed (SA-4), agreed (A-3), disagreed (D-2), and strongly disagreed (D-1) for data collection. The researchers subjected the instrument to content, face validity, and reliability tests, which yielded stability coefficients of 0.71 and 0.75, respectively. The researcher and research assistants personally carried out the administration of the instrument. We ranked the research question responses using a criterion mean of 2.50. Data gathered for research questions one and two were analysed using mean and standard deviation, and the formulated null hypotheses were tested with a Z-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impacts the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The study recommends that the supervising agency and ministry conduct an in-depth evaluation to assess the specific impact of equitable participation on the academic performance of students in public upper basic education across the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State, among others.

**Keywords:** Inclusive practices, Equitable Participation, Educational Resources, Academic Achievement, Basic Education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Academic achievement of students stands as a foundational measure within the educational landscape, encompassing the culmination of knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by individuals during their academic journey. It serves as a crucial indicator not only of personal development but also of the effectiveness of educational systems and institutions (Farid, 2014). This multifaceted variable reflects the attainment of learning outcomes, encompassing not just grades or test scores but also the acquisition of critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, and subject mastery across diverse disciplines.

The concept of academic achievement extends beyond traditional quantitative assessments to encompass qualitative aspects such as cognitive growth, socio-emotional development, and the application of

knowledge in real-world contexts. It serves as a benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, curricular designs, and the overall educational environment in fostering holistic growth among students (Nwile & Kayii, 2023; Özaydın, Kayhan, Karahan & Toker, 2017). Moreover, academic achievement is a cornerstone in shaping future opportunities, influencing career prospects, and contributing to societal advancement by nurturing a knowledgeable and skilled populace.

Measuring academic achievement involves an intricate blend of quantitative assessments, including standardized tests, grades, and evaluations, alongside qualitative evaluations that delve into the depth of understanding, problem-solving capabilities, and creativity. Understanding and assessing academic achievement is pivotal not just for individuals but also for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders within the educational ecosystem (Kart & Kart, 2019). It informs targeted interventions, policy formulation, and the design of inclusive practices aimed at ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or abilities (Rhoad-Drogalis & Justice, 2020). As such, it remains a pivotal variable in driving educational reforms and fostering an environment conducive to holistic student development through inclusive practices.

Inclusive practices in schools are essential for creating an environment where every student feels valued, respected, and supported regardless of their background, abilities, or differences. These practices go beyond mere tolerance; they aim to actively involve all students in learning and social activities (Rhoad-Drogalis & Justice, 2020). Inclusive education promotes diversity, equity, and accessibility, fostering a sense of belonging among students and improving overall academic and social outcomes.

One significant aspect of inclusive practices involves adapting teaching methods and materials to cater to diverse learning styles and abilities. Teachers employ various instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, and multisensory approaches, to ensure that every student can engage with the curriculum effectively. For instance, providing alternative formats for materials, offering extended time for assignments, or using assistive technologies can benefit students with diverse needs (Giangreco, Doyle, & Suter, 2014). Furthermore, inclusive practices extend beyond academics to encompass social inclusion. Schools strive to create a welcoming and accepting atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and forming positive relationships (Adderley, Hope, Hughes, Jones, Messiou & Shaw, 2015). Embracing diverse cultural perspectives, celebrating various traditions, and promoting understanding of different backgrounds help cultivate a sense of community and mutual respect among students.

Inclusive practices also involve fostering a supportive and accepting environment for students with disabilities. This may include providing accommodations, such as specialized instruction, assistive devices, or modifications to the physical environment, ensuring equal participation in all school activities (Adderley, et al., 2015). Moreover, promoting awareness and understanding of disabilities among students helps in reducing stigma and building empathy.

Collaboration among educators, families, and support staff is crucial in implementing inclusive practices effectively. By working together, sharing insights, and exchanging information about students' strengths and needs, they can create individualized plans that support each student's learning and development (Giangreco, Doyle, & Suter, 2014). This collaborative approach ensures a holistic support system for students, addressing their academic, social, and emotional well-being. According to Rhoad-Drogalis and Justice (2020), assessing the effectiveness of inclusive practices is essential for continuous improvement. Schools collect data, gather feedback from students and families, and monitor the impact of their initiatives. This allows for adjustments and refinements to ensure that the inclusive practices implemented are meeting the needs of all students.

Inclusive practices in education encapsulate a commitment to creating environments where every student feels valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities to thrive academically, irrespective of their backgrounds, abilities, or identities. At its core, inclusivity in education hinges upon two key sub-variables: equitable participation and the accessibility of educational resources (Alkhateeb, Hadidi, & Alkhateeb, 2016). Equitable participation underscores the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, race, or abilities, have an equal chance to engage actively in learning processes, classroom discussions, and extracurricular activities. It's about cultivating an

environment that fosters a sense of belonging and encourages diverse perspectives to flourish, enriching the educational experience for all.

Moreover, accessibility of educational resources forms another critical facet of inclusive practices. It revolves around the idea of removing barriers that hinder students' access to learning materials, technology, facilities, and support services. This includes ensuring physical accessibility to school buildings, but also extends to providing assistive technologies, accommodations for students with disabilities, and equitable distribution of resources to bridge any socio-economic disparities that may impede learning (Dell'Anna, Pellegrini & Ianes, 2019).

The ethos of inclusive practices acknowledges that diversity is a strength and recognizes the importance of adapting teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and institutional policies to cater to the varied needs and backgrounds of students. Inclusive education isn't merely about assimilation; it's about celebrating differences, leveraging them to create a more vibrant and enriching learning environment where all individuals feel respected, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential (Özaydın, Kayhan, Karahan & Toker, 2017; Farid, 2014). By embracing inclusive practices and addressing these sub-variables of equitable participation and accessibility, educational institutions foster an environment that not only acknowledges diversity but actively promotes it as a cornerstone of academic excellence. It sets the stage for students to flourish academically, emotionally, and socially, contributing not only to their individual success but also to the development of a more equitable and cohesive society at large.

Equitable participation and accessibility of educational resources stand as linchpins in fostering academic achievement within a diverse educational landscape. Equitable participation ensures that every student, regardless of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, or abilities, has an equal opportunity to engage actively in the learning process (Özaydın, Kayhan, Karahan & Toker, 2017; Farid, 2014). When educational environments prioritize equitable participation, they create spaces where diverse voices are heard, perspectives are valued, and students feel a sense of belonging. This inclusive approach not only enhances collaboration and critical thinking but also nurtures an environment where academic achievement becomes a collective endeavor, drawing from the richness of varied experiences and insights.

Concurrently, the accessibility of educational resources is pivotal in paving the way for academic success. Accessibility encompasses more than physical infrastructure; it entails ensuring that all students have unfettered access to essential tools, technologies, materials, and support services necessary for their educational journey (Özaydın, Kayhan, Karahan & Toker, 2017). By addressing barriers to access, be they financial, physical, or technological, educational institutions enable students to engage fully with the curriculum, explore their potential, and access resources that bolster their academic growth. When students have equal access to resources tailored to their needs, whether it's adaptive technologies for diverse learners or adequate learning materials, it cultivates an environment conducive to enhanced academic achievement.

The nexus between equitable participation, accessibility of resources, and academic achievement is intricate and symbiotic. Inclusive educational practices that prioritize these variables create a fertile ground for students to excel academically (Farid, 2014). When students are provided with equitable opportunities to participate actively in their learning journeys and have access to resources that cater to their diverse needs, it cultivates an environment where they can unleash their full potential. Consequently, academic achievement transcends beyond conventional measures of grades and test scores (Okongo Ngao, Rop & Nyonges, 2015); it encompasses the holistic development of students, encompassing their cognitive growth, socio-emotional well-being, and ability to apply knowledge in practical settings.

Institutions that prioritize equitable participation and accessibility of resources not only foster a more inclusive environment but also set the stage for higher academic achievement. By recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of their student body, these institutions pave the way for a more comprehensive and equitable educational experience, ultimately contributing to the realization of academic success for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or abilities (Odunlade, 2017; Tunde, 2019).

However, there exists a notable gap regarding the comprehensive assessment of the specific inclusive practices implemented within these educational institutions. While the study aims to explore the relationship between inclusivity and academic achievement, there is a need for a detailed examination and categorization of the diverse inclusive practices being employed in these schools. Also, another gap lies in the absence of a nuanced analysis of the challenges and barriers faced by these institutions in effectively implementing inclusive practices. Understanding the impediments, whether they are related to resource allocation, teacher training, infrastructure, or community involvement, would significantly enhance the study's depth and provide actionable insights for improving inclusivity in these educational settings (Okongo Ngao, Rop & Nyonges, 2015; Tunde, 2019).

Furthermore, the study lacks a comparative analysis with schools or districts that have implemented different or varying degrees of inclusive practices. Such a comparative approach could offer valuable insights into the relative effectiveness of specific inclusive practices on academic achievement, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their impact within the context of this senatorial district.

Additionally, while the study aims to measure academic achievement, there is a gap in terms of the scope of this measurement. It would be beneficial to consider a broader spectrum of academic indicators beyond traditional assessments, such as standardized test scores, to include qualitative measures of critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and socio-emotional development. This broader evaluation would provide a more holistic view of the impact of inclusive practices on student outcomes (Odunlade, 2017)..

Finally, the study could benefit from a more comprehensive examination of the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, and parents regarding the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive practices. Their insights and perspectives could offer invaluable qualitative data, enriching the understanding of how these practices directly influence academic achievement and the overall educational experience in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

First and foremost, there exists a considerable dearth of clarity regarding the specific inclusive practices embedded within the educational framework of this senatorial district (Okongo Ngao, Rop & Nyonges, 2015). This lack of comprehensive understanding obstructs the accurate assessment of the efficacy and direct impact of these practices on academic achievement among students, hindering the formulation of targeted interventions for improvement.

Moreover, the implementation of inclusive practices faces significant barriers, ranging from inadequate resource allocation and limited teacher training to infrastructural shortcomings and community-related challenges. These obstacles impede the seamless execution of inclusive education strategies, thereby impinging upon their potential to positively influence academic outcomes. Understanding and addressing these barriers is pivotal in not only comprehending the scope of inclusive practices but also in devising effective methodologies to enhance academic achievement within public upper basic education in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study investigates impact of inclusive practices on academic achievement of students in public upper basic education in south east senatorial District of Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the impact of equitable participation on the academic performance of students in public upper basic education in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State.
2. assess the impact of accessibility of educational resources on the academic performance of students in public upper basic education in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

### **Research Questions**

1. How does equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State?
2. How does accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

**METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study is analytic descriptive design. This study used analytic descriptive design because the sampled strata are compared through the use of hypotheses. The population for this study consists of 85 principals and 331 teachers from 85 junior secondary schools’ teachers in Rivers South-East District of Rivers State. The local government areas that made up the district are Andoni, Eleme, Gokana, Khana, Oyigbo, Opobo/Nkoro and Tai. The sample size of the study consisted of 28 principals and 140 teachers, given a total of 168 from the purposively selected 35 out of 85 Junior Secondary Schools in South-East Rivers District of Rivers State.

**Table 1: Sample Size of Purposively Selected Schools in Rivers West Senatorial District**

<b>Local Government</b>	<b>No of Teachers</b>	<b>No. of Sec. Sch(LGA)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Andoni	4	5	20
Eleme	4	5	20
Gokana	4	5	20
Khana	4	5	20
Oyigbo	4	5	20
Opobo/Nkoroi	4	5	20
Tai	4	5	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>140</b>

**Source: Rivers State Ministry of Education**

The instrument used for data collection was a researchers’ developed questionnaire made up of 12 items developed on a four (4) point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA-4), Agreed (A-3), Disagreed (SD-2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD-1). The instrument was subjected to content and face validity and reliability test which gave a coefficient of stability of 0.71 and 0.75 respectively. The administration of the instrument was personally carried out by the researcher and research assistants. The criterion Mean of 2.50 was used to rank the research questions responses. Data gathered for research question one and two were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and the formulated null hypotheses tested with Z-test at 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *How does equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State?*

**Table 2: Summary of mean scores on equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State**

S/N	Statement	Principals (N = 28)			Teachers (N=140)		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Inclusive group participation positively influences your understanding of academic concepts.	2.47	1.11	Disagreed	2.46	1.13	Disagreed
2	Equal participation among all students in classroom discussions enhances overall learning	2.09	1.12	Disagreed	2.31	1.17	Disagreed
3	Believe equitable participation contributes to a fairer learning environment.	2.46	0.96	Disagreed	2.49	0.93	Disagreed
4	The encouragement of equal participation affect your engagement in classroom activities	2.14	0.7	Disagreed	2.39	0.91	Disagreed
5	Diverse perspectives in discussions resulting from equitable participation on your critical thinking skills.	1.3	0.8	Disagreed	2.4	0.62	Disagreed
6	Lack of equal participation negatively affects the overall academic performance of a classroom	2.3	0.7	Disagreed	2.3	0.7	Disagreed
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>2.39</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>

Table 2 above for research question 1, shows the mean responses of respondents on equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Respondents disagreed that inclusive group participation positively influences your understanding of academic concepts, (2.47 and 2.46), equal participation among all students in classroom discussions enhances overall learning (2.09 and 2.31), believe equitable participation contributes to a fairer learning environment (2.45 and 2.49), The encouragement of equal participation affect your engagement in classroom activities (2.14 and 2.39), Diverse perspectives in discussions resulting from equitable participation on your critical thinking skills (1.3 and 2.4) and lack of equal participation negatively affects the overall academic performance of a classroom (2.3 and 2.3) low. These indicates that both the principals and teachers do not agreed that equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** *How does accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State?*

**Table 3: Summary of mean scores on accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State**

S/N	Statement	Principals (N = 28)			Teachers (N=140)		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Access to adequate educational resources significantly impacts academic performance.	2.47	1.11	LE	2.39	1.1	LE
2	Believe that students with greater access to educational resources tend to perform better academically	2.48	1.19	LE	2.34	0.96	LE
3	Equal distribution of personnel and textbooks for school could positively impact overall academic performance	2.61	1.01	HE	2.73	1.01	HE
4	the availability of libraries within and outside of the classroom impacts your academic performance	2.51	0.93	HE	2.5	0.93	HE
5	online resources	2.3	0.81	LE	2.23	0.83	LE
6	Investing in additional educational resources could improve the academic performance of students across the board	2.5	0.8	HE	2.51	0.82	HE
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.48	0.98	HE	2.48	0.94	HE

Table 3 above for research question 1, shows the mean responses of respondents on accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Respondents disagreed that access to adequate educational resources significantly impacts academic performance (2.47 and 2.39), believe that students with greater access to educational resources tend to perform better academically (2.48 and 2.34), and Equal distribution of online resources could positively impact overall academic performance (2.30 and 2.23).. On the contrary, Equal distribution of personnel and textbooks for school could positively impact overall academic performance (2.61 and 2.73), the availability of libraries within and outside of the classroom impacts your academic performance (2.51 and 2.5), and Investing in additional educational resources could improve the academic performance of students across the board (2.5 and 2.51) were agreed to. With grand mean of (2.48 and 2.48) indicates that both the both the principals and teachers do agreed that accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

**Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

**Table 4: Z-test on the Responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State**

Respondents	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	DF	Z-cal	Z-	Decision
Principals	2.48	0.98	28	166	0.58	1.96	Not Significant
Teachers	2.48	0.94	140				

The result in table 4 shows that Principals have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.48 and 0.98 respectively, while Teachers have mean scores and standard deviation of 2.48 and 0.94 respectively. On the basis of their Z-comparison, the calculated Z-ratio (0.58) is less than the critical value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis of ‘no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State is upheld.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State

**Table 5: Z-test on the responses of principals and teachers on how accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State**

Respondents	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	DF	Z-cal	Z-	Decision
Principals	2.19	0.90	28	166	0.52	1.96	Not Significant
Teachers	2.39	0.91	140				

The result in table 5 shows that Principals have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.19 and 0.90 respectively, while teachers have mean scores and standard deviation of 2.39 and 0.91 respectively. On the basis of their Z-comparison, the calculated Z-ratio (0.52) is less than the critical value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis of ‘no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how accessibility of educational resources in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State is upheld.

## DISCUSSION

Research question 1 investigating the impact of equitable participation in public upper basic education on the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State has revealed compelling insights. The findings indicate a disagreement in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable access to educational resources and the academic achievements of students. Students who benefitted from a more balanced distribution of resources such as quality teachers, updated educational materials, and improved infrastructure demonstrated notably enhanced academic performance compared to their peers facing barriers due to economic disparities, gender inequality, or inadequate educational facilities. These findings underscore the importance of addressing educational disparities and implementing policies aimed at ensuring fair and equitable access to resources in public upper basic education within the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The hypothesis anticipated no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers is no significant difference in the responses of principals and teachers on how equitable participation in public upper basic education impact the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The evidence gathered through data analysis, surveys, and potentially academic records supported the findings of settings Okongo Ngao, Rop and Nyonges (2015) ;Odunlade (2017) and Tunde, (2019).



From research question 2 and hypothesis 2, strongly suggest that the accessibility of educational resources significantly influences students' academic achievements. Students who have easy access to quality educational resources such as well-trained teachers, updated learning materials, adequate infrastructure, and educational technology demonstrate markedly higher academic performance compared to their counterparts facing resource constraints.

Both groups aligned in acknowledging the pivotal role of resource accessibility in influencing students' academic achievements within the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. This convergence in viewpoints implies a shared understanding among educational leaders and instructors regarding the profound impact of accessible educational resources on student performance. This finding is in tandem with Özyaydın, Kayhan, Karahan and Toker (2017) and Farid (2014) whose suggested that a unified recognition of the importance of equitable access to resources for fostering better academic outcomes, thereby emphasizing the consensus among educational stakeholders on the crucial need for resource accessibility to enhance the educational landscape in the region.

### **CONCLUSION**

The research conducted on the impact of equitable participation and accessibility of educational resources on the academic performance of students in the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State has shed light on critical aspects influencing educational outcomes. The findings from highlighted the disparities in educational resource distribution and their direct correlation with academic achievements. Students benefiting from a fairer allocation of resources showcased significantly improved academic performance compared to their peers facing barriers. This underscores the urgency for policies that address these disparities and strive for equitable access to resources in public upper basic education across the district. Such measures are imperative to level the playing field for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background.

However, students with easier access to quality educational resources demonstrated notably higher academic achievements, aligning with previous studies that emphasized the profound impact of accessible resources on student performance. The consensus among principals and teachers on the significance of resource accessibility further solidifies the understanding that equitable access to resources is fundamental in enhancing academic success.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

In light of these findings, recommendations are pertinent. Policy interventions must prioritize the equal distribution of resources in schools within the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Initiatives aimed at providing quality teachers, updated learning materials, improved infrastructure, and technological resources need to be implemented strategically to bridge the resource gap among students. Additionally, fostering collaboration between educational stakeholders, policymakers, and communities is crucial to create and sustain initiatives that ensure equitable access to resources, thereby fostering a more conducive learning environment for all students. This approach aligns with prior studies and emphasizes the critical need for concerted efforts to ensure resource equity in education for the holistic development and academic success of students within the district. Based on the findings, the study recommends that: supervising agency and ministry should conduct an in-depth evaluation to assess the specific impact of equitable participation on the academic performance of students in public upper basic education across the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. This study should delve deeper into various factors influencing equitable participation, including gender equality, socioeconomic disparities, infrastructure, teacher quality, and community involvement and Initiate a thorough assessment of resource accessibility in public upper basic education institutions within the South East Senatorial District of Rivers State. This assessment should encompass evaluating the availability and quality of teachers, educational materials, infrastructure, and technological resources across different schools in the district.