

Policy, Access, and Resource Factors as Correlates of Functionality of Secondary Education in Rural Communities

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Abstract: Educational stakeholders are concerned about the functionality of secondary education, as many secondary school graduates, particularly in rural areas, lack basic skills for work and daily life. Therefore, this study investigated the contributions of policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. The study was conducted within a positivist paradigm and employed a descriptive survey design. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 600 secondary school graduates for the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. Four research instruments, namely the Secondary School Graduate Aptitude Test (SSGAT), Policy Factor Questionnaire (PFQ), Secondary School Graduate Access Questionnaire (SSGAQ), and Resource Factor Questionnaire (RFTQ), were utilised with reliability coefficients of 0.715, 0.733, 0.753, and 0.853, respectively. Data were analysed using inferential statistics such as multiple regression. The policy, access, and resource factors made significant joint contributions to the functionality of secondary education ($F(3, 597) = 266.740$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$) and accounted for 57.1 per cent of its variance. The policy factor ($\beta = 0.451$) and resource factor ($\beta = 0.374$) made relative contributions to the functionality of secondary education, while the access factor ($\beta = 0.084$) did not. The study suggests that urgently addressing policy and resource issues is critical for restoring the functionality of secondary education and improving access to it in rural areas.

Keywords: Policy, access, resource factors, functionality, rural communities.

1. Introduction

The location of educational institutions plays a crucial role in the teaching-learning process. Existing literature has affirmed that the location of the school largely determines the degree of student achievement. A school situated in a conducive environment with all necessary amenities cannot be compared to schools in remote or rural areas with limited facilities for learning (Titus et al., 2016). Therefore, variations in infrastructure and social amenities across urban, rural, or peri-urban communities strongly influence the quality of education. Thus, the location of a school has proven to be fundamental to academic performance. Several key factors that determine students' academic performance and well-being include their living and learning environments, confidence, happiness, and the level of attention provided by teachers. If policymakers take these factors into consideration when developing new legislation, it could help decrease educational inequality in rural regions. In simpler terms, the opportunities or challenges faced by communities are determined by their locations (Zhang, 2023). Therefore, a centralised policy can be disadvantageous if it fails to acknowledge the unique characteristics of different communities (Reid, 2017). Anríquez (2007) also argued that government policies seldom favour rural communities, as evident in the allocation of resources. Nigerian governments have failed to address rural inequalities, neglecting social development and education, which has led to rural-urban migration. Policymakers argue that proper development can only occur when the gaps between rural and urban development are closed (Ering et al., 2014). Furthermore, Anríquez (2007) emphasised that rural development policy has lacked a proper institutional structure on several occasions. As a result, development strategies that have

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traditionally favoured urban regions have had a greater impact on the gap between rural and urban communities.

Consequently, unfavourable policies tend to allocate opportunities and resources towards urban communities. Due to sociocultural, economic, and urban-rural divides, there are limited educational opportunities available in rural areas of African countries (Chakanika et al., 2012). Therefore, policies and programs are needed to optimise opportunities for all. Such interventions will reduce access gaps and mitigate the effects of resource constraints in rural areas. This can pave the way for the delivery of quality education, as there is an inverse relationship between poverty and education, and education remains a powerful tool for improving living standards and incomes. Functional education can help individuals overcome human poverty (Awan et al., 2011). In other words, both national and subnational governments must intervene in rural development, particularly in the areas of education and training for rural residents, especially young people. By providing them with a functional education, they can contribute to alleviating their parents' low standard of living.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the contributions of policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. To achieve this research objective, two hypotheses were formulated and tested at the significance level of 0.05.

- **Hypothesis 1:** There are no significant joint contributions of the policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria.
- **Hypothesis 2:** There are no significant relative contributions of policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Functionality in rural secondary education

Functionality in education refers to education that aims to develop skills and knowledge that learners can apply in practical situations (Asaju & Sunday, 2014). Functional education ensures that recipients are able to rely on themselves, preparing them for social, economic, and political roles, which benefits both the individuals and society as a whole (Nwaka, 2015; Osaat, 2011; Sunday, 2017). Asaju and Sunday (2014) argue that functional education helps society meet its developmental needs and ensures productive performance among its citizens. In this study, functionality in rural secondary education refers to a form of training that equips individuals with the necessary capabilities and skills to perform productive tasks, thereby transforming learning into action that leads to a purposeful life for those who go through the educational system. This can be observed through the provision of quality education, good academic performance, and outstanding achievements. In essence, it refers to the ability of secondary school graduates to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired in secondary school to real-world challenges.

In Nigeria, Ngada (2014), in a study titled "Vocational Education Curriculum in Yobe State Secondary Schools: Availability and Functionality," evaluated the effectiveness of vocational education in reducing unemployment among secondary school graduates from Yobe State. The study selected 81 instructors from 27 secondary schools in Yobe State, Nigeria. The results revealed insufficient availability of instructors and an unequal distribution of vocational subjects. The study recommended the provision of additional teaching materials and tools, the recruitment of more instructors, and the requirement for students to acquire at least one occupational skill before graduation.

In another study on the functionality of rural secondary education, Okunlola and Hendricks (2022) conducted research that examined the functionality of Functional Secondary Education (FSE) in rural

communities in Southwest Nigeria. The study focused on functional literacy, numeracy, and civic/citizenship competency. A post-positivist paradigm was employed, and the study included 467 secondary school graduates as participants. The findings revealed a low level of functional numeracy (45.88%), a low level of functional civic/citizenship competency (50.3%), and a moderate level of functional literacy (60.8%). The study emphasised the need for prompt actions to address the crisis of functional secondary education in rural areas.

2.2 Policy factor and functionality of rural schools

Olang'o et al. (2021) conducted a study to examine the impact of the free-day secondary education (FDSE) policy on the academic performance of rural public day secondary schools in Kilifi County, Kenya. The study utilised a descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 375 participants. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and interview schedules administered to educational directors, principals, and teachers. The findings revealed a decline in test mean scores between 2003 and 2007, as well as between 2013 and 2017, with a correlation between enrollment and poor performance. Based on these results, it was concluded that the implementation of the FDSE policy had a negative effect on the academic performance of rural public day secondary schools. The study recommends a class size of 40:1, timely disbursement of resources, and increased student capitation. Similarly, Okunlola and Hendricks (2022) examined the impact of policy factors, specifically Recruitment and Selection (RS), Salary and Compensation (SC), and Training and Development (TD), on the Quality of Secondary Education (QSE) in rural South-Western Nigeria. The study collected data from 467 secondary school graduates and 134 teachers from nine schools. The findings indicated that policy factors significantly influenced the QSE, highlighting the importance of addressing policy issues in order to improve the quality of education in rural schools.

Another study by Zenda (2020) focused on rural secondary schools in South Africa and investigated the ways in which learner-educator ratio (LER) policies enhance students' academic performance in the physical sciences. The study employed cultural-historical activity theory and qualitative research methods. The findings revealed that large class sizes can hinder discipline and practical tasks, and emphasised the importance of engaged student participation for effective learning. The study concluded that discipline may be compromised and practical activities may be affected by large class sizes, and recommended lowering the LER to 30:1 learners or less. Quan-Baffour (2006) also conducted a study to explore how policies regarding School Governing Boards (SGBs) can enhance academic achievement in Taung rural areas. SGBs aim to involve communities, particularly parents, in education with the expectation that their involvement will improve schools. Through focus groups, interviews, and literature reviews, the study found that parents and guardians are increasingly becoming equal partners in their children's education. The study recommends further investigation into increased participation and representation in education.

2.3 Access factor and functionality of rural schools

Yu and Huang (2021) conducted a study that examines the educational quality of quasi-state schools for rural migrant children in urban China. The study involved semi-structured interviews with 19 government officers, school leaders, teachers, and migrant parents in Shanghai. The article analyses power relations and identifies an "interim quasi-state school system" characterised by low-cost and inferior features. While this system serves as an emergency solution to children's schooling problems, it does not ensure a "good" education.

Another relevant study by Akter (2024) focuses on access and utilisation, investigating the impact of digital technology on schooling in rural areas of Bangladesh. The study evaluates the digitisation process by examining the usage of digital technologies and identifying obstacles through a mixed-methods approach. The findings highlight the need for targeted efforts to bridge the digital divide in rural education. To fully realise the potential of digitisation, the research emphasises the importance

of comprehensive strategies that encompass infrastructure development, teacher training, and integration of digital tools into the curriculum. The results provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers on how to enhance digital literacy and promote inclusive teaching methods in rural communities.

2.4 Resource factor and functionality of rural schools

Okunlola and Hendricks (2023) conducted a study to explore how resource constraints impact the quality of secondary education in rural Southwest Nigeria. The study employed a multi-level mixed methods approach and involved 467 secondary school graduates and 134 educators as participants. Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted with six individuals from the Teaching Service Commission and the Ministry of Education. The data was collected, analysed, and interpreted using a pragmatic paradigm. The findings revealed that the quality of secondary education was significantly affected by resource utilisation and adequacy. The study concluded that addressing resource disparities in rural communities is crucial for improving the standard of secondary education in Nigeria. These results highlight the urgent need to enhance secondary education in rural areas.

In a separate study by Shikalepo (2020) on enhancing the quality of education in rural schools in Namibia, teachers and education officials were selected through a case study design. Data was gathered through focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and a literature review. Thematic analysis was conducted on the collected data. The findings demonstrated that improving the working conditions for teachers, providing adequate funding for their professional development and day-to-day operations, implementing school cluster systems, and allocating sufficient budget for these purposes can all contribute to enhancing academic performance in rural schools. The study suggests leveraging the benefits of school cluster systems to pool resources and achieve sustainable progress in the long run.

2.5 Policy, access, resource factors, and functionality of secondary education

The education policy in Nigeria is a veritable instrument that should meet the aspirations and expectations of education stakeholders. Yet, the declining quality of education exposes the investment as unsatisfactory. Inconsistencies have hindered the delivery of functional education, preventing the development of self-reliant, innovative, and entrepreneurial citizens (Oyelola, 2015). Currently, secondary education faces challenges in increasing access, ensuring learning, and enhancing relevance to prepare them for adulthood, productive work, and societal participation (Null et al., 2017; Okunlola & Hendricks, 2022). Nigeria's primary-secondary school enrollment disparity is alarming, with 16.6%, 19.4%, and 17.5% securing placements in public and private schools in 2013/2014, 2014/2015, and 2015/2016, respectively. Factors affecting enrollment include carrying capacity, quota systems, unaffordable costs, armed conflict, traditions, and gender inequality (Federal Republic of Nigeria, n.d.; Nwogu, 2015; Okunlola & Hendricks, 2022). Owoeye and Yara (2011) additionally pointed out the implications of unequal access to secondary education, indicating that while some students in affluent neighbourhoods have access to educational resources and facilities, others in more remote areas must travel great distances to attend school. It appears that this is having a detrimental effect on the functionality of secondary education in rural regions.

Educational resources are crucial for the success or failure of educational systems worldwide. Okunlola and Hendricks (2023) established in their findings in research conducted on resource inequality in South-Western Nigeria that the quality of secondary education is negatively impacted by the insufficient availability of human and material resources in education. The functionality of secondary education depends on a number of variables, including its teaching force, facilities, staff satisfaction, and student motivation. This was also confirmed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) and Ige (2013), indicating that Nigeria's budgetary contribution to the education sector is smaller

than that of many other African nations despite the sector's critical role in the development of human resources.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study was couched with two frameworks, Functionalist theory and Systems theory.

3.1 Functionalist theory

Functionalist theory has been adopted as the framework for this study. Notable proponents of functionalism, a sociological theory that analyses social systems within society, include Durkheim, Parson, Melton, Murdock, and Malinowski (Izuogu, 2014). Advocates of functionalism liken society to the human body, which consists of various parts with distinct functions. They perceive society as a system composed of interconnected elements, each serving the collective needs. Consequently, education is regarded as an integral component of society and a vital institution intertwined with the political, economic, and familial systems (Okunlola & Hendricks, 2022a; Sever, 2012). Functionalists emphasise the critical role of education and training in societal development through socialisation, resource allocation, and career preparation, among other economic factors (Lawson et al., 2010). Nonetheless, despite the fundamental significance of the functionalist theory in relation to education, it is not without criticism. Conflict sociologists emerged as critics of functionalism mainly because they argued that schools serve the interests of dominant groups rather than function as a harmonious whole (Sadovnik, 2011). While schools may superficially appear to serve the interests of all, the reality exposes a more contentious struggle. Consequently, this perspective poses greater challenges compared to the functionalist emphasis on social cohesion and order. However, both functionalist and conflict sociologists concur that educational systems sort students based on their abilities and competencies. Functionalists assert that sorting is merit-based, while conflict theorists diverge and contend that schools perpetuate class-based divisions and reinforce group dominance (Manza et al., 2010; Sadovnik, 2011).

The central thesis of this study, which examines the functionality of secondary education, is elucidated through the utilisation of this theory. The main tenet of functionalism is that education primarily serves the needs of society (Giroux, 1983; Selakovich, 1984). Lawson et al. (2010) argue that education plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and harmony within society. This is achieved through various functions such as socialisation, allocation, and vocational training. According to functionalist theorists, schools act as agents for transmitting cultural norms and values via both the formal and hidden curriculum. Additionally, education assists in the sorting and placement of individuals into suitable occupations through the allocation function, while the vocational training function equips individuals with the necessary technical and practical skills required in the workforce (Lawson et al., 2010).

This study specifically focuses on the knowledge, skills, and effective learning of secondary school graduates beyond mere certification. The reductionist perspective on education, which disregards proficiency in specific skills, is deemed inadequate (Obanya, 2010). In contrast, this study promotes the notion of efficient learning, which results in valuable skills that are essential either for the labour market or for personal empowerment. Therefore, functional education is considered vital for the economy and society as a whole.

The relevance of functionalist theory to this study lies in its recognition of education as a fundamental institution that supports the overall needs of society. Scholars such as Durkheim and Parson advocate for the importance of education in socialisation, allocation, and vocational training, all of which contribute to social cohesion. This aligns with the study's emphasis on the functional aspects of secondary education in rural communities, highlighting how education can meet societal needs by equipping individuals with essential skills and values. However, to acknowledge the limitations of functionalism, the study also justifies the adoption of General Systems Theory as an additional

theoretical framework. This theory offers a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the educational system by considering complex interactions and interdependencies, thereby addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by secondary education in rural areas.

3.2 General systems theory

Systems theory is a theoretical framework that facilitates the comprehension of a whole by focusing on the interactions among its component elements (Mele et al., 2010). A system consists of multiple interconnected components that collaborate to achieve a specific objective. These components encompass input, process, output, feedback, and the environment (Fred & Allan, 2008). Maselesele (2010) provides a practical perspective by explaining that secondary school principals bear the responsibility of promoting societal welfare as representatives of the government, utilising tools, resources, and policies to optimise student learning outcomes. Therefore, the General Systems Theory (GST) remains relevant in elucidating the processes involved in transforming inputs into outputs, which, in this case, refers to educated individuals. Systems theory clearly demonstrates that inputs, such as policies, access, and resource factors, can be transformed to yield outputs that manifest as the functionality of secondary education. The GST encompasses input, process, output, and feedback. Within the school system, the interaction between students and teachers during the teaching-learning process serves as the mechanism that converts input into output. The output could be products or services in an organisation, but in the context of the school system, it pertains to secondary school graduates. In other words, educated individuals serve as the output. The quality of the output, i.e., educated citizens in this context, may determine the feedback received. Feedback is derived from the environment or society in the form of reactions, which can be commendation or condemnation of the performance of the school system based on its outputs. Therefore, output remains a crucial factor in systems theory as it serves as a means of evaluating the performance of a system. Poor output in a school system may necessitate a complete overhaul or slight modifications to the inputs in order to enhance subsequent output. Based on the aforementioned points, it is evident that the GST remains relevant and informs this study on the transformation of inputs into outputs in the form of educated citizens. This is further illustrated in Figure 1.1, which depicts how variables interconnect to create a web of relationships that result in output.

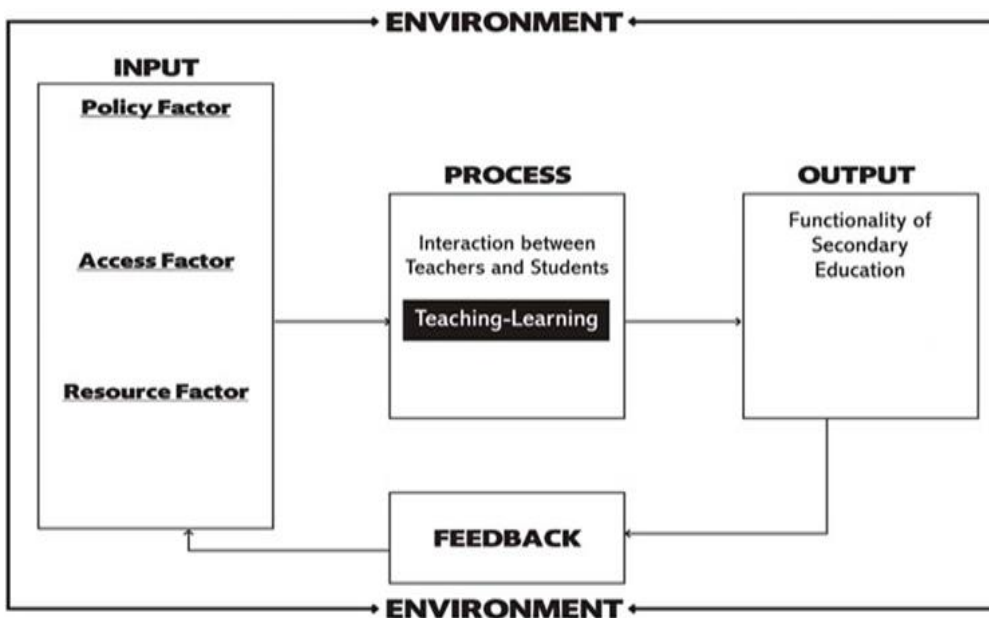


Figure 1: Self constructed conceptual model

The conceptual model illustrates the interconnectedness between the independent variables (policy, access, and resource factors) and the dependent variable (functionality of secondary education). The model depicts the arrangement and interdependence of elements that act as inputs for delivering or producing the functionality of secondary education. The quality of the three independent variables (inputs) can either positively affect (if given due consideration and attention) or negatively influence (if neglected or not adequately addressed) the functionality of secondary education. The model presented in Figure 2.1 is based on the systems theory, which suggests that any modification of the independent variables (inputs) can have a significant impact on the outcome of the functionality of secondary education within the geographical scope of this study.

In summary, the type of policy, access, and resource factors will determine the effectiveness of the outcome. In the context of this study, a severe shortage or alteration in the inflow of inputs (independent variables) may affect the functionality of secondary education (dependent variable). Therefore, the general systems theory helps to position the study within the appropriate theoretical framework. The mathematical equation below further demonstrates the relationship and interaction between the independent and dependent variables as determinants of the functionality of secondary education. This can be illustrated as follows:

$$FSE = f(A, B_1, X_1, B_2, X_2, B_3, X_3) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where:

FSE= Functionality of Secondary Education

F= Function of

A= Constant factor or number

B_1X_1 = Policy Factor

B_2X_2 = Access Factor

B_3X_3 = Resource Factor

The equation simply depicts the functionality of secondary education in rural communities.

3.3 Intersection between the theories

Functionalist theory and General System Theory (GST) intersect in their shared focus on the interrelationships and interdependencies within the educational system. Functionalist theory emphasises the role of education in fulfilling societal needs by promoting socialisation, allocation, and vocational training. It views education as a critical institution contributing to social cohesion and harmony. On the other hand, GST provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how various components of the educational system (inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback) interact to produce functional outcomes. Both theories recognise that the success of education depends on the harmonious integration of its elements to achieve desired societal goals. By combining these perspectives, the study can more effectively analyse how policy, access, and resource factors contribute to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities.

Using functionalist theory and GST to underpin this study is advantageous because it allows for a multifaceted exploration of the educational system. Functionalist theory provides insights into education's societal roles and functions, highlighting its importance in fostering social cohesion and preparing individuals for productive societal roles. GST complements this by offering a detailed examination of the internal dynamics of the educational system, focusing on how inputs (such as policies, resources, and access) are transformed into outputs (educated citizens) through various processes. This dual theoretical approach enables a comprehensive analysis of the factors affecting the functionality of secondary education in rural areas, ensuring that both the societal impact and the internal processes are thoroughly considered. This integrated framework helps identify what needs to be improved and how to effectively implement these improvements.

4. Materials and Methods

Research design is called strategies of enquiries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). White (2013) also asserts that research design is a logical, not a logistical, task, focusing on the overall blueprint rather than the specifics of its execution. Meanwhile, this study is a quantitative investigation. As a result, quantitative research employs well-structured techniques such as the survey method. It relies on questionnaires, large population samples, variables, and hypotheses (Okeke, 2017). This study adopted the descriptive survey design.

The study used a multi-stage sampling technique to select samples from three South-western Nigerian states. The purposive sampling method was used to select Oyo, Ekiti, and Osun States for possessing the most rural demography, followed by cluster sampling to select local government areas with the most rural demography across three senatorial districts, simple random sampling to select a secondary school from each local government area, and proportionate sampling to select 600 secondary school graduates from each of the selected schools.

Structured questionnaires with close-ended questions elicited information on policy, access, and resource factors and the secondary school graduate aptitude test (SSGAT) that tested the functionality of secondary education among the sampled secondary school graduates in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. The instruments used for data collection are the following structured self-designed questionnaires: Secondary School Graduate Aptitude Test (SSGAT), Policy Factor Questionnaire (PFQ), Secondary School Graduate Access Questionnaire (SSGAQ), and Resource Factor Questionnaire (RFTQ). The instruments include the SSGAT with 30 items, the PFQ with 20 items, the SSGAQ with 13 items, and the RFQ with 27 items to comprehensively assess the functionality of secondary education and the factors influencing it. Test measurement specialists verified the content validity, while the instrument's reliability was affirmed through Cronbach Alpha (α) to measure the internal consistency among the items.

This study adopted the Cronbach Alpha (α) reliability test for the instruments, and reliability indexes of 0.715, 0.733, 0.753, and 0.853 at the 0.05 significance level for SSGAT, PFQ, SSGAQ, and RFQ, respectively, *were obtained*. Multiple regression was used in the statistical analysis of the quantitative data to ascertain the impact of various variables on the functionality of secondary education in rural areas in South-western Nigeria.

4.1 Ethical consideration

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, which involved obtaining clearance from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Fort Hare, as well as securing permission from TESCOM and Nigeria's Ministry of Education. In this study, the researcher diligently sought the consent of the research respondents, taking the time to provide a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives and the potential benefits it could offer to participants, the government, and society as a whole. Moreover, the researcher distributed a consent form to the participants to confirm their informed consent, thereby ensuring that they were never subjected to coercion or pressure to participate. It is important to note that the participants' involvement and cooperation in the research were entirely voluntary and willing.

5. Presentation of Results

Below are the results presented to test the two hypotheses formulated above. Hypothesis 1 was presented, followed by hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant joint contributions of the policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria.

Table 1: Joint Contributions of Policy, Access, and Resource Factors on the Functionality

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14024.204	3	4674.735	266.74	.000 ^b
	Residual	10462.685	597	17.525		
	Total	24486.889	600			

R = .757^a
R² = .573
Adjusted R² = .571
Std. Error of the Estimate=4.186

Dependent Variable: Functionality

Predictors: (Constant), Resource factor, Access Factor, Policy factor

Table 1.1 shows the linear relationship between predictor variables and the multiple correlation coefficients (R) of all the combined independent variables with the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria, which is 0.757. The adjusted R², which estimates the variance accounted for by the combined independent variables to the dependent variable measure, is 0.573, which implies that 57.3% contribution of all the independent variables (i.e., policy, access, and resource factors) on the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria, which represents the dependent variable). The remaining 42.7% is due to other variables not being considered in this study. It shows that the combination of the independent variables is effective in predicting the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria (F (3, 597) = 266.740, p< 0.05).

Hypothesis 2: There are no significant relative contributions of policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of the Policy, Access, and Resource Factors on the Functionality

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardise Coefficients		Collinearity statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	12.826	.826		15.521	.000		
	Policy factor	-.119	.032	-.451	-3.656	.000	.047	21.305
	Access factor	-.046	.032	-.084	-1.433	.152	.209	4.781
	Resource factor	-.083	.027	-.384	-3.134	.002	.048	20.997

a. Dependent Variable: Functionality

Table 1.2 shows that there are significant relative contributions of two variables (i.e., policy and resource factors) to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria, while the access factor did not contribute significantly. The table presents the degree of contribution of each independent variable to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. The policy factor contributed the most with $\beta=-0.451$; $t=-3.656$, $p<0.05$, followed by the resource factor with $\beta=-0.374$; $t=-3.134$; $p<0.05$). However, the access factor with $\beta=-0.084$; $t=-1.433$; $p>0.05$ did not significantly contribute to the model.

The result of collinearity diagnostics, as indicated by the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance in Table 1.2, shows that there are no highly correlated variables among the independent variables. The variance inflation factor ranges between 4.781 and 21.305. This indicates that the VIF is greater than 1. Also, the tolerance level is less than 1. The tolerance level ranged between 0.047 and 0.209.

This shows that all the independent variables are quite relevant and helpful in predicting the functionality of secondary education in rural communities in South-western Nigeria.

5.1 Discussion findings

The first hypothesis examined the collective influence of policy, access, and resource factors on the functionality of secondary education. The outcomes of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 1.1. The findings of this study demonstrate that policy, access, and resource factors collectively and significantly contribute to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. In essence, when these independent variables are effectively addressed by government and education stakeholders, secondary education is expected to have a high level of functionality. These results align with those of Ige (2014), who investigated the functionality of junior secondary education in Nigeria, specifically in terms of access for children, teacher quality and quantity, status of infrastructural facilities, transition rate, and educational outputs. The findings emphasised the importance of adequate funding, fair recruitment practices, infrastructural improvements, teacher training and motivation, and policy enforcement in achieving high functionality in education. Therefore, it can be concluded that the combined influences of policy, access, and resource factors are powerful determinants of secondary education functionality in rural communities in South-western Nigeria.

The second hypothesis of this study explored the contributions of policy, access, and resource factors to the functionality of secondary education. The findings of this study revealed that policy and resource factors had significant contributions to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria, while the access factor did not have a significant impact. Therefore, the results indicated that the policy factor had the greatest contribution, followed by the resource factor, while the access factor did not significantly contribute to the functionality of secondary education.

The findings regarding the policy factor align with those of Babirye (2011), who established a strong and positive relationship between teachers' remuneration policy and school performance. The findings on the resource factor are also consistent with Maduewesi (2010), who affirmed that good academic performance is positively correlated with sufficient availability and appropriate use of educational resources. Unsatisfactory performance, on the other hand, has been attributed to inadequate facilities. Additionally, the findings on the resource factor support the research of Xuehui (2018), who examined employment policies in rural China and found that benefits and salaries play a crucial role in defining the standard of instruction in schools, as well as attracting, developing, and retraining excellent secondary teachers.

In contrast, the study found that the access factor, which includes school location and socioeconomic status, did not have a negative impact on the functionality of secondary education. These findings contradict those of Adeniyi (2015), who investigated the influence of socioeconomic status and school location on secondary school students' performance in Nigeria. Adeniyi's findings revealed that factors such as occupation, education, school location, and social status had a positive impact on students' academic performance. Likewise, the findings on the access factor do not agree with Mena (2014), who examined how socioeconomic variables affected students' access to secondary education and discovered that these factors were a major contributing variable to limited access. Finally, this study is not consistent with the outcomes of a study by Joseph (2015), who investigated how location affected students' academic performance and found that covering long distances on a daily basis had an impact on their academic performance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that policy, access, and resource factors collectively and significantly contribute to the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-

western Nigeria. In simpler terms, when these independent variables are effectively addressed, they can predict the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. This indicates that if the government and education stakeholders adequately address policy, access, and resource factors, it is possible to achieve high functionality in secondary education. This researcher proposes several measures that can assist policymakers and other stakeholders in making informed decisions to enhance the functionality of secondary education in rural communities of South-western Nigeria. These measures are as follows:

- Maintaining merit-based recruitment: The government should implement a labour policy that ensures selection and recruitment are based solely on merit.
- Providing transportation to schools: Transportation services should be provided in rural areas to transport children who have to travel long distances from remote communities to school on a daily basis.
- Teaching functional skills: Secondary education should focus on imparting practical skills and the capacity for meaningful livelihoods.
- Providing rural allowances to attract and retain teachers: A policy that offers rural/transportation allowances to motivate teachers is needed in rural areas to attract and retain qualified educators.
- Implementing special interventions in rural schools: Special interventions are necessary to address the issue of resource adequacy in rural communities. The government, along with development partners and non-governmental organisations, should work together to achieve this objective.
- Reducing barriers to access: Efforts should be made to address other barriers that hinder access to functional education, such as school location barriers, challenging terrains, affordability issues, and so on.

7. Declarations

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Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Data availability: The data presented in this study is available on request from the corresponding author.

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