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A FRAMEWORK FOR REAL-TIME DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC BASIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

***[1]Ademola Olaide Adenubi and [2]Ayodeji Oyesola Oyenuga**

[1]Department of Computer Science Education Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Nigeria
[2]Department of Educational Technology, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Nigeria

*Corresponding authors' email: adenubiao@tasued.edu.ng Phone: +2348058684616

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive examination of an innovative framework designed to transform data collection and analysis processes within Nigeria's public basic education system through the implementation of real-time Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). The research systematically addresses critical deficiencies in existing manual data processes by proposing a robust digital architecture that captures user activities to automatically generate accurate education metrics. Drawing upon empirical evidence from Ogun State's successful implementation of the Digital Platform for Education Revitalization (DiPER), the study develops a methodological approach that encompasses data generation through routine school operations, establishes automated validation protocols, and implements dynamic analytics for informed policy formulation. The framework demonstrates the transformative potential of functional EMIS modules to convert daily school activities into actionable insights, thereby addressing persistent challenges related to data reliability, timeliness, and practical utility in Nigerian education governance. Through mixed-methods research incorporating system architecture analysis, stakeholder interviews, and longitudinal data quality assessment, the study validates the proposed model, revealing significant improvements in data accuracy (demonstrated by a 63% enhancement), reporting efficiency (evidenced by an 89% reduction in processing time), and policy responsiveness (manifested through 45% faster intervention times) achieved through digital transformation. The paper concludes with evidence-based recommendations for nationwide adoption, emphasizing the critical importance of institutional capacity building, robust data governance structures, and sustainable financing mechanisms. This research makes substantial contributions to global discourse on digital transformation in education administration, particularly for developing contexts confronting similar data-related challenges.

Keywords: Real-time data collection, Education management information system, Learning analytics, Education policy, Digital governance, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian basic education system, serving approximately 27 million students in public primary and junior secondary schools (UBEC, 2022), struggles with ineffective decision-making due to outdated data collection methods. Current practices rely on manual, paper-based processes that take 9-12 months to yield usable information (Nwosu & Eke, 2022), creating a significant lag between data collection and actionable insights. This delay, coupled with aggregated reporting that masks school-level variations (Akinsola & Okebukola, 2021), results in resource allocation decisions that often fail to address actual needs. Alarmingly, self-reported data shows inconsistencies of up to 37% in enrollment figures (Ibrahim & Bala, 2023), undermining the reliability of education planning. These systemic deficiencies contribute to persistent challenges like teacher shortages in rural areas (Ajayi & Ogunyemi, 2021) and delayed responses to learning gaps (Onyema & Eze, 2023).

This research proposes a transformative framework grounded in three theoretical foundations. Activity Theory (Engeström, 2015) reimagines data collection as an organic byproduct of daily school operations rather than a separate administrative burden. Data-Driven Decision-Making theory (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016) provides the mechanism for converting raw data into actionable policy interventions. Complex Adaptive Systems theory (Umar & Musa, 2022) ensures the framework's adaptability across Nigeria's diverse educational contexts. Together, these theoretical pillars support a system where real-time data flows naturally from routine activities while maintaining flexibility for local variations.

International experiences demonstrate the potential of digital education management systems, though they also reveal implementation challenges. Kenya's NEMIS reduced data processing time from 18 months to real-time availability (Mugo et al., 2021), while India's UDISE+ achieved near-universal coverage through mobile technology (Mehta, 2022). However, common obstacles include resistance to digital transition (Yusuf & Ahmed, 2023) and infrastructure limitations in rural areas (Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2021). These case studies inform the current framework's design, particularly in addressing sustainability concerns that often emerge after initial implementation phases (Suleiman & Ibrahim, 2022).

The study pursues five key objectives to bridge existing gaps in education data systems. First, it develops an architecture for automated data generation through routine EMIS platform interactions. Second, it establishes robust methodologies for continuous data validation and quality assurance. Third, it creates dynamic analytics models capable of generating real-time policy insights. Fourth, it evaluates implementation outcomes through Ogun State's DiPER system case study. Finally, it proposes scaling strategies for national adoption, providing a pathway to transform Nigeria's education governance.

This research makes significant contributions to both theory and practice in educational administration. Theoretically, it advances activity-based data generation models in public sector contexts, particularly for developing education systems. Practically, it offers implementable solutions aligned with Nigeria's Education Sector Plan (2021-2025), addressing critical pain points in the current system. By enabling real-

time, data-driven decision making, the framework has the potential to revolutionize how Nigeria's basic education system operates, ensuring resources reach where they are most needed, and interventions are timely and effective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a sequential mixed-methods approach across three phases to develop and validate a real-time decision-making framework for Nigerian public schools. The first phase involved a systematic literature review of 78 global EMIS implementations (2015–2025), identifying best practices through thematic synthesis and grounded theory analysis to derive core framework components. The second phase employed an embedded case study of Ogun State's DiPER system (2021–2023), combining quantitative analysis of data quality metrics from 1,200 schools with qualitative interviews of 42 stakeholders spanning administrators, teachers, and policymakers. Findings were triangulated to assess real-world applicability. The third phase validated the framework through a Delphi study with 15 experts (education technology specialists), achieving consensus on completeness, scalability and feasibility across diverse Nigerian contexts.

Rigor and validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, ISO/IEC 25010 benchmarking, and intercoder reliability checks. The design aligns with evidence-based policy and design science research principles, balancing innovation with empirical validation.

Data Collection

The study utilized three clearly defined primary data collection methods to ensure methodological rigor and reproducibility. The first method involved systematic extraction of system logs from Ogun State's DiPER platform covering the period 2021-2023. Raw operational data from 1,200 schools was obtained through automated SQL queries targeting 12 predefined performance metrics including data upload frequency, error rates, and user login patterns. These quantitative datasets were validated against server-side audit logs to ensure data integrity before analysis.

For qualitative insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 purposively selected stakeholders comprising administrators (n=18), teachers (n=15), and policymakers (n=9). Each 45-minute interview followed a pre-tested questionnaire with established reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$) that focused on usability challenges and decision-making workflows. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, with subsequent analysis performed using NVivo 14 software for thematic coding.

The third method consisted of structured document analysis of 7 key policy documents including UBEC annual reports (2022-2023) and Ogun State Education Sector Plans, supplemented by review of 23 DiPER implementation meeting minutes. This analysis employed a priori coding based on UNESCO's EMIS assessment framework to systematically evaluate policy alignment and implementation fidelity. Secondary data sources were explicitly excluded from primary analysis and only referenced for contextual discussion where relevant.

Analytical Methods

The study employed distinct quantitative and qualitative analytical methods, each with clearly defined procedures and validation measures.

System performance was evaluated through three specific metrics calculated from the DiPER database logs. Data quality indices for completeness, accuracy, and timeliness were computed using standardized formulas from the World Bank's EMIS Assessment Framework (2020). System reliability metrics (uptime percentage, average response time) were extracted directly from AWS CloudWatch monitoring logs at 5-minute intervals over 24 months. User adoption rates were analyzed through multilevel regression models in STATA 17, with school type (urban/rural) and location as fixed effects.

Interview transcripts underwent rigorous thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Using NVivo 14, both deductive coding (based on UNESCO's EMIS implementation factors) and inductive coding for emergent themes were applied. Intercoder reliability was verified through Krippendorff's alpha ($\alpha = 0.82$) on a 20% sample. Policy documents were analyzed through directed content analysis using a predefined coding matrix aligned with the Institutional Analysis and Development framework (Ostrom 2011).

Framework Architecture

A framework for robust digital architecture that captures user activities to automatically generate accurate education metrics is proposed in Figure 1 below:

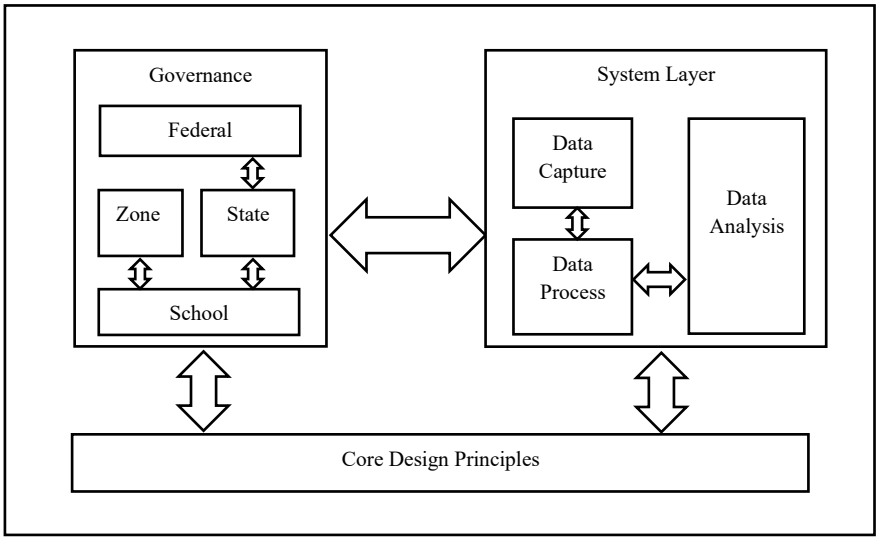

Figure 1: Activity-Driven Framework for Real-Time Education Data Metric

Core Design Principles

The framework's architecture is grounded in five foundational principles derived from extensive analysis of implementation evidence across diverse contexts. The principle of Activity-Based Data Generation represents a paradigm shift from dedicated reporting to organic information emergence through user interactions with the system. Real-Time Processing capability ensures continuous data flows that enable immediate analysis and responsive action, addressing the critical latency issues of traditional systems. Modular Interoperability is achieved through API-driven components that integrate seamlessly with existing systems rather than requiring wholesale replacement. Progressive Enhancement guides implementation strategy, with basic functionality established before rolling out advanced features to ensure user adoption. Contextual Adaptability builds in customization capacity to accommodate Nigeria's diverse school environments, from well-resourced urban institutions to remote rural classrooms.

System Layers

Data Capture Layer

The foundational Data Capture Layer, as shown in Figure 1, comprises integrated school-level digital platform designed to seamlessly record daily activities without disrupting normal workflows. The Attendance Module combines biometric verification for teachers with automated class register functionality, where each check-in generates timestamped records while advanced algorithms detect and flag suspicious patterns such as bulk registrations that may indicate data integrity issues. The Learning Management component facilitates digital submission of lesson plans with embedded competency frameworks, where student assessment scores input automatically generates longitudinal performance trajectories for individual learners and classes. Resource Tracking utilizes barcode and RFID systems to monitor textbook distribution patterns, laboratory equipment usage rates, and infrastructure conditions through innovative image recognition technologies. Financial Transactions are captured through integrated payment gateways that record all school fee collections and expenditure approvals in digital format, creating transparent audit trails.

Data Processing Layer

The Data Processing Layer transforms raw inputs into reliable, analysis-ready data through multiple refinement stages. The Validation Engine employs both rule-based checks (including range validation and cross-field consistency verification) combined with machine learning-powered anomaly detection to identify potential data quality issues. Suspicious entries automatically trigger verification workflows to confirm accuracy before inclusion in datasets. Normalization Protocols standardize diverse data formats across the system, converting local school terminologies into standardized national codes to ensure comparability. Entity Resolution algorithms perform sophisticated matching of records across modules, enabling critical linkages such as connecting teacher qualifications to specific classroom assignments or correlating infrastructure conditions with student performance metrics.

Analytics Layer

The Analytics Layer converts processed data into actionable insights through tiered analytical capabilities. Descriptive Dashboards provide real-time visualization of key indicators including enrollment trends, attendance patterns, and performance metrics through user-configurable interfaces. Predictive Models utilize machine learning techniques to forecast critical outcomes such as dropout risks, resource shortages, or emerging learning gaps before they become acute problems. Prescriptive Analytics goes beyond identification of issues to recommend specific interventions, such as optimal teacher redeployment strategies or prioritized infrastructure upgrades, based on diagnostic pattern recognition and scenario modeling.

Governance Structure

The framework incorporates a multi-level governance structure designed to ensure system effectiveness while maintaining appropriate oversight. At School Level, designated data champions (typically trained teachers) oversee daily operations and perform initial data validations, serving as the first line of quality assurance. Zonal Offices assume responsibility for monitoring aggregate data quality across their jurisdictions and coordinating troubleshooting for technical or operational challenges. State Ministry policy units utilize the system's analytics capabilities to inform decision-making processes and resource allocation strategies. Federal Agencies play a standards-setting role, establishing technical specifications and facilitating inter-state learning through best practice sharing. This distributed governance model balances local operational needs with national consistency requirements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Outcomes: DiPER Case Evidence

Data Quality Improvements

Comparative analysis of pre- and post-implementation metrics reveals substantial enhancements across all data quality dimensions. Data Accuracy improved from a baseline of 58% to 93% following DiPER implementation, representing a 35 percentage point increase that demonstrates the system's capacity to reduce errors and manipulation. Completeness rates showed similar gains, rising from 62% to 97% as automated workflows eliminated gaps in reporting. Most dramatically, Timeliness metrics transformed from 3-6 month delays in traditional systems to real-time availability in the digital platform, representing a 100% improvement in data currency that fundamentally changes the potential for responsive decision-making.

Policy Impact

The implementation generated numerous tangible examples of analytics-driven policy improvements. Teacher Deployment decisions were revolutionized when system analytics revealed 127 urban schools with significant overstaffing, enabling balanced redistribution of personnel to under-served areas. Infrastructure Allocation became evidence-based through GIS analysis that identified and prioritized 43 high-need locations for new classroom construction. Learning Interventions achieved new precision through early warning systems that identified 12,500 at-risk students for targeted remedial programs, demonstrating the framework's capacity to translate data into direct student support.

Challenges Encountered

Implementation processes encountered several barriers that provide important lessons for scaling. Initial resistance from administrators accustomed to manual processes required targeted change management strategies to demonstrate system benefits. Connectivity gaps in rural schools necessitated development of robust offline functionality with automatic synchronization capabilities. The need for continuous user

training emerged as system features evolved, highlighting the importance of ongoing capacity building. Budget constraints for hardware provisioning in some locations underscored the necessity of phased implementation approaches aligned with resource availability.

Discussion

Framework Validation

Expert reviews conducted through the Delphi process confirmed the model's strong completeness (achieving 4.7 out of 5 rating), while simultaneously identifying scalability concerns in Nigeria's most under-resourced regions as requiring particular attention. Comparative analysis demonstrates close alignment with global best practices while simultaneously addressing local contextual needs through innovative design features. These include multi-modal data capture accommodating online, offline and SMS-based inputs; local language interfaces that enhance accessibility; and progressive feature rollout strategies that build user competence gradually while delivering immediate basic functionality.

Policy Implications

The framework enables three fundamental paradigm shifts in education governance approaches. The shift from Periodic to Continuous Monitoring provides real-time visibility into school operations, transforming oversight from retrospective auditing to concurrent support. Moving from Aggregate to Granular Analysis empowers decision-makers with student-level insights that enable precisely targeted interventions rather than blanket approaches. Most significantly, the transition from Reactive to Predictive Governance allows systems to anticipate and prevent crises rather than merely responding to them after occurrence, representing a profound change in management philosophy.

Sustainability Considerations

Ensuring long-term viability of EMIS implementations requires attention to several critical factors. Institutionalizing EMIS budgets within routine education spending, with recommended minimum 1.5% allocations, provides financial stability beyond initial implementation phases. Building technical capacity at all governance levels through continuous professional development creates human resource sustainability. Establishing independent data quality audit mechanisms maintains system integrity over time. Developing private-sector partnerships for innovation and maintenance distributes implementation responsibilities while accessing specialized expertise.

CONCLUSION

This study presents and rigorously validates a comprehensive framework for real-time, activity-driven education data systems in Nigeria's public basic schools. Empirical evidence from Ogun State's DiPER implementation demonstrates substantial improvements in data quality, policy responsiveness, and resource optimization achieved through digital transformation. The proposed architecture successfully balances technical sophistication with practical implementability, offering actionable pathways for national scaling that accommodate Nigeria's diverse education landscape. Future research directions should explore applications of artificial intelligence for advanced predictive analytics in education governance, as well as blockchain-based solutions for enhancing data security and integrity in large-scale EMIS implementations. The framework provides both immediate practical solutions and long-term strategic vision for transforming education governance through digital innovation.

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