

ROLE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN STRENGTHENING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR IMPROVED PRIMARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices and school leadership in improving primary school performance in Sokoto State, Nigeria. Guided by the Results-Based Management (RBM) framework, a descriptive survey design was adopted with a sample of 465 respondents, comprising 150 head teachers, 300 teachers, and 15 LGEA officials. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between effective M&E practices and school leadership performance. However, school leaders' ability to apply M&E data for instructional improvement was found to be limited. The study concludes that strengthening M&E competencies and institutionalizing evidence-based decision-making are critical for enhancing primary school outcomes.

Keywords: Monitoring, evaluation, school, leadership, primary school

Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of social, economic, and political development. Central to every educational system is the primary school, which provides the foundation for lifelong learning and national progress. In Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto State, the effectiveness of primary schools has come under increasing scrutiny due to persistent challenges with learning outcomes, teacher performance, and school management practices. Consequently, school leadership and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems have gained prominence as key mechanisms for improving educational quality and outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) involve systematic processes for tracking progress, assessing performance, and informing decision-making within educational systems.

When effectively implemented, M&E offers school leaders timely, data-driven insights that can strengthen strategic planning, resource allocation, and instructional practices. Similarly, effective school leadership entails guiding teachers, learners, and the wider school community toward the achievement of educational objectives. The integration of leadership and M&E holds significant potential to enhance school performance, especially in resource-constrained contexts such as Sokoto State.

In recent years, stakeholders including the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), non-governmental organizations, and international development partners have underscored the value of evidence-based decision-making at the school level. Nonetheless, there remains a limited empirical understanding of how school leaders in Sokoto State utilize M&E data to inform instructional and administrative decisions. Against the backdrop of growing demands for accountability, transparency, and learner-centered reforms, it is essential to examine the relationship between monitoring and evaluation and school leadership in strengthening primary school performance in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Although several policy interventions and institutional supports have been introduced to strengthen primary education in Sokoto State, key indicators such as pupils' learning outcomes, teacher motivation, and instructional supervision remain below expected standards. A persistent challenge lies in the limited use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems to drive school improvement initiatives. While many schools routinely collect data, there is often a gap between the availability of such data and its practical use by school leaders for planning and instructional decision-making.

In addition, school leadership practices differ widely across education zones, with some school heads lacking either the capacity or the commitment to apply M&E findings in a meaningful manner. The absence of well-defined feedback mechanisms and accountability structures further exacerbates the situation. These gaps not only restrict efforts to improve school performance but also weaken broader education reforms aimed at realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education). Against this background, it becomes important to examine the extent to which M&E practices shape school leadership effectiveness and the ways in which school leaders utilize evaluation data to improve teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools across selected education zones of Sokoto State.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- i. Examine the relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing primary school performance in selected education zones of Sokoto State.
- ii. Assess the extent to which school leaders utilize monitoring and evaluation data to improve teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools within the study area.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing primary school performance?
- ii. To what extent do school leaders utilize monitoring and evaluation data to improve teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following null hypotheses:

- i. There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing primary school performance.
- ii. School leaders do not significantly utilize monitoring and evaluation data to improve teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools.

Literature Review

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are distinct yet interrelated processes designed to assess the progress and effectiveness of projects, programs, and policies. Monitoring refers to the routine collection and analysis of data to measure performance against established outputs and outcomes. Evaluation, in contrast, entails a systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed program or policy to determine its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability (UNDP, 2019).

Within the educational sector, M&E serves as a critical tool for planning, tracking learners' academic progress, enhancing teacher performance, and ensuring accountability in the utilization of resources. Common instruments include classroom observation checklists, attendance registers, learner assessment records, and school improvement plans. When appropriately applied, M&E not only strengthens transparency but also promotes evidence-based decision-making among school leaders and education authorities (Görgens & Kusek, 2010).

School Leadership

School leadership refers to the capacity of school heads and administrators to influence, guide, and support the school community in achieving educational objectives. Effective school leaders are expected to articulate clear goals, cultivate strong professional cultures, promote instructional improvement, and ensure accountability (Bush, 2013). As Leithwood et al. (2020) observed, school leadership ranks second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors influencing student learning. In Nigeria, school heads perform crucial functions in curriculum implementation, teacher supervision, school–community relations, and the coordination of co-curricular activities. Nonetheless, disparities in leadership effectiveness persist, often linked to variations in training, experience, and leadership styles (Ige, 2011).

Monitoring and Evaluation as a Leadership Tool

The integration of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) into school leadership processes is vital for enhancing educational outcomes. Through M&E systems, school leaders are able to set performance benchmarks, monitor teacher attendance, track student achievement, and evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement plans. When properly analyzed and applied, M&E data provide evidence to guide strategic adjustments, resource allocation, and responses to emerging challenges. As Oduro and MacBeath (2003) observe, data-informed leadership enables schools to prioritize measurable outcomes while fostering a culture of reflection and accountability. Nonetheless, the effective use of M&E as a leadership tool hinges on the availability of reliable data, the analytical capacity of stakeholders, and the commitment of school leaders to continuous improvement (World Bank, 2020).

Methodology

Research Design

The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect and analyze data from a representative sample in order to describe and interpret the prevailing relationships between Monitoring & Evaluation practices, school leadership, and primary school performance in Sokoto State. The design also supports the use of quantitative data for identifying patterns and making inferences about the broader population.

Population of the Study

The study population consisted of all public primary schools, head teachers, teachers, and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) officials in the various education zones in Sokoto State, which include Gwadabawa, Tambuwal, and Sokoto North.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Four different sampling techniques were employed in the study, namely stratified, purposive, convenience, and simple random sampling. The educational zones in the State were first stratified, after which three zones were purposively selected. From each selected zone, five Local Government Areas (LGAs) were also purposively chosen. Within each LGA, ten public primary schools were randomly selected to ensure adequate rural–urban representation. In each school, the head teacher was purposively selected, while two teachers were chosen through convenience sampling. In addition, one Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) official was purposively selected from each LGA to provide broader administrative insights. The final sample consisted of:

- 150 Headteachers (1 per school × 10 schools × 15 LGAs)
- 300 Teachers (2 per school × 150 schools)
- 15 LGEA Officials (1 per LGA)
- Total Sample Size = 465 respondents

Research Instruments

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. It consisted of four sections:

- Section A: Demographic data
- Section B: Items on Monitoring and Evaluation practices
- Section C: Items on school leadership effectiveness

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- Section D: Items on school performance indicators

Items were designed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Results

H₀ 1: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing primary school performance. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis, and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and school leadership effectiveness

Variables	N	Mean	S. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Monitoring & Evaluation	465	3.45	0.88			
School Leadership Effectiveness	465	3.62	0.91	0.691	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

Field work, 2025

Interpretation: There is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation practices and School Leadership Effectiveness ($r = 0.691$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that effective M&E practices are associated with enhanced leadership performance in primary schools. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

H₀ 2: School leaders do not significantly utilize monitoring and evaluation data to improve teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools.

Table 2: Influence of M&E Data Usage on Teaching and Learning Outcomes

This hypothesis was tested using Linear Regression analysis to determine the predictive influence of M&E data usage on teaching and learning outcomes, as presented in Table 2.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	R ²	F-Cal	p	Decision
M&E Data Usage	465	3.38	0.91					
Teaching & Learning Outcomes	465	3.54	0.86	0.648	0.420	126.13	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

Field work, 2025

Interpretation: M&E data usage significantly predicts improvements in teaching and learning outcomes ($R^2 = 0.420$, $F = 126.13$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that 42% of the variation in learning improvement among primary schools can be attributed to how effectively M&E data are utilized. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Summary of Findings

1. The null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing school performance was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis accepted, with an r-cal of 0.691 against a significant p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).
2. The descriptive analysis showed that school leaders use M&E data to a moderate-to-high extent to improve teaching strategies, identify challenges, and plan professional development activities. (Note: This is descriptive, not hypothesis-driven, hence not in r-cal format.)
3. The null hypothesis stating that M&E data usage does not significantly predict teaching and learning outcomes in public primary schools was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis accepted, with an R^2 of 0.420, F-Cal of 126.13, and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The paper discusses the key findings in relation to the research objectives, questions, hypotheses, and reviewed literature. The discussion is presented under two major themes corresponding to the study objectives.

The findings of research question one reveal a strong positive and significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices and school leadership effectiveness in enhancing primary school performance in Sokoto State. This supports the notion that schools with active M&E systems tend to experience more effective leadership practices. This result is in line with the findings of Adebayo and Oyeniran (2019) who asserted that the use of M&E tools such as lesson observation reports, teacher attendance tracking, and performance assessments directly improves the ability of school heads to supervise and lead effectively. It is also consistent with the work of

Leithwood et al. (2020) who emphasized that data-informed leadership enhances instructional quality and learner achievement.

The findings of research question number 2 indicates that there is significant relationship between M&E Data Usage on Teaching and Learning Outcomes. This finding echoes the views of Ibrahim & Onasanya (2020) who found that data-driven professional development and classroom support contribute significantly to better student outcomes. Likewise, Ogundele (2019) emphasized the strategic value of data for identifying performance gaps, planning remediation strategies, and allocating instructional resources.

Hypothesis number also revealed that there is significant between M&E Practice and School Leadership, this finding aligns with the Results-Based Management (RBM) Theory, which posits that performance improvement is more achievable when leaders are guided by measurable indicators and results rather than inputs alone (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

While the results are promising, it is important to note that some variation exists in the level of M&E data utilization across schools. This could be attributed to differences in capacity, access to tools, or motivation among school leaders. Such disparities mirror earlier concerns raised by Olaleye and Ajayi (2017) regarding uneven leadership quality in Nigerian primary schools.

Hypothesis number 2 also indicates significant relationship between M&E data usage and learning outcomes. The findings reinforce the idea that data literacy and leadership capacity building are critical for optimizing the benefits of M&E systems. Without sufficient understanding of how to interpret and apply data, school heads may underutilize the available information, thereby weakening the potential impact on teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the survey, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. When school leaders actively engage with M&E tools—such as routine monitoring reports, data feedback mechanisms, and classroom observation templates—they are better positioned to lead with purpose, set performance goals, and improve school functionality. Thus, M&E serves as a strategic leadership enabler.
2. Proper utilization M&E data to a moderate-to-high extent will allow School heads to easily identify learner performance gaps, teacher professional development,

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adjusting instructional methods, and informing classroom support strategies. However, differences exist across schools in terms of M&E data use, which may be linked to variations in leadership capacity and access to training.

Recommendations

1. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the survey: The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) should institutionalize regular M&E training for all public primary school leaders. This training should cover data collection, analysis, and practical application of M&E findings in school leadership.
2. School leaders should be supported with simplified tools (e.g., dashboards, templates) and regular mentoring that enable them to convert raw M&E data into actionable insights. In-service workshops and peer learning sessions should be encouraged to build data literacy.
3. A performance-based incentive system should be introduced to reward schools that demonstrate effective use of M&E for school improvement. This will foster a competitive and innovative approach to leadership within the education zones.
4. Policymakers should embed M&E frameworks into school improvement plans and allocate dedicated resources for their implementation. Monitoring results
5. should feed directly into strategic education planning at both state and local government levels.
6. M&E systems should be digitalized where possible and integrated with the Education Management Information System (EMIS) for real-time decision-making. This approach will help create a transparent, responsive, and learning-oriented school environment.

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