



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 15, Issue, 05, pp. 68362-68366, May, 2025

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.29545.05.2025>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

ANALYZING HOW POLITICAL CHANGES AND POLICY SHIFTS, SUCH AS POTENTIAL CUTS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING AND THE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION REFORMS, AFFECT STUDENTS' ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

***Dr. Kishor Kumar Dash**

Faculty, Balimela College of Science & Technology, Academic Counselor (JMC), IGNOU & OSOU, Scholar, M.A (IRSS), O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU)

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11th February, 2025

Received in revised form
26th March, 2025

Accepted 14th April, 2025

Published online 28th May, 2025

Key Words:

Political Changes, Education funding,
Education Reforms, Access to education,
Academic inequality.

***Corresponding author: Dr. Kishor Kumar Dash**

ABSTRACT

The threats to students' access to quality education are even more significant due to political changes and policy shifts (influenced by potential cutback in public education funding and in the form of real implementation of education reforms). When there are cuts in the funding, overcrowded classrooms, less access to educational resources, and less personalized opportunity to learn becomes the exact face faced by students from disadvantaged background. This financial constraint may restrict the creation of the modern infrastructures including technology integration and such other specialized programs, and the achievement gap may keep on widening. Moreover, education reforms — whether it be changes to the curriculum or the training of teachers — can also create such complex implementation challenges which can interfere with the student's education. Reforms seek to enhance learning outcomes, but these efforts encounter opposition because of bureaucratic impediments, insufficiency of support, and disagreement among the different stakeholders. For that reason, these changes may sometimes unwittingly amplify existing inequalities and ultimately prohibitive to students' academic success. The politics of education access is therefore predicated on the interplay between political decision and educational access and it becomes necessary to achieve more balance in policy making so that the reforms are sustainable and inclusive. Policymakers must allocate equitable funding, select effective reform strategies and long term support of schools and students in order to maintain the quality of the education.

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Citation: Dr. Kishor Kumar Dash. 2025. "Analyzing how Political changes and policy shifts, such as Potential cuts to Public Education Funding and the challenges in Implementing Education Reforms, Affect Students' Access to quality education". *International Journal of Development Research*, 15, (05), 68362-68366.

INTRODUCTION

Political changes and policy shifts have great impact on the accessibility and quality of education by changing how funds are allocated to public education with the consequence of implementing reforms (Darling-Hammond et al. 2024). Stability, appropriate financing, and the proper policies are what propel education, which is an essential pillar of social development. Yet when there are political changes, such as funding cuts, readiness to handle significant challenges that place equitable access to quality education for all students in danger of not being realized, continues to be the challenge. Indeed, initial public education funding cuts can mean overcrowded classrooms, trimming down on the number of teaching staff, and not having a wide enough range of educational resources available to outcast students and those living on low-income. These financial constraints can also cause the delay or stop of these implementation of the modern teaching methods, technology, and specialized

programs that are crucial for academic success of students. In addition, the implementation of education reforms—on curriculum change, teaching standards or school governance—requires its own class of obstacles (DeAngelis et al. 2019). These reforms may face resistance from various stakeholders including the educators, lack of infrastructure and insufficient support hence making students to bear the brunt of the disruptions. To build a fairer and more sustainable system of education, it is important to know how these kinds of political conditions influence the educational experiences.

Research Aim: So as to analyze the impact that political and policy changes or funding cuts or difficulties in implementing education reform have on students' access to quality education.

Objectives

- To examine the effects of potential cuts to public education funding on the quality of education and student outcomes.

- To evaluate the challenges faced by policymakers in implementing education reforms and their impact on students' access to education.
- To explore the role of political decisions in creating or exacerbating educational inequalities among different student demographics.
- To assess the effectiveness of current strategies in mitigating the negative consequences of political and policy changes on students' educational experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the role of political decisions in creating or exacerbating educational inequalities among different student demographics:

Educational inequalities are, in fact, created or compounded by political decisions, particularly in regards to diversity in the educational demographics. Politics and education are not only intertwined, they determine how resources are distributed, opportunity for academic achievement and what the quality of the education students are exposed to. It is found through research that political choice, namely allocations in the budget, legislative decisions and the prioritization of some education reforms, results on inequalities of educational access, especially for groups not covered, namely low income students, racial minorities and rural areas. The allocation of funding is one key aspect of political decisions that bear on the educational inequalities. Most of the public education gets funded through taxes and there are frequent differences in tax revenue which result in unequal funding in districts. As a consequence of this funding gap, students are divided by a chasm when it comes to the very basic issue of which teachers they are taught by, what tools they have to learn with, or what resources they can access. Research by Darling-Hammond (2004) suggests that wealthier districts receive more funding and thus educational inequities emerge when districts unable to provide adequate educational opportunities to students based in poor districts, often existing in minority communities (Frankenberg et al 2019). In the US, state and local governments generally bear the primary responsibility for public education, creating a system of unequal funding between socio economic groups and as such, these inequities are worst here. Moreover, curricular issues like curriculum content, preparation of teachers, and educational standards are made political decisions that foster inequality. The shift of policy in enforcing standard education, for instance, the implementation of high stakes testing and national curricula, does not consider the separated needs of students from different backgrounds. An example is the testing policies that are for the most part politically motivated and might not associate with the learning styles and cultural background of students from underrepresented communities, resulting then in poorer performance and limited chances for advancement. Politically induced policies which often marginalize students from low income or minority status lead to further exacerbating existing educational disparities, as indicated by Anagnostopoulos (2007). Finally, not only the availability of direct teaching services are influenced by political decisions but also political decisions affect the availability of other support services for students. Disadvantaged student programs like after programs, programs offering mental health services and language support are often a political priority. Withdrawing or limiting these services when political leaders make a decision causes this to disproportionately impact students that need them most. Ladd (2003) researches the effect of political decisions regarding funding of support programs on disadvantaged students' academic success and wellbeing in the long run. Once these cuts bear on these particular communities, students may drop out at higher rates, attend college at lower rates and have fewer career opportunities. Also, it has been shown that policies regarding school choice – charter schools, voucher program, and funding of private schools – have catalyzed educational inequalities. These policies are often presented as a means to enhance educational quality and optionality in failing schools, however, Frankenberg et al. (2019) show that they can be used to segregate students by race and class (Lafortune et al 2018). In an attempt to prevent school segregation and to counteract the

negative impact of segregation and poverty on school outcomes, school choice programs are more often equity based, with families with greater resources particularly advantaged, while disadvantaged students remain in underfunded, lower quality public schools. This spawns a cycle of educational failure on the part of students from marginalized groups while students from more privileged backgrounds have better quality of educational experiences. Finally, the political decisions made have the power to create or intensify educational inequalities between different demographics of students. Political decisions of distributing resources, curriculum policies, support services and school choice programs all shape the way in which resources are distributed, curriculum policies, support services and school choice programs structure determination of a quality of education for students. Policymakers must therefore think about the various needs of all the students and change some fairer funding models and some inclusive policies that support the marginalized people. The cycle of inequality can only be broken by means of a holistic political reform and investment in education to ensure all the students are given an equal opportunity to succeed.

Examining the effects of potential cuts to public education funding on the quality of education and student outcomes:

A perennial public education funding issue is cuts to public education funding and its devastating consequences for such public education funding and student outcomes. Local, state and federal government funds most of the costs of public education and local funding is usually quite reliant on property taxes. This structure itself then inherently creates unequal funding in districts and at the times when governments cut budgets to education, these disparities grow disproportionately to affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Multiple existing pieces of literature have found that cuts in funding create a host of problems that make it harder for education to be of a quality level, hinder a student's chances, and result in worse longer term outcomes. Elimination of public education funding cuts a school's resources (Moxnes et al 2024). When schools run on low budgets, the numbers of teachers and support staff have to be cut, as well as educational materials, all of which directly have a negative effect on the learning environment. Baker et al. (2016) study shows that schools with limited budgets are more inclined to eliminate programs relevant to arts, especially extracurricular activities as well support services for students that are pivotal in the development of a complete, rounded education. Thus, students in underfunded schools miss out on enrollment to enriching experiences and may lack the cognitive and social development that these experiences provide. Additionally, when funding cuts cause a decreasing number of teachers, the increase in teacher-to-student ratio in classrooms also occurs. As Darling-Hammond (2004) researches, this leads to a negative impact on the quality of education, as higher teacher student ratio lowers the amount of individual attention which students are exposed to. The condition of the teachers in overcrowded classrooms, where it is difficult to oversee and manage different needs of students especially those who are in need of special attention or support for learning disabilities, language barriers, or socio-economic disadvantages. This lack of individualized support increases the likelihood of less academic achievement and higher dropout rates especially for students in low income or minority backgrounds. Funding for public education also cuts into the teachers' professional development. However, when funds are cut, schools often decrease expenses that pertain to teacher training and development programs. There have been studies that showed that it's critical to have professional development to make teaching better and the outcome of students (Polat et al 2022). An example of the type of finding that can come from a study like this is that according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), the more teacher training a person receives, the more student performance goes up — particularly in subjects such as math and reading. In other words, adequate funding for teacher professional development is needed to ensure that teachers stay current with new teaching methodologies and curriculum changes and with technological advances which paves way to assisting in the effectiveness of instruction. Funding cut will not only cause less resources and poorer quality of teachers, but also reduces abilities to spend on facilities' maintenance and infrastructure.

According to a study by DeAngelis (2019), schools with insufficient funding are prone to experiencing deteriorating physical condition, such as obsolete buildings and heating and cooling systems, etc., and can create unsafe environment. Not only do these conditions make learning uncomfortable, but also it raises health and safety concerns which further exhaust students' learning capabilities. Adequate funding for facilities maintenance is important in helping students to form attitudes towards learning and generally towards their well being in the physical make up of a school. Funding cuts are also a cause for concern on the long term level. Lafortune et al. (2018) look at the link between students' achievements and various resources of the public schooling system (number of public schools or public education funding). Outside of college readiness, students from disadvantaged backgrounds—as if these are already more likely to attend underfunded schools—pose a higher risk of dropping out and behind, and have fewer opportunities for higher education (Smith et al. 2023). Each of those things contributes over time to some sort of broader societal inequality, and therefore to economic immobility that perpetuates cycles of poverty. And furthermore, these students are less likely to acquire the essential skills that are needed for the modern work place, and this might very well withstand a negative effect on what their future job opportunities and whether they would actually be able to earn a living. Finally, public education funding cuts have many profound consequences on the quality of the education, and the outcome of students. The result of these cuts is decreased educational resources, decreased teacher quality, and decreased school facility and led to the thwart of student learning experience and academic performance. It is especially harmful to the disadvantaged student, with decreased underfunded education causing further division of wealth and hindrance of future possibility. This means that public school policymakers should prioritise that public schools receive adequate funding, and think about what the long term implications of cutting public school funding will have the negative impact on the student academic achievement and in society (Garcia et al. 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research approach will be used to study the impact of political changes and policy shifts (especially drop in public education funding) on accessing quality education of the students. The aim of this research is to get numerical data to analyze the relationship between funding levels and student outcome for different demographic groups. The surveys and questionnaires will be conducted with the educators, policymakers and the policies administrators. Perceptions regarding the degree to which funding cuts impact degree of resources available for teaching, the quality of teaching, and student performance will be measured in the survey using a Likert scale (Miller et al. 2018). Other sources of data like educational reports, government statistics and academic studies will be collected for graduates rate and academic achievement, as well as the amount of funding from federal or local departments. Statistical techniques will be used to analyze these data in order to determine patterns and correlation of funding cuts on educational outcomes. With SPSS software, data will be analyzed to look for the strength and the direction of relationships between the variables. The results will clearly determine the effect that funding reductions have on the student's access to a quality education, and will provide help in making future decisions on how to minimize educational disparities.

Analysis

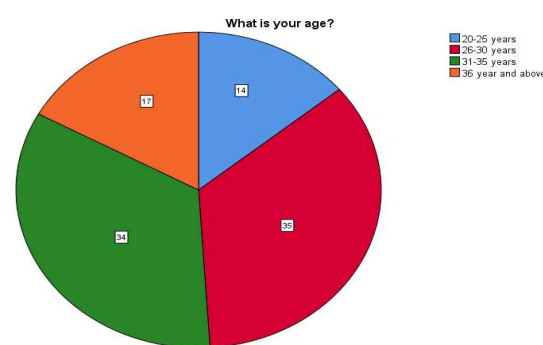
Demographic analysis

Age

Table 1. Age distribution

What is your age?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 20-25 years	14	14.0	14.0	14.0
26-30 years	35	35.0	35.0	49.0
31-35 years	34	34.0	34.0	83.0
36 year and above	17	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS)



(Source: SPSS)

Figure 1. Age distribution

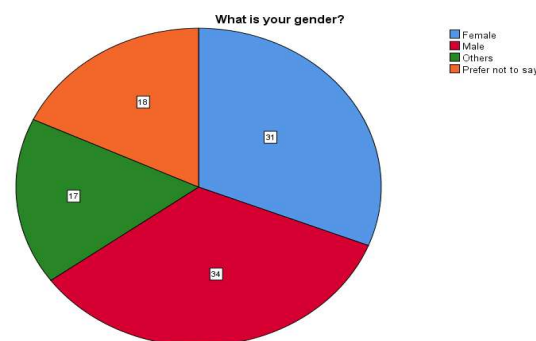
The table and the pie chart for distribution define the differentiation in order to the participation rate of the people from the age of 20 years age to 36 years and above. The maximum rate of participation of the people with the age group 26 to 30 years old which is 35 and the rate of cumulative percentage of the people is 49%. The people who belong between the ages of 20 to 25 are the lowest participated in the survey with a same frequency of 14 and a cumulative percentage is also 14%.

Gender

Table 2. Gender distribution

What is your gender?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	31	31.0	31.0	31.0
Male	34	34.0	34.0	65.0
Others	17	17.0	17.0	82.0
Prefer not to say	18	18.0	18.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS)



(Source: SPSS)

Figure 2. Gender distribution

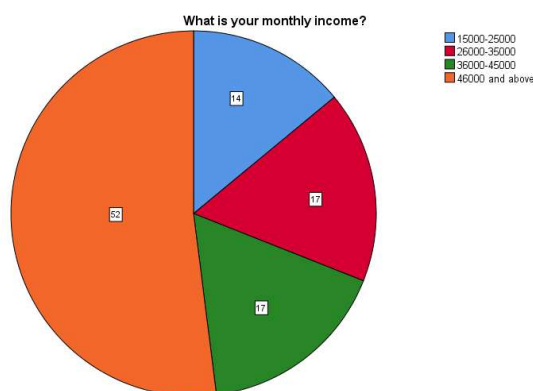
The above figure of the gender distribution table indicates the frequencies of the people with different gender are male, female, others and the people who do not want to say that gender. People who are male are the highest participated in this survey is conducted to determine the effect of policy shift for the implementation of the education reforms in the educational sectors. The pie chart indicates that the frequency of male participants is 34 and the cumulative percentage is 65%. The lowest participation is of the others people with 17 frequencies and the cumulative percentage is 82%.

Monthly income

Table 3. Monthly income distribution

What is your monthly income?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 15000-25000	14	14.0	14.0	14.0
26000-35000	17	17.0	17.0	31.0
36000-45000	17	17.0	17.0	48.0
46000 and above	52	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS)



(Source: SPSS)

Figure 3. Monthly income distribution

Measurement of the monthly income of the respondents shows the enthusiasm among the participants from different ranges of their income. Among the all other participants, the highest interest of the people who monthly 46000 and above the frequency of the people is 52 refers in the pie chart and the valid percentage is 52%. That table in the above indicates that the lowest interest is for the people who are monthly 15000 to 25000. From the above table and the pie chart, it is clear that the participants who earn a moderate to high income such the highest enthusiasm for the survey.

Descriptive analysis

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
DV_political changes	100	1	5	3.92	1.269	-1.543	.241	1.314	.478
IV1.1_policy shifts	100	1	5	2.87	1.361	.240	.241	-1.200	.478
IV1.3_education reforms	100	1	5	2.51	1.299	1.008	.241	-.134	.478
IV2.1_Budget constraints	100	1	4	3.13	1.228	-.821	.241	-1.128	.478
IV3.2_digital resources	100	1	5	3.19	1.245	-.337	.241	-.448	.478
IV4.1_upward mobility	100	2	5	3.82	1.086	-.454	.241	-1.082	.478
Valid N (listwise)	100								

(Source: SPSS)

Figure 4. Descriptive analysis

The table of descriptive analysis above is a clear indicator of the high relationship between political changes to upward mobility in different kinds of education and institutes. The value of the mean statistics for upward mobility is 3.82 and the standard deviation statistics is 1.086. This highest fellow of main statistics clearly indicates that there is a clear effectiveness of the upper atom mobility for changing the political factor to enhance the quality of public education.

Factor analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.380
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	160.582
	df	6
	Sig.	.000

(Source: SPSS)

Figure 5. Factor analysis

The table of factor analysis shown above gives a proper overview of the measurement of the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin in the process of sampling adequacy. The value of the sampling education of this study is 0.380 which is below 0.5 showing the unpredictability factor for the changes of policy in order to public education funding system. The value that is an approximate value for the child square is 160.582 with

6 degrees of freedom and a significance of 0. This hello shows the sufficient correlation between the data that are collected from the study with the effectiveness of political changes in the education system.

Reliability test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha ^a	N of Items
-.260	7

a. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.

(Source: SPSS)

Figure 6. Reliability test

Figure 8 of this study indicates the reliability statistics result that focused on the measurement of Cronbach's Alpha that shows the internal reliability of the variables used in the survey. The negative value for convex Alpha which is -0.260 with 7 number items lies in the range of < 0.5. The negative value of the alpha gives an overview for the less underline construct on the notes of impact for public educational funding challenges on giving equality education to the students.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: The political changes and the educational reforms are connected internally

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.337 ^a	.113	.104	1.201	.113	12.527	1	98	.001	2.238

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV1.3_education reforms

b. Dependent Variable: DV_political changes

ANOVA ^a					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	18.062	1	18.062	12.527
	Residual	141.298	98	1.442	
	Total	159.360	99		

a. Dependent Variable: DV_political changes

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV1.3_education reforms

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.745	.262	18.090	.000
	IV1.3_education reforms	-.329	.093	-3.539	.001

a. Dependent Variable: DV_political changes

(Source: SPSS)

Figure 7. Hypothesis testing 1

That evil of model summary indicates the value for estimation standard error is 1.201 which is greater than 1 and this gives a justification for the impact of educational reforms on political changes in the educational institutes. The coefficient table gives the value for the standardize coefficient for IV1.3 which is educational reform is - 0.337 indicating the impact of this factor on making public education more effective.

Hypothesis 2: The upward mobility and the political changes are internally related to each other's

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.114 ^a	.013	.003	1.267	.013	1.292	1	98	.258	1.846
a. Predictors: (Constant), IV4.1_upward mobility										
b. Dependent Variable: DV_political changes										

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	2.074	1	2.074	1.292	.258 ^b
Residual	157.286	98	1.605		
Total	159.360	99			

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Beta			
1					
(Constant)	3.411		7.328	.000	
IV4.1_upward mobility	.133	.114	1.137	.258	

a. Dependent Variable: DV_political changes
b. Predictors: (Constant), IV4.1_upward mobility

(Source: SPSS)

Figure 8. Hypothesis testing 2

The model summary gives the value of Durbin Watson that is 1.846 and the advert will give the value of preparation that is 2.074. The above 2 highly indicates the impact of political changes to increase the mobility of the educational sector for providing data education and system to the students. The last a section gives a value for on standard rice coefficient which is 0.133.

DISCUSSION

This study findings make it clear that political decisions like cutting education funding for the public are of huge impact on the access of the quality education for the students in that country. The results show that funding reductions soon harm educational quality; indeed, reduction in school quality has immediate and long run consequences and they are particularly harmful to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. When funding is cut, schools must focus on essential services with programs, extracurricular, and student support services all containing a part in a well rounded education. The effect is that there is less engaging learning environment that can ultimately impede in students' development in academic and personal life. It also shows that when money gets cut from its low, there is a double whammy: Already disadvantaged students suffer the most. If funding is chopped in school districts that pride themselves on accommodating students of low economic means, chances that students are going to be well prepared increase the substandard (Roberts *et al* 2021). This decline in educational quality is creditable to high teacher student ratios, minimal access to technology as well as limited facilities. Lack of personal or personalized support and attention by these students results in lower academic achievement and high dropout rates. The findings also show that decisions regarding education funding have larger effects for the society, such as limiting economic subsistence for deprived communities. Because these students have reduced access to quality education, it limits the future opportunities, which keep them perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. The study reinforces the need for policies which place equal emphasis on funding and support of all schools, for no schools or student should be left behind because political decisions lead to the closed down of schools, thus depriving the students of an education (Warren *et al* 2018).

CONCLUSION

Finally, as stated, political decisions relating to educational cuts have significant negative impact on the access to quality education for students. The results conform to the idea that reductions in funding result in a scarcity of educational resources, restricted access to specialized programs, and lower quality of teachers hindering the academic achievement of the students. As these cuts hit hardest among students from marginalized and low-income backgrounds, they attend schools already in resource shortfall. Thus, cuts in funds meant more educational inequalities already exist, producing few opportunities for academic success and social mobility. Additionally, the repercussions of political decisions reach beyond the classroom into the national field of hardships like rising dropout rates and decreased future professions as a result of lack of opportunities during growing period. The results emphasize the necessity of placing supportive policies for all public schools, including equitable funding for each and every one that supports every student to reach the same goal. Policymakers must also put in place more strategies that go well beyond coping with instant monetary limitations to secure sustainable and wide-ranging educational changes that will help to assure persistent academic accomplishment and fill the hole between academic open doors. Such efforts are all we can do to create a more just and inclusive education system for all.

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