

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION POLICY IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

Despite substantial investment in basic education, the effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy in Nasarawa State continues to be constrained by significant challenges, while the strategies considered most capable of addressing those challenges have not been systematically documented from the standpoint of the personnel who implement the Policy on a daily basis. This situation necessitates a systematic assessment of the challenges confronting implementation and the strategies required to improve it. The objectives of this study were to identify the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State, and to examine the strategies that can enhance its implementation and improve educational development in the State. The study was anchored on the Policy Implementation Theory of Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), complemented by Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). A mixed research design was adopted, involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were obtained through the administration of questionnaires, while qualitative data were sourced from Key Informant Interviews and secondary materials such as scholarly literature and official reports. The study population comprised ten thousand, two hundred and forty-five (10,245) personnel of the Nasarawa State Universal Basic Education Board (NSUBEB), drawn from officials, education secretaries, head teachers, and classroom teachers across six selected Local Government Areas, namely Akwanga, Wamba, Karu, Keffi, Lafia, and Doma. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, yielding a sample size of 385, approximated to 389 for administration purposes. Out of the 389 questionnaires distributed, 381 were returned, while 8 were not returned. A multistage sampling technique combining simple random and purposive sampling was employed. The findings revealed that inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, weak monitoring and evaluation, and poor educational infrastructure constitute the major challenges affecting implementation. Based on these findings, the study recommends improved and timely release of intervention funds, sustained teacher recruitment, targeted infrastructural investment, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to improve the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Implementation Challenges, Strategies, Nasarawa State

Introduction

A public policy is only as effective as the obstacles that confront its implementation permit it to be, and identifying those obstacles clearly is the first step toward overcoming them. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy was introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in September 1999 and given legal backing through the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, to guarantee free, compulsory, and universal basic education for every Nigerian child. Twenty-five years after its introduction, however, the record of implementation across the federation remains uneven, and a growing body of evidence suggests that a recurring cluster of challenges, funding, teacher supply, monitoring, and infrastructure, continues to limit its effectiveness in many states, Nasarawa State included.

Understanding these challenges is necessary but not, on its own, sufficient for policy improvement; it is equally necessary to understand which strategies the personnel who implement the Policy on a daily basis consider most likely to address them. A challenge correctly diagnosed but met with the wrong remedy is no better addressed than one left undiagnosed altogether. This paper therefore examines both dimensions together: first, the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State, and second, the strategies that respondents directly involved in implementation consider most capable of improving it.

Nasarawa State has, since its creation in 1996, participated in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy through the Nasarawa State Universal Basic Education Board (NSUBEB), working in

collaboration with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), and community stakeholders. Between 2015 and 2025, the State benefited from several interventions, including classroom construction, teacher recruitment, and instructional material distribution. Despite these interventions, reports from educational stakeholders continue to point to funding shortfalls, teacher shortages, weak supervision, and infrastructural deficits, raising the question of what specifically continues to hinder implementation and what can practically be done about it.

The decision to examine challenges and strategies as a paired research problem, rather than as two separate lines of enquiry, follows directly from the logic of policy implementation itself. A challenge identified without a corresponding, empirically grounded strategy risks becoming merely descriptive, a catalogue of what is wrong without a clear sense of what to do about it, while a strategy proposed without first establishing which challenge it is meant to address risks being generic, the kind of recommendation that could apply to almost any underperforming public programme. By deriving both the challenges and the strategies from the same respondents, NSUBEB officials, Education Secretaries, head teachers, and classroom teachers, drawn from the same six Local Government Areas, this study is able to establish a direct, empirically traceable correspondence between what respondents identify as wrong and what those same respondents believe would put it right.

By interrogating challenges and strategies together, drawn from the same population of NSUBEB personnel, Education Secretaries, head teachers, and classroom teachers, this paper aims to contribute evidence-based insight to policy discourse on strengthening the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Although several empirical studies have examined the challenges confronting Universal Basic Education implementation in Nigeria, most

have concentrated on other states and regions, and relatively few have examined challenges and improvement strategies together, within a single state, using data drawn from the same population of implementing personnel. National reports indicate that funding shortfalls, teacher shortages, weak monitoring, and infrastructural deficits remain widespread across the federation (Aja, Egwu, Aja-Okorie, Ani & Amuta, 2018; UNICEF, 2023).

In Nasarawa State specifically, government reports and policy implementation records suggest that several public basic schools continue to experience infrastructural deficiencies, shortages of qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and weak monitoring and supervision, despite considerable UBEC intervention funding and counterpart funding arrangements between 2015 and 2025 (UBEC, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024). Delays in the release and utilisation of intervention funds, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and weak inter-agency coordination have all been identified as factors capable of reducing programme effectiveness. Where such challenges persist without a correspondingly clear sense of which strategies implementing personnel themselves regard as most workable, government intervention risks being poorly targeted, addressing symptoms that respondents consider secondary while under-resourcing the remedies they consider most urgent.

The persistence of these challenges is notable precisely because it has occurred alongside sustained policy attention. Successive interventions, classroom construction and rehabilitation, teacher recruitment drives, and the distribution of instructional materials, have all been implemented in Nasarawa State over the study period, yet stakeholder reports continue to describe broadly the same set of obstacles that were being reported at the beginning of the period. This apparent persistence, despite continued intervention, is itself a puzzle worth investigating empirically: it suggests either that the scale of intervention has been insufficient relative to the scale of the underlying problem, or that

resources committed to addressing one challenge, such as infrastructure, have not been matched by resources committed to the others, such as monitoring, such that gains in one area are periodically undone by continuing weaknesses in another. Distinguishing between these possibilities requires exactly the kind of paired, respondent-level data on challenges and strategies that this study sets out to collect.

Beyond the challenges themselves, the manner in which implementing personnel apportion responsibility for addressing them is also poorly understood in the existing literature. It is one thing to establish that funding, teacher supply, monitoring, and infrastructure are widely regarded as significant obstacles; it is another to understand whether the personnel who report these obstacles see them as primarily the responsibility of higher levels of government, of NSUBEB itself, or of some combination of the two. This distinction matters for policy design, because a set of recommendations that assumes implementers will readily accept a share of the accountability burden may fail if, in practice, implementers consistently locate that burden elsewhere, an asymmetry this study is specifically designed to surface through its qualitative component.

It is this identified empirical and contextual gap, the absence of a state-specific study that examines challenges and strategies together, from the standpoint of the personnel who implement the Policy, that necessitates the present study, which identifies the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State and examines the strategies that can enhance its implementation and improve educational development in the State.

Research Questions

- i. What are the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in enhancing educational development in Nasarawa State?

- ii. What strategies can enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy and improve educational development in Nasarawa State?

Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in enhancing educational development in Nasarawa State.
- ii. To examine the strategies that can enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy and improve educational development in Nasarawa State.

Conceptual Framework

Implementation Challenges

Implementation challenges refer to the institutional, financial, administrative, and infrastructural obstacles that limit the extent to which a policy's stated objectives are translated into practical outcomes. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) note that such challenges typically arise where the structural variables required for implementation, adequate resources, clear administrative arrangements, and sufficient technical capacity, fall short of what the policy in question actually requires. Such challenges may originate at different points along the implementation chain: some, such as inadequate statutory funding, originate largely outside the immediate control of the implementing agency, while others, such as weak internal monitoring, are more directly within that agency's own control, a distinction this study bears in mind when interpreting its findings. For the purpose of this study, implementation challenges refer specifically to the funding, personnel, monitoring, and infrastructural obstacles confronting the Nasarawa State Universal Basic Education Board (NSUBEB) in delivering the Universal Basic Education Policy.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies refer to the deliberate courses of action adopted, or recommended, to address identified obstacles and improve the extent to which a policy achieves its objectives. Strategies are most effective where they respond directly to specific, empirically identified challenges rather than to challenges assumed in the abstract; a strategy that does not correspond to the obstacles implementers actually experience is unlikely to be prioritised or sustained in practice. For the purpose of this study, implementation strategies refer to the funding, personnel, infrastructural, and monitoring interventions that respondents directly involved in delivering the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State consider most capable of improving its implementation.

It is worth noting that "strategy", as used in this study, is deliberately restricted to the interventions respondents themselves rated through the structured questionnaire and elaborated upon in interviews, rather than a broader set of strategies that might be drawn purely from the researcher's own reading of the literature. This choice reflects the study's underlying concern, discussed in the statement of the problem, that recommendations disconnected from the direct experience of implementing personnel risk being generic and poorly targeted. Restricting the concept in this way narrows its scope but strengthens the claim that the strategies identified in this paper are genuinely those that NSUBEB personnel, Education Secretaries, head teachers, and classroom teachers in Nasarawa State consider most necessary, rather than those an external observer might assume to be necessary on their behalf.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Aja, Egwu, Aja-Okorie, Ani and Amuta (2018), in their study of junior secondary school administrators in Nigeria, found that inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor educational infrastructure, weak supervision, insufficient instructional materials, political

interference, and poor monitoring constituted major impediments to effective implementation of the UBE Policy, collectively reducing the capacity of schools to achieve the Policy's objectives. Although the study offers valuable national evidence, it did not examine which improvement strategies administrators themselves considered most workable, nor was it conducted in Nasarawa State. A similar picture emerges from Ataphia, Okiemute and Obro (2025), whose more recent study of public primary schools in Delta State found that inadequate government funding, poor infrastructural provision, shortage of qualified teachers, and irregular monitoring jointly constrained the effectiveness of UBE implementation; their study, too, examined challenges without directly pairing them against the strategies respondents considered most necessary.

UNICEF (2023), in a broader evaluation of barriers affecting the implementation of basic education policies across selected states in Northern Nigeria, similarly found that inadequate school infrastructure, teacher shortages, weak institutional coordination, and poor policy implementation remained major barriers to achieving universal access to quality basic education, and recommended stronger collaboration among government agencies, communities, and development partners, together with sustained investment in teacher development, infrastructure, and monitoring systems. While this report provides valuable regional evidence and, notably, anticipates several of the strategy categories examined later in this paper, it presents aggregated findings across several northern states without offering a Nasarawa-specific empirical diagnosis, and it does not draw its recommended strategies from the direct, paired responses of a single state's implementing personnel in the way this study sets out to do.

On the strategies dimension, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2024), reviewing nationwide intervention strategies, identified regular teacher professional development, construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, and enhanced data management and quality-assurance mechanisms as strategies that had significantly

improved programme implementation across Nigeria. This is further supported by the World Bank (2022), whose evaluation of the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) programme found that improved educational financing, stronger accountability mechanisms, and effective monitoring systems significantly improved access to quality basic education in participating states. Both sources, however, generated their evidence from nationwide administrative data and programme evaluation rather than from the direct opinions of NSUBEB and LGEA personnel, head teachers, and classroom teachers within a single state, and neither paired its recommended strategies directly against a state-specific empirical diagnosis of challenges. The present study addresses this gap by examining, from Nasarawa-specific field data drawn from the same population of respondents, both the challenges confronting implementation and the strategies considered most necessary to address them.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the Policy Implementation Theory of Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) as its primary analytical framework, complemented by Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). The Policy Implementation Theory holds that the success of a public policy depends on the interaction of the tractability of the problem, the ability of the policy to structure its own implementation through adequate resources and administrative capacity, and non-statutory variables such as socio-economic conditions and political support. Read through this theory, the challenges examined under the first objective of this study correspond to weaknesses in the "ability of the policy to structure implementation" variable, specifically inadequate financial resources and weak monitoring capacity, while the strategies examined under the second objective represent respondents' own assessment of what would be required to strengthen that same variable.

Human Capital Theory, for its part, holds that deliberate and sustained investment in education, particularly in teachers and infrastructure, is

what converts educational spending into productive human capital rather than mere expenditure. Applied to this study, the theory suggests that the strategies respondents rate most highly, funding, teacher recruitment, infrastructure, and monitoring, are not simply administrative fixes but investments that, if sustained, are expected to convert current resource shortfalls into measurable improvements in educational development. Both theories have their limits: the Policy Implementation Theory has been criticised for underestimating the discretion of street-level implementers, while Human Capital Theory has been criticised for treating investment in education as if its returns were guaranteed regardless of how effectively that investment is governed and monitored, a caution directly relevant to interpreting the governance-related findings presented below.

Read jointly, the two theories map neatly onto the two objectives of this study. The Policy Implementation Theory is best suited to explaining why implementation currently falls short, by directing attention to structural weaknesses in resource allocation and administrative capacity, while Human Capital Theory is best suited to justifying why the strategies respondents identify, rather than some alternative set of interventions, should be expected to work: because they represent precisely the categories of investment, financial, human, and physical, that convert policy inputs into developmental outputs. Neither theory alone would fully account for both the diagnostic and the prescriptive dimensions of this paper's research questions; used together, they provide a coherent basis for interpreting both the challenges reported in Table 1.2 and the strategies reported in Table 1.3 below.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research design, involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were sourced from Key Informant Interviews and

secondary materials such as scholarly literature and official reports. The study population comprised ten thousand, two hundred and forty-five (10,245) personnel of NSUBEB, comprising officials, Education Secretaries, head teachers, and classroom teachers serving in 1,441 public basic schools across Nasarawa State (NSUBEB, 2025). The target population was drawn from six (6) selected Local Government Areas, two from each of the three senatorial districts: Akwanga and Wamba (Nasarawa North), Karu and Keffi (Nasarawa West), and Lafia and Doma (Nasarawa South).

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where N is the population (10,245) and e is the level of precision, a constant figure of 0.05. Substituting:

$$n = 10,245 / (1 + 10,245(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 10,245 / 26.61$$

$$n = 384.97 = 385 \text{ (sample size)}$$

To allow for possible non-response, 389 questionnaires were distributed proportionately across the six selected Local Government Areas. Out of the 389 questionnaires distributed, 381 were returned while 8 were not returned. In addition, key informants comprising officials of NSUBEB, Education Secretaries of the selected Local Government Education Authorities, and experienced head teachers were purposively selected for the qualitative component of the study, based on their position, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.

The questionnaire administered to respondents was divided into two sections. Section A elicited the bio-data of respondents, while Section B contained items directly derived from the two research questions guiding

this paper, covering the challenges affecting implementation and the strategies considered necessary to improve it. A five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree was adopted throughout Section B, enabling respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement in a standardised format that could be readily compared across the different categories of respondents. The data analytical tool used was simple percentages and frequency tables, complemented by thematic content analysis for the interview data, enabling the researcher to obtain objective and easily interpretable information on the challenges confronting implementation and the strategies considered necessary to address them.

Data Presentation and Analysis of Results

Below is the analysis of responses to the data supplied through the questionnaire distributed and the interview questions administered to the respondents. Data obtained from the questionnaire are presented using frequency distribution and simple percentages, while each quantitative finding is further triangulated with, and read critically against, the responses obtained from Key Informant Interviews and the relevant literature reviewed above.

Table 1.1: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire by Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Questionnaire Not Returned
Akwanga	65	64	1
Wamba	65	63	2
Karu	65	64	1
Keffi	65	63	2
Lafia	65	64	1
Doma	64	63	1
Total	389	381	8

Source: Field Work, 2026.

Table 1.1 above presents the distribution of questionnaires across the six selected Local Government Areas and the rate of administration and retrieval in the study. Overall, out of the 389 questionnaires distributed,

381 were returned, representing a retrieval rate of 97.9 per cent, while only 8 questionnaires (2.1%) were not returned. This high retrieval rate enhances the reliability of the data and suggests that the findings adequately reflect the perceptions of NSUBEB personnel and LGEA officers regarding the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy across Nasarawa State.

Table 1.2: Respondents' Opinion on the Challenges Affecting the Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Inadequate funding constitutes a major challenge to the effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	230 (60.4%)	110 (28.9%)	10 (2.6%)	20 (5.2%)	11 (2.9%)	381 (100.0%)
Shortage of qualified teachers constitutes a major challenge to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	200 (52.5%)	130 (34.1%)	15 (3.9%)	25 (6.6%)	11 (2.9%)	381 (100.0%)
Weak monitoring and evaluation constitutes a major challenge to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	185 (48.6%)	140 (36.7%)	20 (5.2%)	25 (6.6%)	11 (2.9%)	381 (100.0%)
Poor educational infrastructure constitutes a major challenge to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	210 (55.1%)	120 (31.5%)	15 (3.9%)	24 (6.3%)	12 (3.1%)	381 (100.0%)

Source: Field Work, 2026.

As shown in Table 1.2, inadequate funding was rated the most significant challenge, with 230 respondents (60.4%) strongly agreeing and 110 (28.9%) agreeing, a combined agreement of 89.3%. Shortage of qualified teachers followed, with 200 (52.5%) strongly agreeing and 130 (34.1%)

agreeing, a combined agreement of 86.6%. Weak monitoring and evaluation recorded 185 (48.6%) strongly agreeing and 140 (36.7%) agreeing, a combined agreement of 85.3%, while poor educational infrastructure recorded 210 (55.1%) strongly agreeing and 120 (31.5%) agreeing, a combined agreement of 86.6%. This pattern is consistent with Aja, Egwu, Aja-Okorie, Ani and Amuta (2018), who found that inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor educational infrastructure, and poor monitoring constituted major impediments to effective UBE implementation, and with the more recent findings of Ataphia, Okiemute and Obro (2025) in Delta State.

This was corroborated by a Head Teacher interviewed in one of the sampled schools in Doma Local Government Area in 2026, who stated:

"Our biggest problem is money. Intervention funds are approved but they come late, and by the time they arrive, the needs have changed. We also do not have enough trained teachers for some subjects."

The Head Teacher's framing places the burden of the funding challenge entirely on the timing of disbursement from higher authorities, an explanation that is plausible but incomplete; it does not address whether funds, once released, are fully and transparently applied to the purposes for which they are approved, a concern that recurs in the wider literature (Aja et al., 2018; Ataphia, Okiemute & Obro, 2025). Read this way, the finding that weak monitoring and evaluation also recorded high agreement (85.3%) in the same table is not incidental: it suggests that funding delay and weak oversight are two expressions of the same underlying institutional weakness rather than two independent challenges. However, the fact that the same four challenges, funding, teacher supply, monitoring, and infrastructure, recur consistently across national, Delta State, and now Nasarawa State evidence suggests that these are systemic rather than peculiar to any one location. This finding addresses the stakeholder and geographical gap identified in the literature, since it is drawn from NSUBEB officials, LGEA officers, head

teachers, and classroom teachers within Nasarawa State specifically. On this basis, the finding validates Research Proposition (iii) of the researcher's main doctoral study, that inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, weak monitoring and evaluation, and poor educational infrastructure constitute the major challenges affecting the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.

Table 1.3: Respondents' Opinion on Strategies for Improving the Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Improved and timely funding would enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	240 (63.0%)	105 (27.6%)	8 (2.1%)	18 (4.7%)	10 (2.6%)	381 (100.0%)
Teacher recruitment and development would enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	215 (56.4%)	125 (32.8%)	12 (3.1%)	19 (5.0%)	10 (2.6%)	381 (100.0%)
Provision of educational infrastructure would enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	205 (53.8%)	135 (35.4%)	10 (2.6%)	20 (5.2%)	11 (2.9%)	381 (100.0%)
Strengthened monitoring and evaluation would enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State.	198 (52.0%)	140 (36.7%)	13 (3.4%)	20 (5.2%)	10 (2.6%)	381 (100.0%)

Source: Field Work, 2026.

Table 1.3 shows that 240 respondents (63.0%) strongly agreed and 105 (27.6%) agreed that improved and timely funding would enhance implementation, a combined agreement of 90.6%, the highest-rated strategy. This was followed by teacher recruitment and development, with 215 (56.4%) strongly agreeing and 125 (32.8%) agreeing, a combined agreement of 89.2%; provision of educational infrastructure,

with 205 (53.8%) strongly agreeing and 135 (35.4%) agreeing, also 89.2%; and strengthened monitoring and evaluation, with 198 (52.0%) strongly agreeing and 140 (36.7%) agreeing, a combined agreement of 88.7%. This near-uniform, high level of agreement across all four strategies is consistent with the position of UBEC (2024) and the World Bank (2022), both of which identified sustained financing, institutional strengthening, and effective monitoring as central to improving Universal Basic Education outcomes nationally.

This was echoed by a NSUBEB management staff member interviewed in 2026, who observed:

"If government can release funds on time, post more teachers, fix our classrooms, and then actually follow up to check that the work is done, UBE will achieve much more in this State."

It is notable that the respondent frames the required action almost entirely as central government's responsibility, releasing funds, posting teachers, fixing classrooms, with NSUBEB's own monitoring role mentioned only briefly and in passing ("then actually follow up"). This framing recurs across the interview data: implementing officers tend to locate the primary obligation for reform upstream, in funding and staffing decisions taken above their own level, while giving comparatively less weight to internal accountability and supervisory reform within NSUBEB and the LGEAs themselves. By empirically confirming, from Nasarawa-specific field data, that the same four strategies identified nationally by UBEC (2024) and the World Bank (2022) are considered most necessary locally, while also revealing this asymmetry in how implementers apportion responsibility for reform, this finding closes the theoretical gap identified in the literature: it demonstrates that structuring the policy environment through funding, personnel, infrastructure, and monitoring is necessary, but that its success also depends on implementers accepting a fair share of the monitoring and accountability burden, not only on additional resources from government. On this basis, the finding validates Research Proposition (iv) of the

researcher's main doctoral study, that improved funding, teacher recruitment and development, provision of educational infrastructure, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will enhance the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy and improve educational development in Nasarawa State.

Discussion of Findings

i. One major finding from the study is that inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, weak monitoring and evaluation, and poor educational infrastructure constitute the major challenges affecting implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State, with inadequate funding rated the most significant. Read through the Policy Implementation Theory of Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), these challenges correspond directly to weaknesses in the "ability of the policy to structure implementation" variable: where implementing agencies lack the resources and oversight mechanisms to carry out a policy as designed, a gap opens between the Policy's stated objectives and its practical outcomes. The implication of this finding is that insufficient and untimely funding limits NSUBEB's capacity to implement programmes at scale, sustain empowerment initiatives, and meet stakeholders' expectations, an implication reinforced by the fact that the same cluster of challenges recurs across national and Delta State evidence.

ii. A second major finding is that improved and timely funding, teacher recruitment and development, provision of educational infrastructure, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation were rated by respondents as the strategies most capable of enhancing implementation, in a near-uniform pattern that suggests respondents regard the four strategies as mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities, each directly answering one of the four challenges identified above. Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964) reinforces this finding by holding that deliberate and sustained investment in

teachers and infrastructure is what converts educational spending into productive human capital rather than mere expenditure, provided that the investment is accompanied by the accountability that effective monitoring requires, a qualification borne out by the interview data's revelation that implementers themselves tend to locate responsibility for reform mainly with government rather than with their own supervisory role.

Taken together, the two findings suggest a specific policy sequencing worth highlighting. Because the four challenges identified under the first objective correspond almost one-to-one with the four strategies identified under the second, funding to funding, teacher shortage to teacher recruitment, infrastructure to infrastructure, and monitoring to monitoring, there is little ambiguity in the data about what respondents believe is required. The more difficult question, which this study's qualitative findings begin to surface but cannot fully resolve, is one of sequencing and ownership: whether funding and staffing should be secured first, as a precondition for effective monitoring, or whether strengthened monitoring should be established first, so that additional funding and staffing, once secured, are not lost to the same governance weaknesses that have historically constrained UBE implementation nationally. The interview evidence, in which implementing officers repeatedly located primary responsibility upstream with government while treating their own monitoring role as secondary, suggests that resolving this sequencing question may itself be a necessary strategy, over and above the four identified in Table 1.3.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nasarawa State continues to be constrained by a consistent cluster of challenges, inadequate funding, teacher shortages, weak monitoring and evaluation, and poor infrastructure, that recur across national and state-level evidence alike. Respondents directly involved in implementation are,

however, equally consistent in identifying the strategies they consider most likely to address these challenges: improved and timely funding, teacher recruitment, infrastructural investment, and strengthened monitoring, each corresponding closely to one of the challenges identified. This close correspondence between diagnosed challenge and recommended remedy suggests that the path to improved implementation in Nasarawa State is not obscure; what remains is the political and administrative will to sustain the four strategies together rather than in isolation, and to ensure that NSUBEB's own internal accountability keeps pace with whatever additional resources government provides.

This paper should also be read alongside its companion seminar paper on the factors influencing implementation and its impact on educational development in Nasarawa State, since both papers draw on the same population of respondents across the same six Local Government Areas. Read together, the two papers describe a single implementation process from two complementary angles: the conditions under which NSUBEB currently operates, and the specific obstacles and remedies that arise within those conditions. Neither paper, on its own, provides a complete account of Universal Basic Education implementation in Nasarawa State; it is only by reading the factors, the impact, the challenges, and the strategies together that a full picture of the Policy's implementation, and of what is required to strengthen it, emerges.

Recommendations

- i. In view of the finding that inadequate funding and delays in the disbursement of financial support significantly undermine the effectiveness of Universal Basic Education implementation, it is recommended that the Nasarawa State Government increase and institutionalise budgetary allocations to NSUBEB, ensuring adequate and predictable funding through dedicated budget lines, and establish mechanisms to guarantee the timely disbursement of intervention funds

once released, supplemented, where possible, by partnerships involving the private sector and development agencies willing to co-finance specific components of the Board's intervention programme.

ii. Given the finding that weak institutional and structural frameworks, particularly inadequate monitoring and evaluation, teacher shortages, and poor infrastructure, hinder effective implementation, it is recommended that NSUBEB's institutional capacity be strengthened through the establishment of clear performance indicators and regular programme assessments, sustained teacher recruitment and professional development, and continued investment in modern, well-equipped classrooms and instructional facilities, particularly in rural Local Government Areas. It is further recommended that these four strategies be pursued as a single, coordinated package rather than sequentially, so that gains achieved through additional funding or staffing are not subsequently eroded by the same monitoring and infrastructural weaknesses that this study has identified.

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