
SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Peer Reviewed Book Chapter

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10

CHALLENGES HINDERING STATE GOVERNMENTS FROM ACCESSING UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) COUNTERPART FUNDS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This chapter examined the factors preventing many state governments in Nigeria from accessing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) counterpart funds provided by the Federal Government through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). The chapter observed that despite the huge financial allocations made available for the development of basic education, many states have consistently failed to access these intervention funds due to several administrative, political, and economic challenges. The chapter discussed five major factors responsible for the problem, namely inadequate political will, poor financial capacity of state governments, corruption and diversion of public funds, bureaucratic bottlenecks and weak administrative capacity, and lack of transparency and accountability in educational management. The chapter further explained how the inability of states to access these funds has negatively affected school infrastructure, teacher development, instructional materials, and learners' academic achievement across public basic schools in Nigeria. Examples from different Nigerian states and reports from newspapers, UBEC publications, and educational studies were used to support the discussion. The chapter concluded that failure to access counterpart funds has continued to undermine the achievement of quality basic education in Nigeria. Recommendations were therefore made on strengthening political commitment, improving educational financing, enhancing transparency, and building institutional capacity for effective management of UBE intervention funds.

Keywords: Basic education, UBE intervention funds, Political will, Corruption

10.0. Introduction

Basic education remains the foundation upon which every nation builds its human capital, promotes literacy, reduces poverty, and prepares citizens for meaningful participation in national development. In Nigeria, the establishment of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 represented a major policy response to the growing challenges of illiteracy, school dropout, inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher quality, and the increasing population of out-of-school children. The Federal Government subsequently enacted the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 to provide legal backing for the implementation of free, compulsory, and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age. The programme covers early childhood care, primary education, and junior secondary education. The implementation of the programme is coordinated by the Universal Basic Education Commission in collaboration with State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs).

The importance of basic education to national development cannot be overemphasized. Basic education equips learners with literacy, numeracy, communication skills, civic values, and problem-solving abilities necessary for lifelong learning and national productivity. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, access to quality basic education is central to achieving sustainable development, social inclusion, and economic advancement. In Nigeria, however, the realization of these objectives has been hindered by inadequate funding, weak policy implementation, poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, and administrative inefficiency. To strengthen funding for basic education, the Federal Government introduced the UBE matching grant arrangement through the Universal Basic Education Commission. Under this arrangement, state governments are required to provide counterpart funding before accessing federal grants allocated for the development of basic education in their respective states. The counterpart funding policy was designed to encourage shared responsibility, accountability, and commitment between federal and state governments in financing basic education. Unfortunately, many state governments have consistently failed to access these funds, thereby depriving schools of critical infrastructural facilities, instructional materials, and teacher development opportunities.

Reports from Nigerian newspapers and official UBEC records have shown that billions of naira allocated for basic education development remained unaccessed because several states failed to provide their counterpart contributions. A report published by The Punch Newspaper revealed that many states failed to access over ₦84 billion earmarked for basic education due to their inability to pay counterpart funds. The report specifically identified states such as Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Plateau, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara as among states that failed to access certain UBEC grants between 2015 and 2018. Similarly, another report by The Punch Newspaper indicated that twenty-seven states of the federation failed to access ₦54.9 billion UBE funds as of March 2024 because they did not provide counterpart funding. The report noted that only a few states such as Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara, Borno, Taraba, Nasarawa, Ondo, Enugu, and Delta had fully accessed their



allocations, while several others lagged behind. [The Nation Newspaper](#) reported that twenty-seven states failed to access over ₦45.7 billion set aside for the implementation of Universal Basic Education between 2020 and 2023. The report emphasized that the inability of states to provide counterpart funding had significantly stalled the development of basic education in Nigeria.

The states repeatedly mentioned in different newspaper reports and UBEC documents as failing to fully access counterpart funds include Abia, Ogun, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Niger, Anambra, Ebonyi, Bayelsa, Ondo, Plateau, Ekiti, Nasarawa, and Zamfara. The implication of this development is enormous because funds meant for classroom construction, renovation of dilapidated school buildings, procurement of instructional materials, teacher training, and provision of learning facilities remain unused while schools continue to deteriorate. The failure of many state governments to access UBEC counterpart funds has contributed significantly to the persistent crisis in Nigeria's basic education sector. Across many public primary and junior secondary schools, pupils learn under dilapidated structures, overcrowded classrooms, and poor sanitary conditions. Many schools lack libraries, laboratories, furniture, electricity, and digital learning facilities. Teacher quality and welfare also remain inadequate in several states. The inability of states to access available federal intervention funds therefore reflects weak political commitment to educational development. The justification for this chapter is anchored on the need to examine factors responsible for poor access to UBEC counterpart funds for the development of basic education in Nigeria. Despite the huge financial resources made available through UBEC intervention programmes, many states continue to experience poor educational outcomes, rising numbers of out-of-school children, inadequate school infrastructure, and declining quality of teaching and learning. Investigating this issue is important because education remains the bedrock of national transformation, and failure to adequately finance basic education threatens the realization of national development goals and Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

10.1. Conceptual Terms

Concept of Basic Education

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defined basic education as the entire range of educational activities designed to meet the basic learning needs of children, youths, and adults, including literacy, numeracy, knowledge, skills, and values necessary for survival and development. The Universal Basic Education Commission defined basic education as education given to children aged 0–15 years, covering early childhood care education, six years of primary education, and three years of junior secondary education aimed at developing permanent literacy and numeracy skills (Adeyanju, & Oladipo, 2022; Iyogbele, & Leonard, 2022). According to Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education, basic education refers to the type of education that forms the foundation for lifelong learning and citizenship, encompassing early childhood education, primary education, junior



secondary education, and adult literacy programmes. Obanya Pai described basic education as the minimum level of education required for an individual to function effectively in society, acquire relevant life skills, and contribute meaningfully to national development. United Nations Children's Fund defined basic education as a process of equipping children with essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed for personal development, social participation, and economic productivity.

Universal Basic education (UBE) is a programme which higher education is founded. It is compulsory for all citizens to enable to function effectively in society (Ikoya and Onoyase, 2008). Alabi (2022) submit that the UBE is an act that includes compulsory and free for all school-aged children to complete nine years of basic education, six years of primary schooling and automatic transition into three years junior secondary school, which supposedly makes provision for Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE). The introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria that replaced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of 1976, with a 9 year programme which was launched on September 21, 1999, has the objectives of providing free and compulsory UBE for every Nigerian child of school going age. Basic education is fundamental to human and national development as it is the foundation upon which other levels of education is built as a necessity. It is axiomatic that no nation ever developed technologically, economically and socially without first investing its resources in basic education. The UBE is a continuous nine-year education scheme that seeks to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty with the general goal of stimulating and accelerating national development, political consciousness and national integration (FGN-UBE Guideline,1999).

Component of Concept of Universal Basic Education

Fund

Funding UBE: Federal intervention in UBE will be funded through:

- i. Not less than 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) of the Federal Government.
 - ii. Funds/ contributions in form of Federal Government guaranteed credits.
 - iii. Local/ international donor grants.
- iv. The federal intervention fund to state will be used for the purpose of broadening access, improving quality and ensuring equity in basic education but not for teachers' emoluments and overhead costs. Appropriation- the fund should be shared among the six (6) components of UBE:
- i. Substantial part of the CRF will be disbursed to states as matching grants i.e. 75%.
 - ii. Part of it will be disbursed to states for special intervention to support: initiatives to correct education imbalance up to 2010 – i.e. 14%. Efforts by state to provide special education for the physically and mentally challenged 2%. Effort by state to implement school feeding programme. Good performance 5% (Universal Basic Education Commission 2012;Dennis, & Chidimma, 2016).



10.2. Result and Discussion on Factors Preventing State Governments from Accessing UBE Counterpart Funds in Nigeria

i. Inadequate Political Will and Poor Commitment to Basic Education

One of the major factors preventing many state governments from accessing UBE counterpart funds is inadequate political will and weak commitment to the development of basic education. In many states, political leaders do not prioritize education in budgetary allocation and policy implementation (Tolu-Kolawole, Oloniniran, Taiwo, Bamigbola, Charles, Muntari, & Nejo 2024). Instead, greater attention is often given to politically visible projects such as road construction, political appointments, and urban beautification projects. As a result, governments fail to release the required counterpart contributions needed to access UBEC intervention funds. The counterpart funding arrangement requires states to contribute matching grants before they can access federal allocations for educational development. However, some governors delay or completely ignore this responsibility because education is not treated as an urgent priority. This situation has caused billions of naira meant for classroom construction, renovation, procurement of instructional materials, and teacher training to remain unused. For instance, reports by *The Punch Newspaper* indicated that many states failed to access over ₦54.9 billion UBEC funds in 2024 because state governments did not pay their counterpart contributions. States such as Abia, Adamawa, Benue, Kano, Niger, Ogun, and Plateau were repeatedly identified among states with unaccessed funds (Punch Newspaper, 2024). In some of these states, public primary schools still operate under poor learning environments despite the availability of federal intervention funds. The implication of poor political commitment is visible in overcrowded classrooms, inadequate furniture, dilapidated buildings, and increasing numbers of out-of-school children across many Nigerian states. Educational development cannot be achieved where government leaders fail to demonstrate genuine commitment to the financing of basic education (Lawal, 2024).

ii. Poor Financial Capacity and Economic Challenges of State Governments

Another important factor responsible for the inability of states to access UBE counterpart funds is poor financial capacity arising from economic challenges. Many Nigerian states depend heavily on monthly federal allocations for survival and internally generate little revenue. Consequently, during periods of economic hardship, declining oil revenue, or debt burden, state governments find it difficult to provide counterpart funding for educational projects. Several states experience severe financial stress due to salary obligations, pension payments, loan repayments, and rising recurrent expenditures (Jerry, & Adebisi, 2020).. Under such conditions, educational funding is often neglected because available resources are directed toward immediate political and administrative expenses. This weak financial condition prevents states from meeting UBEC requirements for accessing intervention funds. For example, states in northern Nigeria with weak internally generated revenue and high poverty levels often struggle to fulfill counterpart funding obligations. Reports from UBEC revealed that some states accumulated several years of unaccessed intervention funds because they could not provide their matching grants (UBEC, 2020). In states like Zamfara, Yobe, and Adamawa, insecurity



and economic instability further worsened financial pressures on government resources. Economic challenges also affect educational planning because many state governments lack sustainable financial strategies for funding basic education. Consequently, projects such as classroom construction, teacher recruitment, and school renovation remain abandoned despite federal support opportunities.

iii. Corruption and Diversion of Public Funds

Corruption remains a major obstacle to effective educational financing and one of the key reasons many states fail to access UBE counterpart funds. In some cases, state governments deliberately avoid accessing UBEC funds because of fears of accountability, monitoring, and auditing attached to federal educational intervention projects. The UBEC funding process involves strict procurement procedures, project monitoring, and financial accountability mechanisms, which some corrupt officials attempt to avoid. Mismanagement and diversion of educational funds have weakened public confidence in educational administration across Nigeria. Funds allocated for school projects are sometimes diverted into private accounts, political patronage, or unrelated government activities. This discourages transparency and weakens institutional commitment to proper utilization of educational intervention funds. For instance, reports by the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and educational stakeholders have revealed cases where school infrastructure projects were abandoned after funds had been released. In some states, classrooms awarded for construction under UBE programmes were either poorly executed or never completed despite budgetary allocations. Such practices discourage efficient collaboration between federal and state governments in educational financing. Corruption also creates administrative fear because state officials may avoid accessing funds they cannot transparently manage. Consequently, schools continue to suffer from inadequate infrastructure while available federal funds remain untouched (Ndagi, 2024).

iv. Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Weak Administrative Capacity

Weak administrative structures and excessive bureaucratic procedures also prevent many states from accessing UBE counterpart funds. Effective utilization of UBEC funds requires proper documentation, project planning, budgeting, monitoring, procurement procedures, and compliance with federal guidelines. However, some State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) lack adequately trained personnel and efficient administrative systems to process these requirements. In several states, delays in preparing project proposals, poor record keeping, and weak coordination between ministries of education and SUBEBs contribute to the inability to access funds (UBE Act. 2004). Administrative inefficiency often leads to delays in submission of required documents to UBEC, thereby preventing timely approval and release of funds. For example, educational reports have shown that some SUBEB officials lack technical expertise in project management and financial reporting. In certain states, changes in government administration also disrupt continuity in educational programmes, causing delays in accessing intervention funds. Political interference in educational administration further



worsens bureaucratic inefficiency. Weak institutional capacity affects effective planning and implementation of educational projects. As a result, states lose opportunities to improve school facilities and teacher quality through federal intervention programmes (Irewole, & Akinsuroju, 2018).

v. Lack of Transparency and Accountability in Educational Management

Lack of transparency and accountability in educational administration is another major factor preventing states from accessing UBE counterpart funds. Many state governments fail to maintain accurate financial records and transparent procurement processes required by UBEC before funds can be released (World Bank, 2020). The Federal Government demands accountability measures to ensure that educational funds are properly utilized for the intended purposes. However, some state governments have weak monitoring systems and poor financial reporting mechanisms. Inability to account for previously accessed funds often prevents states from receiving new allocations. For example, some states failed to retire previous intervention funds according to UBEC guidelines, making them ineligible for further disbursement (The Nation Newspaper, 2024). Cases of inflated contracts, ghost projects, and weak monitoring of school projects have been widely reported in Nigeria's educational sector. Lack of accountability also discourages donor agencies and development partners from supporting educational programmes in some states. Without transparent management systems, educational projects become vulnerable to waste, abandonment, and poor implementation. The consequence is that learners in public primary and junior secondary schools continue to face poor learning conditions despite the availability of intervention resources from the Federal Government (Akuta, Akwam, Ahon, & Azever, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter examined the major factors preventing many state governments in Nigeria from accessing the Universal Basic Education counterpart funds provided by the Federal Government through UBEC. The discussion revealed that inadequate political will, weak financial capacity, corruption, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and lack of transparency are the major obstacles undermining effective access to intervention funds for basic education development.

The inability of states to access these funds has negatively affected school infrastructure, teacher quality, learning resources, and educational outcomes across public primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Despite the huge financial allocations available through UBEC intervention programmes, many schools still operate under poor conditions because state governments fail to fulfill counterpart funding obligations. The chapter therefore concludes that effective development of basic education in Nigeria depends largely on strong political commitment, prudent financial management, administrative efficiency, and accountability in educational governance. Based on the findings, the chapter recommends the following:

1. State governments should demonstrate stronger political commitment toward the funding and development of basic education.



2. Governments should prioritize educational financing in annual budgets to ensure prompt payment of counterpart funds required by UBEC.
3. Anti-corruption agencies should strengthen monitoring and investigation of educational funds to prevent diversion and misuse of public resources.
4. State Universal Basic Education Boards should organize regular training programmes for educational administrators on project management, budgeting, and financial reporting.
5. The Federal Government should simplify bureaucratic procedures involved in accessing UBEC intervention funds without compromising accountability standards.
6. State governments should establish transparent monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure effective utilization of educational funds.
7. Civil society organizations, parents, and community leaders should participate actively in monitoring educational projects to promote accountability and transparency.

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Concluding Synthesis

This volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria* contributes significantly to contemporary discourse on educational transformation by examining the policies, practices, innovations, and challenges shaping the Nigerian educational landscape. The chapters collectively demonstrate that sustainable education extends beyond improving access to schooling; it encompasses the creation of resilient, inclusive, equitable, and future-oriented learning systems capable of responding effectively to socio-economic, technological, and environmental changes.

A synthesis of the contributions reveals that sustainable education in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that integrates governance reforms, technological advancement, infrastructure development, teacher capacity building, curriculum modernization, and stakeholder engagement. The studies presented in this volume underscore the importance of aligning educational policies with national development priorities while ensuring responsiveness to global educational trends and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The volume highlights the transformative potential of digital technologies in expanding educational opportunities, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, learning management systems, educational data analytics, and digital content delivery platforms, present opportunities to improve teaching effectiveness, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency. However, their successful implementation depends on reliable infrastructure, adequate funding, digital literacy, and supportive policy frameworks.

The contributions further identify persistent challenges confronting the Nigerian education sector, including inadequate funding, infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, policy discontinuity, regional disparities, insecurity, and socio-economic inequalities. These interconnected challenges continue to undermine educational quality and limit the realization of sustainable development objectives.

Importantly, the volume repositions education as a strategic instrument for national development, social mobility, economic competitiveness, innovation, and nation-building. Sustainable education is presented not merely as a sectoral concern but as a foundational pillar for achieving broader national aspirations, including poverty reduction, employment generation, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

Ultimately, this volume advances scholarly understanding and policy discussions by offering multidisciplinary perspectives and evidence-based insights into the future of education in Nigeria. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, educational leaders, development

practitioners, and other stakeholders committed to fostering educational systems that are resilient, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the collective findings and recommendations presented throughout this volume, the following strategic implications are proposed for policymakers, educational administrators, practitioners, researchers, and development partners:

Policy Reform and Strategic Governance

Governments at federal, state, and local levels should strengthen educational governance through evidence-based policymaking, institutional accountability, policy continuity, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Sustainable educational development requires long-term planning that transcends political transitions and administrative changes.

Digital Transformation and Technology Integration

There is an urgent need to expand investments in educational technology infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital learning resources, and teacher digital competencies. Schools and higher education institutions should leverage emerging technologies to improve access, instructional quality, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency.

Sustainable Education Financing

Alternative and innovative funding mechanisms should complement public expenditure on education. Public-private partnerships, donor-supported initiatives, educational endowments, corporate social responsibility investments, and community participation can contribute to sustainable financing and improved educational outcomes.

Teacher Development and Professional Capacity Building

Continuous professional development should become an integral component of educational reform. Teachers must be equipped with contemporary pedagogical skills, technological competencies, research capabilities, and learner-centered instructional approaches necessary for twenty-first-century education.

Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Educational policies and interventions should prioritize disadvantaged populations, including learners in rural communities, girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and

economically vulnerable groups. Sustainable education requires ensuring that no learner is excluded from quality educational opportunities.

Research, Innovation, and Data-Driven Decision Making

Educational institutions should strengthen research culture and promote evidence-based decision-making. Reliable educational data systems are essential for planning, resource allocation, performance assessment, and policy evaluation.

Infrastructure Development and Learning Environment Improvement

Governments and stakeholders should prioritize investments in school infrastructure, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, digital facilities, sanitation systems, and renewable energy solutions. Safe and conducive learning environments are critical for educational sustainability.

Institutional Resilience and Crisis Preparedness

Educational systems should develop adaptive capacities to withstand disruptions arising from pandemics, economic crises, natural disasters, and security challenges. Flexible learning models, blended education approaches, and emergency response frameworks should be integrated into educational planning.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The sustainable transformation of education in Nigeria requires collaborative engagement among government agencies, educational institutions, private sector organizations, civil society groups, communities, and international development partners. Effective partnerships can mobilize resources, expertise, and innovation necessary for long-term educational advancement.

Editors' Note

The editors are pleased to present this volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria*, a scholarly contribution designed to address critical issues shaping the future of education within the country.

We express our sincere gratitude to the contributing authors whose research and professional insights have enriched this publication. Their diverse perspectives provide valuable understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and emerging trends influencing educational development in Nigeria.

We also acknowledge the dedicated efforts of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional partners whose commitment to academic excellence has enhanced the quality, credibility, and relevance of this volume. Their contributions have ensured that the publication meets the highest standards of scholarly rigor and professional integrity.

This volume is intended to serve not only as an academic resource but also as a practical guide for policymakers, educational leaders, practitioners, researchers, and development organizations seeking innovative solutions to contemporary educational challenges.

It is our hope that the ideas, findings, and recommendations presented herein will stimulate further research, inform policy formulation, encourage collaboration, and inspire transformative action toward building an educational system that is equitable, innovative, resilient, and sustainable.

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