

An Assessment of the Challenges Facing the Implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Taraba State

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Abstract— This study assessed the major challenges facing the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Taraba State, with particular attention to Jalingo and Takum Local Government Areas. The study was motivated by persistent disparities in access, retention, teacher availability and qualification, school infrastructure, community participation, and educational service delivery despite the national commitment to free and compulsory basic education. A descriptive qualitative design was adopted, drawing on interviews, focus group discussions, direct school observations, and secondary evidence from UBEC, the Taraba State Ministry of Education, SUBEB, NBS, UNESCO, the World Bank, and relevant academic studies. The analysis identified inadequate and uneven funding, weak resource utilisation, shortages and uneven deployment of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, insecurity, household poverty, weak local governance, inadequate monitoring and accountability, and ineffective School-Based Management Committees as interconnected challenges. These constraints reinforce one another, particularly in conflict-affected and economically disadvantaged communities, where insecurity disrupts attendance and teacher deployment, poverty increases dropout and child labour, and weak institutional capacity limits effective resource utilisation. The study concludes that UBE implementation challenges in Taraba State are primarily linked to implementation capacity, equitable resource distribution, security, and context-sensitive governance. It recommends needs-based funding, improved teacher recruitment and rural incentives, school rehabilitation, conflict-sensitive planning, stronger SBMCs, social protection for vulnerable households, and transparent monitoring of UBE projects and funds.

Keywords— Universal Basic Education, UBE Implementation, Educational Challenges, Taraba State, Teacher Shortage, Insecurity, Poverty, School Infrastructure.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme represents one of the most important educational policy interventions undertaken by the Nigerian

government to widen access to basic education. Established in 1999 and subsequently given a statutory framework through the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, the programme is intended to provide free, compulsory and uninterrupted basic education for children of school-going age. Its objectives are closely connected with the broader national goals of reducing illiteracy, expanding educational opportunity, improving human capital and promoting social and economic development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Obanya, 2011). The UBE framework therefore places a substantial responsibility on the federal, state and local levels of government to ensure that policy commitments are translated into functioning schools and meaningful learning opportunities.

The importance of UBE is particularly evident in Nigeria because educational opportunity remains uneven across regions and social groups. The implementation of universal education requires more than the formal declaration that schooling is free and compulsory. It requires adequate classrooms, qualified and motivated teachers, instructional materials, water and sanitation facilities, effective supervision, security, reliable funding and active participation by parents and communities. Where these conditions are absent, formal access to education may exist on paper while effective access remains limited in practice. Research reviewed in the attached study indicates that northern Nigeria continues to experience significant disparities in enrolment, retention, teacher quality and learning conditions, with insecurity, poverty, cultural barriers, underfunding and weak institutional capacity frequently identified as important constraints (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2022; Musa & Ibrahim, 2023; Ogbonnaya & Nwankwo, 2021).

Taraba State provides an important context for examining these implementation challenges. The state contains urban centres with relatively stronger

administrative presence alongside rural and peripheral communities that face infrastructure deficits, insecurity, poverty and weaker public-service capacity. The contrast between Jalingo and Takum Local Government Areas illustrates how a common national policy can encounter very different implementation conditions within the same state. Jalingo, as the state capital, benefits from greater administrative visibility and concentration of public institutions, whereas Takum has experienced rural marginalisation, recurrent inter-communal violence and weaker state presence. These contextual differences can affect the capacity of education authorities to recruit and retain teachers, maintain schools, mobilise communities and monitor programme implementation (Taru & Enamhe, 2022; Edward et al., 2024).

The attached study on the impact of UBE in Jalingo and Takum demonstrates that the central problem is not simply whether UBE exists, but whether the institutional, social, economic and security conditions necessary for implementation are present. In Jalingo, improvements in access and community engagement have occurred alongside serious overcrowding. In Takum, insecurity, teacher shortages, infrastructure deficits, poverty and weak School-Based Management Committees have constrained educational participation and continuity. These findings suggest that assessing the challenges of implementation is essential for understanding why the objectives of UBE remain incompletely realised in parts of Taraba State.

Against this background, this paper assesses the major challenges facing the implementation of the UBE programme in Taraba State. It focuses particularly on funding and resource utilisation, teacher-related constraints, infrastructure, insecurity, poverty and hidden schooling costs, governance and accountability, community participation, and the uneven implementation capacity of local education institutions.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of UBE created a broad national commitment to ensuring that every Nigerian child has access to basic education. However, the existence of a comprehensive policy framework has not automatically produced uniform educational outcomes. The evidence presented in the attached study shows substantial differences between Jalingo

and Takum LGAs in enrolment, retention, teacher qualification, pupil-teacher ratios, infrastructure and community participation. In Jalingo, the primary school net enrolment ratio reported for 2024 was 78 percent, while Takum recorded 34 percent. Similarly, primary school completion was reported at 82 percent in Jalingo compared with 41 percent in Takum. These differences indicate that policy availability and actual educational opportunity are not necessarily the same.

A major dimension of the problem is inadequate and uneven educational infrastructure. Some schools in rural communities continue to operate in old or dilapidated buildings, while classrooms in more successful schools may be overwhelmed by rising enrolment. The attached study reports that utilisation of UBEC matching grants in Taraba State was only 47 percent between 2020 and 2024, with concerns that available resources were disproportionately concentrated in urban areas. Thus, the challenge is both the adequacy of resources and the capacity to ensure that available resources reach communities according to educational need.

Teacher availability and quality constitute another major implementation challenge. The study reports that 87 percent of teachers in the sampled Jalingo schools possessed NCE qualifications or higher, compared with 41 percent in Takum. The pupil-teacher ratio was also considerably higher in Takum. Rural schools may consequently depend on a small number of teachers to cover several classes, while insecurity, poor working conditions and limited incentives make rural postings difficult to sustain. These conditions have implications for instructional quality and the continuity of learning.

Security and poverty further complicate implementation. In conflict-affected communities, schools may close temporarily, teachers may leave, families may relocate, and parents may be unwilling to send children to school because of safety concerns. At the same time, households experiencing severe poverty may be unable to meet the indirect costs of education, including uniforms, books, shoes, transport and other supplies. Children may also be required to participate in farming, petty trading, domestic work or other livelihood activities. Consequently, the legal provision of free basic education does not necessarily eliminate the economic barriers faced by poor households.

The problem is therefore multidimensional. UBE implementation in Taraba State is affected by financial, administrative, human-resource, infrastructural, socio-economic, security and community-level constraints that interact with one another. Unless these challenges are understood in their local context, policy interventions may continue to produce uneven outcomes. This study consequently examines the major implementation challenges and considers measures capable of improving the delivery of UBE in the state.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the challenges facing the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Taraba State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. examine the funding and resource-utilisation challenges affecting UBE implementation in Taraba State;
- ii. assess teacher-related challenges, including shortages, qualification, deployment, motivation and retention;

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Review

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

Universal Basic Education refers to a policy framework designed to make basic education available, accessible and compulsory for children within the relevant school-going age. In Nigeria, UBE covers primary education and junior secondary education and includes formal and non-formal approaches intended to provide foundational literacy, numeracy, knowledge and life skills. UBEC (2020) presents implementation as a shared responsibility involving federal, state and local institutions, while the UBE Act provides the statutory foundation for the programme. Obanya (2011) emphasises that the significance of UBE lies not only in increasing enrolment but also in ensuring that education is meaningful, equitable and capable of developing the human resources required for national development.

The concept of UBE therefore contains both an access dimension and a quality dimension. A child who is officially enrolled but attends an overcrowded school without qualified teachers, adequate

instructional materials or a safe learning environment cannot be regarded as enjoying the full benefit of universal basic education. Effective implementation consequently requires attention to enrolment, attendance, retention, completion, teacher quality, infrastructure, learning materials, supervision and community support.

Implementation of UBE

Implementation refers to the process through which a policy decision is translated into programmes, projects, services and activities that affect the target population. In the case of UBE, implementation involves the conversion of policy objectives into functioning schools, teacher deployment, infrastructure provision, instructional support, monitoring, community participation and other educational services. The success of implementation depends on the availability of resources, clarity of responsibilities, communication between implementing organisations, administrative capacity, political commitment and the social environment in which policy is delivered (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

UBE implementation is therefore a multilevel process. Federal institutions such as UBEC establish standards and provide intervention funding, while state institutions including SUBEB are responsible for substantial aspects of planning, teacher deployment, infrastructure and programme execution. Local education authorities and communities also influence school-level delivery. Weakness at any point in this chain can reduce implementation effectiveness.

Challenges of UBE Implementation

Challenges of implementation are conditions that prevent a policy from achieving its stated objectives or reduce the quality, reach, efficiency and sustainability of its outcomes. In UBE, these challenges may be financial, administrative, infrastructural, human-resource, socio-economic, cultural, security-related or institutional. The attached study demonstrates that these categories overlap. For example, a school may have an approved project but remain without adequate facilities because funds are delayed or poorly utilised; a teacher shortage may be worsened by insecurity; and low enrolment may result from both poverty and fear of violence.

Funding and Resource Utilisation

Adequate and predictable financing is central to educational policy implementation. UBE requires expenditure on classrooms, furniture, water and sanitation facilities, instructional materials, teacher development, supervision and maintenance. The attached study reports low utilisation of UBEC matching grants in Taraba State during the 2020–2024 period and observes that many rural areas continued to experience infrastructure deficits. This suggests that funding challenges should be understood not only in terms of the amount appropriated but also in relation to release, counterpart contributions, project selection, procurement, monitoring and utilisation.

Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi (2020) identify political and institutional factors in education financing within Nigeria's federal system. Where resource allocation does not adequately reflect need, peripheral communities can remain disadvantaged even when aggregate funding appears substantial. The implementation implication is that Taraba State requires transparent, needs-based allocation mechanisms that recognise enrolment pressures, poverty, remoteness, infrastructure conditions and security risks.

Teacher Shortage, Qualification and Motivation

Teachers constitute the most immediate human-resource component of basic education. The implementation of UBE can be undermined when schools lack adequate numbers of teachers, when teachers do not possess the required qualifications, or when poor working conditions discourage teachers from accepting and remaining in rural postings. The attached study found marked differences between Jalingo and Takum in teacher qualification and pupil-teacher ratios. In some Takum schools, a small number of teachers reportedly cover several classes, reducing instructional time and placing considerable pressure on individual teachers.

Teacher deployment is also an administrative challenge. Rural and conflict-affected communities may be perceived as difficult postings because of insecurity, housing shortages, poor transport, inadequate teaching facilities and limited opportunities for professional development. Oyewole (2023) links rural-urban disparities partly to weaknesses in teacher-posting policies, while Ajayi and Adeyemi (2024) emphasise the relationship

between teacher quality and learning outcomes. Consequently, UBE implementation requires not merely more teachers but a deliberate strategy for equitable deployment, professional support, welfare and retention.

Inadequate School Infrastructure and Instructional Materials

The physical learning environment is a major determinant of effective implementation. Classrooms must be safe, sufficiently spacious and equipped with basic furniture and instructional materials. Schools also require water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. In the attached study, rural schools in Takum were described as having old and poorly maintained structures, while some Jalingo schools experienced overcrowding because enrolment growth had outpaced classroom capacity.

Infrastructure challenges can therefore take two forms: absolute deficiency and inadequate capacity relative to demand. In a rural school, the problem may be a leaking roof, insufficient classrooms or lack of furniture. In an urban school, the challenge may be overcrowding and the deterioration of facilities due to high enrolment. Both situations reduce the effectiveness of UBE. Regular maintenance and transparent project monitoring are consequently as important as the construction of new facilities.

Insecurity, Conflict and Displacement

Insecurity constitutes one of the most serious contextual barriers to UBE implementation in parts of Taraba State. The attached study documents recurrent farmer-herder conflict, inter-communal violence and other security incidents affecting communities in and around Takum. When schools are located in insecure environments, normal educational activities can be interrupted by school closures, population displacement, teacher movement and parental fear.

The effects of insecurity extend beyond the period of an individual attack. Families that relocate may not immediately return, teachers may seek safer postings, and children may lose months or years of schooling. The study's evidence indicates that schools in affected communities can remain closed for extended periods and that enrolment may fall sharply after violent incidents. Ejiofor (2023) and Ejiofor and Okoli (2024) similarly emphasise the educational consequences of conflict and the need to treat school

safety as part of education planning rather than as an issue outside the education sector.

Poverty and the Hidden Costs of Free Education

Although UBE is intended to provide free basic education, families may still face substantial indirect and associated costs. These include uniforms, shoes, books, writing materials, transportation and contributions associated with school participation. Poor households may also face opportunity costs when children are withdrawn from school to work, assist with household activities or contribute to family livelihoods.

The attached study illustrates this challenge through evidence from Takum, where parents reported difficulty meeting basic schooling expenses despite the formal removal of school fees. The problem is particularly severe in households with several children. Where immediate survival needs compete with school attendance, families may rationally prioritise food, income generation and domestic labour. Oyewole and Ogunyemi (2024) argue that the hidden costs of schooling can weaken the effectiveness of free education policies unless they are accompanied by appropriate social protection measures.

Weak Governance, Monitoring and Accountability

UBE implementation depends on effective coordination between UBEC, state education institutions, local education authorities, schools and communities. Weak coordination can create delays, duplication, poor supervision and inadequate follow-up. Monitoring is necessary to determine whether projects are completed, teachers are present, funds are properly used and intended beneficiaries receive services.

The attached study indicates that local implementation capacity differs considerably between Jalingo and Takum. In Jalingo, community structures and school administrators were reported to be more active in monitoring attendance and addressing dropout. In Takum, institutional weaknesses and limited administrative presence reduced the effectiveness of local monitoring. This supports the broader argument that the quality of policy implementation depends on institutional capacity as much as on formal policy design.

Weak Community Participation and School-Based Management

Community participation is an important component of sustainable educational development because parents, traditional leaders, religious organisations and other community actors possess local knowledge and can support school monitoring. School-Based Management Committees are intended to strengthen school-community relationships and contribute to accountability.

The evidence from the attached study presents a sharp contrast between functional SBMCs in Jalingo and largely inactive structures in Takum. In Jalingo, an active committee monitored teacher attendance, supported minor repairs and mobilised community participation. In Takum, respondents described an SBMC that existed formally but lacked regular meetings, clear membership and meaningful community ownership. The implication is that establishing committees on paper is insufficient; communities need genuine participation, information, authority and institutional support.

Socio-Cultural and Gender-Related Barriers

Socio-cultural conditions can also influence educational participation. Although the attached study identifies poverty and insecurity as particularly prominent in Takum, it also reports gender disparities in enrolment and retention. Girls may face additional pressures associated with domestic responsibilities, early marriage and household economic decisions. Musa and Ibrahim (2023) identify cultural barriers to girls' education in rural Taraba, while the study's evidence shows that girls in some communities experience higher dropout rates than boys.

These factors demonstrate that universal access cannot be achieved solely by building schools. Educational policies must address the household and community conditions that determine whether children, especially girls and other vulnerable groups, are able to remain in school. Community sensitisation, targeted support and retention mechanisms can complement supply-side interventions.

Empirical Review

Existing studies reviewed in the attached paper generally indicate that UBE implementation in northern Nigeria is constrained by regional inequality, inadequate funding, teacher shortages,

insecurity, poverty and local administrative weaknesses. Adeyemi and Ajayi (2022) report regional disparities in UBE implementation, while Akinfolarin and Ehinola (2021) highlight the importance of local government capacity. Taru and Enamhe (2022) draw attention to the crisis of primary education in rural Taraba and the disadvantage experienced by peripheral local government areas.

Research on community participation further suggests that school-level involvement can strengthen retention and educational outcomes. Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi (2022) emphasise community participation in school retention, while Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi (2023) associate effective SBMCs with improved school performance. Ogbonnaya (2024) similarly identifies performance, capacity and institutional conditions as important to the effectiveness of SBMCs.

Studies of insecurity and conflict provide another dimension. Ogbonnaya and Nwankwo (2023) connect conflict-induced displacement with reduced educational access, while Ejiofor and Okoli (2024) argue for stronger school-safety planning in conflict zones. Taken together, the literature suggests that UBE implementation should be analysed as a governance process that operates within a wider socio-economic and security environment rather than as an isolated education intervention.

A gap remains in the tendency of state-level or national discussions to conceal differences between local government areas. The attached study addresses this issue by comparing Jalingo and Takum. The present paper builds on that evidence by organising the observed conditions specifically around the implementation challenges that prevent UBE from producing uniform benefits across Taraba State.

Theoretical Framework

Educational Policy Implementation Theory

This study is anchored on Educational Policy Implementation Theory, drawing particularly on Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) and Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980). The theory explains policy implementation in terms of the relationship between policy objectives and the organisational, financial and socio-economic conditions required to achieve them. Important variables include the clarity of policy standards and objectives, available resources, inter-organisational communication, enforcement

arrangements, characteristics of implementing agencies, economic and social conditions, and the disposition of implementers.

The theory is relevant to UBE because the programme has clear national objectives but depends on a complex chain of implementing institutions. If funds are inadequate or not utilised, if teachers are not deployed, if local agencies do not communicate effectively, or if communities are affected by insecurity and poverty, the policy may fail to achieve its objectives even though the formal policy remains unchanged. The theory therefore helps explain why the same UBE framework can produce different results across LGAs.

Application of the Theory to the Study

The theory provides a useful explanation of the implementation challenges identified in Taraba State. Educational Policy Implementation Theory draws attention to resources, institutional coordination, implementer disposition and policy execution. Where administrative capacity, and execution of policies done, UBE implementation is more likely to be sustained. Where insecurity, poverty, weak institutions and inadequate resources converge, implementation is severely constrained.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design. The approach was considered appropriate because the objective was to understand the institutional, socio-economic, security and community factors that shape the implementation of UBE in Taraba State. The analysis focuses particularly on Jalingo and Takum Local Government Areas as contrasting contexts within the state.

The study covered the period from 2015 to 2024 for the examination of programme implementation and educational outcomes, while field observations reported in the source study were conducted between September and November 2025. Primary information was generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and direct observation. The source study interviewed 32 participants, comprising headteachers, classroom teachers, parents, Local Education Authority officials, community leaders and School-Based Management Committee members. Four focus group discussions were also conducted, two in each LGA, while direct

observations covered twelve schools, six in each LGA.

Secondary information was drawn from UBEC annual reports, Taraba State Ministry of Education records, Taraba State SUBEB documents, National Bureau of Statistics reports, UNESCO reports, World Bank reports, security-related data and relevant academic publications. The source study analysed primary information thematically and used secondary documents for triangulation. For the present paper, the evidence is organised around the major challenges to implementation rather than around the broader impact assessment used in the original study.

IV. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Objective One: Funding and Resource-Utilisation Challenges Affecting UBE Implementation in Taraba State Findings

Low Utilisation of UBEC Matching Grants: The evidence reveals that Taraba State utilised only 47 percent of UBEC matching grants between 2020 and 2024. This low absorption capacity indicates that the challenge is not merely the availability of funds but the institutional and administrative capacity to access, release, and deploy them effectively. Delays in counterpart funding, cumbersome procurement procedures, and weak project selection processes were identified as contributing factors.

Uneven and Inequitable Resource Distribution: Resource allocation was found to be disproportionately concentrated in urban areas, particularly Jalingo, while rural and conflict-affected communities such as Takum received less attention. This urban bias in resource distribution means that schools in peripheral areas continued to experience severe infrastructure deficits even when aggregate state-level funding appeared substantial. The finding supports the argument that funding challenges must be understood not only in terms of the amount appropriated but also in relation to release, counterpart contributions, project selection, procurement, monitoring, and utilisation (Akinfolarin & Ogunyemi, 2020).

Contextual Differences in Resource Needs: The comparison between Jalingo and Takum illustrates that resource requirements vary by context. In

Jalingo, some schools benefited from improvements and active school management, yet overcrowding remained because enrolment increased faster than classroom capacity. In Takum, the more fundamental problem was the continued existence of old, poorly maintained facilities. This dual pattern—absolute deficiency in rural areas and demand-induced pressure in urban areas—demonstrates that a uniform funding formula is inadequate. Resource allocation must be sensitive to both existing deficits and changing demand.

Weak Monitoring and Accountability in Resource Utilisation: The evidence indicates that weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms contributed to poor resource utilisation. In Takum, respondents expressed concerns about project delays, inadequate follow-through, weak local monitoring, and limited responsiveness. Such conditions create a gap between what is approved in plans and what is actually delivered at school level. Transparent reporting of funds, projects, teacher postings, and school conditions is essential for strengthening public trust and reducing implementation gaps.

Discussion

The findings confirm that funding and resource-utilisation challenges are central to UBE implementation failure in Taraba State. The 47 percent utilisation rate of UBEC matching grants is particularly alarming because it suggests that even when federal intervention funds are available, the state lacks the institutional capacity to convert them into tangible educational improvements. This finding aligns with Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi's (2020) identification of political and institutional factors in education financing within Nigeria's federal system.

The urban bias in resource distribution reflects broader patterns of geopolitical marginalisation and elite capture in Nigerian educational resource allocation (Nwangwu, 2023; Edward et al., 2022). Peripheral communities such as Takum remain disadvantaged not because resources are entirely absent but because allocation mechanisms do not adequately reflect need. The implication is that Taraba State requires transparent, needs-based allocation mechanisms that recognise enrolment pressures, poverty levels, remoteness, infrastructure conditions, and security risks.

The contrast between Jalingo and Takum also demonstrates that infrastructure planning should consider both rehabilitation and expansion. A policy that concentrates only on constructing new schools may overlook the need to maintain existing buildings, provide furniture and sanitation, and expand classrooms in communities experiencing rapid enrolment growth. The findings support the central propositions of Educational Policy Implementation Theory (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980): clear policy objectives are insufficient where resources are inadequate, inter-organisational coordination is weak, or implementers operate in difficult socio-economic environments.

Objective Two: Teacher-Related Challenges, Including Shortages, Qualification, Deployment, Motivation and Retention

Findings

Substantial Qualification Gap Between Urban and Rural Schools: The study found a marked difference in teacher qualifications between Jalingo and Takum. In sampled Jalingo schools, 87 percent of teachers possessed NCE qualifications or higher, compared with only 41 percent in Takum. This qualification gap has direct implications for instructional quality and learning outcomes, as teachers without minimum professional qualifications may lack the pedagogical skills required to deliver the UBE curriculum effectively (Ajayi & Adeyemi, 2024).

High Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Teacher Shortages in Rural Areas: The pupil-teacher ratio was substantially higher in Takum, reaching very high levels in some schools. In some Takum schools, a small number of teachers reportedly covered several classes, reducing instructional time and placing considerable pressure on individual teachers. This shortage is not merely a numerical problem; it affects the quality of interaction between teachers and learners, limits opportunities for individual attention, and contributes to teacher burnout and attrition.

Uneven Deployment and Rural-Urban Disparities: Teacher deployment was found to be uneven, with rural and conflict-affected communities experiencing the most severe shortages. Rural schools may consequently depend on a small number of teachers to cover several classes, while insecurity, poor working conditions, and limited incentives make rural postings difficult to sustain. Oyewole (2023)

links rural-urban disparities partly to weaknesses in teacher-posting policies, while the present study's evidence confirms that administrative deployment mechanisms are not adequately addressing these disparities.

Weak Incentives for Rural and Conflict-Prone Postings: The study identified weak incentives as a major factor discouraging teachers from accepting and remaining in rural postings. Teachers may face insecurity, inadequate housing, limited access to professional development, and difficult working conditions. The source study records cases in which teachers considered leaving schools because of poor conditions and alternative livelihood opportunities. This finding suggests that recruitment alone will not resolve the challenge.

Insecurity as a Barrier to Teacher Deployment and Retention: Insecurity emerged as a particularly severe barrier to teacher deployment and retention in Takum and surrounding communities. Violent incidents have resulted in temporary school closures, displacement of households, and reduced school attendance. Teachers may seek safer postings, and those who remain may face personal safety risks. The fear generated by insecurity also affects decisions made by parents and teachers, creating a vicious cycle in which schools close, teachers leave, and children lose months or years of schooling.

Motivation and Retention Challenges: The evidence indicates that teacher motivation and retention are undermined by poor working conditions, inadequate welfare provisions, limited professional development opportunities, and the perceived difficulty of rural service. The problem is reinforced by weak incentives for rural and conflict-prone postings, which makes it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers in the communities that need them most.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that teacher-related challenges are a major constraint on UBE implementation in Taraba State. The qualification gap between Jalingo (87 percent NCE or higher) and Takum (41 percent) is striking and has direct implications for instructional quality. Teachers without minimum professional qualifications may lack the pedagogical content knowledge and classroom management skills required to deliver effective instruction. This finding aligns with Ajayi

and Adeyemi's (2024) emphasis on the relationship between teacher quality and learning outcomes.

The high pupil-teacher ratios in Takum reflect both absolute teacher shortages and uneven deployment. When a small number of teachers must cover several classes, instructional time is reduced, individual attention is limited, and teachers face excessive demands. This situation is exacerbated by the difficulty of attracting and retaining teachers in rural and conflict-affected communities. The finding supports Oyewole's (2023) argument that rural-urban disparities are linked to weaknesses in teacher-posting policies.

The evidence also demonstrates that recruitment alone will not resolve the challenge. Taraba State needs a comprehensive retention strategy that combines equitable deployment, welfare improvements, professional development, rural allowances, and secure accommodation. The finding that teachers consider leaving because of poor conditions and alternative livelihood opportunities underscores the need for a multi-dimensional approach to teacher motivation and retention.

Insecurity further complicates teacher deployment and retention. When schools are located in insecure environments, normal educational activities can be interrupted by school closures, population displacement, teacher movement, and parental fear. The finding that schools in affected communities can remain closed for extended periods and that enrolment may fall sharply after violent incidents underscores the need for conflict-sensitive education planning. As Ejiofor and Okoli (2024) argue, school safety must be treated as part of education planning rather than as an issue outside the education sector.

The findings also highlight the interconnectedness of teacher-related challenges with other implementation constraints. Funding deficiencies affect the ability to recruit and retain teachers; poor infrastructure and insecurity affect teacher working conditions; poverty increases dropout and reduces demand for qualified teachers; and weak community structures reduce local accountability. The result is a cycle in which disadvantaged communities experience multiple constraints simultaneously.

V. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the challenges facing the implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme in Taraba State, drawing particularly on evidence from Jalingo and Takum LGAs. The analysis shows that UBE implementation is constrained by inadequate and unevenly utilised resources, teacher shortages and unequal deployment, poor and overcrowded infrastructure, insecurity, poverty and hidden schooling costs, weak governance and monitoring, and ineffective community-management structures.

The challenges are more severe in rural and conflict-affected communities. Takum illustrates how insecurity, poverty, weak state presence and inadequate infrastructure can combine to limit educational access and continuity. Jalingo demonstrates that even where implementation conditions are relatively stronger, rapid enrolment can create new pressures such as overcrowding. The implication is that UBE implementation should be assessed not only by the existence of policy and funding but by the actual capacity of schools and communities to provide safe, inclusive and continuous learning.

The study therefore concludes that achieving the objectives of UBE in Taraba State requires a shift from a largely uniform implementation approach toward equitable, needs-based and context-sensitive education governance. Stronger funding utilisation, effective teacher deployment, infrastructure maintenance, conflict-sensitive planning, household support and meaningful community participation are essential for reducing implementation gaps.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

I. The first objective of the study was to examine the funding and resource-utilisation challenges affecting UBE implementation in Taraba State. This paper proposes that SUBEB should improve its capacity to access, release, and deploy UBEC matching grants. This recommendation responds directly to the finding that only 47 percent of matching grants were utilised during the review period. The low utilisation rate suggests that the problem is not merely the availability of funds but the institutional capacity to convert available funds into tangible educational improvements. Delays in

counterpart funding, cumbersome procurement procedures, and weak project selection processes were identified as contributing factors.

By addressing these administrative bottlenecks, streamlining procurement, strengthening financial management systems, and setting a clear target to increase utilisation to at least 80 percent within three years, SUBEB can ensure that federal intervention funds actually reach schools and communities. This recommendation is significant because it shifts attention from the question of how much money is available to the more practical question of whether available money is being used effectively. Without improved utilisation capacity, even increased funding allocations would not translate into improved educational outcomes.

II. The second objective of the study was to assess teacher-related challenges, including shortages, qualification, deployment, motivation and retention. This paper recommends that SUBEB should strengthen rural teacher recruitment, deployment, and retention. This recommendation responds directly to the finding that 87 percent of teachers in sampled Jalingo schools possessed NCE qualifications or higher, compared with only 41 percent in Takum. This qualification gap has direct implications for instructional quality and learning outcomes, as teachers without minimum professional qualifications may lack the pedagogical skills required to deliver the UBE curriculum effectively. The recommendation proposes implementing a deliberate strategy for equitable deployment, recruiting qualified teachers specifically for rural and conflict-affected schools, providing rural allowances, offering secure accommodation, creating clear career incentives, establishing partnerships with teacher training institutions, and setting qualification targets with support for unqualified teachers to obtain NCE qualifications. This recommendation is significant because it addresses both the supply and distribution of qualified teachers. Without a deliberate strategy to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural areas, the qualification gap will persist, and children in communities such as Takum will continue to receive lower-quality education than their counterparts in Jalingo.

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