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Assessment of Funds Administration in Universal Basic Education Policy: A Study of Junior Secondary Schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State

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Abstract
This study examined the administration of funds under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State between 2022 and 2025. The study was motivated by persistent concerns about inadequate infrastructure, insufficient instructional materials, and challenges in effective fund utilization despite continuous government intervention through UBE funding. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, utilizing a structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale to collect data from 48 respondents selected from public junior secondary schools in the Local Government Area. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The study was anchored on the Public Policy Implementation Theory, which emphasizes the role of resources, administrative capacity and coordination in achieving policy objectives. Findings among others revealed that UBE funds have had a moderate positive impact on school infrastructure and availability of instructional materials. The study concluded that while UBE funding has contributed to improving educational facilities and learning resources, implementation gaps limit its overall effectiveness. The study recommended among others that government agencies strengthen monitoring mechanism.

Keywords: Administration of funds, Universal Basic Education (UBE), policy in Junior Secondary Schools, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State

Introduction

Education remains the most potent instrument for societal transformation and national development. Recognizing this fundamental truth, the Nigerian government has, over the decades, initiated various policies aimed at expanding access to quality education at the basic level. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, established by the UBE Act of 2004, represents the most comprehensive attempt to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education to all Nigerian children. The programme covers both primary education and junior secondary school (JSS), encompassing the first nine years of formal schooling. The funding architecture of the UBE programme is unique in Nigeria's fiscal federalism. Under Section 11 of the UBE Act 2004, the Federal Government is mandated to provide a block grant of not less than two per cent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund for basic education. However, this funding is designed as a matching grant mechanism: state governments must contribute at least 50 per cent of the total cost of projects to qualify for access to the federal funds held by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) on their behalf. This counterpart funding requirement was deliberately designed to ensure state ownership and commitment to basic education delivery.

Education is widely recognized as a critical instrument for national development, poverty reduction, and social transformation. Governments across the world invest heavily in education to improve literacy, human capital development, and economic productivity. In developing

countries such as Nigeria, the provision of free and compulsory basic education has become a key policy priority aimed at ensuring universal access to education for children of school age (Okeke, 2019). Nigeria introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 as a reform initiative designed to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age. The programme covers nine years of schooling, consisting of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). The policy is implemented through collaborative efforts among the federal, state, and local governments with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) coordinating implementation at the national level (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013; Universal Basic Education Commission, 2024).

A major component of the UBE programme is adequate funding, which is necessary to provide infrastructure, teaching materials, teacher training, and other essential educational resources. The Nigerian government provides intervention funds through UBEC to support states in implementing the programme. However, access to these funds requires states to provide counterpart funding, which has often posed challenges for many states (Adewale & Olatunji, 2020). The Universal Basic Education programme was introduced in Nigeria to address challenges such as low school enrolment, high dropout rates, poor educational infrastructure, and inadequate access to basic education. The programme aims to ensure that every child receives free and compulsory education up to the junior secondary school level (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013).

To facilitate effective administration, the UBE Act established three key institutions:

1. Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) at the federal level.
2. State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) at the state level.
3. Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) at the local level.

Funding for the UBE programme is derived from multiple sources including federal government allocations, state government contributions, donor agencies, and community participation. The federal government provides intervention funds through UBEC, which states can access only after providing 50 percent counterpart funding (Ogunode & Musa, 2020). However, studies have shown that funding challenges continue to affect the implementation of the programme. Many states are unable to access the available funds due to their inability to meet counterpart funding requirements or submit appropriate implementation plans (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2018). In addition, several public schools still face severe infrastructural deficits, shortage of teachers, and inadequate instructional materials despite the existence of intervention funds. Educational experts argue that poor financial management, weak monitoring systems, and bureaucratic bottlenecks have contributed to the ineffective utilization of UBE funds (Aina & Adekunle, 2021). Reports also show that many states have failed to utilize billions of naira allocated for basic education, leading to persistent challenges in the education sector including inadequate classrooms and shortage of teachers (Nigeria Education News, 2025). Even with substantial financial allocations to the UBE programme, the quality of education in many public schools remains poor due to problems such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and shortage of qualified teachers. Reports indicate that billions of naira allocated for basic education have remained unutilized in some states due to administrative bottlenecks and failure to meet funding requirements (UBEC, 2024). In some cases, large amounts of UBE funds

remain dormant in state coffers because states fail to provide the required counterpart funding or implementation plans (Nigeria Education News, 2025).

Notwithstanding this innovative funding framework, the implementation of UBE funding has faced persistent challenges. By mid-2024, reports indicated that a substantial amount of Universal Basic Education (UBE) intervention funds remained unaccessed by state governments due to their inability or unwillingness to provide the required counterpart funding. It was estimated that over ₦250 billion remained unutilized in the accounts of State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), reflecting persistent challenges in funding implementation and intergovernmental fiscal commitment (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2024; The Punch, 2024).This paradox of available funds remaining untapped while schools grapple with infrastructural decay and inadequate learning materials raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the UBE funding implementation model.

As one of Nigeria's 36 states, Edo operates its basic education system through the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (EDOSUBEB), which oversees both primary and junior secondary schools. Ovia North East Local Government Area, comprising both urban and rural settlements, accommodates numerous junior secondary schools that are expected to benefit from UBE intervention funds. Nevertheless, studies and policy reports reveal that many public schools in Nigeria continue to experience infrastructural deficits, inadequate instructional materials, and substandard learning environments, indicating gaps between policy intentions and actual implementation (UBEC, 2022; Federal Ministry of Education, 2019; UNICEF, 2021). The period 2022 to 2025 witnessed renewed federal efforts to clear backlogs of unaccessed UBE funds, with the Tinubu administration approving new strategies to disburse accumulated funds dating back to 2020. By early 2025, nine states had received N27.8 billion in UBEC disbursements following payment of counterpart funds. Yet, the extent to which such funds have translated into tangible improvements at the school level particularly in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East remains largely undocumented. Given the importance of funds administration in policy implementation, it becomes necessary to examine how financial resources allocated to the UBE programme are administered at the local level. This study therefore assesses the implementation of funding under the Universal Basic Education policy in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State between 2022 and 2025.

Statement of the Problem

The gap between policy intention and administration reality in Nigeria's education sector has been a recurring concern. Regardless of the elaborate funding provisions of the UBE Act and the accumulation of substantial intervention funds at UBEC, junior secondary schools across Nigeria continue to face critical challenges that undermine the achievement of UBE objectives. Classrooms remain dilapidated, furniture is inadequate, water and sanitation facilities are often absent, and teaching and learning materials are in short supply. The problem is particularly acute at the junior secondary school level, which represents a critical transition point in the educational continuum. It is at this level that students consolidate foundational literacy and numeracy while being introduced to prevocational subjects that could shape their future career paths. Yet, JSS remains the neglected middle child of Nigeria's education system, less

prioritized than primary education in basic education discourse, yet not attracting the attention given to senior secondary and tertiary institutions.

In Edo State, and specifically in Ovia North East Local Government Area, there is a noticeable scarcity of empirical data on how UBE funds have been implemented at the school level. While national and state-level data on fund releases are periodically reported, the critical question of what happens after funds are released; whether they translate into improved infrastructure, better-equipped classrooms, and enhanced learning environments remains largely unanswered. This knowledge gap impedes evidence based policy adjustments and accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, the counterpart funding mechanism itself presents a potential administration bottleneck. States that fail to provide their matching contributions effectively deny their schools access to federal intervention funds. The extent to which Edo State has met its counterpart funding obligations during the 2022–2025 period, and how this has affected junior secondary schools in Ovia North East, requires systematic investigation. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the administration of UBE funding in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, focusing on the period 2022 to 2025. It aims to bridge the gap between policy-level funding announcements and school-level administration realities.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the administration of funds under the Universal Basic Education policy in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State from 2022 to 2025. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the adequacy of UBE fund disbursements to junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area between 2022 and 2025;
2. Examine the extent to which UBE funds have been administered for infrastructural development in junior secondary schools in the study area;
3. Assess the availability of instructional materials resulting from UBE funding administration in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East; and
4. Investigate the challenges affecting effective administration of UBE funding at the junior secondary school level in the study area.

Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived adequacy of UBE fund disbursements to junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area between 2022 and 2025?
2. To what extent have UBE funds been administered for infrastructural development (classroom construction, renovation, furniture, water and sanitation facilities) in junior secondary schools in the study area?
3. What is the state of availability of instructional materials resulting from UBE funds administration in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East attributable to UBE funding?
4. What challenges militate against the effective administration of UBE funding at the junior secondary school level in the study area?

Scope of the Study

Geographically, the study focused on junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The LGA has its headquarters in Okada and comprises numerous towns and villages, including Okada, Utese, Oluku, Iguoshodin, and Ofunmwegbe. It hosts several public junior secondary schools, making it suitable for assessing UBE funding administration. While findings may have implications for understanding UBE administration more broadly, the study does not claim generalizability to other local government areas or states. Content-wise, the study examines the administration of UBE funding, specifically looking at disbursement adequacy, infrastructural development, instructional materials availability, administration challenges, and accountability mechanisms. It does not assess learning outcomes, teacher quality, or curriculum implementation except as they relate to funding utilization. Temporally, the study covers the period 2022 to 2025. This timeframe allows for assessment of recent funding cycles and captures the period of renewed federal efforts to clear backlogs of unaccessed funds. It also coincides with the implementation of the UBEC 2025–2030 Strategic Blueprint, which introduced reforms to the matching grant formula. Population wise, the study focuses on public junior secondary schools in Ovia North East, excluding private schools and senior secondary schools.

Methodology

The study adopts the descriptive survey research method and relied on primary and secondary data; collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage tables. The population of the study consisted of all 28 public Junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, with a total of 336 teachers and 28 principals, based on administrative records from the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and Edo State Post Primary Education Board (PPEB) (Edo State PPEB, 2024). Purposively this study selected 1 principal and 5 teachers each from 8 junior secondary schools from communities in the Local government Area; namely: Utoka Grammar School**,** Utoka; Iguoshodin Secondary School**,** Iguoshodin; Okada Grammar School**,** Okada**;** Udo Secondary School, Udo; Ekiadolor Secondary School**,** Ekiadolor**;** Oluku Secondary School, Oluku; Uhen Secondary School, Uhen; Ogbese Secondary School, Ogbese. Thus the sample size of the study is forty eight (48).

Conceptual Clarification

Universal Basic Education (UBE): Refers to the nine-year basic education programme comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It is designed to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education for all children of school age (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). The programme is guided by the UBE Act 2004 and implemented through the Universal Basic Education Commission at the federal level and State Universal Basic Education Boards at the state level.

Funding administration: In the context of this study, funding implementation refers to the processes and mechanisms through which UBE funds are disbursed, accessed, and utilised for educational purposes at the basic education level. It encompasses the counterpart funding arrangement, the project execution framework, and the outcomes of fund utilization in terms of improved educational infrastructure and materials. Policy implementation is the process of

translating government policies into practical programmes and actions to achieve predetermined objectives.

Education funding: Education funding refers to the financial resources allocated by government and other stakeholders for the development and management of educational institutions. These funds are used for infrastructure, teacher salaries, instructional materials, and other educational services (Aina & Adekunle, 2021). Junior Secondary School (JSS): This constitutes the final three years of the nine-year basic education programme (JSS 1–3). It follows six years of primary education and precedes senior secondary school. Under the UBE framework, junior secondary education is expected to be free and compulsory, with curriculum emphasis on both academic and prevocational subjects.

Ovia North East Local Government Area: One of the 18 local government areas in Edo State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters at Okada and comprises both urban and rural communities with numerous public junior secondary schools.

Literature Review

The history of basic education funding in Nigeria reflects the country's broader governance challenges and fiscal dynamics. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme of 1976 represented the first major federal intervention in basic education, but it suffered from inadequate planning, insufficient funding, and poor implementation. The failure of UPE informed the design of the UBE programme, which sought to create a more sustainable funding framework through the matching grant mechanism (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2023). According to the UBE Act 2004, funding for the programme derives from multiple sources: the Federal Government block grant of not less than two per cent of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, contributions from state and local governments, funds from federal guaranteed credits, and local and international donor grants. This diversified funding base was intended to insulate basic education from the volatility of annual budgetary allocations. The counterpart funding requirement is central to the UBE funding architecture. The logic is sound; requiring states to contribute their own resources ensures ownership and commitment, while the federal matching grant provides incentive and additional resources. However, the implementation of this mechanism has been problematic. The disbursement of matching grant FGN-Ube intervention funds to Edo state from 2022-2023 was N2,470,225,447.26 (UBEC, 2024).

Core Deliverables and Objectives of UBE policy

One of the key objectives of the UBE policy is to promote access and equity in education. The programme seeks to guarantee free and compulsory basic education for all children of school-going age, with particular emphasis on the education of the girl-child, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and other marginalized groups. This objective also aims at reducing the number of out-of-school children and ensuring equal educational opportunities across different regions of the country (Okeke, 2019). Through this initiative, the government intends to remove barriers to education and promote inclusive learning.

Another major component of the policy is the provision and improvement of educational infrastructure and learning resources. The UBE programme supports the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, provision of school furniture such as desks and chairs, and

distribution of textbooks and library materials to enhance teaching and learning in schools. These infrastructural improvements are intended to create a conducive learning environment that will support effective curriculum delivery and improved student performance (Ogunode, 2021).

The UBE policy also emphasizes quality assurance in the basic education system. To achieve this objective, the programme promotes continuous training and retraining of teachers, improvement of curriculum standards, and the establishment of minimum standards for schools across the country. Teacher professional development programmes are designed to enhance the pedagogical skills of teachers and ensure that they can effectively deliver the curriculum to students (Aina & Adekunle, 2021).

Furthermore, the policy seeks to ensure mandatory completion of basic education. Under the provisions of the UBE Act, parents and guardians are legally required to ensure that their children enroll in and complete primary and junior secondary education. This requirement is intended to promote universal literacy and reduce school dropout rates across the country (UBEC, 2024). Another important deliverable of the UBE policy is the development of essential skills among learners. The programme is designed to equip students with basic literacy, numeracy, manipulative, and life skills necessary for personal development and participation in national development. These skills are essential for preparing learners for further education, vocational training, and productive engagement in society (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013).

In addition, the UBE programme provides alternative education opportunities for children and youths who are unable to participate in formal schooling. Such initiatives include non-formal education programmes, vocational training schemes, and integration of Qur'anic education into the formal education system in order to accommodate children who attend traditional Islamic schools. These alternative learning pathways help to expand educational access and reduce the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Ogunode & Musa, 2020). Finally, the effective implementation of the UBE policy is supported through statutory funding arrangements. The Universal Basic Education Act (2004) mandates that not less than 2 percent of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) of the Federal Government be allocated annually to the Universal Basic Education Commission to support basic education programmes across the states. These funds are disbursed as intervention grants to states for the development of infrastructure, procurement of instructional materials, teacher training, and other educational programmes. However, states are required to provide counterpart funding before accessing these grants, which has sometimes posed challenges to the effective utilization of the funds (UBEC, 2024; Ogunode, 2021).

The core deliverables of the UBE policy are aimed at improving access, quality, and equity in Nigeria's basic education system while ensuring sustainable funding mechanisms for the implementation of educational programmes. Ogunode and Musa (2020) examined the funding structure of the UBE programme and found that inadequate funding and delayed disbursement of funds hinder effective implementation. The study noted that many schools still lack basic infrastructure despite government allocations. Similarly, Aina and Adekunle (2021) found that poor financial management and weak monitoring mechanisms affect the utilization of

educational funds in Nigeria. According to the authors, effective accountability systems are necessary to ensure proper utilization of public funds in the education sector.

Adedeji & Olaniyan (2018) also observed that the requirement for states to provide counterpart funding before accessing UBEC intervention funds has limited the ability of some states to benefit from federal allocations. Furthermore, research shows that lack of coordination among the federal, state, and local governments affects the implementation of the UBE programme. Institutional weaknesses and administrative bottlenecks often delay the release and utilization of funds (Okeke, 2019). Another challenge affecting UBE implementation is the lack of adequate infrastructure and teaching materials in many schools. This situation undermines the quality of education and reduces the effectiveness of the programme (Adewale & Olatunji, 2020). Despite these studies, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on the implementation of UBE funding at the local government level, particularly in Edo State. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap.

Table 1: Disbursement and Access of FGN–UBE Matching Grants in Edo State (2022–2025)

Year	FGN–UBE Matching Grant Allocated (₦ Billion)	Required State Counterpart (₦ Billion)	Total Available (₦ Billion)	Amount Accessed by Edo State (₦ Billion)	Percentage Accessed (%)	Source
2022	1.23	1.23	2.46	2.46	100%	UBEC (2024)
2023	1.23	1.23	2.46	2.46	100%	Federal Budget office (2023(, UBEC (2024)
2024	3.50	3.50	700	7.00	100%	UBEC (2024)
2025	3.50	3.50	7.00	6.00	85.7%	UBEC (2025); The Punch (2025)

Source: Researcher's Findings, 2026.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Public Policy Implementation Theory which was primarily propounded by Paul A. Sabatier and Daniel Mazmanian in 1980. They formalized the theory in their seminar work: "The Implementation of Public Policy: A Framework of Analysis". Sabatier and Mazmanian developed the theory to explain why public policies often fail or succeed at the implementation stage, even when legislation and funding exist. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) outlined the main tenets as follows:

1. Clear and Consistent Policy Objectives: Policies must have well-defined goals that are understood by implementing agencies.
2. Adequate Resources and Funding: Sufficient financial, human, and material resources are essential for successful implementation.
3. Legal Authority and Enforcement Capability: Implementing agencies must have the legal mandate and authority to enforce the policy.
4. Support from Key Actors: Stakeholders such as government agencies, local authorities, and beneficiaries must support the policy.
5. Program Structure and Inter-Agency Coordination: Effective organizational arrangements and coordination mechanisms improve implementation outcomes.

6. Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms: Continuous evaluation and supervision help adjust strategies and ensure objectives are met.
7. Socioeconomic and Political Conditions: Contextual factors, including local politics, public attitudes, and social conditions, influence implementation success.

Application of Public Policy Implementation Theory to this Study

The Public Policy Implementation Theory, propounded by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), provides a useful lens for analyzing the administration of Universal Basic Education (UBE) funds in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. This theory emphasizes that successful implementation of public policies depends not only on the clarity of policy objectives and the availability of resources but also on effective coordination, supervision, and contextual factors.

The theory stresses the importance of adequate resources and proper coordination among implementing agencies, which aligns with examining whether Edo State SUBEB and LGEA effectively distributed UBE funds to schools, and whether these schools were able to use the funds to improve infrastructure and learning resources. Additionally, the theory's emphasis on monitoring, feedback, and accountability mechanisms directly informs the study's exploration of challenges such as bureaucratic delays, inadequate supervision, and incomplete or untimely fund utilization.

Moreover, the theory accounts for contextual factors, including the urban-rural mix of Ovia North East LGA, school size, and local administrative capacity, which influence the effectiveness of fund utilization. By employing this theoretical framework, the study can systematically link UBE fund allocation and administration to tangible outcomes in school infrastructure, teaching resources, and learning environments, thereby identifying gaps between policy intentions and actual implementation.

The theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding the successes and constraints in UBE fund administration, guiding the study to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and challenges associated with policy implementation in Ovia North East Local Government Area. It explains why some schools may experience better outcomes than others, emphasizing the interplay between funding, institutional capacity, and contextual realities (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Hill & Hupe, 2014; UBEC, 2022).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on UBE Funding administration (n = 48)

S/N	Questions	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)
1	UBE funds disbursed to my school between 2022 and 2025 were adequate to meet basic educational needs.	5; 10.4%	12; 25.0%	20; 41.7%	11; 22.9%
2	The timing of UBE fund disbursement to my school was prompt and consistent.	7; 14.6%	15; 31.3%	16; 33.3%	10; 20.8%
3	The amount of UBE funds received by my school was sufficient to support effective teaching and learning.	6; 12.5%	14; 29.2%	18; 37.5%	10; 20.8%

4	UBE funds have significantly improved classroom construction in my school.	4; 8.3%	10; 20.8%	22; 45.8%	12; 25.0%
5	UBE funding has contributed to the renovation of existing school buildings.	3; 6.3%	11; 22.9%	23; 47.9%	11; 22.9%
6	UBE funds have enhanced the provision of furniture, water, and sanitation facilities in my school.	5; 10.4%	13; 27.1%	20; 41.7%	10; 20.8%
7	UBE funding has improved the availability of textbooks in my school.	3; 6.3%	12; 25.0%	21; 43.8%	12; 25.0%
8	Instructional materials such as teaching aids and learning resources are adequate due to UBE funding.	4; 8.3%	14; 29.2%	19; 39.6%	11; 22.9%
9	Students in my school have sufficient access to learning materials provided through UBE funds.	5; 10.4%	15; 31.3%	18; 37.5%	10; 20.8%
10	Delays in the release of UBE funds negatively affect school development.	2; 4.2%	6; 12.5%	21; 43.8%	19; 39.6%
11	Bureaucratic procedures hinder the effective utilization of UBE funds in my school.	3; 6.3	9; 18.8%	22; 45.8%	14; 29.2%
12	Inadequate monitoring and supervision affect the proper use of UBE funds.	14; 8.3%	10; 20.8%	20; 41.7%	14; 29.2%

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

f = frequency (number of respondents)
% = percentage of respondents out of 48
4-point Likert scale: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Responses to question 1 showed that slightly over 64% of respondents perceived UBE fund allocation as adequate. However, 35% disagreed, highlighting that a significant portion of teachers still view funding as insufficient. This indicates partial success in meeting school financial needs and points to uneven fund distribution across schools. Responses to question 2 revealed that only 54.1% of respondents felt funds were released timely, while 46% disagreed, suggesting that delays in fund release remain a problem. Timeliness is crucial for planning infrastructure and instructional activities, so these delays can hamper effective policy implementation. Responses to question 3 revealed that about 58.3% of teachers agreed on sufficiency, again indicating that while funding has improved school resources, more than 40% of respondents feel the funds are inadequate, reflecting persistent funding gaps at the school level.

Responses to question 4 revealed that nearly 71% of respondents acknowledge improvements in classroom infrastructure, suggesting that UBE funds are effectively impacting physical development in schools. Responses to question 5 showed that about 71% positive responses indicate that renovation activities are largely visible, though a small minority of schools may still lack improvements. Responses to question 6 indicated that approximately 62.5% of respondents agreed, showing moderate improvement in facilities. However, the disagreement from 38% of teachers indicates that some schools still face infrastructure deficits, particularly regarding sanitation and furniture.

Responses to question 7 indicated that about 69% of teachers perceive an increase in textbooks, showing a moderate positive impact, although 31% still report insufficient materials. Responses to question 8 showed that 62.5% agree, meaning instructional materials have improved but are not uniformly adequate. Some schools, especially in rural areas, continue to face shortages. While responses to question 9 indicated that only 58.3% of respondents report adequate access, suggesting that while funds improve availability, actual distribution to students may be uneven. Responses to question 10 revealed that 83.4% agreed that fund release delays are a major obstacle to proper use of UBE funds. While responses to question 11 indicated 75% confirms bureaucracy as a significant impediment to proper use of UBE funds. Responses to question 12 showed that 70.9% of respondents perceive poor monitoring as a challenge to proper use of UBE funds

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the frequency and percentage analysis of responses revealed that while 64% of teachers agreed that UBE funds were adequate, a significant proportion (36%) disagreed, highlighting concerns over insufficiency and inconsistent funding. Similarly, responses regarding the timeliness of fund disbursement indicate that only 54% of respondents agreed that funds were released promptly, while 46% experienced delays. These findings suggest that although the policy intends to provide adequate financial resources, in practice, some schools continue to face funding gaps that may hinder educational delivery.

These results are consistent with previous studies. For example, Lawal (2024) and UBEC (2022) observed that many states fail to access the full allocation of UBE funds due to delays in counterpart funding and bureaucratic hurdles. This aligns with the Public Policy Implementation Theory, which posits that successful policy outcomes depend not only on resource allocation but also on the capacity of implementing agencies to release and utilize resources efficiently (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Hill & Hupe, 2014).

Findings indicate that 62–71% of respondents perceived improvements in classrooms, renovations, and provision of furniture, water, and sanitation facilities. While this reflects a moderate positive impact of UBE funding on school infrastructure, the remaining 30–38% of respondents reported that infrastructure was still inadequate. This confirms the findings of Ajayi (2016) and Alabi (2017), who noted that UBE interventions often result in visible improvements in some schools, but implementation gaps persist, especially in rural or semi-urban areas. The results can also be interpreted through the Public Policy Implementation Theory, which emphasizes that even when resources are available, outcomes vary depending on administrative capacity, coordination, and local context (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). In this study, schools with better coordination and oversight experienced more substantial infrastructural benefits than those with weaker management systems.

Responses related to instructional materials reveal that 58–69% of teachers agreed that UBE funding improved access to textbooks, teaching aids, and learning resources. However, a significant minority (31–42%) indicated that instructional materials were still inadequate or unevenly distributed among students. This finding is in line with studies by UBEC (2022) and UNICEF (2021), which highlighted that resource allocation alone does not guarantee equitable

access, and disparities often exist between urban and rural schools. According to the Public Policy Implementation Theory, the availability of resources is only one factor; effective implementation requires proper distribution, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). In the context of Ovia North East LGA, the variation in access to instructional materials underscores the role of local administrative capacity and oversight in ensuring policy effectiveness.

A major finding is that 70–83% of respondents identified challenges such as delayed release of funds, bureaucratic procedures, and inadequate monitoring as significant barriers to effective fund administration. These challenges suggest that despite federal and state efforts, structural and procedural inefficiencies continue to hinder UBE policy implementation. This aligns with findings by Punch (2024) and Lawal (2024), which reported that a large portion of UBEC intervention funds remained unutilized due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and insufficient state-level counterpart contributions. The Public Policy Implementation Theory helps explain this phenomenon: successful policy outcomes are contingent upon institutional capacity, inter-agency coordination, monitoring, and contextual factors (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Hill & Hupe, 2014). The results affirm the relevance of Public Policy Implementation Theory, which emphasizes that policy success is determined not only by resource availability but also by administrative capacity, coordination, monitoring, and context. The findings corroborate studies by Ajayi (2016), Alabi (2017), and UBEC (2022), which reported similar challenges in fund utilization and resource distribution in Nigerian basic education programs.

Conclusion

This study assessed the administration of Universal Basic Education (UBE) funds in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State between 2022 and 2025, with particular attention to fund adequacy, infrastructural development, availability of instructional materials, and challenges affecting fund utilization. The findings reveal that while UBE funding has produced moderate positive outcomes, particularly in the areas of classroom construction, renovation, and provision of learning resources, several critical challenges continue to limit the full realization of policy objectives. The study established that a majority of teachers perceive UBE funds as moderately adequate, yet a significant proportion highlighted insufficiency and delays in fund disbursement. Similarly, improvements in infrastructure and instructional materials were reported, but gaps remain in uniformity, timeliness, and access, reflecting disparities among schools within the LGA. The research also identified key challenges, including bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate monitoring and supervision, and inconsistent counterpart funding by state authorities, which hindered the effective use of UBE resources. The study demonstrates that UBE funds have had a positive but uneven impact on junior secondary schools in Ovia North East LGA. While the policy framework and funding mechanisms provide a strong foundation for improving access and quality of basic education, implementation challenges continue to limit effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the policy:

1. Edo State SUBEB and LGEA should strengthen financial planning and coordination to reduce delays and ensure that schools receive funds on time for infrastructure, instructional materials, and teacher development. Periodic audits and reports should be used to track fund utilization and highlight areas of delay.
2. UBEC, Edo State SUBEB, and school authorities should regularly monitor fund utilization to ensure resources are applied for their intended purpose by establishing standardized monitoring frameworks, including reporting templates and supervisory visits, to track the impact of UBE funds on classroom construction, teaching resources, and sanitation facilities. Schools should maintain detailed records of fund expenditure to enhance accountability and transparency.
3. Priority should be given to equitable distribution of UBE funds, ensuring that schools in both rural and urban areas benefit from infrastructure development and instructional resources by scaling up the renovation and maintenance of classrooms, provision of furniture, water, and sanitation facilities in public secondary schools where deficits persist.
4. Government agencies should consider alternative funding mechanisms such as partnerships with local communities, NGOs, and private organizations to complement UBE funds.

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