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An Assessment of Secondary Education Funding, Infrastructure Challenges, and their Impact on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools

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Abstract

Purpose: This study evaluates the funding of secondary education and the infrastructural challenges facing public secondary schools in Nigeria, and how these factors influence teaching and learning outcomes.

Methodology: A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the investigation. The population comprised teachers from public secondary schools, from which a sample of 296 teachers was selected from five secondary schools using a stratified random sampling technique due to the homogeneous nature. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Secondary Education Funding, Infrastructure and their Impact on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools Questionnaire (SEFI-TLQ). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions, while the chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique was employed to test the hypotheses.

Findings: The findings revealed a significant relationship between government funding policies for secondary education and the state of school infrastructure. The study also established that both funding and infrastructural conditions are statistically significant determinants of teaching and learning performance in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The results indicate that effective implementation of policy measures, such as increased educational funding, reduction of corruption, improved teacher motivation, and strategic educational planning would significantly enhance the development and performance of the secondary education sector.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study contributes to educational management and public finance theory by providing empirical evidence on the interconnectedness of educational funding, infrastructural development, and teaching–learning outcomes in public secondary schools. From a policy perspective, the findings support the need for increased government investment in education and reinforce UNESCO's recommendation that 26% of national budgets be allocated to the education sector. The study further highlights the importance of prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, regular infrastructural maintenance, and strategic resource allocation as critical measures for improving educational quality and student performance in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Keywords: *Education, Funding of Education, Infrastructure, Government Policy, Regulation*

Introduction

Quality education is characterized by any mechanism through which an individual increases knowledge, enhances understanding, or improves skills (Kenneth, Kenneth, Uju, & Chris, 2020). Education is a necessary condition for closing inequality gaps, as stated in the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). It is also a key priority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNICEF, 2018).

Furthermore, education contributes to the achievement of several SDGs by reducing poverty, stimulating economic growth, and addressing inequality and injustice. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, one in three children in Nigeria is out of school—amounting to approximately 10.2 million at the primary level and 8.1 million at the junior secondary level. Additionally, one in four girls does not have access to schooling, while about 50 percent of out-of-school children reside in conflict-affected areas.

Education is also considered an economic good because it is scarce and must be allocated efficiently. Economists regard education as both a consumer and a capital good: it provides direct utility to individuals and serves as an input in the production of goods and services. As a capital good, education facilitates the development of human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. It also positively impacts the poor and vulnerable by improving their standard of living (Okwu, Moses, Owolabi, & Adejola, 2022).

Education funding has long been recognized as a critical component of fiscal policy in developing economies. The rationale for government intervention is supported by empirical evidence showing that education and human capital significantly influence economic growth. Education enhances the skills and attitudes required for higher productivity. However, the realization of such growth depends not only on the volume of resources invested but also on the efficiency with which these resources are utilized.

In Nigeria, education has evolved over time through various policy reforms. The 1976 Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme introduced free primary education for all children. Subsequently, the 6-3-3-4 system was implemented, comprising six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education, and four years of university education. The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act in April 2004 marked another milestone aimed at ensuring access to basic education for all (Anih, Ekoh, & Eneh, 2023).

Despite these policy reforms, the issue of poor academic performance in public secondary schools remains a major concern. Public outcry over declining educational standards continues to grow. Learning is a complex process influenced by students' motivation and environmental conditions. While teaching resources, instructional skills, and curriculum are essential, the physical condition of school infrastructure also plays a crucial role. School infrastructure has

been identified as a significant factor influencing educational quality. Therefore, funding secondary education and improving infrastructure remain key priorities for governments in both developed and developing economies. Adequate investment in these areas is expected to significantly enhance teaching effectiveness and improve students' overall learning outcomes, particularly in public schools.

Statement of the Problem

The declining quality of education and poor academic performance of students in public schools have attracted the attention of teachers, counselors, psychologists, researchers, and school administrators in Nigeria. Several studies indicate that many school systems, especially in rural and high-poverty areas are characterized by dilapidated school buildings, leaking roofs, broken windows and doors, and cracked walls. These conditions pose serious threats to the health, safety, and learning opportunities of both teachers and students.

This situation is particularly concerning given the substantial government investment in education through funding, provision of free education, scholarships, bursaries, and the establishment of more schools. Despite these efforts, the desired outcomes have not been achieved. There is limited evidence of growth-enhancing benefits from government funding of public secondary education. Instead, educational expansion appears to have deepened social inequalities, contributed to declining learning outcomes, and accelerated infrastructural decay.

Moreover, these challenges have been associated with negative social outcomes among students, including cultism, brain drain, sexual harassment, examination malpractice, gender inequality, result manipulation, and the increasing number of out-of-school children (Edeh, Obi, & Obi, 2018). In light of these challenges, this study is motivated to critically assess the funding of secondary education, the challenges of infrastructure, and their impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess secondary education funding and the challenges of infrastructure, and how these factors influence teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria. The study also seeks to bridge gaps in empirical literature.

The following research questions and hypotheses (in null form) guide the study:

Research Questions:

i. In what ways do government policies and regulations on funding secondary education affect teaching and learning in public schools?

ii. How do the conditions of school infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories facilitate teaching and learning in public schools?

Hypotheses:

H_{01}: Government policies have no significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools.

H_{02}: School infrastructures have no significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools.

Literature Review

Education

Education is defined as any mechanism through which individuals increase knowledge, improve understanding, and develop attitudes or skills. Since political independence in many African countries during the 1950s and 1960s, education has been recognized as a key driver of economic growth and development. It is widely believed that education unlocks human potential and fosters national development.

Empirical evidence supports the importance of education in enhancing economic complexity and productivity. As economies grow, the demand for skilled manpower increases, making education essential. Consequently, many African countries allocate a significant proportion of government expenditure to education (Kenneth et al., 2020).

Education Funding

Poor funding of the education sector in Nigeria extends beyond inadequate infrastructure to include weak incentive structures for staff. Teachers are among the least paid in the public service, reflecting the government's insufficient commitment to education funding. According to UNESCO (2018), the quality of education in any country largely depends on the level of investment in infrastructure and human capital.

Historically, public schools in Nigeria during the 1970s to 1990s were characterized by discipline, qualified teachers, and well-funded infrastructure. Educational expenditure, which includes both capital and recurrent spending, plays a crucial role in shaping the education system. Capital expenditure refers to investments in physical assets such as buildings and facilities, while recurrent expenditure covers salaries, maintenance, and operational costs.

However, rapid population growth and increasing school enrolment have placed significant pressure on government resources. Declining oil revenues have further constrained funding capacity. As a result, many public schools now operate under poor conditions, lacking essential instructional materials and conducive learning environments (Abdulraheem, 2019; Thomas, 2018). This has widened the gap between students in public and private schools, thereby exacerbating social inequality.

Government Policies and Regulations

Government policies and regulations play a critical role in determining access to and the quality of education. In Nigeria, initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act aim to provide free and compulsory education. Other frameworks, including the National Policy on

Education (NPE) and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), are designed to improve educational quality.

Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Additionally, inconsistencies in policy implementation such as frequent changes in the academic calendar and education system structure have undermined stability.

Budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria typically ranges between 5% and 7%, which falls far below UNESCO's recommended 26%. Furthermore, issues such as corruption, delayed salary payments, and inadequate provision of teaching materials continue to hinder effective teaching and learning. These challenges have contributed to the declining standard of education in public secondary schools (UNESCO, 2018).

School Infrastructure

School infrastructure refers to the physical facilities required to support effective teaching and learning. These include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, sanitation facilities, and learning equipment. Infrastructure significantly influences teachers' effectiveness and students' academic performance.

In Nigeria, school infrastructure is generally inadequate and unevenly distributed across regions and socio-economic groups. Several barriers hinder effective teaching and learning, including poverty, geographic challenges, insecurity, gender disparities, and limited human and financial resources.

According to the World Bank, quality education is built on five key pillars: learners, teachers, learning resources, school infrastructure, and system management (World Bank, 2020). Among these, infrastructure plays a vital role in ensuring a conducive learning environment.

However, many school buildings fail to meet minimum standards in terms of safety, ventilation, sanitation, and student capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these infrastructural deficiencies. Although governments recognize the need for improvement, efforts are often constrained by limited resources and the absence of a systematic approach to infrastructure development and maintenance.

Empirical Review

Government Funding Policies on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools

Dorathy, Enueshike, and Justice (2023) examined the contribution of government educational expenditure to economic growth in Nigeria and sought to determine whether real GDP, recurrent educational expenditure, and capital educational expenditure are important predictors of economic growth. The study employed the Unit Root Test to determine the stationarity of the variables, the co-integration approach to establish the long-run equilibrium relationship among the variables, and the Error Correction Model to determine the speed of adjustment, using annual

data covering the period from 1986 to 2022. The study observed that government recurrent educational expenditure remained low and inconsistent with the expected level of economic growth in Nigeria. However, the outcomes of government capital expenditure on education were found to be important predictors capable of influencing economic growth in Nigeria.

Austine and Vintseh (2023) assessed the influence of government funding on secondary education in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State. The study adopted an ex-post facto research design with a population of 232 secondary school teachers from 15 government senior secondary schools in the study area. A sample of 164 teachers, representing 71 percent of the population, was used for the study. The findings revealed that government funding significantly influences teaching and learning in public schools in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study recommended that sufficient funds should be made available by the government for the effective management of public secondary schools.

Nurudeen, Rahaman, and Latif (2018) investigated the impact of government funding on students' academic performance in Ghana. Data covering the 2011/2012 to 2016/2017 academic sessions were obtained from students' continuous assessment registers, which contained academic records for each term. The data were collected and analyzed quantitatively using the Mann-Whitney U Test to compare students who benefited from funding with those who did not. The authors further noted that funds are required to plan and organize staff recruitment, pay salaries, allowances, and fringe benefits. They emphasized that without adequate funding, it would be impossible to provide for staff welfare in an educational institution. The findings indicated that government funding has a significant impact on students' academic performance.

According to Thomas (2018), effective government policies and regulations on funding secondary education lead to increased enrolment, reduced dropout rates, and improved teaching and learning performance to a significant degree. Corruption and inconsistency in government policies have been identified as major problems in Nigerian leadership, particularly where there is little continuity in policy implementation. This contrasts with countries such as Japan, China, India, and Malaysia, which have made substantial developmental progress because successive leaders built upon, rather than dismantled, the efforts of their predecessors.

Finally, Aregbeyen (2017) studied a panel of 40 African countries, including Nigeria, and found that government funding and investment in secondary education, especially in public schools, are significantly and positively associated with economic growth. The study adopted the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression technique. The results revealed that both capital and recurrent expenditure on education have a positive and significant impact on teaching and learning in secondary schools across African countries. However, the study covered multiple countries, which differs from the present study, which focuses on one country.

School Infrastructure Challenges on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools

Yangambi (2023) studied the impact of school infrastructure on students' learning and achievement in three public schools in the Kinshasa-Ngaliema Education Division. The study adopted a quantitative research design specifically developed for the investigation and based on literature addressing the effect of school facilities on student achievement. The target population (N = 180) consisted of teachers from three public secondary schools in the Kinshasa-Ngaliema Education Division. The accessible population was selected based on research interest using non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling. The findings highlighted several important observations, showing that school infrastructure has a significant impact on student learning and performance. The study recommended the continuous improvement of school infrastructure in order to optimize students' achievement in all schools.

Mugizi (2021) examined the infrastructure of a private university in Bushenyi District, Uganda. The study reported that physical infrastructure, including lecture rooms, was a significant positive predictor of students' engagement. In a correlational study, Elie and Andala (2021) examined the relationship between school physical infrastructure and students' enrolment in nursery schools in Ngororero District, Rwanda. The study revealed that school infrastructure, such as classrooms, was positively and significantly related to students' enrolment.

Mwila (2021) investigated how infrastructural challenges influence students' academic performance, specifically describing the challenges encountered by school heads in improving school infrastructure for academic performance in rural public secondary schools in Iringa District. The research used a mixed-method approach and a convergent parallel research design. The findings revealed that students' performance in rural public secondary schools in Iringa District was unsatisfactory due to inadequate school infrastructure such as libraries, laboratories, classrooms, dormitories, and instructional materials. The study concluded that infrastructure is essential for the provision of quality education, which promotes growth and excellence. It therefore recommended that the government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should increase funding to provide adequate teaching and learning materials as well as standard infrastructure in secondary schools.

However, although the studies reviewed above indicated the existence of a relationship between school infrastructure and enrolment or academic performance in public schools, none of these studies was conducted in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theory underpinning this study is the Social-Ecological Theory propounded by Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The theory proposes that the activities of an individual are influenced by everything in the surrounding environment, including school infrastructure (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarström, 2018). It describes the dynamic relationships among individuals,

groups, and their environments, explaining how the environment and personal development are interconnected (Orendorff, 2019).

The theory posits that the environment consists of several layers, with each layer contributing to the overall setting in which individuals function. Specifically, the Social-Ecological Theory identifies layers such as the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. The microsystem refers to the layer closest to the learner, with which the learner has direct contact, including immediate surroundings such as school infrastructure. The mesosystem represents the relationships between the different subsystems in the learner's world. The exosystem refers to the larger social system, including institutional and organizational structures such as school systems and administrative frameworks (Shapira, Lishchinsky, & Ben-Amram, 2018).

Although the Social-Ecological Theory is a general theory and does not focus exclusively on school infrastructure, it emphasizes the need to pay attention to the system as a whole, including the physical environment of the school (Mugizi, 2021). Therefore, based on the Social-Ecological Theory, this study investigates how materials within the microsystem, including infrastructure, relate to learners' academic outcomes in school. Akande (2022) asserted that learning occurs through interaction with one's environment. He further explained that the environment, in this context, refers to the school infrastructure available to facilitate students' learning outcomes.

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised 458 teachers randomly selected from 28 public secondary schools in Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. A sample size of 296 teachers, representing over 65% of the population, was used. This is consistent with Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2005), who suggested that a sample size between 60% and 80% is appropriate for such a population.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample, as the population was homogeneous. The instrument for data collection was a five-point structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, titled *"Secondary Education Funding, Infrastructure and their Impact on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools Questionnaire (SEFI-TLQ)."*

The questionnaire was validated by experts from the Department of Educational Management and the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University. A pilot test was conducted using 20 teachers from four secondary schools that were not part of the sampled population. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 indicated a high level of internal consistency, confirming that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics—mean and standard deviation—to answer the research questions. A mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision-making. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was considered significant, while scores below 2.50 were regarded

as not significant. The research hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of fit at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Findings

Research Question One

In what ways do government policies and regulations on funding secondary education affect teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations on the Effects of Government Policies and Regulations on Funding Secondary Education and Teaching–Learning in Public Schools.

No	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	X	SDV	Decision
1	If the government makes funds available, it will enable school management to hire the services of professionally qualified teachers in public secondary schools.	106	145	29	13	3.17	0.78	Accepted
2	Increasement of funds in the educational budget enhances the continues process of employing qualified teachers in public secondary schools.	112	160	16	8	3.27	0.72	Accepted
3	The number of training and workshops carried out in the secondary school is determined by the availability of funds.	134	115	30	17	3.24	0.86	Accepted
4	Financial resources enable school management to pay teacher salaries and allowances in secondary schools.	117	154	14	11	3.27	0.69	Accepted
5	The availability of funds enable the school management to effectively run and coordinate the affairs of secondary school without disruption.	134	115	30	17	3.24	0.86	Accepted
Cluster Mean /Standard Deviation						3.29	0.79	Accepted

This indicates that respondents agreed that the availability of funds determines the number of qualified teachers in public secondary schools. Funding enables school managers to recruit professionally qualified teachers, pay salaries and allowances, and sustain the continuous employment of qualified personnel. Furthermore, adequate funding enhances teacher retention and professional development.

The cluster mean of 3.26 with a standard deviation of 0.79 also exceeded the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that funding secondary education significantly influences teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Research Question Two

How do the conditions of school infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, facilitate teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations on the Effects of School Infrastructure on Teaching–Learning in Public Schools

No	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	X	SDV	Decision
1	The availability of essential modern teaching aids such as text books, white marker boards, marker, computers and visual aids facilitates and supports teaching and learning in public schools.	190	85	10	9	3.44	0.68	Accepted
2	The availability school infrastructure such as science and entrepreneurship laboratory equipment can aid in teaching and learning in public schools	130	128	16	8	3.27	0.72	Accepted
3	The availability electricity supply and computer can aid teaching and learning in public schools.	134	115	20	17	3.29	0.83	Accepted
4	The availability of a good road network and means of transportation can ease transportation challenges faced by most public schools in rural areas. It can also help reduce some dropout rates among both teachers and learners in public school, while making monitoring and project evaluation easier for the government.	140	124	20	21	3.25	0.82	Accepted
5	The availability ICT facilities has a positive impact on teaching and learning in public schools, as it can facilitate the training and retraining of teachers.	157	103	20	17	3.30	0.97	Accepted
Cluster Mean /Standard Deviation						3.30	0.81	Accepted

This indicates that respondents agreed that the availability of school infrastructure—such as modern teaching aids (textbooks, whiteboards, markers, computers, and visual aids), laboratory equipment, electricity supply, transportation facilities, and ICT resources—facilitates teaching and learning in public schools. These facilities also improve monitoring, evaluation, and overall school management. The cluster mean of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.81 further confirms

that adequate school infrastructure significantly enhances teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

The two hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool at a 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

H01: Government policies and regulations on funding secondary education have no significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-Square (χ^2) Test on Government Policies, Funding, and Teaching–Learning

Opinion	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Df	Level of Significance	X^2 Calculated	X^2 Tabulated	Decision
No impact	17(5%)	147(50%)	1	0.05	285.00	3.79	Reject H0
Impact	279(95%)	147(50%)					

Values in parentheses are percentage (X^2 – 285.00, df – 1, p*0.05 > 0.00)

The results in Table 3 show that 95% of respondents agreed that government policies on funding have a significant impact on teaching and learning, while only 5% disagreed. The calculated chi-square value (χ^2 = 285.00) was greater than the tabulated value (χ^2 = 3.79) at 0.05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) was rejected. This implies that government policies and regulations on funding have a significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

H02: School infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, has no significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-Square (χ^2) Test on School Infrastructure and Teaching–Learning

Opinion	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Df	Level of Significance	X^2 Calculated	X^2 Tabulated	Decision
No impact	15(5%)	147(50%)	1	0.05	347.22	3.79	Reject H0
Impact	279(95%)	147(50%)					

Values in parentheses are percentage (X^2 – 347.22, df – 1, p*0.05 > 0.00)

The results in Table 4 indicate that 95% of respondents agreed that school infrastructure significantly impacts teaching and learning, while 5% disagreed. The calculated chi-square value

($\chi^2 = 347.22$) exceeded the tabulated value ($\chi^2 = 3.79$) at a 0.05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H02) was rejected. This implies that school infrastructure—such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories—has a significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of the research questions and the testing of the hypotheses, the following findings were established:

The study revealed that government policies and regulations on funding secondary education have a significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools in Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the empirical works of Aregbeyen (2017) and Austine and Vintseh (2023), who observed that the prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances enhances motivation, increases productivity, and promotes greater commitment to the teaching–learning process.

The study also revealed that school infrastructure—such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories—has a significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools. This finding corroborates the work of Elie and Andala (2021), who examined the relationship between school physical infrastructure and students' enrolment in secondary schools in Ngororero District, Rwanda. This underscores the importance of infrastructure such as instructional materials, textbooks, electricity, and other facilities, which were found to be positively and significantly related to students' academic performance in public schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that funding of secondary education and the provision of school infrastructure have a significant impact on teaching and learning in public schools.

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made:

i. The results suggest that the Nigerian government should formulate policies aimed at increasing the annual budgetary allocation to the education sector to 26% of the total national budget, in line with UNESCO recommendations. In addition, there is a need to minimize policy inconsistencies and ensure the availability of funds for the prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, thereby enhancing effective teaching and learning performance in public schools.

ii. Ensuring the timely payment of teachers' salaries and allowances is a critical policy lever for improving teaching–learning outcomes in public secondary schools. This recommendation goes beyond administrative efficiency; it directly influences teacher motivation, instructional quality, student performance, and overall system stability.

iii. There should be periodic assessment and evaluation of capital expenditure on school infrastructure, as well as proper maintenance of existing facilities. This is necessary in view of the significant positive effect of infrastructure on teaching and learning in public schools.

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