ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND SUBEB IN REDUCING OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CHIKUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of government policies, particularly the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) initiatives, in addressing out-of-school children (OOSC) in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design framed by the Policy Cycle Model, the research targeted a population of approximately 550,000 inhabitants. A multistage sampling technique yielded a sample of 400 adults, analysed using frequency/percentage, descriptive statistics (means), and thematic analysis (Cronbach's alpha = 0.728). Results indicated that OOSC is primarily driven by lack of financial support, socio-cultural norms, religious obligations, peer influence, fear of insecurity, communal conflicts, and parental preference for vocational training (aggregate mean = 3.27). Implemented policies were perceived as ineffective in enhancing enrolment, retention, completion rates, or related outcomes (aggregate mean = 2.79). Consequences included reduced school enrolment, increased crime rates, declining living standards, fewer completions, skilled manpower shortages, rising illiteracy, and early marriage/unwanted pregnancies (aggregate mean = 3.20). The study concludes that policy implementation gaps and contextual barriers have limited impact on OOSC reduction in Chikun LGA. Recommendations include sustained enlightenment campaigns to promote formal education, increased funding for free basic education, robust monitoring mechanisms, and improved security to foster parental confidence and sustainable enrolment.

Keywords: Out-of-school children, Government policy, Policy implementation, Enrolment, Chikun LGA

1. Introduction

Education has generally been recognized as a universal instrument of development; it provides the means for social cohesion, economic advancement, and personal empowerment to all people of all genders, socio-economic backgrounds, and other barriers (Oyedeji, 2015). By equipping citizens with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to contribute to society effectively through their roles as leaders and innovators, education leads to the transformation of youth into productive members of society (Sen, 1999). Education in Nigeria is seen as an integrated approach to transferring values, skills, and behaviours from one generation to another while providing individuals with the skills and knowledge to integrate into society and achieve personal satisfaction (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2014). The National Policy on Education (2013) requires that all citizens have access to an equal education regardless of where they live; each level of government has a role to play in ensuring access to free and compulsory basic education for all citizens.Governmental educational policies are the main tools for directing gradual changes in the education system with the aim of improving the quality of life of citizens and meeting social needs (Okoroma, 2000). The Act of 2004 on Universal Basic Education (UBE) is one of the most crucial among these policies, which was intended to provide free education and thus reduce the number of out-of-school children (OOSC). In Kaduna State, the execution of UBE is in the hands of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), which engages in activities like teacher reform, building of educational infrastructure, and putting in place measures to facilitate the enrollment of children, such as the Free 12-Year Education Policy and the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) program. However, despite these initiatives, there are still a number of implementation problems including underfunding, administrative hurdles, and inconsistently skilled staff across different levels of government.

Nigeria is having an enormous OOSC crisis, with estimates going up from 10.5 million in 2018 to 18.5 million by 2022, accounting for one in five children worldwide not attending school (UNESCO, 2022; UNICEF, 2022). The North-West zone, which consists of Kaduna State, is the main area, with the numbers of OOSC in 2023 being more than 8 million, and these issues are made worse by a lack of security, poverty, customs, and conflicts like banditry and school abductions. The state of Kaduna has seen the number of OOSC rise from 535,000 in 2018 to 768,000 in 2022, and rural areas have up to 58% of the population being OOSC. Chikun Local Government Area (LGA), which is a peri-urban area and has a population of over 372,000, is affected by these numbers as well, and during the years of 2019 to 2023, the estimated number of OOSC in basic education is between 30,000 and 50,000. Insecurity has led to the 2021 Bethel Baptist High School abduction and other

incidents that resulted in schools being closed, students quitting, and parents becoming unwilling to send their kids to school, and all this has made the enrollment gains (Dalhatu & Jumare, 2023) disappear.

This problem of policy intent and outcomes not matching is due to weak enforcement, corruption, and external shocks which are the main reasons for requiring evaluation. The current study evaluates the impact of UBE and SUBEB policies on the reduction of OOSC in Chikun LGA from 2019 to 2023 by looking at the implementation of the programs and the challenges to implementation as well. Thus the study seeks to evaluate policy effectiveness, examine the impact of implementation on outcomes, and identify the key barriers to informing the development of new strategies for the sustainable reduction of OOSC.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concepts

Generally, education has been a universally acknowledged tool of development. It offers an avenue to social cohesion, economic development, and personal empowerment to everyone irrespective of his or her gender, socio-economic status, and other obstacles (Oyedeji, 2015). Through education, individuals can become leaders and innovators by providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to play a significant part in society (Sen, 1999). Education in the Nigerian context is considered a combined process of passing values, skills and behaviours across generations and enabling individuals to have the skills required to fit in society and attain personal fulfilment (Akanbi and Jekayinfa, 2014).

The National Policy on Education (2013) emphasises that all citizens should have equal access to education irrespective of location. The different levels of government have a role to play in ensuring they provide free and compulsory basic education. Educational policies are one of the major tools of guiding a systematic reform of the education system towards enhancing the quality of life of the citizens and meeting the needs of the society (Okoroma, 2000).

Out-of-School Children (OOSC) are children of school going age who are not enrolled or attending any formal basic education. This encompasses those who have never enrolled, those who have dropped out and those at risk of dropping out. Nigeria is plagued by an enormous OOSC crisis, whose estimates have soared over the past few years. Poverty, insecurity, cultural practices, and conflicts like banditry and school abduction mostly impact the North-West region which comprises Kaduna State.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a flagship programme that was introduced to offer free, compulsory and quality basic education (including early childhood care, six years of primary, and three years of junior secondary education). It is supported by the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004. In Kaduna state, UBE is implemented through the Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). SUBEB is involved in training and deploying teachers, building and refurbishing classrooms, supplying instructional resources, and special programs like Free 12-Year Basic Education Policy and Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) programme.

Although the efforts on these policies have been made, there are still challenges in implementation such as poor funding, administrative bottlenecks, insecurity, and disparate capacity between government levels. Such lapses usually lead to disengagement between policy goals and realities in curbing OOSC.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The current work is based on the analysis of the public policy, namely the stagist (stages heuristic) approach, which is also called the Policy Cycle Model. This paradigm has theorised policymaking as a series of interrelated processes: agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. It is a systematic perspective in the analysis of the process of government intervention, i.e. the UBE programme and SUBEB initiatives, in terms of their path to conception, as well as to practice.

The research is mainly centered on the implementation phase because it assesses the implementation of UBE and SUBEB policies which target the out-of-school children in the Chikun Local Government Area in 2019-23.

There are two perspectives that are dominant concerning the implementation of policies:

Top-down approach focuses on hierarchical control, clear goals and central authority to maintain policy fidelity. This approach can be applied to understanding the centrally-based UBE and SUBEB systems in Nigeria.

The bottom-up approach emphasizes the importance of street-level bureaucrats (teachers and local education officers), the community, and local adaptations in determining the policy outcomes. This particularly applies in insecure and conflict-affected areas such as Chikun LGA.

The hybrid framework that embraces the interplay of the central directives and the grassroots realities is used in the study as a result of the combination of the two perspectives. This provides a subtle insight into why the best-laid policies can still fail to alleviate OOSC in a society with insecurity, poverty, and socio-cultural impediments.

2.3 Empirical Review

The empirical research on out-of-school children demonstrates complex and multifaceted causes, different measures of policy effectiveness, and devastating socio-economic impacts.

Causes of OOSC: Studies point to primarily socioeconomic, institutional and cultural causes. Poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancy, long distance to school, cultural traditions, parental loss and illness are significant drivers in the North-Central region of Nigeria (Okoh et al., 2020). The issue is aggravated in north Nigeria by early/child marriage, poverty, violence, cultural beliefs and values, as well as dislike of formal education and preference of Quranic education (Oyekan et al., 2023). Systemic problems like inadequate funding, corruption, banditry, kidnapping, insecurity, and a low level of child rights enforcement have also been noted (Farouq et al., 2024).

The same trends are observed elsewhere. Abia State (South-East Nigeria) found insecurity, low parental income and education, bullying, teacher aggression, inadequate facilities, disability, gender discrimination, and peer influence to be the key causes (Ogunode, 2022). Research in rural Pakistan indicates that poverty, negative school climate, parenting style and social behaviours lead to secondary school dropout internationally (Parveen, 2023). Family duties, unfavorable teacher-student relations, peer pressure, motivation, and poverty were prevalent in Tanzania (Kalamba & Mpiza, 2024).

Effectiveness of Government Policies: Policy impact results are inconclusive. Certain of these interventions have yielded positive outcomes, including higher enrolment, retention, and completion rates of girls in Zamfara State (Sule, 2018) and higher access by street children in Kenya (Lagat et al., 2024). Nevertheless, a lot of policies have not performed so well. In Adamawa State, the government was unable to stabilise secondary education (Umar, 2017), and in rural Akwa Ibom State, the initiatives did not bring much improvement to learning outcomes (Ekong & James, 2012).

The effects of OOSC: The effects are far reaching and intergenerational. They are unemployment upsurgery, premature marriage, crime, social instability and

lawlessness (Okoh et al., 2020). The wider impacts include child trafficking, child labour, cultism, robbery, low literacy levels, chronic poverty, prostitution, and lack of skilled manpower (Ogunode, 2022). In the case of girls, early marriage, pregnancy, violence in schools, and lack of proper infrastructure also impede development, slows economic growth, increases gender disparities, increases child mortality, and decreases female leadership (Jacob, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education (UBE)programme andKaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)policies in reducing out-of-school children (OOSC) inChikun Local Government Area (LGA)**,** Kaduna State, Nigeria, from 2019 to 2023. Chikun LGA, a peri-urban and rural region prone to insecurity and socioeconomic challenges, experiences persistent high OOSC rates despite policy interventions. The research assessed policy implementation, impacts on enrolment and retention, and barriers such as insecurity and resource constraints.

A descriptive survey design with cross-sectional elements collected quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. This mixed-methods approach described phenomena, explored relationships between policy inputs and outcomes, and provided in-depth contextual insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It facilitated representativeness through probability sampling and depth via purposive techniques.

The study targeted stakeholders in Chikun LGA, including teachers, headteachers, parents, and education officials involved in or affected by UBE/SUBEB initiatives. The population, estimated at approximately 550,000 (based on 2006 census projections), encompassed residents across 12 administrative wards (NPC, 2022). Using Taro Yamane's formula for a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where N = 550,000 and e = 0.05, the calculated sample size was approximately 400.

The combination of probability and non-probability techniques using a multi-stage methodology facilitated representativeness and expertise. Randomly selected 5 wards were 1 town/village (per ward), schools (90 total through SUBEB directories) and then purposively selected respondents (180 teachers, 90 headteachers, 60 parents, 30 officials). There were also 20 key informants (LGEA, zonal staff, SUBEB staff, parents, teachers) who were purposely selected to interview.

Structured questionnaires (which included Likert-scale and closed-ended questions on policy effectiveness, factors, and challenges) were used to collect primary data (300 respondents); semi-structured interviews (20 people) were used to collect primary data; secondary sources (UBEC/SUBEB reports, enrolment statistics) were also used to gather primary data. Instruments were subjected to face validity check by professionals and reliability test (Cronbachs alpha =0.743).

The data analysis involved triangulation using both quantitative (descriptive statistics, chi-square, ANOVA through SPSS) and qualitative (thematic analysis through NVivo) methods of data analysis. Ethical considerations were informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation and institutional approval which were adjusted to security risks in the LGA.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper reviewed primary data (319 valid questionnaire responses out of 79.8% response rate) gathered in the Chikun Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, and fused by qualitative data (interviews). Quantitative analysis SPSS version 22 was employed in terms of frequency, percentage and descriptive statistics (means) and a decision rule was applied based on mean of 3.0 as agreement. There was a high internal consistency of the questionnaire (Cronbachs alpha = 0.728; Table 4.2).

4.1 Respondent Demographics

The population was mostly male (53.6%), fell within the age range 4553 years (29.2), married (57.7), First Degree/HND (38.2), and long term residents (28.5) (Table 1). This is a well-educated, mature, and agriculturally based profile with a very good local knowledge.

4.2 Contributing factors to Out-of-School Children (OOSC)

The respondents had a high agreement that OOSC is propelled by various socioeconomic, cultural, and security variables (aggregate mean = 3.27; Table 4.4). Best rated were parental preference crafts/business (= 3.37), communal conflicts (= 3.33) and financial support absence (= 3.26). These were supported by qualitative themes that included poverty as a driving factor toward child labor, cultural preference of farming/vocation, and fear as a result of insecurity by parents.

Table 1: Factors Responsible for OOSC

Statement	Mean	Remark
Parental preference for craft/business	3.37	Agreed
Communal conflict	3.33	Agreed
Lack of financial support	3.26	Agreed
Fear of insecurity in schools	3.23	Agreed
Socio-cultural norms	3.23	Agreed
Aggregate	3.27	Agreed

Field Survey (2025)

4.3 Effectiveness of Government Policies (UBE/SUBEB)

Policies were perceived as ineffective in reducing OOSC (aggregate mean = 2.79; Table 4.5). Respondents disagreed on improvements in enrolment (2.74), retention (2.76), completion (2.70), and related outcomes like funding or crime reduction. Interviews attributed this to poor implementation, corruption, and insecurity undermining initiatives.

Table 2: Effectiveness of Policies

Statement	Mean	Remark
Increased school completion rate	2.70	Disagreed
Increased enrolment rate	2.74	Disagreed
Increased retention rate	2.76	Disagreed
Increased school funding	2.78	Disagreed
Aggregate	2.79	Disagreed

Field Survey (2025)

4.4 Consequences of OOSC

Respondents agreed on severe societal impacts (aggregate mean = 3.20; Table 4.6), including early marriage/pregnancy (3.25), declining living standards (3.24), and increased illiteracy/crime. Qualitative data highlighted reduced graduates, skilled manpower shortages, and youth involvement in violence.

Table 3: Consequences of OOSC

Statement	Mean	Remark
Early marriage/unwanted pregnancy	3.25	Agreed
Decline in standard of living	3.24	Agreed
Increase in illiterate persons	3.23	Agreed
Reduction in school enrolment	3.22	Agreed
Aggregate	3.20	Agreed

Field Survey (2025)

4.5 Discussion of Findings

Results show that chronic OOSC in Chikun LGA is fuelled by co-morbidity of poverty, cultural values, and insecurity- which are in line with the overall trends in Nigeria where OOSC had hit 18.3 million in Nigeria by 2024 (UNICEF, 2025). The ineffectiveness of the policies can be related to the gaps in the implementation witnessed in the northern states, and complemented by the banditry and school attacks in Chikun (e.g. Kuriga abduction, 2024). Cycles of poverty and instability are perpetuated through consequences as it has been shown before (Okoh et al., 2020; Ogunode, 2022). Although the state has tried to make progress in infrastructure investments and community hubs (PLANE programme, 2025), local obstacles prevent it.

These outcomes identify context-specific interventions that are security-integrated to increase UBE/SUBEB interventions in conflict-affected regions.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and the Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) initiatives face ongoing challenges because their efforts to eliminate out-of-school children (OOSC) from Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) in Kaduna State show no signs of success. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to identify OOSC factors which included financial support deficits and cultural religious beliefs and peer pressure and parents who prefer vocational training and security threats and community conflicts. The study results showed that UBE and SUBEB policies have not created any measurable improvements in student enrolment or retention or completion rates within the

research area. The policy weaknesses have created major problems which include decreased school attendance and increased criminal activities and reduced quality of life and insufficient qualified workers and growing rates of illiteracy and early marriage and unplanned pregnancy. The study concludes that existing government strategies have been largely ineffective in achieving a tangible reduction of OOSC in Chikun LGA due to significant gaps in policy implementation and prevailing contextual barriers such as insecurity and poverty.

5.2 Recommendations

The solution to these problems needs an improved local solution which requires better financial resources and better oversight and local community involvement and improved safety measures to help restore trust from parents and ensure permanent basic educational opportunities.

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