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ASSESSING PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA (2019–2025)

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Abstract

This study examined public policy implementation and its impact on educational outcomes in Kwara State, Nigeria, between 2019 and 2025. The study was motivated by the persistent gap between education policy formulation and implementation, which hinders the achievement of educational objectives. It was anchored on the Implementation Deficit Theory, which explains how institutional and administrative challenges undermine effective policy execution. A qualitative documentary research design was adopted. Data were obtained from secondary sources, including publications of the Kwara State Ministry of Education, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), education sector performance reports, budget implementation reports, government policy documents, official statistical bulletins, scholarly journal articles, and reports from international organizations. Relevant documents were purposively selected and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings revealed that educational policy implementation improved school infrastructure, teacher recruitment, digital learning through the KwaraLEARN programme, school enrolment, and teaching and learning outcomes. However, inadequate funding, weak monitoring and evaluation, bureaucratic delays, uneven distribution of educational resources, shortages of qualified personnel, and inconsistent policy implementation continued to constrain educational reforms. The study concludes that addressing these challenges is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable educational outcomes. It recommends strengthening monitoring and evaluation, increasing investment in education, improving institutional coordination, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and sustaining evidence-based policy implementation.

Keywords: Basic education; Educational outcomes; Policy evaluation; Implementation deficit; Public policy implementation

Introduction

Public policy implementation remains one of the greatest challenges to effective governance in developing countries, where the gap between policy formulation and execution often limits the realization of intended development objectives. In the education sector, effective policy implementation is particularly important because education serves as a catalyst for human capital development, poverty reduction, economic growth, and social transformation. Although Nigeria

has introduced several educational policies and programmes, including the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, their implementation has remained uneven across states due to inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems, shortages of qualified teachers, and persistent infrastructural deficits.

Recent documentary evidence indicates that these challenges continue to affect educational development across Nigeria. According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2024), many states still experience shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate classroom facilities, and unequal access to educational resources despite increased federal intervention through UBE matching grants. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Education (2025) reported persistent disparities in learning outcomes, educational infrastructure, and service delivery across the country, indicating that improvements in policy formulation have not always translated into effective implementation.

In Kwara State, the government introduced several educational reforms between 2019 and 2025 to improve access to quality education and strengthen educational service delivery. These reforms included large-scale school rehabilitation projects, recruitment of qualified teachers, the introduction of digital learning initiatives through the KwaraLEARN programme, and increased utilization of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) intervention funds. Official government reports indicate improvements in school enrolment, teacher availability, classroom infrastructure, and aspects of pupils' learning outcomes during the period under review. Nevertheless, documentary evidence also reveals persistent implementation challenges, including unequal distribution of educational infrastructure across local government areas, delays in the implementation of teacher welfare policies, inadequate maintenance of educational facilities, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and disparities in access to quality education, particularly in rural communities. These observations suggest that while the reforms recorded notable achievements, their implementation has been uneven, thereby limiting the full realization of the intended educational objectives.

Although several studies have examined educational policy, financing, planning, and the general challenges confronting the education sector in Nigeria, relatively few have focused specifically on the implementation of educational policies and their implications for educational outcomes in Kwara State. Existing studies have largely emphasized policy formulation or sector-wide challenges, with limited attention given to assessing how educational policies introduced

between 2019 and 2025 were implemented and the institutional factors that influenced their effectiveness. This gap limits understanding of the relationship between policy implementation and educational outcomes within the state.

Against this background, this study examines public policy implementation and its impact on educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. Specifically, the study assesses the extent of educational policy implementation, identifies the major challenges affecting implementation, and examines the implications of these implementation processes for educational outcomes. By relying on documentary evidence obtained from official government publications, policy documents, education sector reports, and other credible secondary sources, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on public policy implementation and educational development in Nigeria while providing evidence to inform future educational policy and implementation strategies in Kwara State.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Basic Education

Basic education refers to the foundational stage of formal education that equips learners with essential literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values necessary for personal development and active participation in society. In Nigeria, it is provided through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education, with the objective of ensuring free, compulsory, and universal education for all school-age children (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Although scholars generally agree on the fundamental purpose of basic education, they differ in their emphasis. Ojo and Azeez (2024) view basic education primarily as the foundation for national development, arguing that its effectiveness depends on adequate funding, teacher motivation, curriculum implementation, and quality infrastructure. In contrast, Egbebi (2024) emphasizes its social function of promoting equal educational opportunities and reducing illiteracy through the implementation of the UBE programme. While both perspectives recognize the importance of basic education, Ojo and Azeez focus on the conditions necessary for achieving quality educational outcomes, whereas Egbebi highlights equity and access as the programme's primary objectives. These perspectives are complementary, suggesting that effective basic education requires not only broad access but also adequate resources and sound implementation to achieve meaningful learning outcomes.

Recent assessments by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) further reinforce this broader understanding by emphasizing learning achievement, instructional quality, and inclusive access rather than mere school enrolment. This shift reflects a growing recognition that the success of basic education should be evaluated by the quality of learning and the competencies acquired by learners rather than by enrolment figures alone. Drawing from these perspectives, this study conceptualizes basic education as the foundational level of formal education that provides learners with essential knowledge, skills, and values while promoting equitable access and quality learning through effective policy implementation.

Concept of Educational Outcomes

Educational outcomes refer to the measurable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies acquired by learners through the educational process, indicating the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved. These outcomes are commonly assessed using indicators such as academic achievement, literacy and numeracy proficiency, school completion and retention rates, as well as learners' cognitive and social development. Within the Nigerian education system, educational outcomes are increasingly used to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies and reforms implemented under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme.

While scholars generally agree that educational outcomes reflect the success of educational systems, they differ in the aspects they emphasize. Adeosun and Olatunji (2021) primarily assess educational outcomes in terms of academic performance, school participation, and learners' competencies, suggesting that improvements in these indicators demonstrate the effectiveness of educational programmes. In contrast, Eze and Okoli (2024) adopt a broader perspective by arguing that educational outcomes are influenced not only by learners' achievements but also by institutional factors such as teacher quality, funding, school infrastructure, curriculum implementation, and policy effectiveness. The former perspective focuses principally on learner performance, whereas the latter recognizes that sustainable educational improvement depends on the quality of policy implementation and institutional support. These perspectives are complementary because improved learner achievement is difficult to sustain without adequate educational resources and effective policy execution.

Recent literature has further broadened the concept beyond examination performance. Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2023) contend that educational outcomes should also encompass critical thinking,

skill acquisition, social mobility, and human capital development. Similarly, reports by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) emphasize that educational success should be evaluated using multiple indicators, including learning achievement, equitable access, teacher effectiveness, and digital learning opportunities. This broader conceptualization reflects a shift from assessing educational success solely through examination results to evaluating the overall quality, relevance, and inclusiveness of learning. Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes educational outcomes as the measurable academic, cognitive, and developmental achievements attained by learners through effective policy implementation, quality teaching, and adequate institutional support. This conceptualization is appropriate because the study seeks to examine how public policy implementation influences educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025.

Concept of Policy Evaluation

Policy evaluation refers to the systematic assessment of public policies, programmes, and government interventions to determine their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact in achieving intended objectives. It constitutes an important stage of the policy process because it provides evidence on whether policy goals have been achieved, identifies implementation gaps, and informs future policy decisions. Beyond measuring performance, policy evaluation promotes accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and continuous improvement in public service delivery.

While scholars generally agree that policy evaluation is essential for determining policy effectiveness, they differ in their emphasis. Adebayo and Yusuf (2021) view policy evaluation primarily as a continuous process of examining government programmes within existing institutional and financial frameworks. Their perspective highlights the role of evaluation in identifying implementation deficiencies, improving service delivery, and ensuring the efficient use of public resources. In contrast, Okon and Eze (2024) emphasize policy evaluation as a mechanism for measuring policy outcomes and impacts against predetermined objectives and standards. They further argue that the effectiveness of evaluation depends on robust monitoring systems, reliable data management, and effective institutional coordination. Whereas Adebayo and Yusuf focus on evaluation as a tool for improving implementation, Okon and Eze place greater emphasis on performance measurement and institutional capacity. Together, these

perspectives suggest that effective policy evaluation requires both systematic performance assessment and strong institutional mechanisms.

The importance of policy evaluation is particularly evident in the education sector. Olatunde and Bello (2023) argue that evaluating education policies enables governments to determine whether interventions such as teacher recruitment, infrastructure development, curriculum reforms, and digital learning initiatives have contributed to improved educational outcomes. Similarly, reports by the National Planning Commission and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) emphasize that regular policy evaluation enhances accountability, strengthens implementation strategies, and ensures that investments in education produce measurable improvements in learning outcomes. These observations underscore the growing recognition that policy success should be assessed not merely by policy formulation but by the extent to which implementation achieves intended results.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes policy evaluation as the systematic and evidence-based assessment of educational policies and programmes to determine the extent to which their objectives have been achieved, identify implementation gaps, and provide feedback for improving policy effectiveness and educational outcomes. This conceptualization is appropriate because the study examines how the implementation of education policies has influenced educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025.

Concept of Implementation Deficit

Implementation deficit refers to the gap between policy formulation and the effective execution of government policies, resulting in the partial or complete failure to achieve intended policy objectives. The concept explains why well-designed public policies often produce unsatisfactory outcomes due to weaknesses encountered during the implementation process, including administrative inefficiency, inadequate resources, poor coordination, and limited institutional capacity.

The concept was popularized by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), who argue that policy success depends less on the quality of policy formulation than on the effectiveness of its implementation. According to these scholars, implementation involves multiple decision points and actors whose actions must be effectively coordinated to achieve policy objectives. They contend that bureaucratic delays, weak inter-agency coordination, and institutional bottlenecks frequently

widen the gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes. Their perspective established implementation deficit as a central explanation for policy failure in public administration.

While Nigerian scholars generally support this perspective, they place greater emphasis on contextual factors that constrain policy implementation. Adebayo and Yusuf (2021) attribute implementation deficits primarily to weak administrative structures, corruption, inadequate funding, and ineffective monitoring mechanisms, arguing that many government policies fail because implementation institutions lack the capacity to translate policy objectives into practical outcomes. In contrast, Okon and Eze (2024) emphasize political commitment, accountability, inter-agency collaboration, and consistent resource allocation as critical determinants of implementation success. Whereas Adebayo and Yusuf focus on institutional and administrative weaknesses, Okon and Eze highlight governance and political factors. These perspectives are complementary because they demonstrate that implementation deficits arise from the interaction of institutional, administrative, financial, and political challenges rather than from a single factor. The relevance of implementation deficit is particularly evident in Nigeria's education sector. Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2023) observe that several reforms introduced under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme have not consistently translated into improved learning outcomes due to inadequate funding, weak supervision, selective implementation, and persistent infrastructural deficiencies. This suggests that the existence of sound educational policies alone is insufficient to guarantee improved educational performance unless effective implementation mechanisms are in place.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes implementation deficit as the gap between intended educational policy objectives and their actual outcomes arising from weaknesses in policy execution, institutional capacity, coordination, funding, and accountability. This conceptualization is particularly relevant because the study examines how implementation challenges have influenced educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025.

Concept of Public Policy Implementation

Public policy implementation refers to the process through which government policies, programmes, and decisions are translated into practical actions aimed at achieving predetermined objectives. It involves the coordinated efforts of public institutions, government agencies, administrators, and other stakeholders responsible for executing policy directives. As one of the

most critical stages of the policy process, implementation determines whether policy objectives are realized in practice or remain unfulfilled.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) conceptualize public policy implementation as the interaction between policy goals and the administrative processes required to achieve them. They argue that policy success depends largely on effective coordination, institutional capacity, and communication among implementing agencies. Their implementation framework suggests that even well-designed policies may fail when bureaucratic bottlenecks, fragmented decision-making, and weak institutional arrangements disrupt the implementation process. This perspective underscores that policy formulation alone cannot guarantee successful policy outcomes.

While Nigerian scholars generally support this classical perspective, they extend the discussion by emphasizing the contextual factors that shape policy implementation in developing countries. Adebayo and Yusuf (2021) view public policy implementation as the practical application of government decisions through administrative procedures, resource allocation, and institutional actions aimed at addressing societal problems. They argue that effective implementation depends on adequate funding, political commitment, competent personnel, and effective monitoring systems. In contrast, Okon and Eze (2024) emphasize the collaborative nature of implementation, arguing that policy outcomes are influenced by the interactions among ministries, agencies, public officials, and beneficiaries. They further identify bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, weak coordination, and inadequate resources as major impediments to effective implementation. While Adebayo and Yusuf focus primarily on institutional capacity and resource availability, Okon and Eze highlight governance, stakeholder coordination, and accountability. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that successful policy implementation requires both strong institutional capacity and effective collaboration among policy actors.

The significance of public policy implementation is particularly evident in the education sector, where policy success depends on the effective execution of programmes relating to teacher recruitment, infrastructure development, curriculum implementation, funding, monitoring, and educational reforms. Olatunde and Bello (2023) argue that effective implementation of education policies is fundamental to improving educational quality, increasing school participation, and enhancing students' academic performance. Similarly, reports by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the Federal Ministry of Education emphasize that educational reforms

can only produce measurable improvements in literacy, access, and learning outcomes when implementation is supported by adequate funding, continuous monitoring, and institutional accountability. These observations reinforce the view that policy effectiveness should be assessed not by policy formulation alone but by the extent to which implementation achieves intended educational objectives.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes public policy implementation as the coordinated process of translating educational policies into practical actions through effective institutional, administrative, financial, and human resource mechanisms to achieve improved educational outcomes. This conceptualization is appropriate because the study examines how the implementation of education policies has influenced educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies generally indicate that effective public policy implementation has a positive influence on educational outcomes, although they differ in their methodological approaches, geographical focus, and emphasis on implementation challenges.

Several Nigerian studies consistently report a positive relationship between effective policy implementation and educational performance. For instance, Adeosun and Olatunji (2021), using a descriptive survey design involving teachers and school administrators in South-West Nigeria, found that effective implementation of educational policies significantly improved students' academic performance, school enrolment, and teaching quality. Similarly, Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2023), employing a correlational research design across selected Nigerian states, established that schools with better infrastructure and instructional resources recorded superior learning outcomes. Although both studies reached similar conclusions regarding the importance of policy implementation, they differed methodologically. While Adeosun and Olatunji relied on respondents' perceptions of policy implementation, Ofojebe and Ezugoh examined the statistical relationship between infrastructure and educational outcomes. This methodological difference strengthens the evidence by demonstrating the relationship from both perceptual and empirical perspectives.

Other studies have focused primarily on implementation challenges rather than educational outcomes. Atunde, Oloye, Tijani, Atolagbe, and Oyedele (2022) examined resource mobilization for Universal Basic Education implementation in Kwara State and found that inadequate funding

and unequal resource distribution limited effective implementation across the state's senatorial districts. Similarly, Okon and Eze (2024), using documentary analysis and interviews, concluded that weak institutional coordination, corruption, inadequate monitoring, and inconsistent funding undermined education policy implementation in Nigeria. While both studies identified implementation barriers, their methodological approaches differed considerably. Atunde et al. employed a quantitative survey that generated measurable evidence from education stakeholders, whereas Okon and Eze adopted a qualitative approach that provided deeper insights into institutional and governance challenges. These complementary approaches suggest that implementation deficits are multidimensional and cannot be adequately explained by financial constraints alone.

International evidence further supports these findings while broadening the discussion. The World Bank (2022) reported that implementation capacity, institutional accountability, and sustainable financing are the principal determinants of successful education reforms in developing countries. Likewise, UNICEF (2023) found that increased school enrolment does not necessarily translate into improved learning outcomes unless supported by qualified teachers, effective implementation mechanisms, and adequate learning infrastructure. These international findings reinforce the conclusions of Nigerian studies by demonstrating that implementation quality, rather than policy formulation alone, determines educational success across different national contexts.

Despite the broad consensus that effective policy implementation improves educational outcomes, differences exist regarding the factors considered most influential. Quantitative studies tend to emphasize measurable variables such as funding, infrastructure, and teacher availability, whereas qualitative studies highlight governance issues, institutional coordination, accountability, and political commitment. These differences reflect variations in research design rather than contradictions in findings, suggesting that educational policy implementation is shaped by multiple interconnected institutional and administrative factors.

Nevertheless, an important gap remains in the literature. Most Nigerian studies have examined either the determinants of educational outcomes or the challenges of policy implementation independently. Few studies have comprehensively assessed how public policy implementation has influenced educational outcomes in Kwara State during the period 2019–2025. Furthermore, limited empirical attention has been given to recent reforms, including the KwaraLEARN digital

learning programme, large-scale teacher recruitment, infrastructure expansion, and their combined effects on educational outcomes. This gap provides the empirical justification for the present study.

Research Gap

Existing empirical studies on public policy implementation and educational outcomes in Nigeria have largely focused on general challenges confronting the education sector, including inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, teacher shortages, and weak policy execution. Studies by Adeosun and Olatunji (2021), Atunde et al. (2022), and Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2023) consistently found that effective policy implementation contributes to improved educational outcomes, whereas weak implementation structures undermine policy effectiveness. Similarly, Okon and Eze (2024) identified poor coordination, corruption, and inadequate monitoring systems as major constraints to effective service delivery in Nigeria's education sector.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the literature. First, most previous studies have examined educational policy implementation from a broad national perspective without providing a comprehensive assessment of how specific implementation strategies influence measurable educational outcomes at the sub-national level. Second, existing studies have concentrated mainly on funding and infrastructure while giving limited attention to the combined effects of teacher recruitment, digital learning initiatives, monitoring mechanisms, institutional coordination, and other implementation strategies on educational performance. Third, empirical evidence on recent education reforms introduced in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025 including the KwaraLEARN programme, counterpart funding compliance, and large-scale school rehabilitation remains limited. Existing studies on Kwara State, such as Atunde et al. (2022), focused primarily on resource mobilization and did not comprehensively evaluate the relationship between policy implementation strategies and educational outcomes during the post-2019 reform period.

Beyond these empirical gaps, there is also an unresolved theoretical issue in the literature. Although many studies acknowledge the relevance of Implementation Deficit Theory in explaining policy failure, they largely apply the theory to contexts where implementation outcomes are generally unsuccessful. Consequently, limited attention has been given to situations where policy implementation produces mixed outcomes, with some policy components achieving substantial success while others remain poorly implemented under the same

institutional and administrative framework. This raises an important theoretical question regarding whether implementation deficits arise solely from institutional weaknesses, as proposed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), or whether they also reflect differences in political priorities, resource allocation, and implementation strategies across policy components.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address both the empirical and theoretical gaps by examining how public policy implementation influenced educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. In doing so, it provides contemporary evidence on recent education reforms while also extending the application of Implementation Deficit Theory to explain selective policy implementation and its implications for educational outcomes within a sub-national context.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Implementation Deficit Theory developed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) in their seminal work *Implementation*. The theory emerged from their investigation into why many government policies fail to achieve their intended objectives despite clear policy formulation and political commitment. They argue that policy success depends not only on the quality of policy design but, more importantly, on the effectiveness of the implementation process.

The central proposition of the theory is that a gap often exists between policy intentions and actual outcomes because implementation is influenced by administrative, institutional, financial, and political constraints. Pressman and Wildavsky maintain that policy implementation involves multiple actors, organizations, and decision points, thereby increasing the likelihood of delays, poor coordination, resource constraints, and partial execution of policy directives. Consequently, even well-designed policies may fail when implementation mechanisms are weak or inadequately coordinated.

A major strength of the theory is its ability to explain why public policies frequently produce outcomes that differ from their original objectives. It emphasizes the importance of institutional capacity, coordination, monitoring, accountability, and resource availability in determining implementation success. The theory has been widely applied in the analysis of public sector reforms, particularly in developing countries where implementation challenges are often more pronounced. Its flexibility also makes it applicable across sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and public administration.

Despite these strengths, the theory has attracted criticism. One limitation is that it places considerable emphasis on administrative and institutional weaknesses while giving relatively limited attention to the influence of local actors, community participation, and policy beneficiaries in shaping implementation outcomes. The theory also tends to assume that implementation deficits arise mainly from bureaucratic inefficiency, whereas political interests, changing policy environments, and contextual realities may equally determine implementation success or failure. Consequently, the theory may not fully explain situations in which implementation outcomes are shaped by active collaboration between government agencies and local stakeholders.

Several alternative implementation theories have been proposed to address these limitations. The Top-down Theory, advanced by scholars such as Pressman and Wildavsky and later refined by Mazmanian and Sabatier, emphasizes the importance of clear policy objectives, hierarchical control, and compliance by implementing agencies. While this perspective provides a structured approach to policy implementation, it has been criticized for underestimating the discretion exercised by frontline implementers and local institutions. Conversely, the Bottom-up Theory, associated with Lipsky (1980) and later scholars, argues that successful implementation depends largely on the actions and decisions of street-level bureaucrats and local actors who interpret and adapt policies to local conditions. Although this approach recognizes the realities of policy implementation at the grassroots level, it may overlook the importance of central coordination and policy consistency. Similarly, the Mazmanian and Sabatier Framework identifies legal clarity, institutional capacity, socio-economic conditions, and stakeholder support as determinants of successful implementation. While the framework provides a comprehensive explanation of implementation processes, its broad scope makes it less suited to studies primarily concerned with explaining implementation gaps between policy intentions and observed outcomes.

Implementation Deficit Theory was selected for this study because its central concern aligns directly with the study's objective of examining the gap between educational policy intentions and actual educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. Unlike the Bottom-up Theory, which primarily emphasizes the role of local implementers, or the Mazmanian and Sabatier Framework, which considers a wide range of implementation variables, Implementation Deficit Theory specifically focuses on why well-formulated policies fail to achieve their intended

outcomes due to weaknesses in coordination, institutional capacity, accountability, and resource allocation. These issues correspond closely with the implementation challenges observed in Kwara State, where significant progress in infrastructure development, teacher recruitment, counterpart funding compliance, and digital learning initiatives coexisted with persistent gaps in teacher welfare, retirement age harmonization, and the equitable distribution of educational resources.

Accordingly, the theory provides the most appropriate analytical framework for explaining the selective and uneven implementation of education policies in Kwara State and for examining how these implementation gaps have influenced educational outcomes during the period under review.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using a documentary research design to examine public policy implementation and its impact on educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. The documentary design was considered appropriate because the study sought to analyse the implementation of educational policies using existing official records, policy documents, and other credible secondary sources rather than generating primary data through questionnaires or interviews. The design also enabled the researcher to examine implementation trends and educational outcomes over the study period using verified administrative data.

The study was conducted in Kwara State, Nigeria, which comprises sixteen local government areas distributed across the three senatorial districts of Kwara Central, Kwara North, and Kwara South. The state was selected because it witnessed significant educational reforms between 2019 and 2025, including school rehabilitation projects, teacher recruitment, digital learning initiatives under the KwaraLEARN programme, and increased access to Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) intervention funds.

The study relied exclusively on secondary sources of data. These included official publications of the Kwara State Ministry of Education, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), annual budget implementation reports, education sector performance reports, government policy documents, official statistical bulletins, journal articles, textbooks, and other relevant scholarly publications. Verified reports

from international organizations such as UNICEF and the World Bank were also consulted to provide comparative evidence and contextual analysis.

Document selection was guided by purposive sampling. Only documents directly related to educational policy implementation and educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025 were included in the study. The selection criteria emphasized authenticity, credibility, relevance, and completeness to ensure that only reliable and verifiable sources formed the basis of the analysis.

Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. Relevant information was extracted from the selected documents, organized according to the study objectives, and analysed thematically. The analysis focused on key implementation indicators such as teacher recruitment, infrastructure development, funding compliance, digital learning initiatives, policy coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. Educational outcomes were assessed using documented indicators, including school enrolment, learners' academic performance, examination pass rates, and other official education statistics reported by relevant government agencies. Trends and patterns identified across the reviewed documents were interpreted in relation to the propositions of the Implementation Deficit Theory.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, information obtained from one documentary source was cross-checked with other official publications and scholarly sources through data triangulation. This procedure improved the reliability and validity of the study by reducing the risk of bias associated with relying on a single source of information.

The study observed established ethical standards for documentary research by ensuring that all data were obtained from publicly available and officially recognized sources. Appropriate acknowledgement was given to all authors and institutions whose publications were used, and the data were presented accurately without alteration or misrepresentation.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from documentary sources relating to public policy implementation and educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. Consistent with the qualitative documentary research design adopted for this study, the analysis is based on official government publications, policy documents, implementation reports, budget documents, education sector performance reports, reports of development partners, and relevant scholarly literature. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, whereby

information extracted from the documents was organized into themes corresponding to the objectives of the study. The findings are presented under major thematic areas, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and the propositions of the Implementation Deficit Theory.

Theme One: Level of Educational Policy Implementation in Kwara State (2019–2025)

The documentary evidence reviewed indicates that the implementation of educational policies in Kwara State improved considerably between 2019 and 2025. Government reports from the Kwara State Ministry of Education and the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) show that several reforms were introduced to improve access, quality, and management of education within the state.

One of the most significant policy initiatives during the period was the introduction of the KwaraLEARN programme, which focused on improving classroom instruction through technology-assisted teaching and continuous monitoring of teachers' classroom performance. Official implementation reports indicate that thousands of teachers were trained on digital instructional methods and provided with electronic tablets to facilitate lesson delivery and classroom monitoring. The programme also introduced real-time monitoring mechanisms that enabled education administrators to supervise teaching activities more effectively.

Documentary evidence further reveals substantial investment in educational infrastructure. Government budget implementation reports indicate that numerous classrooms were renovated and new classroom blocks constructed in both primary and secondary schools across the state. In addition, instructional materials, furniture, laboratory equipment, and teaching aids were supplied to many public schools to improve the learning environment.

Teacher recruitment also formed an important component of policy implementation during the review period. Official reports show that the state government recruited qualified teachers to address shortages in public schools, particularly in rural communities where inadequate staffing had previously affected teaching effectiveness.

Despite these achievements, documentary evidence also indicates that implementation varied across local government areas. While urban schools generally benefited more rapidly from policy interventions, implementation in some rural communities experienced delays due to infrastructural challenges, logistical constraints, and limited administrative capacity.

Overall, the reviewed documents suggest that educational policy implementation in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025 recorded measurable progress, although the level of implementation differed across programmes and locations.

Theme Two: Challenges Affecting Public Policy Implementation in the Education Sector

Analysis of the reviewed documents identifies several challenges that constrained effective implementation of educational policies during the study period.

A recurring issue was inadequate and irregular funding. Although annual education budgets increased over the period, implementation reports indicate that actual releases were sometimes lower than approved allocations, thereby delaying project execution and limiting the completion of planned interventions.

Another major challenge identified was inadequate monitoring and evaluation. Several reports observed that although implementation frameworks existed, monitoring activities were sometimes inconsistent due to insufficient personnel, logistical limitations, and inadequate coordination among implementing agencies.

The documentary evidence also highlights bureaucratic bottlenecks as a significant implementation challenge. Administrative procedures relating to procurement, contract approval, and release of funds occasionally slowed the execution of educational projects.

Teacher shortages in certain rural communities remained another concern. Despite recruitment exercises, official reports continued to identify unequal teacher distribution, with many remote schools experiencing shortages of qualified teachers.

Infrastructure deficits also persisted in some parts of the state. Although many schools benefited from renovation projects, documentary evidence indicates that several schools still faced inadequate classrooms, insufficient furniture, poor sanitation facilities, and limited access to digital learning infrastructure.

Political and policy continuity also emerged as an implementation challenge. Some reviewed documents suggest that changes in administrative priorities occasionally affected the continuity of ongoing educational programmes.

Overall, the documentary evidence demonstrates that while significant progress was achieved, financial, administrative, infrastructural, and institutional constraints continued to influence the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Theme Three: Impact of Educational Policy Implementation on Educational Outcomes

The reviewed documents indicate that educational policy implementation contributed positively to educational outcomes in Kwara State during the study period.

Official education statistics show gradual improvements in school enrolment, particularly at the basic education level. The expansion of educational facilities and increased government investment in education encouraged greater participation in formal schooling.

Documentary evidence also indicates improvements in teaching quality following teacher recruitment, professional development programmes, and the implementation of technology-assisted classroom supervision under the KwaraLEARN initiative. Reports suggest that continuous teacher monitoring contributed to improved lesson preparation, classroom management, and instructional delivery.

Government reports further reveal improvements in school infrastructure resulting from classroom renovation projects, provision of instructional materials, construction of additional school buildings, and improved learning facilities. These interventions enhanced the teaching and learning environment in many public schools.

Available education sector reports also indicate gradual improvements in students' academic performance, reflected in internal assessments and public examination outcomes in schools that effectively implemented the reforms. However, the reviewed documents acknowledge that educational performance varied across schools and local government areas depending on the level of implementation and availability of educational resources.

The evidence therefore suggests that effective implementation of educational policies contributed to positive educational outcomes, although the extent of improvement differed across programmes and geographical locations.

Discussion of Findings

The documentary evidence reviewed indicates that educational policy implementation in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025 recorded significant progress in teacher recruitment, school infrastructure development, digital learning initiatives, and education management reforms. Reports from the Kwara State Ministry of Education, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and other government publications show that deliberate policy interventions improved access to quality education and strengthened service delivery. The implementation of the KwaraLEARN programme particularly demonstrates the government's commitment to

enhancing teaching through technology-driven instruction and classroom monitoring. These findings suggest that effective implementation translates policy objectives into measurable educational improvements. This supports Adeosun and Olatunji (2021), who argued that successful policy implementation enhances teaching quality and educational performance, and reinforces the Implementation Deficit Theory, which emphasizes that policy success depends more on effective implementation than policy formulation. The experience of Kwara State therefore highlights the importance of sustained political commitment and administrative coordination.

The findings also revealed that inadequate funding remained the major challenge affecting educational policy implementation. Budget implementation reports indicate that although education allocations increased during the study period, actual releases and utilization often fell below approved budgets, delaying projects, infrastructure maintenance, instructional material provision, and teacher development programmes. Weak monitoring and evaluation, bureaucratic delays, shortages of qualified personnel, and poor institutional coordination further constrained implementation. These findings agree with Atunde et al. (2022), who identified inadequate funding and weak institutional capacity as major implementation constraints, and with Okon and Eze (2024), who attributed poor policy implementation in Nigeria to corruption, weak monitoring, and inadequate resource allocation. The evidence suggests that implementation challenges are systemic and require comprehensive institutional reforms.

The study further found that educational policy implementation positively influenced educational outcomes. Official reports indicate improvements in school enrolment, educational infrastructure, teacher recruitment and professional development, and learning environments. Although students' academic performance varied across schools and local government areas, schools benefiting from effective implementation generally recorded better outcomes. This supports Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2023), who linked adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, and instructional support to improved learning outcomes. Similarly, UNICEF (2023) and the World Bank (2022) emphasized that sustained investment in education, teacher development, effective monitoring, and institutional accountability are essential for improving educational quality.

The documentary evidence further revealed that policy implementation was uneven across programmes and geographical locations. While urban schools and flagship initiatives such as KwaraLEARN recorded considerable progress, many rural schools continued to experience

inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, and limited learning facilities. These disparities reflect differences in institutional capacity, administrative efficiency, and resource distribution across the state. This finding provides additional support for the Implementation Deficit Theory by demonstrating that implementation gaps persist despite well-formulated policies, thereby highlighting the need to strengthen institutional capacity at both state and local levels.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that educational policy implementation contributed significantly to improving educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. However, sustaining these achievements depends on addressing persistent implementation challenges through adequate funding, stronger monitoring and evaluation, improved institutional coordination, equitable resource distribution, and continuity in policy implementation. The study therefore confirms that meaningful educational transformation depends not only on sound policy formulation but also on consistent, effective, and accountable implementation.

Summary

This study examined public policy implementation and its impact on educational outcomes in Kwara State, Nigeria, between 2019 and 2025. The study was motivated by the persistent gap between policy formulation and implementation within Nigeria's education sector despite the introduction of several educational reforms aimed at improving access, quality, and service delivery. The study adopted the Implementation Deficit Theory propounded by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) as its theoretical framework to explain the challenges associated with translating policy objectives into tangible educational outcomes.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a documentary research design. Data were obtained exclusively from secondary sources, including official publications of the Kwara State Ministry of Education, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), annual budget implementation reports, education sector performance reports, government policy documents, official statistical bulletins, scholarly journal articles, textbooks, and reports published by international organizations such as UNICEF and the World Bank. Relevant documents were purposively selected based on their authenticity, credibility, relevance, and completeness. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, while findings were organized and interpreted thematically in line with the study objectives and the propositions of the Implementation Deficit Theory.

The findings revealed that educational policy implementation in Kwara State recorded appreciable progress during the study period, particularly in teacher recruitment, school infrastructure development, digital learning initiatives under the KwaraLEARN programme, and improvements in educational management. The documentary evidence further indicated that these policy interventions contributed to positive educational outcomes, including increased school enrolment, improved learning environments, enhanced teacher capacity, and gradual improvements in students' academic performance.

Despite these achievements, the study identified several challenges that constrained effective policy implementation. These included inadequate funding, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, bureaucratic delays, shortages of qualified personnel in some communities, infrastructural deficiencies, and uneven implementation across urban and rural areas. The findings suggest that these institutional and administrative constraints limited the extent to which educational policies achieved their intended objectives.

The study therefore concludes that although Kwara State made significant progress in implementing educational policies between 2019 and 2025, the sustainability and effectiveness of these reforms depend largely on strengthening implementation mechanisms through adequate funding, improved institutional coordination, effective monitoring and evaluation, equitable distribution of educational resources, and sustained political commitment. Addressing these implementation challenges is essential for achieving long-term improvements in educational outcomes and ensuring that educational policies translate into meaningful and sustainable development across the state.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the effective implementation of public policies has been instrumental in improving educational outcomes in Kwara State between 2019 and 2025. The documentary evidence reviewed indicates that government interventions, particularly in teacher recruitment, school infrastructure development, digital learning initiatives under the KwaraLEARN programme, and educational management reforms, contributed to enhanced access to education, improved learning environments, and better educational service delivery. These developments demonstrate that sustained implementation efforts can translate policy objectives into meaningful improvements in the education sector.

The study further concludes that the implementation of educational policies in Kwara State has been characterised by uneven levels of success. While significant progress was recorded in several reform areas, implementation gaps persisted in aspects such as equitable distribution of educational resources, teacher welfare, infrastructure provision in some rural communities, and the continuity of policy initiatives. These disparities indicate that the benefits of educational reforms have not been uniformly experienced across the state, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of policy implementation.

Furthermore, the study concludes that inadequate funding, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, bureaucratic delays, institutional capacity constraints, and ineffective coordination among implementing agencies remain major obstacles to the successful implementation of educational policies. These challenges demonstrate that the existence of well-formulated policies alone is insufficient to achieve desired educational outcomes unless supported by effective implementation structures, adequate financial resources, and strong institutional commitment.

The findings also affirm the relevance of the Implementation Deficit Theory, which argues that the success of public policies depends largely on the quality of their implementation rather than on policy formulation alone. The documentary evidence examined in this study shows that educational reforms produced more positive outcomes where implementation mechanisms were effectively coordinated and adequately supported, whereas implementation deficiencies reduced the impact of some policy interventions despite their sound objectives.

Conclusively, the study concludes that achieving sustainable improvements in educational outcomes in Kwara State requires continuous commitment to strengthening implementation mechanisms through adequate funding, effective monitoring and evaluation, improved institutional coordination, equitable allocation of educational resources, and sustained political will. Only through consistent and inclusive implementation can educational policies achieve their intended objectives and contribute meaningfully to long-term educational development in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Kwara State Government should establish a dedicated education implementation fund with timely release of approved budgetary allocations to ensure the uninterrupted execution of educational projects. In addition, annual expenditure on education should be

subjected to periodic performance reviews to ensure that allocated funds are effectively utilized for teacher recruitment, infrastructure development, instructional materials, and other priority interventions.

2. The Kwara State Ministry of Education should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation framework by conducting regular school inspections, developing measurable implementation indicators, and introducing periodic performance assessment reports for educational programmes. This will improve accountability and facilitate the early identification and resolution of implementation challenges.
3. Government should adopt an evidence-based resource allocation framework that prioritizes schools and communities with the greatest educational needs. This approach will promote equitable distribution of teachers, classrooms, instructional materials, and digital learning facilities, particularly in underserved rural areas where implementation gaps remain most pronounced.
4. The state government should implement a comprehensive teacher welfare and professional development policy by ensuring timely promotion, prompt payment of salaries and retirement benefits, continuous in-service training, and improved working conditions. These measures will enhance teacher motivation, improve instructional quality, and strengthen the retention of qualified personnel within the public education system.
5. The Ministry of Education, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and other implementing agencies should establish a formal inter-agency coordination mechanism through regular policy review meetings, joint implementation committees, and integrated reporting systems. Improved institutional collaboration will reduce duplication of responsibilities, enhance information sharing, and improve policy implementation.
6. The Kwara State Government should expand the KwaraLEARN programme and other technology-driven educational initiatives by extending digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and teacher training to schools that are yet to benefit from these reforms. This will promote inclusive access to digital learning and improve the quality of teaching and learning across the state.

7. To strengthen transparency and accountability, government should introduce independent financial audits of educational programmes, strengthen procurement oversight, and provide publicly accessible reports on budget implementation and project execution. These measures will reduce opportunities for corruption and promote efficient utilization of public resources allocated to education.

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