INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND TRUST DEFICIT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY IN NIGERIA

Adebayo Olumide ADEDEJI
Department of Public Administration,
Faculty of Management Sciences,
Redeemer's University, Ede.
adedejia@run.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The National Primary Education policy, subsumed under the Universal Basic Education programme, has not achieved a reduction in the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. One of the factors responsible for this is the ineffective intergovernmental structures and processes for implementing the policy. This ineffectiveness is traceable to coordination challenges. Consequently, this study aims to identify the coordination challenges associated with the intergovernmental relations framework for implementing the National Primary Education policy. The study employed the qualitative research design using the case study method. Data was collected from secondary sources and analysed using content analysis to identify patterns. The study was guided by the Administrative Federalism theory, which prescribes a functional division of roles and responsibilities for achieving coordination in a federation. Findings revealed several challenges, including power imbalances among implementing agencies, adversarial relationships between different levels of government, ineffective leadership at the national level, overlapping functions and an intergovernmental process characterised by low levels of trust and commitment. The study concludes that these factors impede the coordination needed to implement the National Policy on Primary Education. The study recommends streamlining the multiple agencies to reduce duplication of efforts.

Keywords: Coordination, Intergovernmental relations, Primary education, Policy implementation

INTRODUCTION

It has been established that most structural arrangements for implementing government policies are intergovernmental or inter-organisational (Goggin *et al*, 1990). These structural arrangements face the daunting task of coordinating the efforts of various public agencies at different levels towards meeting citizens' demands. This is because duplication of efforts and conflict often manifest in joint action programmes. For instance, Jackson and Hasrul (2024) observed, in their study of transportation management in Nigeria, the multiplicity of agencies involved, making coordination a herculean task. Each agency pursues its interests rather than the country's transport policy objectives. Primary education policy, like most public policies in Nigeria, requires the active involvement of the three tiers of government in actualising its goals. However, the intergovernmental structure for implementing these policies is often characterised by adversarial rather than cooperative relations (Adedeji, 2021). This adversarial relationship goes against Lundun's (2007) assertion that a cooperative relationship is essential in implementing public policies within an intergovernmental relations framework. Research on intergovernmental relations in Nigeria has observed a lack of synergy among government agencies at the three levels – local, state and federal (Freinkman, 2007).

One of the challenges of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria is achieving coordination among these tiers of government. For instance, the Nigerian government's commitment to Universal Basic Education (UBE) is enshrined in the National Policy on Primary Education (FGN, 2004), which operates under the legal mandate of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act of 2004. This landmark legislation guarantees every child's right to accessible and mandatory education at both primary and junior secondary levels (UBEC, 2004). The Act establishes a comprehensive implementation framework, specifying the institutions responsible for implementation.

At the federal level is the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), which serves as the national coordinating body tasked with formulating policy guidelines for nationwide UBE implementation and managing federal education funds through block grants to states and local governments. The State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) are at the state and local government levels, respectively. These tiered agencies collectively translate UBE objectives into concrete educational outcomes. This multi-level governance structure reflects Nigeria's federal approach to education delivery, where policy success hinges on the synergistic operation of all participating entities. The 2004 Act thus establishes both an institutional framework and a fiscal architecture for achieving universal basic education, with UBEC as the key stakeholder in this ambitious national project. While the Act prescribes the institutions and their functions, it does not anticipate the relationship pattern between them.

Freinkman (2007), commenting on service delivery in Nigeria, emphasised the importance of coordination and noted the weak capacity of the intergovernmental structures and processes to achieve desired results. Freinkman identified several factors contributing to these ineffective intergovernmental processes and structures. For instance, councils for intergovernmental relations, such as the National Economic Council established by the 1999 Constitution to oversee economic programmes, have become forums for discussions with minimal implementation activities. Additionally, communication between the federal and state governments is ineffective. State governments frequently view Federal government policies as attempts to usurp their responsibilities, which reduces their readiness to pass on necessary information (Adedeji, 2021).

According to Comfort (2007), coordination ensures that the capacities, activities, and time of multiple stakeholders align with the shared goal. In implementing the National Primary Education policy, which is incorporated under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, statutory government agencies, private entities, and international donor agencies must align their activities to achieve the policy's objectives. The expected outcome of the policy is to inculcate numerical and verbal skills into pupils and reduce the number of out-of-school children. With the high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria, estimated at 10 million (Nigeria Governors' Forum, 2024), there is a need to identify the factors responsible. This study identifies a lack of coordination as one of the factors responsible. While studies on intergovernmental relations have identified how governments coordinate (Bolleyer, 2009; Poirier *et al*, 2015), little is known about the conditions under which governments coordinate (Schnabel and Hegel, 2021). Consequently, the objective of this study is to identify the challenges of intergovernmental coordination in implementing the National Primary Education Policy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study examines how intergovernmental coordination influences the implementation of Nigeria's National Policy on Primary Education, with a focus on the barriers that impede effective collaboration among the various tiers of government agencies involved in the process. To ensure rigorous investigation, the research employs a case study approach constructed on the qualitative research design, focusing on the National Policy on Primary Education. This provides an in-depth understanding of the factors that hinder or enhance intergovernmental coordination. Data was collected from various secondary sources - a deliberate strategy to improve the study's validity and depth. As Yin (2003) emphasises, research relying on singular data sources tends to yield limited perspectives, whereas multi-source studies command greater academic credibility.

The study's evidentiary foundation is based on secondary sources, carefully selected to provide comprehensive insights into Nigeria's educational governance landscape. These include official government publications (e.g., Nigerian Education Sector Diagnosis reports, UBEC statistical bulletins), national education data repositories (Nigerian Digest of Education Statistics, NEDS reports), peer-reviewed journal articles, research from academic and policy institutions and reports from international development organisations.

The research utilises content analysis as its primary analytical tool. As defined by Holsti (1969), this systematic methodology involves the objective, replicable categorisation of textual (and non-textual) data through explicit coding protocols. Beyond traditional document analysis, this approach is valuable for efficiently processing large volumes of qualitative data, identifying and tracking institutional priorities and policy trends, making empirically grounded inferences about governance patterns and revealing latent themes in policy implementation. The flexibility of content analysis allows for examining diverse materials—from official documents to media reports—while maintaining methodological rigour. This technique helps uncover the dynamics of intergovernmental relations in education policy and establishes a foundation for potential follow-up studies using complementary research methods. Combining multi-source secondary data with robust content analysis, this study aims to produce a nuanced understanding of the coordination challenges affecting primary education delivery across Nigeria's federal, state, and local governance structures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars have developed multiple conceptual models to systematically analyse intergovernmental relations, each aiming to identify key variables and their dynamic interactions in shaping policy outcomes. These theoretical frameworks provide researchers with analytical tools to examine how different levels of government coordinate to deliver public services effectively. When investigating intergovernmental systems, researchers typically focus on two critical dimensions: the institutional structures that enable cross-governmental collaboration and the operational processes that facilitate interactions among officials across different tiers of government.

This study employs the administrative federalism model to analyse Nigeria's implementation framework for its National Policy on Primary Education under the Universal Basic Education programme. This approach proves particularly relevant as Newton (1978) demonstrated in his study of American federalism that while policymakers frequently emphasise programme objectives, they often neglect the crucial implementation mechanisms. Newton's work reveals a critical insight - failing to design appropriate implementation strategies and operational techniques can undermine even well-conceived policy objectives. His framework explicitly addresses this gap by outlining essential management components for successful programme execution, including clear monitoring systems, structured reporting mechanisms, effective direction protocols, transparent approval processes, and efficient resource allocation methodologies.

By applying this analytical lens, the study examines how Nigeria's intergovernmental structures and processes either facilitate or hinder the realisation of primary education policy goals through the Universal Basic Education programme. The administrative federalism model is valuable for understanding the distribution of responsibilities and coordination challenges among federal, state, and local education authorities.

The model examines three key dimensions of federal, state, and local interaction - grant-based, cooperative agreement, and procurement contract relationships. Under the grant-based relationships, the federal government provides financial assistance to lower-level governments to implement programmes aligned with national objectives. It also ensures that lower-level governments retain operational autonomy, managing programmes with minimal federal oversight. Finally, under a grant-based relationship, compliance is ensured through adherence to approved proposals and federally mandated administrative standards. The federal government incentivises lower-level governments to undertake nationally significant functions through cooperative agreement relationships. This is achieved through a collaborative framework that clearly defines the roles of participating agencies, focuses on joint coordination, and integrates related projects to ensure alignment with intended outcomes. The procurement contract relationships involve the federal government's acquisition of specific goods or services from lower-level entities, utilising predefined contractual terms. The focus remains on fulfilling the exact requirements set by the federal agency.

A cooperative agreement represents a distinct intergovernmental partnership, differing significantly in nature and intensity from grant-based support or procurement contracts. Under this agreement, the federal government plays an active role beyond providing funding or procuring services. The federal government typically involves setting precise programme requirements and performance standards, conducting regular compliance reviews, and maintaining ongoing implementation oversight. Unlike hands-off grant arrangements, cooperative agreements feature substantive federal engagement in programme operations. Federal agencies may provide technical assistance to subnational partners, retain approval authority for key decisions, recognise and validate program milestones and participate directly in specified implementation aspects.

This framework establishes a governance partnership in which federal and subnational entities share management responsibilities. The cooperative agreement structure formalises this joint commitment through mutually agreed-upon roles and responsibilities, clearly defined collaboration mechanisms, and shared accountability for programme outcomes.

The model creates an intermediate level of federal involvement - more engaged than grant administration but less controlling than procurement contracting - making it particularly suitable for complex, multi-jurisdictional initiatives requiring coordinated execution. Administrative federalism is a model used to examine the intergovernmental relations structure and operational dynamics of various federations. Countries such as the United States, Austria, Brazil, Germany, and Mexico exemplify this type of intergovernmental relations. This model involves financing and implementing programs through the active participation of multiple levels of government. The executive and legislative branches at the national level formulate public policies and programmes and assign responsibility for administration and implementation to subnational levels. As noted by Behnke (2020), the essence of administrative federalism is acquiring and retaining independence of action in policy implementation.

Administrative federalism is not categorised as a division of powers vertically across policy areas but by a functional division within each sphere. In other words, the rule-making function is the responsibility of the national government, while sub-national governments are assigned the tasks of implementation and continuing administration (Mueller and Fenna, 2022). This is the model's premise, as a functional division of roles and responsibilities would ensure coordination among the various levels of government. Considering this premise, the theory finds relevance for this study. The federal government formulates policies in key sectors such as water supply, health, sanitation and education, while state governments administer these policies. The model intends to ensure the coordination of actions by each tier of government and achieve uniform policy outcomes (Bakvis and Brown, 2010). In the case of the National Policy on Primary Education, subsumed under the UBE Act, the federal government enacted the policy. It assigned implementation responsibilities to the state and local governments.

GOALS AND STRUCTURE OF THE UBE POLICY

The primary goal of any public policy is to achieve its specific objectives. Failing to meet these objectives is deemed a policy failure by policy developers and intended beneficiaries. To ensure success, every public policy is accompanied by implementation procedures that provide a clear outline for public officials to understand their roles and tasks during the execution process. These procedures not only outline tasks but also specify the required resources, including both human and financial resources. The availability of funding, its sources, and the personnel's capability to perform their duties are critical factors influencing the policy's success. Effective policy implementation demands thorough planning, competent management, and timely allocation of necessary funds.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme encompasses six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. Primary education is structured into two stages: lower basic education (Primary 1–3) and middle basic education (Primary 4–6). By the end of the six years, students are expected to achieve key outcomes, including permanent literacy and numeracy skills and practical communication abilities. The programme requires deploying both human and material resources to realise these objectives. This includes constructing new classrooms, administrative blocks, and sanitary facilities, procuring educational materials, and recruiting qualified teachers. Achieving these goals demands substantial financial investment and efficient management. However, a recurring challenge in implementing public policies is the discrepancy between the intended and actual outcomes. This underscores the importance of thorough and strategic planning during policy formulation to ensure alignment between policy goals and implementation outcomes.

The Universal Basic Education Act (UBEC, 2004) mandates the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and the Local Education Authority (LGEA), which will implement the programme. These institutions, established by the UBE Act, are overseen by both the Federal and State governments. According to the Act, the Local Education Authority is supervised by the State Universal Basic Education Board, a state government agency. Consequently, the State government administers the Local Education Authority, not the Local Government Council (ESSPIN, 2009a). This institutional arrangement serves as the framework for intergovernmental relations in implementing the national policy on primary education. Officials from these institutions interact regularly and maintain formal communication channels. Other bodies, such as the Federal Ministry of Education, the State Ministries of Education and Finance, and the Local Government Council, also supervise basic education. However, these roles are not clearly defined for achieving basic education goals.

The UBE Act specifies that the commission, board, and local education authority are directly responsible for implementing basic education. To better understand the dimension of coordination within the intergovernmental relations framework, it is essential to examine specific factors. These factors are examined through the prism of administrative federalism, under a cooperative type of relationship in which the federal government's involvement is to set standards and guidelines and ensure compliance, while subnational levels are responsible for carrying out activities to actualise the goals of the policy. The implementation framework of UBE encompasses a functional division of roles and responsibilities among the federal, state and local governments. This is based on the assumption that coordination would be achieved with each level of government functioning within its sphere of competence. The factors hindering effective coordination, as observed in the secondary data sources, are discussed below.

POWER DYNAMICS, INCENTIVES AND PATTERN OF RELATIONS

These factors predate the commencement of the implementation process and represent a vital aspect of the relations. The power dynamics convey unequal resources, capacity, or status among government agencies participating in the relationship. This results in power imbalances and affects the participation of implementation agencies, particularly those at the sub-national level. This is evident in the funding arrangement for implementing primary education, which is subsumed under the broader category of basic education. A key function assigned to the commission by the Act is the disbursement of the federal government's intervention fund for basic education. The commission has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the various boards on how funds disbursed will be expended to provide basic education. This MOU details the state's specific needs and how the funds should be applied.

However, if the board fails to adhere to the provisions of the MOU, a clause gives the commission the power to suspend or stop the subsequent disbursement of funds to the state. A resultant effect of this provision is a superior-subordinate relationship between the commission and the board, altering the balance of power in favour of the commission. While the clause ensures accountability and transparency in utilising the funds, most states struggle to meet the MOU's requirements (ESSPIN, 2009a). This decreases the likelihood of achieving basic education goals since a significant portion of primary education funding comes from the federal government through the commission. Delays or non-release of these funds negatively impact infrastructure funding and teacher training (UNESCO, 2015; Adirika and Oluwatayo, 2013).

Similarly, the Local Government Council (LGC), which is responsible for primary education, performs minimally in implementing basic education. For instance, SUBEB appoints Education Secretaries for the LGEA and teaching and non-teaching staff from grade level 06 and above. The LGEA is responsible for appointing staff in grades 1 to 5 and reports to the board. According to a report of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN, 2009a), while the LGEAs are supposed to manage basic education for LGCs, SUBEB, a state agency, exercise administrative control over them. Consequently, the power of the Local Government Councils to oversee the LGEAs and primary schools within their area has been usurped by the State government. These provisions in the UBE Act create a power imbalance between the UBEC and the SUBEBs, as well as between the SUBEBs and the LGEAs. The intent of this provision may be to ensure accountability of subnational agencies to the central government. However, a study by Adedeji (2025) showed that it made SUBEB subservient to UBEC, and also made LGEA subservient to SUBEB.

Another factor affecting implementation is the incentive to participate in the intergovernmental process. These incentives include financial gain and tangible policy outcomes emanating from intergovernmental relations. For instance, the report of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN, 2009a) noted that the function of recruiting staff in grades 1 to 5 assigned to LGs created a disconnection between the State government and Local Governments. In this case, the local governments' incentive to participate may be low, considering their limited role. On the other hand, most of the financial and administrative responsibilities for basic education are with the state government. Similarly, based on available evidence, the incentive for state governments to participate is low. This is seen in their inconsistency in providing counterpart funding for basic education.

According to a Premium Times newspaper report (2015), 32 out of the 36 states in eight years did not access 56 billion naira of counterpart funding provided by the Federal government through the Commission. Despite this, these states allocate funds for primary education in their annual budgets. This suggests that state governments prefer to spend money under their control rather than be subject to external regulation. The recent financial autonomy granted to Local Government Councils by the Supreme Court (BUDGIT, 2025) may likely give them more financial capacity to fund primary education, which may lead to fragmentation of services as the activities of the State governments may not align with those of the Local Governments (Adedeji, 2025b)

The last factor is a pattern of relations, characterised by conflict or cooperation. Concerning the UBE programme, State Governors allege that they were not consulted by the President before its introduction in 1999 (Elaigwu, 2013). The governors expressed dissatisfaction with the programme's announcement without consultation, considering that their operational support was vital to its implementation. Additionally, the federal government's attempt to deduct funds from the statutory allocation of state and local governments was annulled by the Supreme Court in 2002 (Adediran, 2015). State governments consider this action by the Federal government as an attempt to encroach on their sphere of jurisdiction, a phenomenon that has often generated conflict between them.

LEADERSHIP IN COORDINATION

A review of the framework for intergovernmental relations in implementing basic education suggests that the commission is better positioned to provide effective leadership. Based on the Act's provisions, the commission can set policy guidelines and coordinate implementation activities in collaboration with the board, LGEAs, and non-governmental and multilateral agencies. Consequently, the commission will lead the nationwide coordination and implementation of basic education. However, documented evidence shows that despite setting these policy standards, the commission struggles to ensure adherence by SUBEBs and LGEAs. Freinkman (2007) noted that federal agencies cannot monitor and coordinate state performance. This was further corroborated by Khemani (2001), who indicated that the management and financial responsibilities of primary education are unclear, and rules are often misunderstood or ignored. A probable explanation for this is the low level of trust between UBEC and SUBEB, as well as between SUBEB and LGEA. A Federal Ministry of Education report (FME, 2012) also noted that the protocols between the Commission and boards were overly complex, unclear, and lacked accountability, which contributed to coordination issues. Adediran (2015) observed inefficiencies due to the lack of an adequate coordinating system for international donor agencies like DFID and USAID, leading to duplicative efforts.

Similarly, the multiplicity of government agencies with overlapping mandates at the national and sub-national levels impedes the commission's ability to provide effective leadership (Santcross *et al*, 2010; FME, 2011). As a result, the commission has not effectively coordinated the various activities of international donor agencies, education authorities, and boards, thereby undermining the goals of basic education.

STRUCTURAL DESIGN

The structural design of the intergovernmental process determines who participates and to what extent. The hierarchical nature of this structure aims to include as many participants as possible, resulting in a complex web of government agencies involved in providing basic education. This complexity is often cited as a reason for not achieving basic education goals (Arong and Ogbadu, 2000; Adamolekun, 2013; World Bank, 2008). For instance, the functions and powers among the three tiers of government and their agencies are not well-defined, leading to accountability issues (Good Planet Foundation, 2013). For example, multiple agencies inspect primary schools - the Federal Ministry of Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission, State Universal Basic Boards, State Ministries of Education, and Local Governments' Education Authorities all have overlapping inspection responsibilities. This results in incoherent supervision and a lack of a unified vision (Orbach, 2004). Furthermore, the role of local government councils appears restricted. The Constitution and the UBE Act mandate local governments to provide primary education through LGEAs under SUBEB's administrative control. Local governments have minimal input, as decisions are made at the state level without adequate consultation (ESSPIN, 2009a). The unclear roles and lack of coordination hinder the achievement of UBE goals.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESS

Effective communication builds trust, mutual respect, and commitment (ESSPIN, 2009b; Gilliam *et al*, 2002; Warner, 2006). However, the hierarchical framework of relations makes communication between UBEC, SUBEB, and LGEA more instructional than consultative. Freinkman (2007) observed an antagonistic relationship between federal and state agencies, reflecting the pattern between UBEC and SUBEB. This lack of consultation means project selections do not reflect local priorities, undermining local officials' involvement. A report of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN, 2009) noted that conditions attached to UBEC expenditures were set without considering state-specific needs. Trust is crucial for the intergovernmental process to be effective, especially when there is a prehistory of agency conflict. The duplication of roles suggests a lack of trust. For instance, local governments in Kwara state initiated a teacher recruitment scheme, which SUBEB saw as an overreach of their function, highlighting distrust and a lack of decentralisation (ESSPIN, 2009a). Likewise, the commitment of state and local governments is essential for policy success.

Evidence suggests weak state government commitment to UBE, evident in inconsistent counterpart matching grants and insufficient attention to UBE implementation (Edho, 2009; Egonmwan, 2002; Omokhodion, 2002; UNESCO, 2009). Government funding for education, particularly intervention aid, is often subject to strict conditions that make it challenging for some states and institutions to access the funds. The UBEC funding, which requires state governments to provide at least 50% of the counterpart funding before capital project funds are released, has been a major obstacle for many states. In 2018, the UBE chairman revealed that N65 billion remained unassessed in the Central Bank of Nigeria due to these barriers. The South East had the highest unutilised funds at N15.49 billion, followed by the North Central with N15.36 billion and the South West with N11.18 billion. The North East and North West had the lowest unassessed funds (BUDGIT, 2025). Table 1 below shows the unassessed funds from 2015 to 2021.

Table 1: UBEC Budget Allocation Trend

Year	Budget (N billion)	Amount Released (N billion)	Unassessed Amount
2015	63.12	63.12	952.29 million
2016	77.11	77.11	3.55 billion
2017	95.19	95.19	6.22 billion
2018	113.73	113.73	18.14 billion
2019	112.47	112.47	22.72 billion
2020	111.79	-	-
2021	70.1	-	-

Source: BUDGIT, 2021

This indicates the weak commitment of the state government to the UBE programme due to the strict conditions for assessing the funds. Likewise, Freinkman (2007) noted that state leaders' reluctance to share information and participate in joint projects impacted the policy's success. A shared understanding of issues and solutions is necessary. However, reports from various monitoring agencies - UBEC and SUBEB - are often not harmonised, complicating coordination (Aransiola *et al*, 2009). Different perceptions of basic education issues lead agencies to operate based on their views rather than a unified approach.

POLICY AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Considering all the above issues, there is a need to amend the UBE Act to clarify and rebalance power relations among UBEC, SUBEB, and LGEAs. This includes reinforcing the autonomy of subnational units (particularly LGEAs) while maintaining accountability. The rationale behind this policy suggestion is that excessive centralisation disincentivises active participation by local governments and leads to inefficiencies due to a top-down approach.

Secondly, the federal government should reform the counterpart funding model to reduce access barriers for state governments, such as adopting a phased or conditional release of funds based on performance metrics rather than upfront lump sums. This would address the current 50% counterpart fund requirement, resulting in significant unutilised funds and poor service delivery. Similarly, it introduces performance-based grants that reward states and local governments for meeting specific educational targets, such as enrolment, retention, and teacher training metrics. Thus, financial incentives should align with actual outcomes, increasing stakeholder commitment.

The above makes it important for government to begin to think of coming up with a number of policies. First, a unified coordination framework with clearly delineated roles should be established to reduce duplication among federal, state, and local agencies. For instance, a joint UBE steering committee comprising UBEC, SUBEBs, and LGEAs should be introduced. This would reduce overlapping mandates that lead to incoherent supervision and inefficiencies. A harmonised structure will improve clarity and operational efficiency. Second, consultative mechanisms that require UBEC to engage states and local governments in planning and project selection should be institutionalised. Participatory budgeting frameworks should be inculcated. The present top-down approach erodes local ownership and relevance of interventions; inclusive processes can improve alignment with local priorities.

Third, the federal government, through UBEC, should invest in capacity-building initiatives for SUBEBs and LGEAs, including training on planning, budgeting, and monitoring. Fourth, trust-building programmes and information-sharing platforms should be established among the tiers of government. This would resolve the low level of trust and weak institutional capabilities, which undermine coordination and implementation. Fifth, an integrated monitoring and evaluation system shared by UBEC, SUBEBs, and donor agencies should be developed to ensure consistency in reporting, reduce redundancy, and enhance accountability.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation in this study reveals a complex intergovernmental relations framework for basic education implementation, characterised by a multiplicity of agencies and duplication of efforts, reflecting a low level of trust among stakeholders. This complexity hinders effective coordination and achievement of basic education goals (Adamolekun, 2013; World Bank, 2008; Good Planet Foundation, 2013; Orbach, 2004; Freinkman, 2007). Ejere (2011) noted that UBEC could not ensure adherence to implementation rules, further complicating coordination. Consequently, the intergovernmental relations framework for implementing the national primary education policy is ineffective. High regulation and formal procedures can negatively impact inter-organisational performance, restricting flexibility in a complex environment (Vlaar et al, 2007). A trust deficit, characterised by a low level of trust, hampers effective inter-organisational coordination, while fostering trust, which improves coordination by increasing confidence and expectations among partners (Ahsan, 2010).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends reviewing the present intergovernmental relations framework for implementing the National Primary Education Policy. The review should streamline the multiple agencies involved in the implementation to avoid duplication of efforts. Similarly, enhancing trust among the implementing agencies within the intergovernmental relations framework would facilitate better coordination of their activities. This could be achieved by creating a forum for consultation and constructive engagement among UBEC, SUBEBs and LGEAs. This would reduce suspicion of usurpation of jurisdiction between the UBEC and SUBEBs. In the same regard, the SUBEBs should devolve more functions to the LGEAs and actively engage the local government councils in the administration of primary schools. These measures would facilitate better coordination among the intergovernmental agencies involved in the implementation process.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None is reported

REFERENCES

Adamolekun, L. (2013, February 12). Education sector crisis: Evidence, causes and possible remedies. *Vanguard*. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/02/education-sector-in-crisis-evidence-causes-and-possible-remedies

Adedeji, A. O. (2021). Intergovernmental relations and the birthing of collaborative governance in Nigeria. *Contemporary Journal of Politics and Administration*, *1*(2), 3–24.

Adedeji, A. O. (2025). Intergovernmental relations and coordination in Nigeria. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations, 3*(4), 14-22.

Adedeji, A. O. (2025). Intergovernmental relations and national education policy implementation in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Regional & Federal Studies*, *35*(2), 187–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2023.2261380

Adediran, S. (2015). Forces of educational policy change since 2000 in Nigeria. Background paper prepared for Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015: *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges* (ED/EFA/MRT/2015/PI/38).

Adirika, B. N., and Oluwatayo, G. K. (2013). The Nigeria Universal Basic Education Programme: The status quo and the way forward. *Research Journal of Organisational Psychology and Educational Studies*, *2*(6), 325–332.

Ahsan, K. (2010). *Problems of coordination in local administration in Bangladesh* [MPhil thesis, University of Bergen]. Accessed 10 Feb. 26 from: nva-resource-storage-755923822223.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com

Ajayi, I. A. (2007). Achieving universal basic education in Nigeria: Strategies for improved funding and cost-effectiveness. *Social Sciences*, *2*(3), 342–345.

Aransiola, J. O., Bamiwuye, O., Akinyemi, A. I., and Ikuteyiyo, L. O. (2009). Proliferation of street children in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Social Work*, *9*(4), 371–385.

Arong, F. E., and Ogbadu, M. A. (2000). Major causes of the declining quality of education in Nigeria from an administrative perspective: A case study of the Dekina local government area. *Canadian Social Science*, *6*(3), 183–198.

Bakvis, H., and Brown, D. (2010). Policy coordination in federal systems: Comparing intergovernmental processes and outcomes in Canada and the United States. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, *40*(3), 484–507.

Behnke, N. (2020). Administrative autonomy of the German Länder over seven decades of the Basic Law. In F. Knüpling, M. Kölling, S. Kropp, & H. Scheller (Eds.), *Reformbaustelle Bundesstaat* (pp. 187–202). Springer.

Bolleyer, N. (2009). *Intergovernmental cooperation: Rational choices in federal systems and beyond*. Oxford University Press.

BudgIT. (2018). *Educational financing: Analysis and recommendations*. https://budgit.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Education-financing.pdf

BudgIT. (2021). *Education fund: Leaving no child behind, 2021 education budget analysis*. https://budgit.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021-Education-Budget-Analysis.pdf

BudgIT. (2024). Money has finally changed hands: The implications of financial autonomy for local government in Nigeria. https://budgit.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Federal-Ministerial-Policy-Brief-copy.pdf

Comfort, L. K. (2007). Crisis management in hindsight: Cognition, communication, coordination, and control. *Public Administration Review*, *67*(Special Issue: Hurricane Katrina), 188–196.

Edho, O. G. (2009). The challenges affecting the implementation of universal basic education in Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, *20*(3), 183–187.

Ejere, E. I. (2011). An examination of critical problems associated with the implementation of the universal basic education programme in Nigeria. *International Education Studies*, *4*(1), 221–229.

Egonmwan, J. (1991). *Public policy analysis: Concepts and application*. Benin City: SMO Aka and Brothers.

Elaigwu, J. I. (2013, November 13). The practice of federalism in Africa, the Nigerian experience and the way forward. *The Third Arc Goddy Jidenma Public Lecture*, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos.

ESSPIN. (2009a). *Analysis of the role of Local Government Authorities and Local Government Education Authorities in supporting basic education in Nigeria* (Report No. ESSPIN 203).

ESSPIN. (2009b). *Analysis of Federal and Lagos State UBE legislation* (Report No. ESSPIN 231).

Federal Ministry of Education. (2011). *Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics 2006–2010*. Government Printer.

Federal Ministry of Education. (2012). *4-Year strategic plan for the development of the education sector (2011–2015)*.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *National policy on education* (4th ed.). NERDC.

Freinkman, L. (2007). *Intergovernmental relations in Nigeria: Improving service delivery in core sectors* (MPRA Paper No. 10032).

Gilliam, A., Davis, D., Barrington, T., Lacson, R., Uhi, G., and Phoenix, U. (2002). The value of engaging stakeholders in planning and implementing. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, *14*(5), 5–17.

Goggin, M. L., Bowman, A. O. M., Lester, J. P., and O'Toole, L. J. Jr. (1990). *Implementation theory and practice: Toward a third generation*. Harper Collins.

Good Planet Foundation. (2013). *Accelerating progress to 2015: Nigeria* [Working paper]. http://educationenvoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/NIGERIA-UNSE-FINAL.pdf

Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Addison-Wesley.

Jackson, A. B., and Hasrul, M. (2024). Coordination as an encumbrance to effective transport management in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *14*(1), n.p.

Khemani, S. (2001). *Fiscal federalism and service delivery in Nigeria: The role of states and local governments*. http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/March2003Seminar/FiscalFedReport.pdf

Lundin, M. (2007). Explaining cooperation: How resource interdependence, goal congruence and trust affect joint actions in policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *17*(4), 651–672.

Mueller, S., and Fenna, A. (2022). Dual versus administrative federalism: Origins and evolution of two models. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, *52*(1), 1–28.

Newton, R. (1978). Administrative federalism. *Public Administration Review*, *38*, 252–255.

Nigeria Governors' Forum. (2024). *Education sector expenditure and institutional review: A state-level report*. http://ngfrepository.org.ng:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/6306.

Omokhodion, J. (2008). Assessing the preparedness of Nigeria for her Universal Basic Education Programme. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(9), 866–870.

Orbach, E. (2004). *The capacity of the Nigerian government to deliver basic education services*. World Bank African Region Human Development Series.

Poirier, J., Saunders, C., and Kincaid, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Intergovernmental relations in federal systems: Comparative structures and dynamics*. Oxford University Press.

Premium Times. (2015, September 29). N56.7bn UBEC funds wasting while governors owe teachers, fail to fund education. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/186489-n56-7-bn-ubec-funds-wasting-while-governors-owe-teachers-fail-to-fund-education.html.

Santcross, N., Hinchcliffe, K., Williams, A. S., Adediran, S., and Ombon, F. (2010). *Mid-term evaluation of the EFA Fast-Track Initiative: Country case study—Nigeria*. Cambridge Education Consultants.

Schnabel, J., and Hegel, Y. (2021). Explaining intergovernmental coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic: Responses in Australia, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, *51*(4), 537–569.

UNESCO. (2015). *Education for all: National review*. UNESCO.

UNESCO-EFA. (2009). *Global monitoring report*. UNESCO.

Universal Basic Education Commission. (2004). *Universal Basic Education Act* [Internet]. https://ubec.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/NGA87623-UBE-ACT-2004.