



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF RECENT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON TEACHING QUALITY AND LEARNING OUTCOMES IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE.

Francis Odey Ntamu, Canice Erunke, and Ruth Caleb Luka.

Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

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ABSTRACT: *This study provides a systematic, document-based assessment of recent educational reforms in Kwara State, Nigeria, within the wider national Universal Basic Education (UBE) framework. Despite rising enrolment and substantial government investment, Nigeria continues to face a learning crisis, with many pupils failing to master foundational literacy and numeracy. Kwara is widely portrayed as a reforming state, implementing a cluster of interventions including SUBEB-led infrastructure expansion, teacher recruitment and professional development, curriculum implementation, participation in the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, and the technology-enabled structured pedagogy initiative, KwaraLEARN. Yet, rigorous evidence of how these reforms influence classroom practice and learning outcomes remains limited. Using a qualitative, desk-based research design, the study systematically reviewed national and state policies, programme documents, administrative data, and empirical studies published from 2015 onward. A structured data extraction and thematic analytic framework was applied to examine reform design, implementation pathways, and documented outcomes. Findings show that while Kwara has expanded infrastructure, increased teacher training, improved curriculum delivery mechanisms, and widened school feeding coverage, evidence of sustained changes in teaching quality and learning outcomes is still fragmented. School feeding studies consistently report gains in enrolment and attendance, and structured pedagogy initiatives indicate improvements in lesson organisation and teacher preparedness, but independent, classroom-based evidence remains scarce. State-level learning data are limited, aggregated, and insufficient to establish clear trends or attribute improvements to reforms. The study concludes that Kwara has developed a comprehensive reform bundle aligned with national priorities, but the causal chain from reforms to instructional practice and improved learning remains only partially supported by evidence. The findings highlight the need for stronger assessment systems, routine classroom observation, disaggregated equity-focused data, and deeper integration of teacher agency and school-level support into reform design. These insights offer practical implications for policymakers, SUBEB, and development partners committed to improving foundational learning in Kwara State.*

KEYWORDS: Basic education; Educational reform; Universal Basic Education (UBE); Teacher professional development; Structured pedagogy; Kwara LEARN; Curriculum implementation; School feeding; Learning outcomes; Teaching quality; Foundational literacy and numeracy; Education policy.



INTRODUCTION

Basic education is a cornerstone of human capital development and a key pathway to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education under SDG 4 (World Bank, 2022). Yet, despite rising enrolment, many low- and middle-income countries face a learning crisis, with an estimated 70 percent of 10-year-olds unable to read and understand a simple age-appropriate text, described as learning poverty (World Bank, 2022). Research shows that teacher quality, coherent curricula, and supportive learning environments are decisive determinants of pupil achievement, and that reforms which neglect classroom-level processes rarely improve learning (OECD, 2025).

Nigeria has responded through successive reforms, notably the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004, which guarantees nine years of basic education and seeks to provide uniform and qualitative opportunities nationwide (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Through UBEC and state SUBEBs, federal and state governments have invested in infrastructure, teacher recruitment, curriculum reform, and school feeding programmes (Onyekwena et al., 2017; UBEC, 2022). Nonetheless, recent assessments still report low literacy and numeracy proficiency among basic education pupils, indicating that system-level reforms have not consistently translated into improved classroom instruction (UBEC, 2024).

Kwara State operates within this national framework. UBEC provides counterpart funding, minimum standards, and periodic audits, while Kwara SUBEB oversees implementation at state and local levels (UBEC, 2024; Ucheoma et al., 2024). Rising enrolment and community demand have increased pressure on public basic schools, exposing shortages of teachers, infrastructure, and instructional resources (Onyekwena et al., 2017). Prior to the current administration, reviews and media reports documented overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms, inadequate furniture, multi-grade teaching, and teacher absenteeism (Onyekwena et al., 2017), patterns consistent with UBEC's National Personnel Audit, which highlighted shortages and qualification gaps nationwide (UBEC, 2024).

Recent reforms in Kwara include recruitment of over 6,400 teaching and non-teaching staff between 2021 and 2025 and scaled-up teacher development, including large cohorts trained in foundational literacy, cognitive skills, and early childhood education (Kwara SUBEB, 2025). These efforts align with global evidence that sustained, well-designed professional development improves teaching and achievement (Samsudin, 2024). The state has also expanded curriculum-related initiatives and participation in the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, which evidence associates with better enrolment, attendance, and in some cases, learning outcomes (National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, 2020; Dada, 2024; Ndagi, 2024). However, persistent gaps in service training coverage, teacher supply, infrastructure quality, and learning materials (Kwara Education Trust Fund, 2025) highlight a continued tension between reform ambition and uneven implementation, and point to the need for systematic, evidence-based evaluation of how these state reforms affect teaching quality and learning outcomes in basic schools.



Problem Statement

Basic education in Nigeria, including Kwara State, faces a central paradox. Enrolment and spending on infrastructure and programmes have increased, yet many pupils still complete primary school without mastering foundational literacy and numeracy, contributing to high learning poverty (World Bank, 2022). Kwara is frequently portrayed as a reforming state that has moved basic education from near collapse through investments in school infrastructure, teacher recruitment, and digital learning initiatives such as KwaraLEARN (AbdulRazaq, 2021; Onyekwena et al., 2017; KwaraLEARN, 2023). However, rigorous evidence that these reforms have improved classroom instruction and learning remains limited.

Theoretically, Kwara's reforms target recognised pathways to better learning, namely teacher quality, curriculum relevance and enactment, and pupil readiness through nutrition and attendance (Engida, 2024). Meta-analyses show that well-designed teacher professional development with active learning, subject-specific focus, and ongoing support is associated with significant gains in achievement (Franklin, 2015; Samsudin, 2024). Studies of school feeding in Nigeria report gains in enrolment, reduced absenteeism, and support for cognitive development, although effects are context dependent (Dada, 2024; Nigeria Health Watch, 2021).

Existing empirical work in Kwara examines discrete issues such as assessment for learning, parental and teacher roles or school feeding in selected areas (Daramola, 2019; Ndagi, 2024; Charity, 2022), but does not assess how the whole bundle of reforms, including SUBEB interventions, teacher training, curriculum updates and school feeding, jointly affects teaching quality and pupil performance. This study addresses that gap by providing context-specific, policy-relevant evidence on whether recent reforms are improving teaching and learning, in line with SDG 4 and Nigeria's UBE roadmap.

Revised Aim of the Study

The study aims to critically assess how recent educational reforms in Kwara State are structured and implemented, and to synthesise available documentary evidence on their implications for teaching quality and learning outcomes in public basic schools.

Objectives

The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To map and describe the scope, design, and implementation trajectory of key educational reforms affecting basic education in Kwara State, particularly SUBEB interventions, teacher training and professional development policies, curriculum updates, and school feeding programmes.
- ii. To analyse, using policy and programme documents, the explicit and implicit pathways through which these reforms are expected to influence classroom instruction and teaching quality in public basic schools.



- iii. To synthesise existing administrative statistics, monitoring reports, and evaluation studies that report on changes in pupil participation and learning outcomes in Kwara State in the period following the introduction of these reforms.
- iv. To critically appraise the strengths, gaps, and limitations of the available evidence linking recent educational reforms to teaching quality and learning outcomes, and to identify priority areas for further empirical research.

Research Questions

In line with the revised objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the main recent educational reforms that have targeted basic education in Kwara State, and how are they designed and implemented according to federal and state policy and programme documents?
- ii. Through what articulated mechanisms or pathways are SUBEB interventions, teacher training and professional development policies, curriculum updates, and school feeding programmes expected to improve classroom instruction and teaching quality in Kwara State basic schools?
- iii. What does existing documentary and statistical evidence indicate about trends in pupil participation and learning outcomes in Kwara State since the introduction of these reforms?
- iv. How strong and coherent is the current evidence base linking recent educational reforms in Kwara State to improvements in teaching quality and learning outcomes, and what gaps remain for future primary or mixed methods research?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Quality

Teaching quality is widely recognised as one of the most powerful school-based determinants of student learning, yet it is inherently multidimensional and not directly observable as a single trait (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Rather than being confined to formal qualifications or years of experience, contemporary literature conceptualises teaching quality as the combination of teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions with their observable instructional practices, classroom management, and capacity to create supportive learning environments (OECD, 2019). Within this broader frame, effective teaching is typically characterised by clear instructional goals, coherent lesson structure, appropriate use of teaching strategies, formative assessment, constructive feedback, and positive, respectful teacher–pupil interactions (Stronge, 2018).

Large-scale studies show that variation in teacher effectiveness, measured through classroom observation and value-added models, explains substantial differences in achievement within



schools, often more than class size or physical resources (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Kane & Staiger, 2012). At the same time, teaching quality is shaped by professional judgement and context, not a narrow checklist (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In low- and middle-income settings such as Nigeria, large classes, limited materials, and multilingual classrooms demand adaptability and context-specific pedagogy (Pritchett & Sandefur, 2017; Piper et al., 2018).

In this paper, teaching quality in Kwara's basic schools is treated as a process construct, reflected in lesson preparation, clarity, learner-centred methods, classroom management, formative assessment, and professional commitment (Stronge, 2018; UBEC, 2021). It is both an outcome of reforms and a mediating mechanism through which SUBEB infrastructure, curriculum updates, teacher training, and school feeding influence pupils' learning (World Bank et al., 2022).

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes refer to measurable changes in learners' knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes arising from educational experiences (UNESCO, 2017). In basic education, global consensus increasingly prioritises foundational literacy and numeracy as prerequisites for further learning and meaningful participation in society (UNESCO, 2014; World Bank et al., 2022). Broader domains include higher-order cognitive skills, socio-emotional competencies, and civic dispositions (OECD, 2018; UNICEF, 2019).

Unlike input indicators such as enrolment or infrastructure, learning outcomes capture what children actually know and can do. This distinction underpins the shift from "schooling for access" to "schooling for learning," prompted by evidence that many pupils in low- and middle-income countries complete several years of schooling without basic competencies (Pritchett, 2013; World Bank et al., 2022). The World Bank's concept of learning poverty, defined as the share of 10-year-olds unable to read and understand a simple age-appropriate text, reflects this outcome focus (World Bank et al., 2022).

In Nigeria, UBEC's National Assessment of Learning Achievement in Basic Education operationalises learning outcomes through curriculum-aligned literacy, numeracy, and life skills tests, reporting mean scores and proficiency gaps across groups (UBEC, 2018, 2024). For this study, learning outcomes in Kwara's basic schools are defined primarily in cognitive terms, using available standardised test results, examination scores, and, where possible, repetition, dropout, and completion rates (UNESCO, 2014; Saadu et al., 2024). These outcomes are treated as distal results shaped by classroom processes, especially teaching quality, and by demand-side factors such as nutrition, attendance, and home support (Jomaa et al., 2011; Dada et al., 2024), while recognising the imperfections of existing assessment data.

Overview of Basic Education Reforms in Nigeria

Basic education reform in Nigeria is framed by the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004, which guarantees nine years of free, compulsory schooling and mandates all tiers of government to deliver it (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The Act created UBEC as the federal coordinating body for intervention funding and minimum standards, with the goal of a uniform



and qualitative basic education system (UBEC, 2018, 2021). The revised National Policy on Education reinforces this by tying basic education to access, equity, quality, and relevance, and by highlighting curriculum and teacher education as core levers of change (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

In response to persistent problems, including large numbers of out-of-school children, weak foundational skills, and regional disparities, the federal government adopted more strategic tools. The “Education for Change” Ministerial Strategic Plan 2016 to 2019 and the UBEC 10-year UBE Roadmap 2021 to 2030 outline coherent pillars around teaching and learning, teacher development, infrastructure, data, inclusion, and governance, signalling a move away from standalone projects towards system-level reform (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016; UBEC, 2021). Yet national assessments and personnel audits, together with global learning poverty diagnostics, show that many pupils still complete primary school without basic literacy and numeracy, despite rising expenditure (UBEC, 2018, 2024; World Bank et al., 2022). Policy discourse has therefore shifted from access alone to what happens inside classrooms.

Within this framework, states are expected to align with federal policy while addressing local priorities. In Kwara, this has involved using UBEC funds for infrastructure and teacher development, launching a technology-supported pedagogy reform (KwaraLEARN), and expanding the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (Kwara State Government, 2021; Kwara SUBEB, 2024; UBEC, 2023). Whether these elements function as a coherent, outcome-oriented reform package remains an empirical question this study addresses.

SUBEB Interventions in Basic Schools

SUBEBs implement basic education at the state level. In Kwara, SUBEB manages UBEC counterpart funds, oversees construction and rehabilitation, procures furniture and materials, and supports school-based management (UBEC, 2021; Kwara SUBEB, 2024). Recent intervention cycles have focused on physical conditions, with sizable investments in classroom blocks, desks, examination halls, boreholes, and toilets across local government areas (Kwara SUBEB, 2024; UBEC, 2023). The state has framed these as an “education revitalisation” agenda and has abolished compulsory PTA levies while introducing modest school grants (Kwara State Government, 2021, 2022).

However, civil society and community accounts still report overcrowded classes, dilapidated buildings, and inadequate furniture in some areas, raising concerns about targeting, equity, and quality assurance (Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All, 2023). SUBEB also plays a central role in KwaraLEARN, distributing tablets with scripted lessons and learner management tools and coordinating associated materials (Kwara State Government, 2021; NewGlobe, 2023). Government claims improved lesson completion and test scores, but teachers have voiced concerns about workload and limited autonomy (Ogunniyi, 2023). Overall, inputs have increased, but their effect on classroom processes and learning remains uncertain, justifying an outcome-focused evaluation.



Teacher Training and Professional Development Policies

Nationally, reforms increasingly centre teacher quality as crucial for learning (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006; World Bank et al., 2022). The National Policy on Education assigns governments the responsibility for initial and continuous teacher education, while TRCN, NCCE, and NTI regulate standards and provision (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; TRCN, 2018; National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012). The UBEC Roadmap earmarks a dedicated share of intervention funds for in-service training, and TRCN's MCPD framework aims to embed periodic professional learning, with studies reporting benefits for skills and professional identity (UBEC, 2021; TRCN, 2018; Okeke & Amechi, 2020). Nevertheless, personnel audits show many basic school teachers receive no in-service training over extended periods (UBEC, 2024).

Kwara has positioned teacher development at the centre of its reforms. Joint UBEC–SUBEB programmes have trained headteachers, managers, and classroom teachers on curriculum delivery and school-based professional development (UBEC, 2023; Kwara SUBEB, 2024). KwaraLEARN adds practice-embedded, technology-mediated training on lesson delivery, assessment, and classroom management, supported by coaching (Kwara State Government, 2021; NewGlobe, 2023; Darling Hammond et al., 2017). Yet empirical work suggests many teachers experience training as top-down and misaligned with classroom realities, and some report that intensive scripting and digital monitoring under KwaraLEARN reduce autonomy and affect motivation (Ogunniyi, 2023; Yusuf, 2022).

For this study, teacher professional development in Kwara is treated as a central mechanism through which broader reforms, including infrastructure and digital tools, are expected to influence teaching quality and learning outcomes. Evaluating reforms without examining their effects on teacher competence, motivation, and practice would risk repeating the input-focused pattern that has limited past reform impact.

Theoretical Framework for Policy Impact Evaluation

To structure the evaluation of reform impacts in Kwara State, this study draws on two complementary theoretical lenses: the instructional core framework and the dynamic model of educational effectiveness. These are embedded within an explicit theory of change that links policy interventions to classroom processes and learning outcomes.

The instructional core, as articulated by City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel, positions the interaction between teacher, student, and content as the fundamental unit of analysis for any effort to improve teaching and learning (City et al., 2009). According to this framework, there are only three ways to improve student learning at scale: raise the level of content, increase the skill and knowledge teachers bring to that content, or increase students' engagement with the content. Changes in structures or resources that do not affect at least one of these three elements, or the relationships among them, are unlikely to yield sustained gains in achievement. In the context of Kwara, SUBEB infrastructure projects and school feeding are interpreted as structural changes that can support but not substitute for shifts in content rigor, teacher expertise, and pupil engagement. Teacher professional development and curriculum updates are interpreted as direct interventions in the knowledge and content components of the instructional core.



The dynamic model of educational effectiveness, developed by Creemers and Kyriakides, provides a more elaborate account of how factors at system, school, and classroom levels interact over time to influence student outcomes (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Kyriakides, 2023). The model distinguishes between context factors (for example, policy environment and socio-economic conditions), school factors (for example, leadership and climate), classroom factors (for example, teaching practices and classroom management), and student-level background characteristics, and specifies how these contribute to learning. It highlights that effectiveness factors operate at multiple levels, that their impact may be indirect and mediated by other variables, and that they can change over time as schools engage in improvement processes. This study uses the dynamic model to conceptualise state-level reforms as context and school-level interventions as expected to produce changes in classroom-level process variables, particularly teaching quality, which, in turn, affect pupils' outcomes.

Building on these frameworks, the study adopts a theory-of-change approach to policy impact evaluation. A theory of change is defined as a structured description of how and why a programme or intervention is expected to lead to desired changes, including a clear specification of activities, intermediate outcomes, final outcomes, and contextual moderators (United States Department of Education, 2015; UNICEF, 2023). It is both a planning tool and an evaluative framework, because it provides testable hypotheses about the mechanisms through which reforms should work. In this study, the theory of change posits that:

- state and federal investments in infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum reform, and school feeding will improve school conditions, teacher competence, and pupil participation;
- these improvements will manifest as higher teaching quality, operationalised through indicators such as lesson preparation, use of learner-centred methods, and formative assessment; and
- higher teaching quality, combined with improved attendance and readiness to learn, will be associated with better learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, and related domains.

This combined framework has three implications for the empirical design of the conference paper. First, it focuses measurement not only on distal outcomes (pupils' performance) but also on key mediating variables at the classroom level (teaching quality) and the school level (availability of infrastructure, exposure to training, curriculum resources, and school feeding). Second, it recognises that the same reform may have heterogeneous effects across schools and learner groups depending on contextual conditions, which is consistent with the dynamic model's emphasis on multilevel variability. Third, it supports a critical reading of reform success that goes beyond counting inputs or activities, aligning with Fullan's argument that meaningful educational change requires alignment among policy, professional culture, and classroom practice rather than isolated initiatives (Fullan, 2016).

Within this theoretical framing, the impact of recent educational reforms in Kwara State will be judged by the extent to which they have altered the instructional core and the multilevel



effectiveness factors identified by Creemers and Kyriakides, and by whether these alterations are associated with measurable improvements in pupils' learning outcomes in basic schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a systematic review of policies and documents to examine how recent educational reforms in Kwara State are structured and implemented, and how they are plausibly linked to teaching quality and learning outcomes in basic schools. Instead of collecting primary data from schools, teachers, or pupils, it relies on carefully selected documentary sources, including federal and state policy texts, implementation and programme reports, administrative statistics, and reputable research and evaluation studies. This approach is appropriate for a conference paper when fieldwork is not feasible, and it reflects established practice in education policy analysis, which uses documents to trace reform trajectories, underlying assumptions, and associated system-level changes.

Research Design and Study Area

The study adopts a desk-based, qualitative dominant design, with a systematic review of documents and a descriptive use of secondary statistics where available. Documents are treated as data and are identified, screened, and analysed using explicit criteria and analytic frameworks rather than cited selectively. The geographical focus is on Kwara State in North Central Nigeria, but given the interdependence of Nigerian education governance, national documents such as UBEC reports, the National Policy on Education, national curriculum documents, and school feeding guidelines are reviewed alongside state-specific materials from the Kwara State Government, Kwara SUBEB, UBEC–Kwara joint programmes, and development partners. Kwara is selected because it has recently implemented a cluster of reforms directly relevant to the study, including SUBEB infrastructure and instructional support projects, teacher recruitment and in-service professional development, adoption of the KwaraLEARN technology-enabled instructional reform, and participation in the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme.

Data Sources, Document Selection, and Inclusion Criteria

The population of interest is the body of publicly available and credible documents that describe, regulate, or evaluate basic education reforms affecting Kwara. Four broad categories are used. First, policy and legal frameworks, including the Universal Basic Education Act, National Policy on Education, UBE Roadmap, curriculum and teacher development policies, and state policy and strategy documents on Kwara's education reforms. Second, programme and implementation reports, such as UBEC and SUBEB intervention and annual reports, project summaries on infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum support, school feeding, and official descriptions of KwaraLEARN. Third, administrative statistics and monitoring reports, including UBEC and federal data on enrolment, teachers, personnel audits, and national learning assessments, along with any Kwara EMIS summaries and statistical bulletins. Fourth, independent research and evaluation studies, such as peer-reviewed articles, evaluations, and working papers on teacher



quality, curriculum implementation, school feeding, or basic education outcomes in Nigeria, particularly those that include Kwara or comparable states.

Systematic Selection Procedure

Document selection follows transparent steps. Identification uses targeted searches of the official websites of the Federal Ministry of Education, UBEC, NERDC, the Kwara State Government, the Kwara State SUBEB, international organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO, and academic databases. Screening is based on titles and abstracts or executive summaries, retaining documents that relate to at least one core reform area, namely SUBEB interventions, teacher development, curriculum updates, or school feeding, and to outcome constructs such as teaching quality, learning outcomes, or pupil participation. A document is included if it is produced by a credible institution, covers roughly the period from 2015 to the present, and provides substantive information on policy design, implementation processes, or empirical evidence on basic education quality and outcomes. Where multiple versions exist, the final official version is used, unless earlier drafts are needed to trace the evolution of a reform.

Data Extraction and Analytical Strategy

A structured data extraction template is applied to each included document. It records document type, authoring institution, year, reform areas covered, stated objectives and theory of change, Kwara-specific implementation details, reported outputs and outcomes, and any explicit links to teaching quality or pupils' performance. For independent studies, additional fields capture research design, data sources, sample, key findings, and limitations.

Analysis proceeds in three steps. First, mapping the reform architecture, using documents to build a structured picture of how national policies, state initiatives, and donor-supported programmes interact in Kwara, and which elements target which stages from policy to classroom instruction and learning outcomes. Second, thematic analysis of pathways and assumptions, coding evidence against the theoretical framework to examine how reforms are expected to improve teaching quality and learning, and what intermediate indicators are reported. Third, descriptive synthesis of outcome evidence, summarising any available statistics or evaluation findings on enrolment, completion, or learning achievement, and assessing whether trends are consistent with claims about reforms, while avoiding formal causal attribution. Throughout, the instructional core and dynamic model of educational effectiveness guide interpretation, so that reforms are assessed not only by their scale and rhetoric, but by the extent to which documents suggest they are changing conditions for teaching and learning in Kwara's basic classrooms.



FINDINGS FROM THE SYSTEMATIC POLICY AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

i. Mapping of Key Educational Reforms Affecting Basic Education in Kwara State

The review shows that basic education in Kwara State operates within a layered reform context. Federally, the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004, the National Policy on Education, and the UBEC 10 Year UBE Roadmap provide the legal and strategic backbone for access, equity, and quality in basic education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; UBEC, 2021). UBEC coordinates implementation by disbursing intervention funds to states for infrastructure, teacher professional development, learning materials, and assessment reform (UBEC, 2023).

At the state level, successive Kwara administrations have framed basic education as a priority. Policy and programme documents highlight four interlinked strands of reform: expanded SUBEB infrastructure and instructional support using UBEC grants, the technology-enabled instructional reform KwaraLEARN, intensified focus on teacher professional development, and participation in the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (Kwara State Government, 2021; KwaraLEARN, 2022; UBEC, 2023). These strands constitute the reform bundle examined in this study.

Federal Policy and Legal Framework Shaping Basic Education

The UBE Act defines basic education as early childhood care plus nine years of formal schooling and entitles all eligible children to free and compulsory education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). It establishes UBEC and mandates each state to create a SUBEB and Local Government Education Authorities. The matching grant formula, where federal funds require state counterpart contributions, shapes the scale and continuity of reforms (Akingbehin, 2016; UBEC, 2023).

The National Policy on Education translates the Act into goals, structures, and standards, with emphasis on curriculum relevance, teacher education, and assessment (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). UBEC's 10 Year UBE Roadmap 2021 to 2030 sets seven pillars, including teaching and learning, teacher development, infrastructure, inclusion, and governance (UBEC, 2021; UBEC, 2023). Ten percent of UBE intervention funds is earmarked for teacher professional development, administered with SUBEBs and TRCN, while TRCN's Mandatory Continuing Professional Development framework seeks to professionalise teaching (UBEC, 2024; TRCN, 2024). Overall, federal documents frame reforms as a coordinated national agenda rather than isolated projects.

State-Level Reform Initiatives in Kwara State

Within this framework, Kwara articulates a state-level reform agenda that seeks to move the system from near-collapse to more robust, data-informed provision (Kwara State Government, 2021). Four initiatives stand out. SUBEB has used UBEC funds for large-scale construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, provision of furniture, toilets, and boreholes, with completed projects handed over as part of an "education revitalisation" drive (Kwara SUBEB, 2025; Daily Trust, 2025; Kwara State Government, 2025; Stallion Times, 2025; CIIJ, 2025).



KwaraLEARN targets the instructional core by equipping teachers with digital devices, scripted lesson plans, and a central data platform for monitoring and coaching (KwaraLEARN, 2022; Kwara State Government, 2021). The state also invests in teacher recruitment, TRCN certification support, and participation in UBEC-funded professional development (UBEC, 2023; TRCN, 2024). Finally, Kwara implements the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme, with evidence from Asa Local Government Area showing enrolment gains linked to free meals (Saadu et al., 2024).

Together, these initiatives combine supply-side measures, such as infrastructure, teacher development, and curriculum implementation, with demand-side incentives, such as school feeding. Variation in documentation depth across strands, however, limits the strength of inferences that can be made about their collective impact on teaching quality and learning outcomes.

ii. Documentary Evidence on SUBEB Interventions and Classroom Conditions

Nature and Scope of SUBEB Infrastructure and Instructional Support

SUBEB documentation indicates a substantial expansion of capital and material inputs into Kwara's public basic schools over recent intervention cycles. Tender notices for the third and fourth quarters of the 2024 UBEC SUBEB projects list multiple lots for the construction and remodelling of classrooms, the fabrication of teachers' and pupils' furniture, the construction of VIP toilets, and the drilling of solar-powered boreholes (Kwara SUBEB, 2025). These projects are financed through the UBE Act matching grant mechanism, whereby UBEC releases funds to states that meet their counterpart obligations (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; UBEC, 2023).

Media reports and government statements confirm that some projects have been completed and handed over. In October 2025, newly completed classroom blocks and motorised boreholes were commissioned in Ilorin, framed as efforts to create more conducive learning environments (Stallion Times, 2025; CIJ, 2025). A further 2025 announcement reported the abolition of compulsory Parent Teachers Association levies and the introduction of small operating grants for headteachers, funded from UBEC SUBEB resources, to ease financial burdens on parents and support minor school improvements (Kwara State Government, 2025).

Nonetheless, while project types and geographic coverage are described in some detail, documents say relatively little about quality assurance, maintenance, or explicit links to classroom practice. UBEC reports emphasise infrastructure as a core pillar of the UBE Roadmap, intended to underpin better teaching and learning, but rarely provide school-level evidence on how facilities affect pedagogy or outcomes (UBEC, 2021; UBEC, 2023).

Reported Effects on School Environment and Conditions for Teaching

Government narratives suggest that improved classrooms, water, and sanitation have reduced overcrowding, enhanced safety and hygiene, and supported punctuality and discipline (Kwara State Government, 2025; Stallion Times, 2025), consistent with literature that associates adequate infrastructure with attendance and teacher morale (Ogunsanmi, 2014). However, independent



reports highlight that many Nigerian schools still function in poor physical conditions despite significant spending (Centre for Public Impact, 2017). For Kwara, the lack of robust baseline and follow-up data makes it difficult to gauge the scale and equity of improvements or their effects on daily teaching. Overall, evidence supports expanded inputs and better environments in many schools but offers limited systematic insight into distribution and instructional impact, reflecting the need for rigorous school-based evaluations.

iii. Documentary Evidence on Teacher Training and Professional Development

Design and Coverage of Teacher Professional Development Programmes

At the national level, UBEC and TRCN documents position teacher professional development as a core pillar of basic education quality improvement. UBEC's Teacher Professional Development Programme earmarks 10 percent of UBE intervention funds for in-service training, school-based professional development, and the integration of information and communication technology in teaching and learning, to be accessed by states that meet counterpart requirements (UBEC, 2024). TRCN complements this with regulatory standards and a Mandatory Continuing Professional Development scheme, making structured professional learning a condition for maintaining teacher registration, with evaluation evidence from Ekiti State linking participation to perceived gains in teaching skills, classroom communication, and professional identity (TRCN, 2024; Osiesi et al., 2024).

In Kwara State, the documentary record highlights two main channels of teacher development. First, UBEC and Kwara SUBEB convene conventional workshops and capacity building programmes for headteachers, education managers, and classroom teachers on curriculum delivery, school-based professional development models, and UBE programme management, with UBEC reports listing Kwara among states drawing on the dedicated professional development fund, although disaggregated participation data are limited (UBEC, 2023). Second, the KwaraLEARN programme embeds intensive, practice-focused training and coaching, including induction on tablet use, scripted lesson plans, classroom management routines, formative assessment tools, and baseline learning assessments to monitor progress (KwaraLEARN, 2022; Vanguard, 2022). Official and media reports suggest thousands of teachers have been trained and over half of public primary schools have been reached, but comprehensive coverage figures for the entire state are not consolidated (Kwara State Government, 2023; KwaraLEARN, 2022).

Reported Links to Teaching Practices and Teacher Professionalism

Policy documents at the federal and state levels assume that professional development will improve pedagogy, classroom management, and curriculum implementation. UBEC explicitly frames in-service training as a vehicle for better teaching and supports school-based, continuous learning models (UBEC, 2024). The Ekiti State evaluation of TRCN's programme provides empirical support, reporting higher self-efficacy, improved instructional strategies, and more reflective practice among participants (Osiesi et al., 2024).

For Kwara, KwaraLEARN materials and state communications claim more structured lesson delivery, increased time on task, improved pupil engagement, and early gains in foundational



literacy and numeracy in participating schools, alongside better teacher punctuality and closer monitoring through classroom observations and digital data (Kwara State Government, 2023; KwaraLEARN, 2022). These narratives align with international evidence on instructional coaching and structured pedagogy. However, commentary in Nigerian media and professional circles notes that some teachers view scripted lessons as restrictive and report increased workload and reduced autonomy, especially in large or poorly resourced classes (Vanguard, 2022). This highlights the need to interpret professional development effects in light of teacher motivation and agency, not only programme design.

iv. Documentary Evidence on Curriculum Updates and Instructional Practices

Implementation of the Revised 9 Year Basic Education Curriculum

Federal curriculum policy confirms that Nigeria operates a 9-year basic education structure built on a competence and outcome-based curriculum (NERDC, 2008; NERDC, 2023). The revision aims to reduce content overload and duplication and to prioritise core competencies such as literacy, numeracy, digital skills, critical thinking, creativity, citizenship, and values education. NERDC's Implementation Strategy outlines a phased rollout that includes curriculum dissemination, teacher orientation, provision of teacher guides, and gradual alignment of assessment with competency-based outcomes (NERDC, 2023). At the primary level, core subjects include Mathematics, English Studies, Basic Science and Technology, and Social Studies. In contrast, the junior secondary level uses subject clustering and pre-vocational content to maintain breadth.

Recent federal communications indicate further curriculum adjustments to reduce subject loads and align with international benchmarks and national economic priorities (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025), reflecting curriculum reform as an ongoing process. Implementation studies, however, highlight persistent constraints such as shortages of textbooks and aids, large classes, and limited teacher preparation in competence-based pedagogy (Igbokwe, 2015; Oladipo & Adediran, 2023). Kwara has not adopted a separate curriculum; rather, it is expected to implement the national curriculum through SUBEB and the Ministry of Education, using NERDC and UBEC guidance (Kwara State Government, 2020). The evidence suggests that the impact of reform depends on how states organise teacher support, materials, and assessment, issues that are closely linked to KwaraLEARN.

Integration of Curriculum Reform within KwaraLEARN and Related Initiatives

KwaraLEARN is presented as a technology-enabled reform aligned with the national curriculum, using high-quality materials and data-driven coaching to improve learning in public primary schools (KwaraLEARN, 2022). Structured lesson plans mirror the scope and sequence of the 9-year curriculum in core subjects while incorporating phonics, numeracy routines, and formative assessment. Scripted teacher guides translate curriculum statements into daily activities, delivered through digital devices that also collect real time data on lesson completion and pupil assessment (KwaraLEARN, 2022; Kwara State Government, 2021).



Empirical work reports that KwaraLEARN is associated with better teacher punctuality, preparedness, and more consistent curriculum coverage, although device availability and technical support remain challenges (Olorunfemi & Alege, 2025). Qualitative findings depict the programme as a double-edged sword, supporting lesson organisation but sometimes constraining teacher autonomy through rigid scripts and intensive monitoring (Busari, 2025). This mirrors international evidence that structured pedagogy can raise foundational learning when curriculum, guides, and assessment are aligned, but outcomes depend on teacher buy-in and adaptation space. In Kwara, curriculum content has been made more visible and actionable, yet its classroom influence is mediated by how teachers negotiate these tools in everyday practice.

v. Documentary Evidence on School Feeding and Pupil Participation

Design and Coverage of School Feeding in Kwara State

School feeding in Kwara State operates under the federal National Home Grown School Feeding Programme, which provides one free meal per school day to public primary pupils, particularly in lower primary classes, with objectives that include boosting enrolment and attendance, reducing short term hunger, and supporting local agriculture through locally sourced food (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2016; Okolo-Obasi & Uduji, 2022). Kwara was announced in 2020 as the 35th participating state, followed by state-level preparations that involved recruiting and training cooks and vendors across all sixteen Local Government Areas (ThisDay, 2020; Kwara State Government, 2020; Radio Nigeria, 2021).

Policy review workshops indicate that Kwara maintains an active monitoring team, and that menu quality, payment regularity, and coverage are periodically discussed (Solid Media, 2023). However, public documentation does not provide consolidated or disaggregated figures on the proportion of schools and pupils served, reflecting broader data limitations in the programme. Operationally, the scheme follows the national template, with community-based cooks, locally sourced foodstuffs, and federal financing routed to cooks, while state ministries and local education authorities handle coordination (Patience, 2019; Okolo-Obasi & Uduji, 2022). Civil society groups have raised concerns about delayed payments and irregular meal provision, calling for greater transparency and consistency (Elites Network for Sustainable Development, 2019). Overall, school feeding is clearly institutionalised in Kwara, although the depth and stability of coverage and adherence to nutritional standards remain imperfectly documented.

Reported Effects on Enrolment, Attendance, and Classroom Engagement

A survey in Asa Local Government Area links the free school feeding programme to sharp increases in enrolment, from 13.30 percent in 2020 to 31.06 percent in 2021 and 42.46 percent in 2022, with balanced gender participation (Saadu et al., 2024). Studies from Gombe and Ondo similarly report significant gains in enrolment and regular attendance and teacher perceptions of better concentration and classroom participation (Alabi & Ibrahim, 2024; Ayimoro & Asunmo, 2024), while a multi-state appraisal in southeast Nigeria finds improved enrolment and attendance but flags funding delays and incomplete coverage (Agu et al., 2023).



International reviews show consistently positive effects of school feeding on enrolment and attendance, with more mixed, context-dependent impacts on learning outcomes (Jomaa et al., 2011; Adelman et al., 2008). Nigerian briefs emphasise increased participation and reduced hunger as the primary educational benefits, with learning gains dependent on teaching quality and school context (UNICEF, 2005; Okolo-Obasi & Uduji, 2022). Qualitative accounts in Asa suggest improved punctuality and reduced mid-day absenteeism (Saadu et al., 2024). Overall, evidence indicates strong associations between school feeding in Kwara and improved participation and classroom engagement, while effects on learning outcomes remain less clearly documented.

vi. Synthesis of Evidence on Teaching Quality and Learning Outcomes

Convergence and Divergence across Policy, Administrative, and Research Sources

Across sources, there is clear convergence on the centrality of the reform bundle examined in this study. Federal and state policy documents consistently frame SUBEB infrastructure projects, teacher professional development, curriculum updates, technology-enabled instructional change, and school feeding as key levers for improving basic education quality and outcomes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; UBEC, 2021; Kwara State Government, 2021; NERDC, 2023). Programme and implementation reports confirm that these reforms have been rolled out at scale in Kwara, citing large numbers of completed infrastructure projects, teachers trained, schools enrolled in KwaraLEARN, and schools participating in the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme.

Research and evaluation studies converge on some outcome patterns. School feeding studies in Kwara and other states consistently report positive effects on enrolment and attendance (Saadu et al., 2024; Alabi & Ibrahim, 2024; Agu et al., 2023). Evaluations of teacher professional development and structured pedagogy interventions suggest that practice-oriented training aligned with clear curricula can improve teaching practices and sometimes learning outcomes (Osiesi et al., 2024; Piper et al., 2018).

Divergences arise when official narratives are compared with independent evidence. Government communications emphasise successful delivery and early gains, whereas civil society and independent analyses highlight continuing infrastructure deficits, uneven coverage, and concerns about sustainability and teacher morale (Centre for Public Impact, 2017; Elites Network for Sustainable Development, 2019). While curriculum documents and KwaraLEARN materials present a coherent competency-based vision, qualitative studies reveal that scripted lessons can both support and constrain professional practice (Busari, 2025; Olorunfemi & Alege, 2025). UBEC assessments and global learning poverty analyses underline low foundational learning nationally, yet disaggregated evidence linking Kwara's reforms to improved test scores is sparse (UBEC, 2018; World Bank et al., 2022), leaving the causal chain from reforms to teaching quality to learning outcomes only partially documented.

Strengths and Gaps in the Existing Evidence Base

The evidence base has notable strengths. Policy and programme documents provide detailed accounts of reform design and implementation, especially for SUBEB infrastructure, teacher



development, curriculum reform, and KwaraLEARN. Emerging empirical studies, such as the Asa Local Government Area work on school feeding and early assessments of KwaraLEARN, are beginning to shift from descriptive narratives toward impact-oriented analysis.

However, significant gaps remain. There is no systematic, publicly available time series of learning outcomes for Kwara that can be linked to specific reforms; UBEC assessments rarely provide state-level trends (UBEC, 2018). Independent classroom-based research on teaching quality is scarce, with most claims relying on programme reports or self-reports rather than on observation or mixed-methods designs. Many evaluations of school feeding and related interventions are cross-sectional and perception-based, limiting causal inference, and equity-focused evidence on rural-urban or inter-local government area differences in reform coverage and outcomes is fragmented, despite strong rhetorical commitments to inclusion.

In summary, the documentary and research evidence paint a picture of an active reform environment in Kwara State, with credible indications of improvements in school conditions and pupil participation, and promising but still tentative signs of changes in instructional practice. Yet, the evidential chain connecting reforms to teaching quality and, ultimately, to learning outcomes remains incomplete. This reinforces the rationale for the present study as a systematic synthesis of what is currently known, and it underlines the need for future primary and mixed methods research that can more directly and rigorously test the assumed pathways from reforms to classroom instruction and pupils' performance.

DISCUSSION

a) Interpreting the Reform Pathways in Light of the Instructional Core

How Reforms Engage Teacher, Student, and Content in Kwara's Basic Schools

Viewed through the instructional core, Kwara's reforms touch teacher, student, and content, but with uneven depth. KwaraLEARN most directly targets the teacher–content relationship by providing scripted lesson plans aligned with the revised 9-year basic education curriculum, digital devices, and coaching, in line with the argument that meaningful improvement requires changes in content rigor, teacher skill, or student engagement rather than peripheral inputs (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). UBEC and TRCN supported professional development seeks to strengthen the teacher vertex by improving pedagogical content knowledge, assessment literacy, and classroom management. When sustained and practice-focused, such programmes can reshape how teachers interpret curriculum goals, design tasks, and respond to learners, core elements of teaching quality (Darling Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Osiesi et al., 2024).

Curriculum reform engages the content vertex through a competence-based 9-year basic education curriculum that emphasises problem solving, critical thinking, digital literacy, and foundational skills (NERDC, 2023). Its integration into KwaraLEARN's scripted lessons and formative assessment routines suggests that some schools now work with a clearer, sequenced view of content. School feeding mainly affects the student vertex by reducing short-term hunger and



household costs, thereby improving enrolment, attendance, punctuality, and classroom participation (Saadu, Yusuf, & Oyewole, 2024; Alabi & Ibrahim, 2024). SUBEB infrastructure interventions shape the surrounding context, with improved classrooms, furniture, water, and sanitation classified as school-level conditions that support effective processes (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008). Overall, reforms form a multi-pronged attempt to act on the instructional core and its environment, although their effect on daily practice is mediated by capacity, leadership, and teacher agency.

Areas Where Structural Inputs Have Not Yet Shifted Classroom Practice

The review indicates that structural inputs have expanded faster than verified changes in instruction. SUBEB projects and school feeding are visible and well documented, yet there is little independent classroom observation or rigorous evidence of pedagogical change, reflecting a wider pattern where investment in access outpaces attention to the instructional core (Pritchett, 2013). For curriculum reform, sophisticated competence-based frameworks contrast with constraints such as large classes, limited materials, and weak preparation for active learning (Igbokwe, 2015). Structured pedagogy through KwaraLEARN improves lesson organisation and pacing, but teachers report concerns about rigid scripts and intensive monitoring that may restrict professional agency (Busari, 2025; Olorunfemi & Alege, 2025).

Teacher professional development shows similar ambiguity. Frameworks assume workshops and mandatory continuing professional development will transform practice, and some studies report positive self-perceived gains (Osiesi et al., 2024). Yet, audits reveal many teachers receive little or no in-service training, and follow-up is limited (UBEC, 2024). Without school-based coaching, collegial learning, and supportive leadership, workshop-driven models rarely sustain deep change. Taken together, these patterns support Fullan's warning that reforms which do not penetrate the culture of teaching and learning risk remaining "surface changes", visible in policy and infrastructure but shallow in pedagogical impact (Fullan, 2016).

b) Interpreting Evidence on Learning Outcomes and Participation

Consistency between Reform Claims and Reported Outcome Trends

On participation, reform claims and available evidence align reasonably well. School feeding interventions in Kwara, particularly the Asa Local Government Area study, report substantial post-introduction increases in enrolment, with similar findings in other regions (Saadu et al., 2024; Agu et al., 2023). This pattern is consistent with global evidence that school feeding reliably boosts enrolment and attendance, especially among disadvantaged pupils (Jomaa, McDonnell, & Probart, 2011). These documented participation gains lend credibility to government narratives that demand-side reforms are drawing more children into school and helping them remain there.

For learning outcomes, however, evidence is far less conclusive. National assessments and learning poverty estimates indicate that foundational learning in Nigeria remains low, with many pupils unable to read and understand age-appropriate texts by the end of primary school (UBEC, 2018; World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2022). Publicly accessible state-level longitudinal data for Kwara are insufficient to trace clear



upward trends or to attribute improvements directly to current reforms. Programme-specific evaluations of KwaraLEARN and teacher professional development report better teacher preparedness, more time on task, and some early literacy and numeracy gains, but these studies are few and methodologically uneven (Olorunfemi & Alege, 2025; Osiesi et al., 2024). Overall, reform rhetoric matches participation outcomes more strongly than learning outcomes, showing the need for systematic, independent learning assessments and caution against overclaiming impact.

Equity Considerations across Local Government Areas and School Types

Equity is prominent in national rhetoric but weakly evidenced for Kwara. Federal and UBEC documents stress reducing regional and rural urban disparities, yet most publicly available data are aggregated at the state level, with little disaggregation by Local Government Area, location, or school type. The Asa study provides rare localised evidence of large enrolment gains in a predominantly rural area (Saadu et al., 2024), but there are no comparable studies across other Local Government Areas, making it difficult to judge coverage and distribution.

Government reports on infrastructure and KwaraLEARN cite large numbers of schools and teachers reached, but rarely identify communities that remain underserved. Equity concerns also extend to low-fee private schools, which educate many urban pupils but fall largely outside SUBEB projects, school feeding, and KwaraLEARN, even though their pupils feature in state learning statistics. From an instructional core perspective, equity is about access to high-quality teaching and learning, not just access to school. The absence of disaggregated data makes it impossible to determine whether current reforms are narrowing or widening gaps across Local Government Areas, rural and urban areas, and public and private schools, representing a major limitation for policy and research.

c) Positioning the Kwara Experience within Wider Empirical and Policy Debates

Comparison with National and Regional Evidence on Basic Education Reforms

Kwara's basic education reforms broadly mirror national and regional trends. Like many Nigerian states, it uses UBEC funds for infrastructure, teacher development, and curriculum implementation, and participates in the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (UBEC, 2021; Kwara State Government, 2021). Its emphasis on technology-enabled structured pedagogy through KwaraLEARN is similar to tablet-based scripted lessons and coaching models rolled out in other Nigerian states and East African systems to tackle low foundational learning (Piper, Destefano, Kinyanjui, & Ong'ele, 2018).

Emerging evidence from Kwara is consistent with international findings that structured pedagogy can improve teaching practices, and sometimes learning outcomes, especially when combined with coaching and monitoring. At the same time, teacher reports of workload, loss of autonomy, and adaptation challenges echo concerns in other contexts when programmes are highly prescriptive (Piper et al., 2018). On school feeding, Asa Local Government Area results align with a large body of Nigerian and global literature that shows strong effects of school meals on enrolment and



attendance, but more variable impacts on learning where teaching quality is weak (Saadu et al., 2024; Jomaa, McDonnell, & Probart, 2011; Agu et al., 2023).

What is more distinctive is the combination of reforms and the prominence of a state-branded instructional reform, KwaraLEARN, within a UBEC-aligned system. This makes Kwara a useful case for studying how state-level innovation interacts with federal frameworks and donor-supported programmes, and how structured pedagogy can be scaled while respecting national standards and local realities.

Implications for Theories of Change in Education Reform in Nigeria

The Kwara case suggests several refinements to theories of change. First, it shows the need to distinguish immediate outputs, such as projects delivered and participation gains, from intermediate changes in classroom processes and longer-term learning outcomes. Reforms in Kwara appear to influence participation and school conditions first, while shifts in teaching quality and learning are slower and less well documented.

Second, it reinforces the instructional core understanding that sustainable learning gains require changes in the interaction among teacher, student, and content, not only in infrastructure or demand-side incentives (City et al., 2009). Infrastructure and school feeding need to be coupled with strong teacher development, curriculum support, and assessment reform, as partially attempted through KwaraLEARN.

Third, the case highlights the centrality of data. Ambitious federal and state plans are constrained by gaps in reliable, disaggregated learning data and limited classroom observation, which weakens the testing and revision of assumptions. More evidence-informed theories of change would prioritise robust state-level assessment and monitoring systems.

Finally, Kwara shows that technical designs are filtered through political and institutional realities. Access to UBEC funds depends on counterpart financing and administrative capacity, while the sustainability of KwaraLEARN and school feeding rests on predictable funding, stakeholder support, and alignment with political priorities. Teacher responses to structured pedagogy reflect professional norms and labour relations as much as pedagogy. Credible theories of change in Nigerian basic education must therefore integrate political economy with instructional and organisational perspectives.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Main Understanding from the Policy and Document Review

The policy and document review shows that basic education in Kwara State sits within a dense, multilayered reform context shaped by the Universal Basic Education Act, the National Policy on Education, the UBEC Roadmap, and the revised 9-year basic education curriculum, all of which emphasise access, equity, and quality. Within this national framework, Kwara has assembled a reform package that combines SUBEB-led infrastructure and instructional support projects,



teacher professional development, curriculum implementation, a technology-enabled structured pedagogy initiative under KwaraLEARN, and participation in the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme.

Across these strands, there is clear evidence of expanded inputs and activities. Documents report more classrooms and furniture, improved water and sanitation facilities, increased teacher training and TRCN-related professionalisation, roll out of scripted lessons and digital devices to KwaraLEARN schools, and widening coverage of school feeding in public primary schools. Research on school feeding, including the Asa Local Government Area study, provides relatively robust evidence of positive effects on enrolment and attendance. Evaluations of professional development and structured pedagogy, including early work on KwaraLEARN, suggest promising improvements in teacher preparedness, time on task, and lesson organisation.

However, significant limitations in the evidence base remain. Independent, classroom-based documentation of changes in teaching quality in Kwara remains limited, and publicly available learning data are too sparse and aggregated to demonstrate clear state-level trends or attribute any improvements to particular reforms. While policy narratives emphasise success, civil society reports, national assessments, and qualitative studies continue to highlight persistent infrastructure gaps, uneven reform coverage, and tensions around teacher workload and autonomy. In effect, reforms have clearly altered school conditions and participation, but the whole chain from reforms to instructional practice to sustained gains in learning outcomes is only partially evidenced.

Implications for Basic Education Policy and Reform Design in Kwara State

The findings carry several implications for policy design and implementation. First, Kwara has made notable progress in aligning with the national basic education framework and in constructing a coherent reform bundle that addresses infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum, technology, and demand-side incentives. This positions the state as an active reformer and creates a platform for greater instructional improvement.

Second, the evidence reinforces that structural inputs and participation gains are necessary but not sufficient for better learning. The instructional core framework makes clear that the real test of reform is whether it changes what teachers do with content and how pupils engage with that content. Reforms closest to the instructional core, particularly teacher professional development and KwaraLEARN, therefore require sustained attention, careful adaptation, and integration with curriculum and assessment systems.

Third, the lack of robust, disaggregated learning and classroom data means that debates often rest on assumptions and success stories. If Kwara is to pursue evidence-informed reform, it needs stronger assessment and monitoring systems, including regular state-level participation in national learning assessments, credible state assessments in foundational literacy and numeracy, and more systematic documentation of teaching practices. Without these, it will be difficult to judge impact or make timely course corrections.

Fourth, the limited visibility of equity patterns raises concerns about who benefits most. State-level averages can conceal large differences between Local Government Areas, between rural and



urban schools, and between public and low-fee private schools. Policies will therefore need a stronger equity lens, with explicit mechanisms for identifying and supporting underserved communities and for tracking distributional effects over time.

Practical Recommendations for Government, SUBEB, and Development Partners

The review suggests several priority actions. First, consolidate and deepen existing reforms rather than multiplying new projects, by integrating infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum implementation, KwaraLEARN, and school feeding under a shared theory of change that puts teaching quality and foundational learning at the centre.

Second, build an assessment and monitoring architecture that can credibly track learning and teaching, through regular literacy and numeracy assessments at key grades, carefully designed sampling for national assessments, and simple tools for classroom observation, developed in partnership with universities and research institutes.

Third, strengthen both the quality and equity of infrastructure provision by mapping school conditions across all Local Government Areas, prioritising the most deprived communities, and publishing project locations and status to enhance accountability.

Fourth, recalibrate teacher professional development and KwaraLEARN with greater attention to teacher agency, emphasising school-based, collaborative models and systematically incorporating teacher feedback into programme design.

Fifth, institutionalise routine equity analysis by disaggregating enrolment, attendance, learning outcomes, and reform coverage by Local Government Area, rural or urban status, and gender.

Finally, development partners should align with these priorities, focusing on strengthening state capacity for data use, instructional leadership, and sustainable financing, and supporting independent research on teaching quality and learning outcomes in Kwara's basic schools.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

i. Methodological Limitations of a Document-Based Study

This study relied solely on policy texts, programme reports, administrative statistics, and published research, not primary data from schools, teachers, or pupils. Official documents tend to emphasise successes, civil society sources often stress problems, and many texts lack methodological detail, while statistics and narratives could not be independently verified. The analysis, therefore, offers a reasoned synthesis of existing evidence, not a causal estimate of reform impact.

ii. Data and Evidence Gaps Identified in the Existing Literature

There is a lack of publicly available, disaggregated learning data for Kwara that track trends over time and link outcomes to specific reforms. Independent classroom-based research on teaching quality is rare, equity is weakly documented, and many studies are cross-sectional and perception-based, limiting causal inference.



iii. **Priority Areas for Future Primary and Mixed Methods Research on Teaching Quality and Learning Outcomes in Kwara State**

Future research should link reform exposure to learning data, use mixed methods classroom studies, and systematically examine equity across Local Government Areas, locations, and school types.

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