THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION REFORMS: A REVIEW
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INTRODUCTION

This note outlines the key findings of a review of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Reforms, introduced in Nigeria in 1999. The review was carried out by Education Data Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN) in partnership with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). It took stock of all available evidence on the design, implementation and outcomes of the UBE reforms, and identified key issues that require further attention from the Nigerian government.

The note briefly describes each component of the reforms. It then looks at the results of the reforms, first reviewing the overall trends in education outcomes since the advent of the reforms, and then examining the results of each of the reform’s nine components. It concludes with a set of recommendations for the Federal and State governments.

ABOUT EDOREN

EDOREN is a consortium of leading organisations in international development and education managed by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and includes the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. EDOREN is supported by UK Aid. Also visit our website, www.nigeria-education.org, to subscribe to reports, articles and other materials.
SUMMARY

TRENDS IN EDUCATION OUTCOMES OVER THE REFORM PERIOD HAVE BEEN MIXED.

Survey data indicates that net enrolment rates have stagnated at the primary level, but improved by roughly 15 percentage points at the secondary level. Access to schooling remains far from universal, with 9 million children estimated to be out of school.

There is no nationally-representative data on changes in learning outcomes over the reform period. In absolute terms, these outcomes are very poor. A number of recent surveys consistently indicate that the vast majority of children are not attaining grade-level skills.

Gender gaps and regional imbalances have narrowed slightly over the reform period, but wealth inequality in access has worsened.

THESE TRENDS REFLECT CERTAIN INADEQUACIES IN THE MEASURES TAKEN AS PART OF THE UBE REFORMS. IN PARTICULAR:

The provision of free basic education has not led to universal access owing in part to the indirect and opportunity costs of schooling, violence in the North, and various barriers to girls' access to schools.

The organisational changes introduced as part of UBE have not addressed the fundamental problem of overlapping roles and responsibilities amongst government agencies, which contribute to inefficiency and weak accountability.

The UBE Intervention Fund is a potentially powerful tool for improving education outcomes, but its structure needs to be improved, not least to improve its disbursement rate.

The increase in the minimum qualification for teachers has been a blunt tool to improve the quality of teaching. The NCE does not guarantee that teachers have the minimum skills and knowledge needed to teach effectively. Meanwhile, broader flaws in teacher management have been left unaddressed.

The creation was SBMCs has been undermined by implementation failures, although these are now being addressed. Where functional, SBMCs have had some positive impacts, for instance on school participation, but it is unclear how much they can achieve given the broader systemic constraints in the education sector.

Drawing on these findings, this note ends with a set of recommendations that point to an agenda for the next phase of reforms to the basic education system in Nigeria.
THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE REFORMS

The Universal Basic Education reforms were launched in Nigeria in 1999 to redress persisting weaknesses in access to and the quality of basic education. The reforms had the following main components:

1. **FREE AND COMPULSORY BASIC EDUCATION:** At the heart of the reforms was a commitment to provide nine years of free and compulsory schooling to all Nigerian children. This was enshrined in the UBE Act of 2004.

2. **ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES:** New agencies were set up at each of the three tiers of government with primary responsibility for the delivery of basic education – UBEC at the federal level, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) in each state, and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) in each local authority.

3. **EDUCATION FINANCING:** A notable part of the reforms was the introduction of a mechanism that allowed the federal government to have greater influence over financing for basic education. Most spending on basic education in Nigeria takes place at the state and local levels. Prior to the UBE reforms, the main source of revenue for this spending consisted of funds allocated by the Federal government to the states and LGAs through the Federal Account Allocation Committee. Federally-allocated funds are not earmarked for any purpose and states have full discretion over how to use them. This meant that the federal government had very little control over the amount and pattern of basic education spending.

Against this backdrop, the UBE Intervention Fund (IF) was introduced in 2005 to supplement the resources allocated to basic education by the states. Under the UBE Act, 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund is earmarked annually for basic education and deposited in the Intervention Fund. 50% of the Fund is allocated for investments in infrastructure and is equally distributed to states that provide matching grants. The remaining 50% is allocated across different areas of spending, as outlined in Table 1.

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*The CRF consists of all revenue raised by the federal government.*
The current formula, introduced in 2009, has changed in a few ways from its initial iteration. Notably, funds for instructional materials and teacher professional development were initially provided as part of the matching grant, which accounted for 75% of the UBE-IF under the original formula.
In the face of chronic under-funding of basic education by the states and pervasive irregularities in state-level budgetary management, the Federal government established strict rules for the disbursement of the matching grant. Detailed annual and quarterly costed investment plans were to be submitted to UBEC as a precondition for the release of initial tranches, with subsequent disbursements conditional on detailed monitoring of expenditure, undertaken by SUBEBs and overseen by UBEC.

4. TEACHERS: The UBE reforms did not introduce significant changes related to the management of teachers. The main change here was an increase in the minimum qualification required to teach at the basic education level, from the Grade II certificate to the three-year National Certificate in Education (NCE). This was complemented by the provision of some funding for in-service teacher training under the UBE Intervention Fund. These funds have largely been used to finance part-time courses to allow teachers who don't have the NCE to get this qualification (Humphreys and Crawfurd 2014).

5. SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES: The reforms included measures to increase the accountability of schools to local communities. In 2006 the government mandated that all primary and junior secondary schools must have a School-Based Management Committee. Membership of these communities includes the schools' head teacher, representatives of teachers, pupils and parents, and traditional and religious leaders. SBMCs are expected to contribute to improving the management of schools, the quality of schooling, and relations between schools, communities and local government.

6. PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLING: The UBE Act called for the public provision of one year of free pre-primary schooling to all children - although this was not made compulsory.

7. MOTHER TONGUE LEARNING: The 2004 National Policy on Education recommended that in the first three years of primary school, the medium of instruction should be the language of the immediate environment, switching to English thereafter. This attempt to encourage mother tongue instruction is backed up by a large body of evidence that shows that children learn better in the language of their home environment.

8. INTEGRATION OF QUR’ANIC SCHOOLS: An integration policy was introduced in an effort to provide some secular schooling to the estimated 9.5 million children - largely in Northern Nigeria - who are enrolled in Qur’anic schools. As part of this, UBEC provides teachers and learning materials to Qur’anic schools that are willing to commit at least 8 hours per week to providing some non-religious education.

9. GENDER PARITY: In order to redress gender imbalances, a Gender in Basic Education Policy was developed in 2007 with support from the DFID-funded Girls Education Project. Its main provision is a requirement for states to introduce laws against early marriage. The policy suggests various further measures to promote girls' education (such as incentives to attract female teachers to rural schools), but states are under no compulsion to introduce these measures (FME 2007).
The results of the reforms:
Trends in basic education outcomes

Roughly 9m children are still out-of-school in Nigeria according to UNESCO.

The evidence base on the results of the UBE reforms is limited. There have been no rigorous evaluations of any of the reform’s components. In addition, there is a dearth of reliable administrative data on education and of nationally-representative, comparative information on learning outcomes. This makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about changes in education outcomes over time, let alone disentangle the extent to which these changes can be attributed to the UBE reforms. With this significant caveat, the rest of this section briefly presents the evidence that is available on trends in basic education outcomes over the reform period.

Access

There are no firm estimates of the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria, partly owing to a lack of recent census data. UNESCO’s latest estimate places this at 9 million. This is consistent with findings from recent household surveys. The 2013 Demographic and Health Survey estimated the net attendance rate (NAR) at primary level at 59% and the NAR at secondary level at 49%. At both levels, there were large disparities across geographical zones. For instance the primary NAR in 2013 ranged from 82% in the South East zone to 44% in the North East.

In the absence of reliable administrative and census data, household survey data can be used to draw inferences about trends in enrolment rates. Using harmonised indicator definitions and comparing data from surveys between 2003 and 2011, Mezger (2014a) finds no evidence of statistically significant improvements in the primary net attendance rate over this period. In contrast, she does find evidence of a large increase in the secondary NAR, of roughly 15 percentage points. Two key contributing factors may have been the construction of new junior secondary schools following the UBE reforms, and the introduction of a policy of automatic promotion from primary to junior secondary school.

The Net Attendance Rate (NAR) at the primary school level is 59%
The Net Attendance Rate (NAR) at the secondary school level is 49%
Secondary Net Attendance Rates (NAR) increased between 2003 and 2011 by 15%
These estimates have been calculated by Mezger (2014a) using survey microdata and applying standardised definitions of net attendance rates.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

There is virtually no nationally-representative data on trends in learning outcomes over the reform period. Nigeria does not have a system of regular standardised learning assessments until the end of senior secondary school. The government has carried out some assessments amongst samples of pupils in primary and junior secondary school but these are difficult to interpret; their comparability is questionable, and it is unclear what the raw test scores translate to in terms of grade-level competencies. As a result, it is difficult to say with any confidence how learning outcomes have changed over time.

However, various school and household surveys do provide an idea of the current state of learning in Nigerian schools. The picture that they paint is bleak. The nationally-representative Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) 2010 tested whether a respondent could read a sentence in English or any national language, with or without comprehension. Analysing the NEDS microdata, the World Bank found that only 50% of children who had completed primary grade 4 could read a sentence.

School-level surveys carried out as part of donor-funded programmes have had similar findings; although these are indicative only as they are not representative, even at the level of individual states. The ESSPIN Composite Survey, carried out in six states (Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Kwara, Enugu and Lagos) in 2012 found that only 4% of P2 pupils and 3% of P4 pupils had grade-level literacy skills, and only 12% of P2 pupils and 6% of P4 pupils had grade-level mathematics skills. The second round of the Composite Survey in 2014 found no improvement in these outcomes (Cameron 2015).

The findings of the Teacher Development Programme’s baseline survey provide an extra layer of information by benchmarking the extent to which children have fallen behind their grade. Of the 2700 P3 pupils surveyed in Jigawa, Katsina and Zamfara, 60% of pupils had fallen behind by at least two full grades on literacy, and had the literacy skills expected of pre-school children. Similarly 80% of pupils tested had fallen behind by at least two full grades on numeracy (De and Pettersson 2015).
EQUITY

Mezger (2014b) analyses changes in the equity of school attendance in relation to three factors: wealth, gender and region. She finds that wealth inequality in access widened at the national level between 2003 and 2013. This was after controlling for other factors that influence access.

While children from the middle and upper wealth quintiles were less likely to be out of school than 10 years ago, children from the poorest 20% of households were more likely to be out of school. This was largely driven by trends in the North Central and Southern regions. In contrast, gender gaps have narrowed, driven by trends in the North West and North East, where these gaps were largest to start with. Regional imbalances have also narrowed slightly, but remain very wide in absolute terms.

Overall, the evidence points to large persisting weaknesses in basic education outcomes, and a mixed picture in terms of changes in these outcomes over the reform period - with the caveat that the extent to which any changes can be attributed to the reforms is unclear. The next section considers each reform component individually, analysing the changes that it has contributed to.

Figure 2: Average predicted probability of being out of school by sex and region (2003, 2008, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR 2003</th>
<th>YEAR 2008</th>
<th>YEAR 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORTH EAST/WEST</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CENTRAL</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE RESULTS OF THE REFORMS: ANALYSIS OF EACH REFORM COMPONENT

1. FREE AND COMPULSORY BASIC EDUCATION

Access to basic education remains far from universal, despite the provision of free schooling. The literature points to a number of reasons for this:

**INDIRECT AND OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF SCHOOLING CONTINUE TO RESTRICT ACCESS.**

This was highlighted by the NEDS 2010, which found that the cost of schooling and households’ need for their children’s labour were together the most frequently cited reasons for school drop outs and for children having never attended school.

**POOR QUALITY OF SCHOOLS**

17% of parents cite poor school quality

School participation is restricted to some extent by concerns about the quality of schools. In the NEDS, 17% of parents whose children had never attended school cited poor school quality as the reason for this.

**VIOLENT CONFLICT**

250 SCHOOLS

Violent conflict associated with the Boko Haram insurgency is a major barrier to schooling in the North East, as well as other parts of the North. For instance in Borno state, over 250 schools were destroyed in 2013, resulting in the closure of all public schools in March 2014 (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2014).

**BARRIERS TO GIRLS’ ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

There are various specific barriers to girls’ access to schooling. These include a preference within some households for educating boys, the prevalence of early marriage in rural areas (despite laws banning this), the absence of clean toilets for girls in many schools, and gender violence (Humphreys and Crawford 2014).

Cultural norms may play some role in restricting access. In parts of the North, secular education is considered inconsistent with traditional and religious values (Bennell et al. 2007). However, it is unclear whether this is the main driver of enrolment in Qur’anic schools. Several studies have found that this preference is driven instead by the view that Qur’anic schools are of higher quality and have more committed teachers than public schools (Abd-El-Khalik et al. 2006, Antoninis 2012; cited in Humphreys and Crawford 2014). The NEDS 2010 seems to substantiate this, as only 1% of parents cited religion as the most important driver of school choice.

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1 Apart from the distance of the nearest school (cited by parents of 32% of children who had never attended school), the most commonly-cited factors were the cost of schooling (25%) and the fact that the child’s labour was required by the household (32%). When parents of children who had dropped out of school were asked why this was the case, the most commonly-cited reason was cost (33%). This was irrespective of socio-economic group. The two other most commonly-mentioned factors were that the child was not interested in schooling (27%) and that the child needed to work (37%).

2 The 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that 20% of girls aged 15—19 were married or living with a partner. The incidence was higher amongst poor and rural households.
2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES
The organisational changes introduced as part of the UBE reforms failed to address the fundamental problems with the division of responsibilities in the education sector.

Under the 1999 Constitution various functions relating to basic education are shared across the three tiers of government. The federal and state governments can both legislate on the planning, organisation and management of education, while state and local governments are jointly responsible for basic education provision (Santcrown et al. 2009). At the federal level, policy leadership and regulatory oversight are provided by the National Council of Education and the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOE). In addition to these bodies, there are 21 parastatals at the federal level (including UBEC) that carry out different functions related to education (Humphreys and Crawford, 2014). Institutional arrangements at the state level largely mirror those at the federal level, with a similar proliferation of parastatals.

A key problem with the division of responsibilities in the sector is that it is characterised by overlapping roles and responsibilities and a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. For instance, school supervision is carried out by multiple organisations across the three tiers of government. However, there is no clarity on how their roles are supposed to complement one another, and no shared vision for what the government is trying to achieve through the supervision process. This creates a situation in which each level of government and its organisations is doing something in almost every functional area, but none is accountable for any such area. The various functional areas suffer from a lack of leadership and direction, which reduces the chances of holding anyone accountable for the success or failure of any function (Orbach 2004).

The creation of new bodies has added to this complex picture without addressing these fundamental weaknesses related to unclear responsibilities and the absence of organisational accountability. Furthermore, these new organisations are not immune to the problems mentioned above. For
instance, the SUBEBs and LGEAs are both involved in the recruitment and deployment of teachers, but co-ordination between them is poor, which contributes to uneven pupil–teacher ratios across schools (Humphreys and Crawford, 2014). Beyond this, there is little evidence on the precise implications of the new reporting lines that have resulted from the creation of these organisations, and whether the separation of the basic education function has brought any benefits.

3. Education financing: The UBE Intervention Fund
The creation of the UBE Fund marked a shift towards greater federal involvement in basic education financing. This was highly justified as it increased the likelihood that the fiscal resources to meet the federally-mandated goal of UBE would be available. However, there is considerable scope for improving the way that the Fund is structured.

A key limitation has been that many states have struggled to access their matching grant allocations. Data published by UBEC indicates that the disbursement rate has averaged 78% since the Fund’s inception and has fallen steadily over this period to just 28% in 2014.

In total, NGN 62 billion is now lying undisbursed in the Intervention Fund. Disbursement rates have also varied substantially across states.

**KEY FACTORS HAMPERING DISBURSEMENT OF MATCHING GRANTS**

01. States often fail to put up their counterpart funds.

02. The fall in oil prices since mid-2014 will have compounded these difficulties.

03. States have also faced difficulties in meeting the other conditions for grant disbursement.

04. Recurring weaknesses in the transparency of spending by SUBEBs have also been a constraint.

States often fail to put up their counterpart funds owing to a lack of fiscal space or high-level political commitment to education. Even when there is strong political commitment, delays in the approval of state budgets and limited cash availability at the start of the fiscal year can prevent states from
Accessing UBEC funds (Jones et al. 2014). The fall in oil prices since mid-2014 will have compounded these difficulties. States have also faced difficulties in meeting the other conditions for grant disbursement. They have struggled to put together the annual plans that need to be submitted to UBEC; and to fully spending the previous years’ allocations for capital expenditure owing to problems with the procurement process. Recurring weaknesses in the transparency of spending by SUBEBs have also been a constraint.

For the sizable funds that have been disbursed through the UBE-IF, there is limited information on how effectively they have been used. It is also difficult to assess the extent to which they have led to genuine increases in total education spending, rather than substituting for funds that states would have allocated to basic education from their own budgets, as there is no comprehensive data on total state and LGA-level spending on education.

In Federal systems, one common goal of intergovernmental fiscal transfers is to increase equity across different parts of the country. The UBE-IF does have a mechanism to address this, in the form of the Imbalance Fund, but this is arguably very weak. The Imbalance Fund is split across three areas: community-initiated self-help projects (70%), the National Almajiri Education Programme (20%), and an initiative for girls (10%). Of the first component, 50% is split equally across all states. The other 50% is distributed equally across 24 states that are classified as educationally disadvantaged. These funds don’t go into the state budget, but instead are disbursed directly to disadvantaged communities. This setup makes the Imbalance Fund a relatively blunt tool for improving inter-state equity in education spending. Meanwhile, it is possible that the system of matching grants is exacerbating imbalances across states by providing more funds to states that are better managed and where political commitment to education is greater - two factors that are positively associated with states’ ability to provide matching funds, as well as with their ability to deliver quality learning for all.

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To increase equity, the Imbalance Fund is split across three areas:

- **70%**
  for community-initiated self-help projects.

- **20%**
  for the National Almajiri Education Programme.

- **10%**
  for an initiative for girls.
4. Teachers
The change in the required qualification for teachers was the main measure introduced as part of the reforms to strengthen the quality of teaching. The evidence suggests that it has been far from adequate. First, this requirement has not been strictly enforced; EMIS data indicates that 30% of public primary school teachers did not have the NCE in 2010. The share of unqualified teachers is significantly higher in rural areas and the North of the country.

A second and much more fundamental issue is that the NCE is no guarantee that teachers have the minimum skills and knowledge required to teach effectively. While there are no nationally-representative surveys of teachers' knowledge or skills, a number of surveys within specific states have shed some light on this issue. These surveys consistently find that teachers' skills and knowledge are extremely low, and that although teachers with the NCE may perform better than those without, in absolute terms, many lack the skills and knowledge needed to teach effectively. For instance, a survey carried out by the World Bank in 2013 in Anambra, Bauchi, Ekiti and Niger found that only 4% of public school teachers scored 80% or more on primary grade-level English and Mathematics tests. In a similar vein the ESSPIN Composite Survey in 2014 found that a majority of teachers could not score 50% or more on primary grade-level English and Mathematics tests. In Kwara state, over 19,000 teachers were tested on their basic numeracy skills, basic literacy in English, reading comprehension, and ability to analyse children's learning outcomes. Teachers were deemed to have achieved a minimum level of competence if they scored 80% or more on all four tests. Only 0.03% of teachers met this criteria. Teachers with the NCE performed at roughly the same level as the group average (Johnson, 2008a).

OVER 19,000 TEACHERS

in Kwara state were tested on their basic numeracy skills, basic literacy in English, reading comprehension and ability to analyse children's learning outcomes.

ONLY 0.03% of teachers met criteria for minimum competency (i.e. scoring 80% or more on all four tests).

These findings highlight that the government's focus on ensuring that all teachers have the NCE is far from sufficient to ensure even an acceptable level of teaching in Nigerian schools. Instead, there are grounds for the system of pre-service training and accreditation to be thoroughly reviewed, and for the introduction of new measures to attract talented, motivated individuals with an aptitude for teaching into the profession.
Teacher management: A vital but neglected issue

A significant oversight of the UBE reforms was that they did very little to improve the quality of teaching. In particular, they failed to address the litany of deficiencies in the system of teacher management. Some of the main flaws in this system are summarised here.

The teacher recruitment process is not sufficiently stringent, as highlighted by the very weak skills and knowledge of most teachers. Both, recruitment and deployment are not linked to a clear assessment of school’s staffing needs. This results in very uneven PTRs across schools and a situation in which teachers are often teaching subjects that they have not specialised in.

Once teachers are in post, they receive little pedagogical support or guidance through the school supervision system. This is compounded by problems with in-service training, which is often ad hoc and of poor quality. Furthermore, the incentive structure for teachers is flawed.

Teachers’ career progression and pay are linked entirely to seniority rather than performance. This is likely to be a source of frustration for better-performing teachers, and a disincentive for talented and motivated individuals to join the teaching profession. Designing a credible system of performance-based progression for teachers is admittedly very challenging, but the case for trying to grapple with this is strong.

Teachers’ morale is also undermined by various issues related to salaries – dissatisfaction with low salaries (below those received by civil servants), long delays in payments in some states, and variations in salary structures across states. Ahmed et al. (2015) note that teachers see their low salary as an indication of the value that society places on their work. This link between extrinsic (e.g. financial) and intrinsic (e.g. the respect that society gives teachers) sources of motivation highlights the fact that raising pay is by no means the only way to raise morale, and that a more nuanced approach to understanding teachers’ aspirations is required to boost motivation and performance.

5. School-based Management Committees
The SBMC policy got off to a problematic start owing to widespread implementation failures. SBMCs were created but in most cases, there was little support provided by SUBEBs or UBEC to ensure that they became functional. The outcome was that most SBMCs existed in name alone (UBEC 2013). More recently, there have been improvements in policy and practice as regards SBMCs, facilitated in part by ESSPIN. The programme has helped to provide training and mentoring to SBMCs in select schools in the six states in which it is active. It is also working with LGEAs and states to encourage linkages between the school development plans created by SBMCs, LGEA's plans, state-level plans and ultimately LGEA and state budgets. In 2012 ESSPIN's SBMC development model was adopted by UBEC. Since then UBEC has provided each state with NGN 10 million to train SBMCs. Funds for mentoring (which ESSPIN's experience suggests is crucial) have yet to be provided. UBEC is also working on bringing permanent funding for SBMCs into the UBE Act and giving them formal status as organs of UBEC (ESSPIN 2014).

A number of studies have found that when provided with training and mentoring, SBMCs are effective in mobilising community resources for investments in school infrastructure, and in encouraging school participation. The involvement of traditional and religious leaders has been vital to their success on these fronts (Pinnock 2012; Dunne et al. 2013). There is also some evidence that SBMCs can play a role in exercising oversight of schools and encouraging teacher attendance (Pinnock, 2012); although this is at odds with the results of the Composite Survey 2, which found that only 39% of SBMC chairs in ESSPIN-supported schools had visited the school at least three times over the school year.

Even functional SBMCs, however, suffer from various weaknesses. They struggle to get resources from the LGEA or state to fund activities in their school development plans (Pinnock 2012). The literature finds that some SBMCs treat parents in a derogatory and punitive fashion, telling them what to do and threatening them with fines for non-compliance, as well as demonstrating a lack of understanding as to why parents might not want to enrol or keep their children in school (Humphreys and Crawfurd 2014). More fundamentally, questions remain about how effectively SBMCs can exercise oversight of schools given that they lack any formal powers to take actions against schools or teachers. Furthermore, even if they did have such powers, it is unclear whether this would lead to improvements in school outcomes (besides higher teacher effort) given that schools have almost no autonomy over recruitment or resource allocation decisions. Finally, as Booth and Cammack (2013) note, there are questions about how much can be achieved through social accountability mechanisms in the absence of supportive top-down accountability exercised by government.
6. Pre-primary schooling
The stated goal of providing one year of free public pre-primary schooling to all children has unsurprisingly had little impact given that no tier of government is legally required to provide this; and that states and local government face major challenges mobilising sufficient resources even for primary and junior secondary education, which they are legally obliged to provide. The World Bank estimates that pre-primary enrolment has barely increased since the onset of UBE, from 8% in 2001 to 10% in 2010.

7. Mother tongue learning
There is a strong body of evidence that supports the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the early years of school. However, the impact of this policy has been undermined by weak implementation. Available evidence indicates that most teachers have continued to teach in English, although with considerable code switching, in the early years of primary school.

The literature points to a number of factors that have contributed to this situation. There is no official guidance on what the medium of instruction should be in multilingual communities. Pre-service training does not prepare teachers for bi- or multilingual teaching. There are shortages of text books in Nigerian languages. Apart from the three major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), primary school teachers may be able to speak their native language but not read and write in it, and many of these languages do not have the vocabulary to fully describe concepts in science and maths (Humphreys and Crawfur 2014). More research is needed on language use in Nigerian schools to improve practices on this vital front.

8. Integration of Qur’anic Schooling
There is very little evidence to date on the outcomes of the integration policy. It is unclear how many Qur’anic schools have been successfully integrated, to what standard the curriculum is being taught in these schools, and the implications for pupils’ learning outcomes. An ongoing evaluation of the DFID-funded Girls’ Education Programme 3 (GEP3) in Northern Nigeria should shed some light on these issues.
9. Gender parity
Gender parity has improved slightly in parts of the North. However, it is unlikely that the Gender policy has been an important contributing factor given that it lays out a set of broad suggestions for the state governments, rather than setting out a clear and enforceable strategy for improving girls' education outcomes.

Key recommendations
This review has pointed to a number of recommendations for the Nigerian government. These are summarised in Table 2 below (the thematic areas in the table are numbered in line with the reform components in the previous section). A number of these take the form of broad suggestions that need to be fleshed out through further research and analysis. While the review focused on federal-level reforms, it has also pointed to certain suggestions for the state governments. There are three key overarching points that are worth highlighting here, as an accompaniment to the table:

1. In any Federal system, one critical question is the extent to which the central government should intervene in the design of education policies and the framework for their delivery. The answer to this will vary across contexts and there is insufficient evidence to say whether Nigeria has struck an appropriate balance here. Fifteen years on from the introduction of the UBE reforms, it would be worthwhile for the Federal government to review its level of engagement with the education sector, and assess whether there is a case for this to be amended.

2. The dearth of reliable data on education inputs and outcomes has been a recurring theme in the review. This makes it difficult to assess whether education policies are meeting their goals. It also restricts the scope to strengthen accountability or make informed decisions about how best to allocate resources. In line with this, the table makes some suggestions related to data.

3. The quality of teaching lies at the heart of any education system. It is clear that this issue has received inadequate attention under the UBE reforms. There is also limited evidence on it in the Nigerian context. The starting point would be to gather more evidence on teachers' skills and knowledge, and the reasons why they are so limited.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC AREAS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
<th>FEDERAL/STATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Access</strong></td>
<td>Carry out diagnostic work to assess the relative importance of the different barriers to access. Devise solutions that can be piloted, evaluated and refined. Experiment with various forms of pro-poor targeting or policies to offset the indirect and opportunity costs of schooling.</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Organisational structure:</strong> a. Division of functions</td>
<td>Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all organisations involved in education policy design and delivery. Ensure that there are no overlapping responsibilities. Ensure that there is alignment between the responsibilities assigned to organisations and the resources that they are provided with. (Resources are both financial, and the flexibility to hire appropriate staff.)</td>
<td>Federal, State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Organisational structure:</strong> b. Accountability</td>
<td>Carry out a comprehensive review of accountability relationships between the key organisations involved in delivering basic education. Identify and introduce mechanisms to strengthen these accountability relationships.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Education financing</strong></td>
<td>Collect data on State and LGEA-level spending on education as a step towards boosting accountability. Monitor per pupil spending on education. Consider changing the formula for allocating the UBE Intervention Fund so that the Fund can be used to promote incentives for States to introduce reforms to key functions such as teacher deployment, recruitment, and the collection of data through the ASC. Improve the reliability and timeliness of fiscal transfers to the States.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve the quality of plans and budgets</td>
<td>States</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve budget execution rates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Put systems in place to track the use of funds and prevent misappropriation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collect and publish comprehensive data on state-wide education spending</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Teachers:</strong> a. Teacher management</td>
<td>Introduce measures to improve the calibre of new recruits to the teaching profession. Ensure that recruitment policies are transparent and applied consistently. Ensure that deployment patterns are aligned to schools' staffing needs. Introduce special schemes to attract teachers to under-served schools. Consider giving schools greater flexibility to hire teachers (although with norms set by the government) Identify credible and transparent ways to introduce some link between teachers' performance and their career progression and pay.</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>THEMATIC AREAS</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>FEDERAL/ STATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teachers: b. Pre-service training</td>
<td>Explore the scope to set more stringent standards for the accreditation of the CoEs and award of the NCE. Base this on a clear diagnosis of why the NCE is failing to meet its objectives.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teachers: c. School supervision</td>
<td>Carry out a comprehensive review of the school supervision system. Identify what this should achieve; assess what it achieves at present, and how the gap between the two could be bridged. Use this to identify an agenda for reform.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<td>4. Teachers: d. In-service training</td>
<td>Ensure that all teachers have access to a holistic professional development programme that includes needs-based training and school-based mentoring and support.</td>
<td>Federal, State</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. SBMCs</td>
<td>Ensure that SBMCs are mentored regularly</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gather evidence on whether functional SBMCs are indeed able to contribute to better school-level outcomes and the conditions under which this is the case. Draw on this to identify options to strengthen SBMCs’ contribution to improving education outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Mother tongue learning</td>
<td>Gather evidence on why implementation of the MoI policy has proved to be so problematic. Identify ways to improve implementation of the policy.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Take steps to support state-level collection of reliable, timely administrative data.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<td>Improve the timeliness and quality of EMIS data</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal govt.’s role</td>
<td>Consider whether there is a case for an enhanced role for the federal government in the pursuit of UBE and different options for how this might be exercised.</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<td>Consider introducing a system of standardised learning assessments.</td>
<td>Federal, State</td>
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<td>Identify ways in which the data could be used to improve management of the school system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consider carrying out regular assessments of the subject knowledge and skills of samples of teachers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SELECTED REFERENCES


Cameron, S. 2015. ESSPIN Composite Survey 2. ESSPIN


