



Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria



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Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Produced for **Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education**,
Federal Republic of Nigeria as part of the Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II)
Programme by **MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd.**

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This document and other data in relation to the TENS II Programme on which it is based are
available online at www.tensng.com

MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd, **October 2024**

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His Excellency, Please refer to Stakeholder Management

Mohammed Umaru Bago

The Executive Governor of Niger State. X Delete

Federal Republic of Nigeria

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*Education is not a priviledge for the few,
but a necessity for the masses.*

For it is the foundation of any society. full stop

-Dr Roni Ajao ”

A portrait of Dr. Hadiza Asabe Mohammed, Honourable Commissioner of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. She is wearing a red traditional Nigerian attire (buba and headwrap) and glasses. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Dr. Hadiza Asabe Mohammed
Honourable Commissioner
Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

Preface

The Education sector in Niger State had long been the focus of numerous interventions, ranging from Government-led initiatives to international aid programmes, all aiming to enhance access to quality education. Over the years, organisations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK's Department for International Development, and most recently, the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) Project, have played pivotal roles in addressing some of the State's educational challenges. Each of these interventions has brought unique perspectives and resources to the effort, targeting a broad spectrum of barriers that hinder educational progress. Despite these efforts, several deeply rooted issues persist within the education system in the State. These barriers have collectively contributed to making Niger State a focal point for understanding the problems. This highlights the need for ongoing, focused efforts to change the situation and create lasting improvements in the education sector not only in Niger State but nationally.

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed, qualitative analysis supported by quantitative data based on a comprehensive Education Census of the multifaceted challenges facing Niger State's education system. Through a thorough examination of the problems, this report seeks to emphasize the major challenges within the education system such as, poor infrastructure, insufficient teachers, financial constraints, security concerns, students and parental perception, ~~activities~~ with the intention of ~~recommending innovative implementable solutions and putting forward cost-effective~~ recommendations. These recommendations aim to inform future policy decisions and offer strategic solutions that can effectively address the root causes of the educational crisis in Niger State. By focusing on both immediate and long-term solutions, this report aspires to guide the State Government and its partners in designing a comprehensive framework that will foster educational quality; it also aims to ensure that Niger State can overcome its current challenges and serve as a model for educational reform in similar contexts in Nigeria.

with cost effective implementable solutions.



Dr. Jonathan Kujamah Wasa
Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

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Acknowledgements

The success of this report, which outlines the TENS II Programmes Approach to the Problems in Education System, would have not been possible without the invaluable contributions and support of many individuals and organisations. We extend our sincere gratitude to all the stakeholders whose active engagement and commitment have been central to the development of the TENS II Programme. We would like to acknowledge the strategies' of high-level stakeholders, His Excellency Governor Muhammed Umaru Bago the Honourable Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, Directors and other Senior officials from across Ministries, Agencies and Departments for their leadership, guidance and continued support in ensuring the smooth delivery of the TENS II Programme to date. Their influence and expertise have been instrumental in shaping the decisions that were made during this phase of the Programme.

Additionally, we express our appreciation to the TENS II Committee and the TENS II Technical Team members for their ongoing collaboration and dedication. Their involvement has been key to ensuring that the deliverables, such as, the Education Census, Geo-mapping and Verification exercise, Focus groups interviews, Out of school children, the Nomadic assessment report, Entrepreneurship Strategy and the Stakeholder Management Strategy were successfully delivered. Out-of-School-Children

Special thanks to those who have participated in this process, helping to identify schools and ensure that the necessary buy-in was achieved at the critical stages of the TENS II Programme. Their insights provided a deeper understanding of how to facilitate strong relationships between the stake holders and the programme. Finally, we are grateful to the entire TENS II team for their hard work, professionalism and commitment to achieving the goals of this Programme. Without the collective effort of all involved this report would have not been possible.

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INTRODUCTION



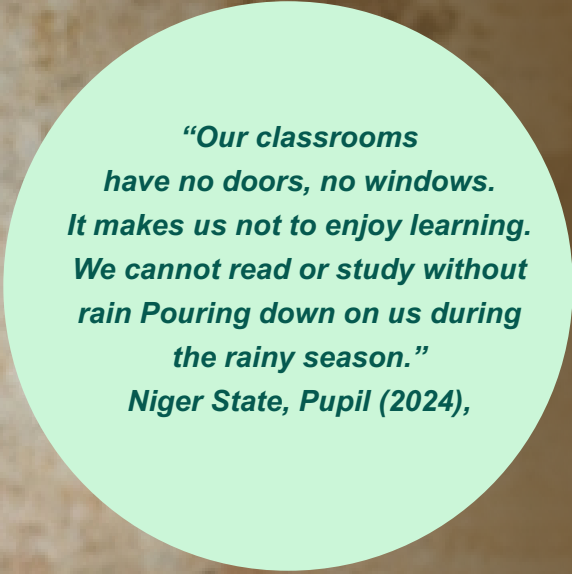
1.1 Education and Development

Education and development share a very special connection which is manifested by the dynamic and dialectical relation of education being a key driver of development as much as it is greatly as its provisions are influenced by a nation's level of development. Indeed, education and development go together in the task of delivering sustainable growth and development of nations leading to prosperity and happiness for the majority. It is from this perspective that ^{the} The World Bank in its education page accessed on October 9, 2024 (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview>) views it as:

'A human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income, and is the most important factor to ensure equity and inclusion;.

Globally, consensus has been reached around education as an inevitable instrument for furthering human growth and development. There have been great debates as to the influence of education on fundamental parameters and variables that define the level of progress and development achieved by nations such that developed nations have accounted for the best or most optimal educational systems while the developing countries of the South have accounted for struggling educational systems globally. Within nations, education has been shown to account for significant regional differences (Power, 2014).

Many studies have been reviewed and cited as giving credible evidence as to how education has been used to create conditions for creating, reproducing or sustaining established social exclusion, segregation and poverty in countries like India (Sano, 2020; Kumari, 2020; and Sahoo and Singh, 2020) in contrast with other studies that indicated the positive effect of using education to create



***“Our classrooms
have no doors, no windows.
It makes us not to enjoy learning.
We cannot read or study without
rain Pouring down on us during
the rainy season.”
Niger State, Pupil (2024),***

enhanced economic status, prosperity and mobility across social strata. These studies are not necessarily contradicting but present further evidence that education can be and is used for both stability and change which a society requires for various reasons to specific to countries.

The nature of stability and change desired or achieved is ultimately decided by the peculiarities of countries. The justification for investing in education and making it a priority development initiative is attested to by many global and intercontinental organizations, development experts and scholars among others. For example, the United Nations considers investment in education “the foundation to improving people’s lives and providing sustainable development” (Smart 2020: 62) with education representing two of the four components of its Human Development Index (HDI) (i.e., expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling) (Agbaire, 2020). Other scholars have collected empirical evidence to support the fact that education has positive impacts on human capacity and capital development, technology-driven innovations and inventions and their transfers, cultural preservation, security and overall economic prosperity.

It is in light of the established connection between education and development that the education system in Niger State has received attention in recent times, and it is evolving into a landscape noticeable by all (Adelakun & Ogbede, 2023). This focus is driven by the pivotal role of Niger State within Nigeria's socioeconomic stability, its impact on the economic stability of the Northern region of Nigeria, and the potential contributions of a well-functioning educational system to its developmental goals (Arah & Yahaya; Babu et al., 2020). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Niger State has always been a spotlight for educational interventions, and it has been considered as lagging other states with similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics (Adigun, 2021; Umar, Kenayathulla, & Hoque, 2021).

The State's vast landmass and diverse cultural heritage present both challenges and opportunities for its educational system (Maniyunda & Ya'u, 2021).

Its increasing population and expansive geography present challenges that heightened unequal access to education across the state's urban and rural areas (Ahmed & Gyong, 2024). The human and geographical diversities have therefore necessitated the call for tailored holistic approaches to the education challenges in the state that will be all inclusive and effective (Adeleke, 2024; Arah & Yahaya, 2024).

Consequently, the State has benefitted from a series of educational interventions ranging from government-led initiatives to international aid and grant programmes aimed at improving access to quality education (Arah & Yahaya, 2024; Usman, 2024; World Bank, 2024). The notable interventions include those from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), now known, as the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the World Bank Better Education Delivery Services for All (BESDA), The Girl Child Education Programme (GEP) is another example and More recently, the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) Project (Williams et al, 2019; World Bank, 2024), each bringing different perspectives to address the educational challenges in the State. Previous interventions identified several factors, including socio-economic barriers, infrastructural challenges, and historical underinvestment in education as the major challenges (Arah & Yahaya; Ukeje & Aisiku, 2022; Williams et al., 2019; World Bank, 2024). Therefore, making the State a model for learning crisis and educational challenges for both local and international communities (UNICEF, 2021; Usman, 2024). Despite previous efforts to sustain quality education, there has been uneven progress (Abd'Razack et al, 2021).

A.





While some areas, mostly in the urban centers, have seen little improvements in education access and improvements, rural areas continue to face significant barriers (Adigun et al., 2021; Arah & Yahaya, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). These barriers are further exacerbated by factors including cultural norms, proximities to conflict borders, and poverty, which creates a multifaceted environment that hampers educational progress (Adeleke, 2024; Ugochukwu & Ibeke, 2021).

The COVID-19 global pandemic, which brought its own educational complexities, occasioned total school lockdowns affecting 1.19 billion learners recording an estimated three hundred days of learning loss (World Bank, 2021). Like many parts of the world, the pandemic significantly disrupted the educational system in Niger State, which forced schools to close, and in some cases, shift to remote learning through radio programmes and the Nigeria Learning passport (NLP) initiative (Adigun et al., 2021; Bahago & Fadipe, 2022; Daniel, 2020; Tarkar, 2020). The transition to remote learning has also faced significant hurdles, particularly due to a lack of access to digital technologies (e.g., computers and the Internet) and electricity (Adigun et al., 2021; World Bank, 2024). The pandemic, therefore, heightened the educational challenges and inequalities, making it harder for students to keep up with learning losses and for governments to address educational challenges effectively (Tarkar, 2020; World Bank, 2024).

In parallel with these discussions, there is growing recognition of the importance of early childhood education in laying the foundation for lifelong learning and focusing on gender female education (Ahmed & Gyong, 2024; Fasasi & Yisa, 2018; Ibrahim, 2020). There have been calls to improve access to early childhood education, which has historically been lacking in most parts of the State (Ibrahim, 2020). These are based on the premise that early educational interventions are crucial for later life success and academic achievements, especially in primary, secondary, and tertiary education (Fasasi & Yisa, 2018; Ibrahim, 2020; McCoy et al., 2021; Wolf, 2020; Wolf et al., 2024). In the same vein, efforts are centred on empowering adolescent girls through education based on the hypothesis that educating girls and women is one of the key panaceas to improving families and community socioeconomic outcomes (Adeleke, 2024; Arah & Yahaya, 2024; World Bank, 2024).

1.2 Education as an Overarching Development Agenda

With the preceding background, the choice of education as a key development agenda by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Niger State, Mohammed Umaru Bago, is not only well-intentioned but quite appropriate for meeting the needs of the paradigm shift represented by the government's New Niger Development Projects initiative. As a leader keen to change the negative development narratives in the State, His Excellency has made education one of his top development priorities. Education along with health and water, are the key priorities for the budget in the State for 2025.

It is imperative to put in context the current state of affairs in the State that despite its competitive agricultural advantage, huge solid mineral resources, and tourism potential, among others, it has not grown and developed its economy away from a predominantly civil service-driven economy. Creating the necessary window for significant economic growth requires a total overall reorientation of the State's educational

system to become the driver for the transformation of not only the system but its capacity and resilience to drive other social and economic sectors to move the State forward to greater development-enabled heights.

While education could go both ways to either create, reinforce or sustain the existing negative socioeconomic narratives of the State or act as the transformative driver of reform and change, it beholds that choosing the later rather than the former represent a giant step towards doing the needful as the Chinese wise saying goes: a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single first step. The choice is also an affirmation of the assertion of scholars like Professor Frederick, who, though acknowledging the values of financial and natural resources, preferred to pitch their tent with the human factor as the main driver of development. Professor Frederick Harbison of Princeton University, when looking at education in relation to national development, had cause to point out that:

“Human resources . . . constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop, the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.”

(Frederick, 1973:3)

The above quote, though referring to the national level, has potent meaning for sub nationalities that see education as a means to achieve their development aspirations. The state's transformative education agenda provides the

means to link its educational provisions and delivery to the state's development needs. ~~We get the full import of the above quotation when we replace nation with State wherever it occurs.~~

Furthermore, it is a step in the right direction for the government to commit the State to a purposeful well-choreographed journey of educational transformation that delivers value by linking educational investment with the development imperatives and outcomes of a New Niger. Part of the fundamentals of this choice include focusing and achieving positive teaching and learning outcomes, creating conducive, safe and secured learning spaces, acknowledging the place and value of generating and deploying empirical evidence in driving policy formulation and implementation, employing the use of educational data to drive decision-making and policy formulation, enhancing the achievement of social inclusion, and production of competitive socioeconomic and cultural advantages tailored to the state's development agenda. Factoring accountability, transparency and due diligence during implementation represent other fundamental dimensions of the choice of transformative education delivery for the State.

not yield the desired results

However, the choice and investment in education may ~~come to nought~~ unless certain considerations are factored in and allowed to inform the whole continuum of the education transformation programme. A key consideration in this regard is paying attention to what investment is to be made and how it is to be made in terms of resource allocation and application.

It is also important that we recognise and provide for the existing contexts of educational provisions. We ought to know and acquire objective insights about the current system's level of performance or sub-optimal level of performance with a clear idea about its delimiting impact on the overall system. In this respect, having an objective idea of how schools are or are not in themselves agents or factors of underdevelopment is crucial to our appreciation of how the transformation of the sector should proceed. Knowing what side of the divide the current education provision is helping to reveal the scope and depth of the constraints the realisation of a new narrative would face as we push to realise its objectives and outcomes through focused implementation.



1.3 Rationale for the Study

This report is one of the deliverables of TENS II Programme. The report would inform the commencement, refinement or consolidation of the ~~key processes of~~ ^{initiatives / projects of} the TENS II Programme. As a precursor to other key activities, the outcomes of this study would help the TENS II team navigate the landscape of educational provision in the State with full insights of its current performance status and other constraints that should be captured and addressed during the implementation stage of the TENS II Programme.

At a more specific level, the report of the study would feed the processes for developing initiatives to address the challenges in the sector, develop action plans, and programme plans with the appropriate programme governance structures, manage risks, design and implement monitoring and evaluation frameworks and or mechanisms to be carried out by the TENS II Programme team, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and its ~~Agencies~~ ^{agencies}. Baseline data or indicators would be formulated from the outputs and outcomes. From an overarching point of view, the outcomes of the study would

feed the TENS II Programme development, implementation, ~~and~~ ^{comma} monitoring and evaluation with a view to ensure that the solutions are effective, efficient and sustainable.

Furthermore, the report of this study would inform and direct the need for the formulation of actionable strategies that can be sustained and improved upon, that learn from the limitations of existing approaches to education to improve teachers' teaching quality and students' learning outcomes. This is to ensure that students would be able to compete with their peers from other parts of the country or globally. Yet in another sense, the outcomes of this study, which draws insights from primary data from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (i.e., schools, teachers, students, community leaders, policymakers, school management boards, and expert consultation), created the awareness and strong willingness to engage in difficult, data-backed education reforms by His Excellency, ~~Honourable~~ ^o Muhammed Umar Bago and other ^u political actors.



1.4 Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II)

~~(TENS II) Programme~~

The TENS II Programme aims to rebuild, transform and ultimately sustain an education system suitable for the 21st Century.

Under the directive and custodian of His Excellency, the Executive Governor, ~~Honourable~~ Mohammed Umaru Bago, the TENS II Programme is led by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, with support from the following key ministries: the Ministry for Tertiary Education, the Ministry for Budgeting and Planning, the Ministry for Pastoral and Nomadic Affairs, and the Ministry for Communication Technology and Digital Economy. Other minis-

tries include the Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, the Ministry for Homeland Security, the Ministry of Rural and Community Development, the Ministry of Land and Survey, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Women Affairs. MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd will support the implementation of the TENS II Programme, overseeing the Programme Management aspect of the various projects.

and the Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises

1.4.1 The Scope of TENS II

The scope of the TENS II Programme includes all government-owned primary and secondary schools, the government-owned Early Childcare Development Education (ECCDE) centres, private schools at all levels, faith-based schools (Christian and Quranic), Nomadic schools and tertiary institutions across the twenty-five LGAs.

The TENS II Programme will be delivered in phases. Phase I focuses on identifying the problems within the education sector and defined groups, such as nomadic and out-of-school

children, conducting an Education Census across the 25 LGAs, and identifying key stakeholders. Furthermore, given the high level of unemployment amongst the youths in the State, the role of entrepreneurship in the delivery of the curriculum will also be explored.

Subsequent phases of the TENS II Programme will comprise solutions through various initiatives to address the problems established.

New
Paragraph



> 1.4.2 The Vision

The new Strategic Vision is to improve education across all levels resulting in a transformed education system that benefits all Niger State citizens.

> 1.4.3 The Mission

The Mission is to create an exciting, secure and stimulating learning environment in which all age-appropriate Niger State citizens and members of the school community can grow in confidence, acquire knowledge and skills and develop to their full potential.

> 1.4.4 The Aim

After years of neglect and limited investment, the TENS II Programme aims to improve and transform the state's education system.

As previously highlighted, the Niger State Government is currently propelling a dramatic and rapid education transformation agenda akin to the changes seen in the Agricultural sector through Niger Foods. TENS II is intended to drive this change within the educational system and will demand higher standards, more professionalism and commitment from all within the sector. The aim is, therefore, to improve and transform the standard of education across the State.



1.4.5

Goals of TENS II Programme

The goals of the TENS II Programme are articulated as follows:



To identify the current problems and challenges within the education sector in Niger State.



To develop and implement interventions and initiatives to address the problems and challenges within the sector.



To transform the sector sustainably by improving the educational environment's standard at all levels.



To provide an education, pupil and student experience that will empower recipients by enhancing teachers' skills and improving learning access and outcomes.



To develop mechanisms to continually review and put forward recommendations on the implementation of the curriculum to reflect the needs of pupils and the labour market, such as entrepreneurial skills development and technical skills acquisitions.



To update and review teaching methodologies to ensure best practice and applicability with the National Curriculum for enhanced performance in national examinations across the State.



To identify and implement the required operational and process transformations within the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, to effect the desired changes to make the organisation more efficient and effective in undertaking its statutory responsibilities.

1.4.6 TENS II Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the TENS II Programme are stated as:

- To use proven methodologies (examples include PESTLE, SWOT, Gap Analysis, Interviews and Focus Groups with key stakeholders) to conduct an in-depth analysis to identify the problems in the education system.
- To conduct an Education Census to establish the current state of educational provision at all levels in the State.
- To improve the education system such that the enhanced standards of teaching empower pupils and a more refined learning process that addresses the needs of the State. This is based on the Education Census findings, research, interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.
- To provide a challenging and stimulating pupil and student experience within the educational environment.
- To review and recommend changes to the curriculum that will address current challenges in youth unemployment, such as, entrepreneurial education, skill acquisition and specialisation, more specifically, in engineering, science, technology, agriculture and health.
- To ensure that all pupils in the State have access to quality educational provisions to allow them to reach their potential irrespective of gender, ethnic group, socio-economic background, previous educational attainment and disability.
- To provide a healthy, safe and supportive classroom and school environment.
- To retrain and recruit additional qualified teachers by 2025, especially specialist teachers, to teach in the sciences, technical subjects, Maths and English.
- To conduct an audit of all employed teachers in the State to obtain up-to-date data to prioritise the needs, address existing shortfalls and track teacher deployment.
- To ensure continuing teacher certification and capacity building by attending a compulsory 5-day teacher training programme to commence in 2025.
- To strengthen the provision of quality education through the provision and refurbishment of infrastructure, facili-



ties, furniture and the provision of learning equipment, such as, functioning libraries, science laboratories and instruction materials, i.e., books, desks, chairs etc.

- To develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive school building programme across the twenty-five Local Government Areas in the State.
- To ensure the implementation of adequate financial planning and budgetary management.
- To ensure adequate funding for education planning and school curriculum delivery.
- To make funds available that will guarantee the payment of teacher salaries and associated remuneration benefits, training and

Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and the provision of teaching aids and materials such as textbooks, workbooks, laboratory equipment and school feeding programmes.

- To build the capacity of education providers.
- To create opportunities for the local community to get involved in contracts such as building, renovations and growing food for the school feeding programme or other related initiatives.

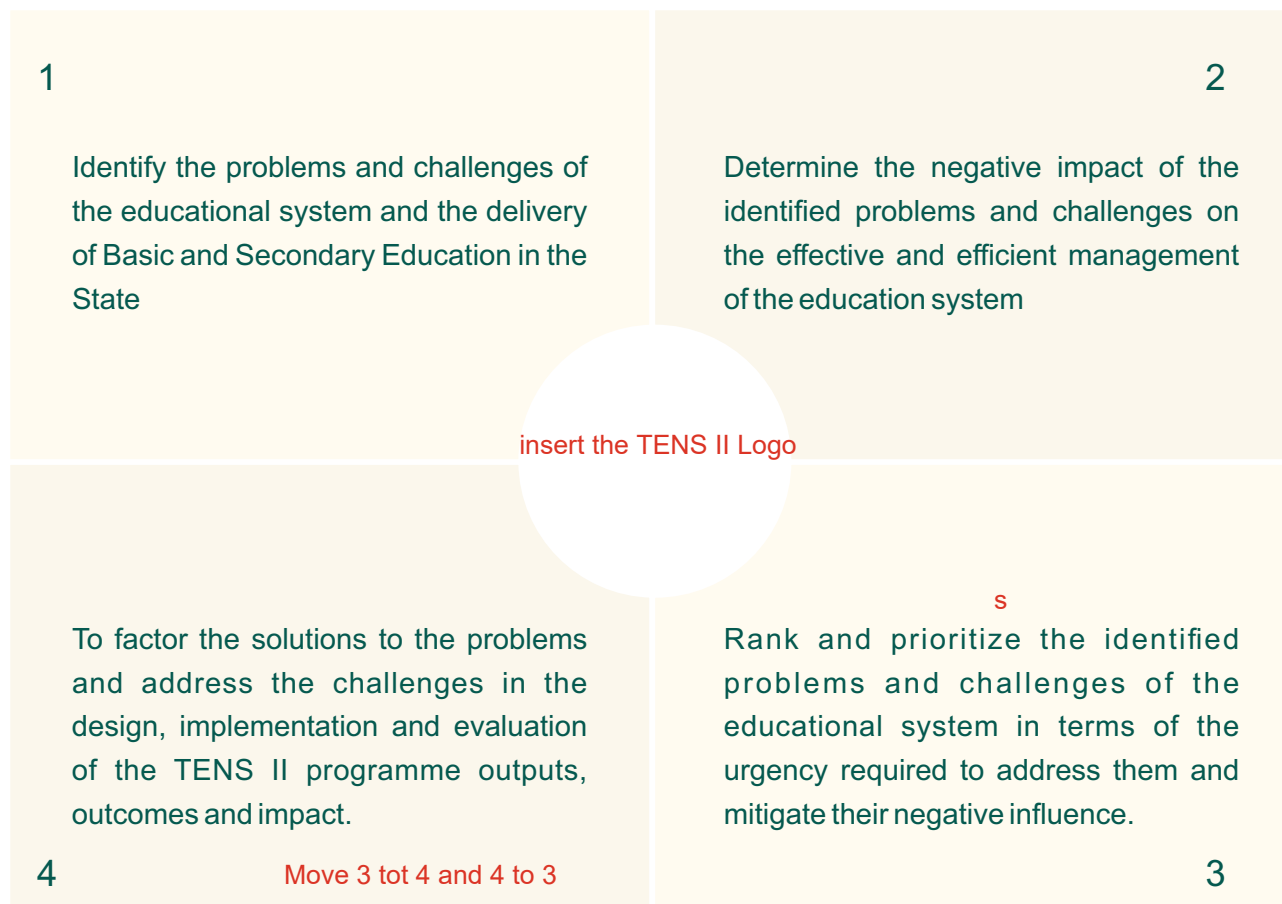
1.4.7 The Values of the TENS II Programme

The TENS II defined values are as follows. The values will develop as the Programme progresses and underpin the core values of the Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.

- Placing the pupil and student at the centre of the education system.
- Driving up educational standards and outcomes for students across Niger State.
- Ensuring that students are fully prepared for the future world regarding employment, social integration, and becoming worthwhile citizens.
- Ensuring students develop into resilient individuals capable of responding to an uncertain future.
- Developing as a State by sharing best practices locally with other states of the Federation and internationally with other countries.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study would produce results that would be used to achieve the following core objectives: -





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1.6 Report structure

The report of this study is presented in a logical sequence with a view to enable users to objectively understand and follow its content in a systematic way as follows:

Introduction

The Education System in Nigeria

Niger State and its Education Landscape

Methodological Approach

Findings, Discussions and Recommendations

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA



Replace with a more dilapidated building

2.1 Introduction

The education system in Nigeria is below expectations for its per capita income, despite some progress over the last decade. Millions of children do not attend preschools, millions of school-age children are out of school, school quality is below average, there is increased illiteracy, and there are huge educational disparities across income groups, genders, and regions (UNICEF, 2024). The extent of the manifestations of these deficiencies vary across the six geopolitical zones with three each in the northern and southern of the country.

Dating back to history, Nigeria has never met the targets of international proclamations such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on education (Oleribe & Taylor-Robinson, 2016). These goals include Sustainable Development Goal 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Oleribe & Taylor-Robinson, 2016), the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(Article 26\)](#) which focuses on ensuring that everyone has the right to free and compulsory education at the elementary and

fundamental stages (Okunloye, 2018), the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Article 28\)](#) which state that all everyone recognises the right of the child to education and shall take steps to make it available and accessible (Achilihu, 2010), and the [Education for All \(EFA\) movement](#) ^{movement in black font} that represents a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth, and adults by 2015 (Umo, 2014). This has been significantly considered as the contributory cause to overall underdevelopment (UNDP, 2021).

The problems of education in Nigeria have been identified as two folds: mismanagement of human and capital resources and lack of access to educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2015). Most importantly, there is a significant disparity between the educational curriculum and the competencies required for future success. These challenges are more prominent in the Northern region, where Niger State is centrally located (Adelakun & Ogbede, 2023; Adeleke, 2024).

These negative narratives exist in spite of the fact that the Nigerian educational system has undergone major structural changes over the last 30 years around following areas:

1960

Prior to and following independence in 1960, the Nigerian Educational System at the primary and secondary levels mirrored the British system, i.e., 6 years of primary education and 5 years of secondary and 2 years of higher level / A Levels.

1973

In 1973, the educational system was updated to the 6-3-3-4 (6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary, and 4 years tertiary education), similar to the American system.



1982

In 1982 the first National Policy on education was developed and adopted. Since this period, the educational system has witnessed a lot of changes and modifications at various levels.



2.2 A Glimpse Across Educational Levels

The following section gives a narrative of the educational system in Nigeria which also applies to Niger State. This narrative is presented to give an overview of the education system in Nigeria as it relates to Niger State.

2.2.1 Primary Education

Primary education in Niger State usually begins at the age of six. However, children as young as three attend school independent of pre-school arrangements, which is usually provided by private providers. Students usually spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school-leaving certificate. Subjects taught at the primary level are Mathematics, English language, Islamic knowledge Studies, Bible Knowledge, Science and Hausa-Fulani. On completion of primary school, primary school children are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into Federal and State Government secondary schools.

Align gap

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) came as a replacement to Nigeria's universal primary education scheme of the 6-3-3-4 system of primary education. The 9-3-4 system of education was designed in conformity with the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) and the Education for All (EFA) policy initiative.

The specific objectives of the UBE as stipulated in the guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education include:

- 'Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- The provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through relevance, quality and efficiency).
- Catering to the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education, and
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning' (FME, 2011).

The UBE was a response to the demands of the EFA goals, which projected education as a basic human right. In addition, the 1999 constitution also gave priority to education and spelt out the framework for achieving educational advancement. The constitution stipulates that:

“Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide; free, compulsory and universal primary education; free secondary education; free university education; and free adult literacy programme” (Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, section 18[3]).

The UBE has been hailed as a more effective scheme to realize the EFA goals and move Nigeria away from the bottom rank regarding the literacy rate of poor countries in the world. Furthermore, the UBE has a broader objective than the UPE. Whilst not all children attend school, the UBE was intended to be compulsory to give the government more direct control to address gender and regional disparity in education across the nation. By making the first nine years of schooling for school aged children compulsory, both girls and boys and all social strata have equal opportunity to education irrespective of region or religious affiliations. The compulsory nature of the UBE program is also intended to enforce communal participation, including parental involvement, local commitment, and participation of all levels of government (Obanya, 2002; Ogunide, 2022). However, since its implementation, this has not necessarily been achieved, especially in the Northern parts of the country. Niger State is no exception.

The UBE is intended to ensure “complete ownership” by bringing everybody together to realise education for all citizens (Ogunide, 2022). Furthermore, the UBE scheme made provision for the education of the most disadvantaged groups of children, including the poor, girls, nomadic and out-of-school children (street children and Amajair's), and those with disabilities. UBE also recognised the benefit of early childhood education as the guidelines stipulated initiatives for promoting and achieving early education (Lawal, Aliyu, & Umar, 2024). Whilst the UBE is considered a more aggressive approach to eradicating illiteracy than previous schemes in Nigeria, it also appears that some of the failures of the UPE still beleaguer the UBE scheme (Lawal et al., 2024; Ogunide, 2022). These factors include lack of adequate planning needed to correspond to the level of targeted outcomes, inadequate supply of teachers, inaccurate projection of the population of enrolees, and inadequate financial resources

supporting the system which are apparent in Niger State and many others (Daura & Audu, 2015).

Although the UBE program has generated increased enrolment over the years, evidence has revealed that Nigeria's education system has declined over the last ten years. Nigeria currently has the highest number of children out of school in the world, and the education system continues to suffer from low-quality education as millions of children continue to be left out of school and many others remaining are subject to a severely dilapidated education environment (UNICEF, 2024).

The UBE scheme involves 6 years of primary School and 3 years of junior secondary school, culminating in 9 years of uninterrupted schooling, and transition from one class to another is automatic but assessed through continuous assessment. The scheme is monitored by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and has made it free and a right of every child in Nigeria. The UBEC Law Section 15 defines UBE as early childhood care and education. The law stipulates 9-years formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skill acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, the girl child and women, Al-majiri, street children and disabled individuals.

Unfortunately, the stated objectives of UBE have not been matched with sustained actions in terms of resource investment to improve education in Nigeria. Education levels in the 21st century remain low and disappointing due to neglect and disruptions in the educational sector. As a result, the country continues to maintain a bottom-rank position in most international measures of socio-economic status. The major consequence of this neglect is that more children in Nigeria are now out of school than any other nation (UNESCO, 2021).

2.3 Secondary Education

Students spend six years in Secondary School, which is three years of JSS (Junior Secondary School) and three years of SSS (Senior Secondary School). In Senior Secondary School Class 2 (SS2), students take the GCE O' Levels exam, which is not mandatory, but most students take it to prepare for the Senior Secondary School Examinations. The Senior Secondary School Exam, the West African Examination, is taken in the last year of high school (Ss3).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of thirty-six States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There are about two Federal Government Colleges in each state. These schools are funded and managed directly by the Federal Government through the Ministry of Education with the teachers and staff employed by the government. Teachers at the Federal Government schools must possess a bachelor's degree in education or in a particular subject area, such as Mathematics, Physics etc. These schools were initially intended to be model schools carrying and maintaining the ideals of secondary education in Nigeria.

Admission to a Federal Government College is based on merit, determined by the National

Common Entrance Examination taken by all final year elementary school pupils. Tuition and associated fees are considered very low in comparison to Federal Government Colleges and private schools. State owned secondary schools are funded by each state government, such as Niger State and are not comparable to the Federal Government Colleges. Although education is supposed to be free in most state-owned institutions, students must purchase books and uniforms. Teachers in state-owned institutions usually have a National Certificate of Education (NCE) or a bachelor's degree. These schools are often understaffed due to low state budgets, lack of incentives and irregularities in payment of staff salaries. Private secondary schools in Nigeria tend to be quite expensive with average annual fees averaging from four to six thousand dollars (\$4000.00 - \$6000.00) per term. These schools have smaller classes (approximately twenty to twenty-five students per class), modern equipment and a school environment comparable to international school standards. Teachers in these institutions all possess at least a bachelor's degree in a specific course area and are regularly sent on workshops and various training programmes.

2.3.1 The 9-3-4 System

The introduction of 9-3-4 system of education in Nigeria requires students to enter secondary school after spending a minimum of nine years of primary education and passing a prescribed national entrance examination. The students must spend a minimum period of six years in secondary school. During this period, students are expected to spend three years in Junior Secondary School and three years in Senior Secondary School. The General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE) was replaced by

the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). The SSCE is conducted at the end of the Secondary School studies in May/June. The GCE is conducted in October/November as a supplement for those students who did not get the required credits from their SSCE results.

The standards of the two examinations are the same. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) conducts both the SSCE and GCE. A

minimum of seven subjects and a maximum of nine are registered for the examination by each student with Mathematics and English Language taken as compulsory subjects. A maximum of nine grades are assigned to each subject from A1, A2, A3 or A1, B2, B3, B4, (Equivalent to Distinctions Grade); C4, C5, C6, or B4, B5, B6, (Equivalent to Credit Grade); P7, P8 or D7, D8, E (Just Pass Grade); F9 (Fail Grade). Credit grades and above is considered academically adequate for entry into any University in Nigeria. In some study programs, many of the universities may require higher grades to get admission.

The Federal Government policy on education is adhered to by all secondary schools in Nigeria. Six years of elementary school is followed by six years of secondary school. Senior Secondary school consists of the SS I, SS 2,

and SS 3 which is equivalent to the 10th, 11th and 12th Grade. The Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) is taken at the end of the SS 3. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) administers both exams. Three to six months after a student has taken the SSCE examination, they are issued an Official transcript from their institution. This transcript is valid for one year, after which an Official transcript from the West African Examination Council is issued.

The National Examination Council is another examination body in Nigeria that administers the Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) in June/July and the General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE) in December/January. Students often take both WAEC and NECO examinations in SSS 3.

2.4 Higher Education

The government has majority control of university education. The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument for national development. As of 2024, there were over 270 universities in Nigeria, two of which were founded within the first half of the year. Of the total count, 149 were private, while state and federal universities added up to 63 and 62, respectively (Statista, 2024).

In addition to the number of universities, there are several Federal and State-owned Polytechnic Colleges respectively. These were established to train technical, middle-level manpower. The English Language is the medium of instruction. The Academic Year is from October to September. First year entry requirements into most universities in Nigeria include a minimum of SSCE/GCE Ordinary Level Credits at maximum of two sittings; Minimum cut-off marks in Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Entrance Examination

(JAMB) of 200 and above out of a maximum of 400 marks are required. Candidates with minimum of Merit Pass in National Certificate of Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND) and other Advanced Level Certificates minimum qualifications with minimum of 5 O/L Credits are given direct entry admission into the appropriate undergraduate degree programs.

programmes

Duration of undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities depends largely on the programme of study. For example: Social Sciences /Humanity related courses 4 Years (two semester sessions per year), Engineering/Technology related courses 5 Years (two semester sessions per year), Pharmacy 5 Years (two semester sessions per year), Medicine (Vet/ Human) 6 Years (and have longer sessions), Law 5 Years (two semester sessions per year). Niger State universities and technical colleges follow the format set by the Federal government.

Too much space

Nigerian Universities are generally grouped into the following:

2.4.1 First Generation Universities

Five of these Universities were established between 1948 and 1965, following the recommendation of Ashby Commission set up by the British Colonial Government to study the needs for university education for Nigeria. These universities are fully funded by the Federal Government. The Universities were established primarily to meet the manpower needs of Nigeria and set basic standards for university education in the country. These universities have continued to play their roles in manpower development and provisions of standards, which have helped to guide the subsequent establishments of other generations and state universities in Nigeria. Examples include, the University of Ibadan, Amadu Bello University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University of Lagos, the Obafemi Owolowo University Ile Ife, and University of Maiduguri.

2.4.2 Second Generation Universities

With the increasing population of qualified students for university education in Nigeria and the growing need for scientific and technological developments, setting up more universities became imperative. Between 1970 and 1985, 12 additional universities were established and located in various parts of the country. Examples include the University of Benin, the University of Jos, the University of Calabar, University of Ilorin. During this period, the Federal University of Technology was established in Minna, Niger State in 1983.

Include a picture of a university



2.4.3 Third Generation Universities

The need to establish universities to address special areas of Technological and Agricultural demand prompted the setting up of 10 additional universities between 1985 and 1999.

technological - small t
agricultural - small a

2.5 State Universities

Pressures from qualified students from each state who could not readily get admission to any of the Federal Universities continue to mount on state governments. To address the situation, some State Governments have invested in establishing universities within their states.

state governments

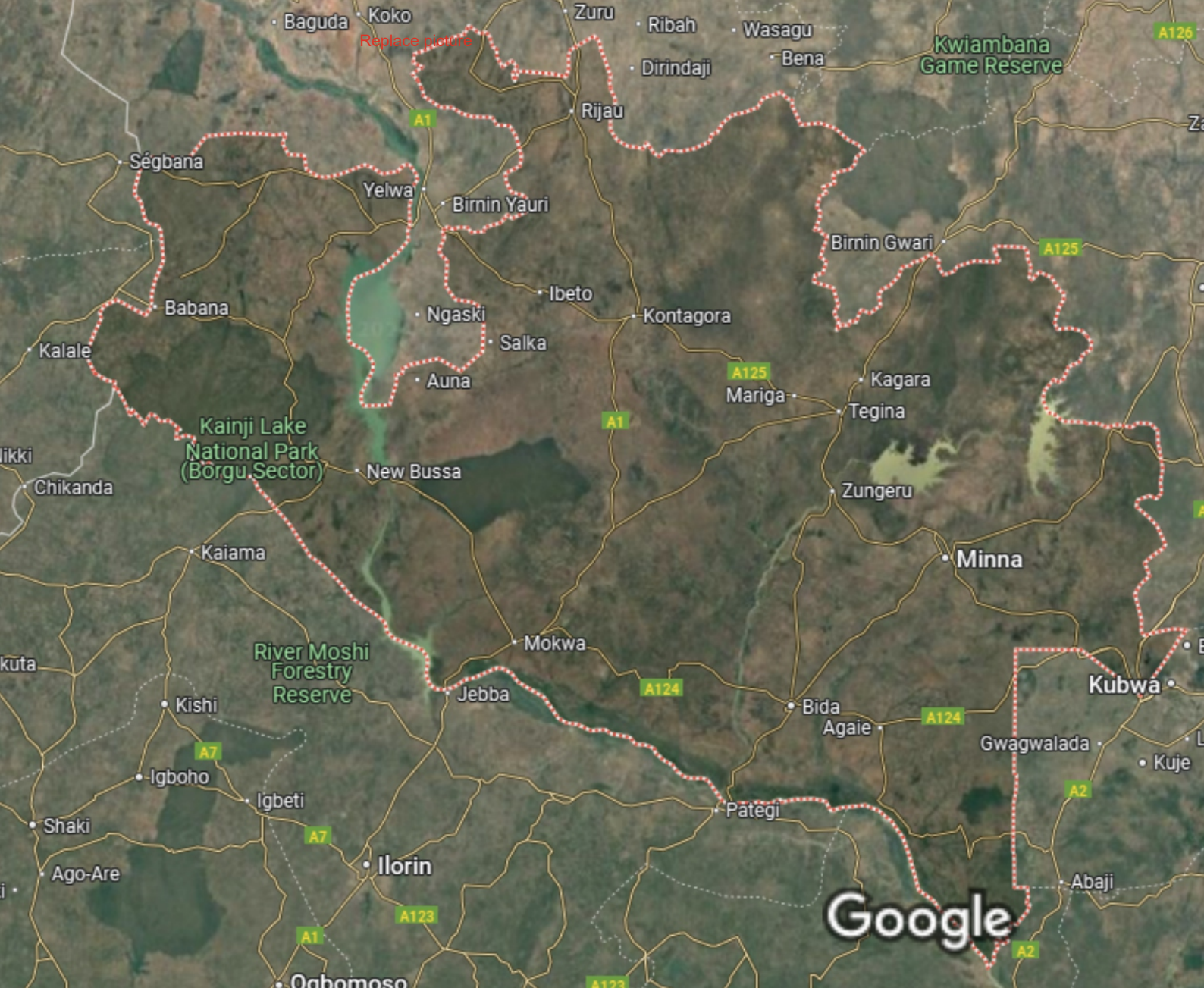
2.6 Private Universities

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Furthermore, in recognition of the need to encourage private participation in providing university education, the Federal Government established a law in 1993 allowing the private sector to establish universities following strict guidelines prescribed by the Government. Examples of private universities include Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, American University of Nigeria, Babcock University to mention a few.

3

NIGER STATE AND ITS EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE



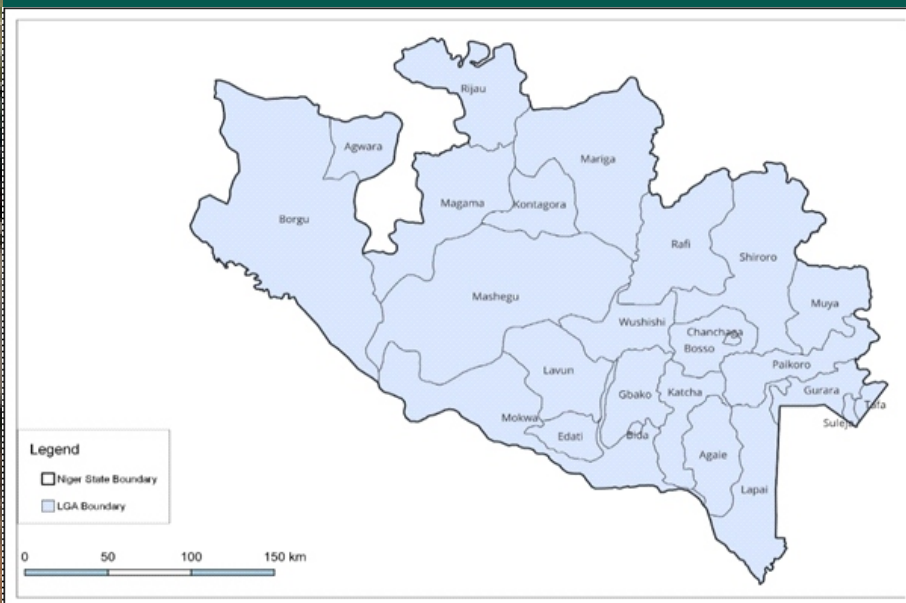
3.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the Niger State as an entity giving due consideration to its physical location, size, economic activities, and sociocultural peculiarities, among others. It also showcases the landscape of its educational provisions.

3.2 Niger State

Niger State is situated in the northcentral geopolitical zone of Nigeria shown in Figure 1 below. The State capital is Minna. Other major cities in the State include Suleja, Bida, and Katangora. Established in 1976, Niger State was created out of the defunct Northern Western states. Niger state is the largest state in Nigeria in terms of land mass 86,000km² of approximately 8.6 million hectares, constituting about 9.3% of the total land area of the country. Lying on latitude 3.20° East and longitude 11.30° North, the State shares a country border with the Republic of Benin (West), and several states within Nigeria which includes the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Zamfara (North West), Kebbi (North West), Kwara (North Central) and Kaduna (North West).

Figure 1 Map of Niger State





The State derived its name from River Niger, one of the major rivers in Nigeria. It also boasts of having the biggest hydroelectric dam in Nigeria, the Kainji Dam. It is known as the “Power State” because of the three hydro-electric power stations located within the State which in addition to Kainji shown in figure 2, include Shiroro and Jebba power stations.

Figure 2 Kainiji Dam in Borgu Local Government





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3.2.2 Population

Niger State is situated in the northcentral geopolitical zone of Nigeria shown in Figure 1 below. The State capital is Minna. Other major cities in the State include Suleja, Bida, and Katangora. Established in 1976, Niger State was created out of the defunct Northern Western states. Niger state is the largest state in Nigeria in terms of land mass 86,000km² of approximately 8.6 million hectares, constituting about 9.3% of

the total land area of the country. Lying on latitude 3.20° East and longitude 11.30° North, the State shares a country border with the Republic of Benin (West), and several states within Nigeria which includes the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Zamfara (North West), Kebbi (North West), Kwara (North Central) and Kaduna (North West).

3.2.3 Local Government Areas

The State comprises 25 Local Government Areas (LGAs) divided into three Geopolitical Zones, Zones A, B, and C, each consisting of 8, 9, and 8 LGAs. The 25 LGAs are divided into 274 wards. Table 1 shows the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Niger State, classified by their administrative zones along with the number of wards in each LGA.

Table 1. Niger State Local Government Areas (LGAs) and wards

Senatorial Districts	Zones	Local Government Area	Number of Political Wards
Niger South Senatorial District	A	Agaie	11
		Bida	14
		Edati	10
		Gbako	10
		Katcha	11
		Lapai	10
		Lavun	12
		Mokwa	11
Niger East Senatorial District	B	Agwara	10
		Borgu	10
		Kontagora	13
		Magama	11
		Mariga	11
		Mashegu	11
		Rijau	10
		Wushishi	10
		Rafi	11
Niger North Senatorial District	C	Bosso	10
		Chanchaga	11
		Gurara	10
		Munya	10
		Paikoro	10
		Shiroro	15
		Suleja	10
		Tafa	10
3 Senatorial Districts	3 Zones	25 LGAs	274 Wards

Source: Niger State Government, Nigeria 2020

3.2.4 The Structure of the State

The State runs three arms of government comprising the Executive headed by the Executive Governor, the Legislature headed by the Right Honourable Speaker and the Judiciary headed by the State Chief Judge. This is, for all intent and purpose, a replica of what obtains at the Federal Government level. There are two recognised tiers of government comprising the State and Local Government Areas headed by an Executive Chairman.

The officers of the executive arm of government comprise the Executive Governor, who is assisted by a Deputy Governor with the Cabinet Secretariat headed by a Secretary to the State Government. The Governor also appoints a Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Commissioners, Special Advisers, Directors General and Special Assistants to assist him in the discharge of his duties and responsibilities.

Appointed Honourable Commissioners are the political heads of the Ministries answering to the Executive Governor. The Civil Service that represents the State Bureaucracy is headed by a Head of Service assisted by Permanent Secretaries heading the administrative structure of the Ministry assisted by directors of different departments to run the day-to-day affairs of the Civil Service. Also, part of the executive arm are

officers of different designations appointed by the Governor to run the affairs of Commissions, Boards and Agencies reporting to either the Governor or the Honourable Commissioners.

The legislature, called the State House of Assembly, forms the second arm of government. It is headed by a Right Honourable Speaker elected by other Honourable members based on the principle of first among equals. The Speaker is assisted by a Deputy Speaker and a host of principal officers appointed in consultation with other members of the House. The Committee of Principal Officers of the House is headed by the Speaker and has the Deputy Speaker, Majority and Minority Leader and Chief Whip as members. There are also leaders of party caucuses that have elected members in the House. The legislature is organised around committees with a chairman as the head of each committee to assist the Speaker in running the affairs of the Assembly. The administration of the affairs of the legislature is handled by a House of Assembly Service Commission headed by a Chairman who is assisted by members of the commission with directors and other officials. Other operations of the House are the responsibilities of Clerk of the House, Sergeant at Arms and Clerks of Committees.



The Judiciary which is the third arm of government is headed by the Chief Judge of the State appointed by the National Judicial Council. He ministers to the need for the effective and efficient administration of justice in the State independent of the executive and legislative arms of government. There is also a State Judicial Service Commission that manages the affairs of the judiciary under the guidance of the chief judge of the State.

The Local Government Area is headed by a Chairman who heads the local government council. The Council consists of the office of a Secretary in charge of administration and Supervisory Councillors who stand in as the equivalent of Honourable Commissioners at the Local Government Level. The supervisory councillors oversee various departments (i.e., headed by directors). The Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Supervisory Councillors collectively constitute the Executive Council at the Local Government level. The Secretary and Directors of Department constitute the Bureaucracy at the same local level. It is instructive to mention that in contrast to other departments, the Local Government Education Authority is headed by an Education Secretary appointed by the State Universal Education Board in consultation with the Executive Chairman of the Local Government in line with

the law setting up the Board. The Local Government Service Commission at the State level, headed by a Chairman assisted by other Permanent Members, ministers the administrative and personnel needs and affairs of the Local Government Areas.

Legislative arm of local government is headed by a Speaker also appointed on the basis of the principle of first among equals. He is assisted by a deputy, principal officers and committee chairmen as well as party caucus leaders. The Local Government Areas do not have a Legislative Service Commission but they have the Local Government Service Commission which oversight the administration of Local Government Councils and Staff. and an administrative secretary assigned by the Local Government Service Commission.

Each Local Government Area is assisted by an Emirate Council headed by a first-class Emir or Royal Highness that has authority over his traditional domain. There are eight Emirate Councils in the State with the Etsu Nupe, a first-class chief as Chairman, Niger State Councils of Chiefs. Under each Emirate Council, we have districts and wards; each with its District Head while villages are headed by village heads throughout the State.



3.2.5 Presidential Democracy

Political leaders, from the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Local Council Chairman to members of the State and Local Government Legislative Houses, are elected by universal suffrage. While the tenure of state-level elected officers is based on a four-year tenure, the chairman and councillors at the Local

Government level are subjected to different tenures depending on the wishes of the Executive Governor. The maximum tenure for the Executive Governor is a period of eight years comprising of two terms of four years each. This requirement is not applicable to the chairman, honourable members and councillors.

3.2.6 The State and the Federal Government

Nigeria runs a federated country with a Federal (central) Government at the helm of its national affairs operating from the federal capital city of Abuja. While other mandates areas are exclusive to the Federal Government (e.g., defence, foreign affairs, customs and immigration etc.), education is on the current legislative list meaning that the sector is jointly managed and legislated by the federal and state governments. Thus, many educational policies and other regulatory functions are exercised by the Federal Government, with other policies and regulations

subordinated to those of the Federal Government.

Many educational initiatives, including policy directions, donor partner interventions and financing, derive traction from efforts and regulatory oversights of the federal government. This scenario affects both ways – positively and negatively – the power of the States to determine their independent positions on many educational issues and challenges.



3.2.7 Implications for Education

The features of the State described in the preceding section have serious educational implications that should be noted and given attention by the TENS II Programme. The significance of the described features would affect the planning, funding, delivery and results and outcomes of education in the State in some of the following ways:

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- The provision of learning spaces in the form of schools particularly classroom, facilities and other physical infrastructure would be a challenge because of distances between schools as well as the additional investment required in taking schools to hard-to-reach areas.
- The expanse of land and forest resources has already culminated in providing hiding places and attack launching locations for the current banditry and spate of kidnappings plaguing very large of the land mass covering many Local Government Areas resulting in closure of many schools.
- Because of the incidents of banditry and kidnappings that have been rampant in the part of the State that historically been lagging behind in access to education, the intra-state disparity has been exacerbated further with the potential for generating political crisis and security challenges.
- The population growth of the State has been quite rapid adding to the figures the State contributes to the national population of out of school children in the country. This phenomenon is aggravated by the location of State sitting between northern states and the Southern States.
- With four key rivers passing through the State and being a host to four hydro-electric power stations, the State is a candidate for emergencies in education through the negative impact of flooding on school calendar and continuity.
- With the management of education being shared between the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education with State Universal Basic Education Board on the hand and also local governments on the other hand, the issue of coordination and partnership and collaboration is debilitating factors on education management.



3.3 Niger State Education Landscape

While noting the possible influence of the features of the State and their possible negative impact the provision and delivery of education, the following succinctly describe the educational landscape of Niger State.

3.3.1 Number of Schools, Enrollment and Teachers

Based on the 2020/2021 Annual School Census, there are 2,904 primary, 348 junior secondary and 226 senior secondary conventional schools in the State. In comparison, there were only 156 special curriculum schools comprising of 59 integrated Islamiyya school schools, 81 nomadic schools, 8 vocational and technical schools. In 2021 in terms of enrolment, there were 1,016,317 pupils and students in the Basic and Secondary schools comprising of 571,624 males and 444,693 females. With male pupils/students representing 56.25% of the total enrolment means the gender parity is still an issue to be addressed. There were 26,266 teachers with male teachers constituting 58.75% of the pool of all teachers.

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There has been a significant improvement in school enrolment in the State. However, the gross enrolment remains very low. Thus, making Niger State one of the states with the worst rates of out-of-school children in Nigeria. This statistic is more pronounced for girls (Adeleke, 2024).

Following the completion of the Education Census in the State by the TENS II Programme, up-to-date education statistics will be available for the State. The results of the data collection exercise will be published in a separate report called "The Education Census", which will be available during the final quarter of 2024.





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3.3.2 Teacher Quality Issues in Education

Based on the ASC in 2021, The level of teacher quality is obvious with teacher qualification reaching a high percentage of between 84% and 92%. The school system in the State has posted pupil teacher ratio of between 33 to 49 pupils to a teacher for all (i.e., qualified and unqualified) and between 39 and 59 pupils/students for qualified teachers. In terms of qualification, majority of teachers have a minimum of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), HND and Degree. The percentage of those with NCE was of high percent-

age in primary schools decreasing as we move from primary to senior secondary schools. But for qualifications higher than NCE (i.e., HND, Degree, Master etc.) the percentage starts low and keeps on increasing as we move from primary through junior to senior secondary schools. This means there are still serious issues of teacher quality plaguing the system to be addressed.



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3.3.3 Adequacy of Educational Provisions

There are reports of inadequate teaching resources, insufficient classrooms, curriculum conflicts with non-western education, lack of vocational training, and policy monitoring and challenges (Adigun et al., 2021; Ogwuru et al., 2022). This challenge means that Niger State is considered a region struggling to provide quality education and adequately prepare those who manage to enrol for future opportunities. In addition, the state is faced with significant hurdles

in fostering a well-educated and skilful workforce that could drive the innovation needed for competitive socio-economic development and upscaling the 21st century global competitive capacity in the education sector. It is therefore imperative that the State declares a State of Emergency in the sector.

3.3.4 Level of Technology Integration and Digitisation

There is only a single smart school in the whole of the State built under the UBEC – SUBEB annual project interventions. The school has commenced operation and is one year old into its existence. However, under the SMART School initiative, this has increased this number to five schools that are technology enabled. Notwithstanding, the level of the deployment of technology into the school system – for teaching

and learning purpose is extremely low. In a survey conducted for the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, less than 10% of secondary have computer laboratories. Furthermore, most of the computers were not usable. What is more, less than 5% of teachers and learners across all levels of the education strata have usable digital skills for teaching and learning



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3.3.5 System Performance and Outcomes

A key concern for education is the determination of the performance and effectiveness of the system, especially with emphasis on what it is able to produce and sustain as expected outcomes of the investment in education. Conventionally, the level of performance in national examinations and assessments, as well as prizes/awards earned during competitions, are used to determine system performance and production of desired educational outcomes. Unfortunately, records of the performance of the

State on national examinations and assessments have been relatively poor. However, few records of pupils/students performing highly during international and national competitions exist. Niger state students have won some prizes during workshops and competitions to give an inkling of the successes of the system.



3.3.6 Parent and Community Engagement

The educational system of the State is very strong on this. Almost every school at the Basic and Secondary Education level has Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Based Management Committee (SBMC). This strong showing in parent and community engagement

was made possible by the intervention of UNICEF's financial and technical assistance some years. Particularly, SBMCs were trained and utilised to develop and implement School Improvement Plan (SIP).



3.4 Conclusion

The review of the State and its educational landscape reveals a critical need for immediate action to put education back in the State on the track to the glory that it was once known for again. The processes of transforming the Basic and Secondary Education sector would benefit from the identification and unravelling of the problems

and challenges constraining the effective and efficient functioning of the State's education system which this study is designed to achieve. Section four of this report describes the methodology adopted for this purpose by the study.



4

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the methodological approach adopted for the collection of data aimed at determining the various challenges confronting education provisions and delivery in the State. It states the means deployed to collect various types of data, the sources of the data and other specific procedures used in the objective determination of the educational challenges that the design and implementation of the TENS II Programme interventions or activities need to note and proffer solutions to so as to achieve its stated goals and objectives. Through rigorous examination of the systemic and operational barriers identified by the means of this methodological approach, the TENS II Programme would use the process outcomes to isolate current critical deficiencies within the educational system to map out the strategies for moving forward in the task of transforming the educational system in the State.

4.2 Methodology •

It is important to mention that this study in its overall manifestation is meant to complement the quantitative approach of determining the current status of the landscape of education in the State carried out the Education Census survey as part of the TENS II Programme.

The Education Census has identified the challenges associated with education provisions of relevance to the adequacy of facilities vis-à-vis the capacity of the system to provide safe, secured and learner-friendly learning spaces to guarantee access, equity and quality of other educational inputs. Therefore, this study, which was carried out by the TENS II Programme as a complement to the Education Census, and is geared towards identifying other challenges of the system using two types of data collection procedures briefly described below.





4.2.1.Desk Research

It would be erroneous to assume zero knowledge of challenges confronting the education system in the State. It is expected that evidence of such challenges would be found and documented in different records, documents/ reports, departmental submissions and reports of past committees. Glimpses of extant challenges could be curated from official publications especially from past education sector strategic plans. The desk research undertook the review of some of these documents/ reports. However, in deploying desk research, particular emphasis was placed on the review of the relevant sections of the most recent active education sector and strategic plans in the State. The rationale for this choice is to ensure that the challenges captured by these publications are still potent and applicable in the extant situation of education in the State. Particularly, the review of the challenges highlighted by the current education sector and basic education

strategic plan revealed them to be still operative in the education system. The review also took into account previous research undertaken in Niger State in 2016 – 2018 in relation to the problems in the State to ascertain if these challenges still existed or if the priorities had changed.

The desk review of literature on the state of education in Niger State also helped to identify knowledge gaps, frame the research questions, and design the interview protocols. It also eased the delineation of the aims and objectives of the study as well as the planning, designing and implementation of the qualitative research. Following this activity preliminary meetings were held with key stakeholders to gain their perspectives on the state of the education systems.



4.2.2.Qualitative Research

The qualitative data collection of this research utilised tools that included interviews, focus groups, and direct participant observations (Creswell, 2013; Rahman, 2020). These methods were chosen because of their flexibility, which involves the ability to refine and adapt the approaches based on emergent themes and the disposition of the participants. It also helps in understanding contextual realities through in-depth understanding from the participants' perspectives especially because given the language and other sensitive barriers (Rahman, 2020). This variety of tools was deployed so as to capture the breadth and depth of participants' perspectives.

The question protocols were designed to primarily identify challenges faced by policymakers, commissioners, students, teachers, school administrators, and community heads and to detail Indigenous approaches to navigate the complexities posed by these challenges. Appendix 2 details the list of interview questions and protocols utilised. The interview protocol was flexible to allow for probing and nudging participants to seek clarity on a particular concept. There was also room for follow-up questions based on participants' responses.

4.3 Data Collection

Relevant data to determine the challenges of educational provisions in the State were collected using a reasonable sample of participants, instruments, and procedures, as described below, to determine the challenges of educational provisions in the state.

4.3.1 Participants

The participants represent a diverse group of persons from various education sectors in Niger State. A total of 577 participants were interviewed and participated in focus group discussions. The participants were derived from a pool of stakeholders to be part of the data generation activities to ensure that there was a comprehensive representation and diversity of experiences and perspectives necessary to give credence to the study findings.

The 577 participants were selected from 21 out of 25 local governments in the State. The list of local governments visited is shown in Appendix 1. Participants included policymakers, such as commissioners, permanent secretaries, and directors. Other participants included head teachers, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, National Youth Service Corp Members, religious leaders, and community leaders. The participants included both genders (e.g., males and females) and cut across all ages. This broad spectrum of participants was crucial to the holistic view of the educational landscape in Niger State.

4.3.2 Data Collection Instruments

To capture the breadth and depth of participants' perspectives, a variety of qualitative data collective instruments described below were employed. The justification for their use has been explained earlier.



Interview

Appendix 2 details the list of interview questions and protocols utilised. The interview protocols were flexible, allowing for probing and nudging participants to seek clarity on a particular concept.

There was also room for follow-up questions based on participants' responses. The protocols contain open-ended semi-structured interview questions designed to facilitate discussions with participants.



Focus Group Discussions

The TENS II team used the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) technique earlier during the Education Census exercise. The same processes were used in the present case except for the extraneous provisions added to reflect the technique's focus and context and align it with the exercise's qualitative orientation in the present situation.



Direct observations

Not much of this was used in the present instance since the exercise was not focused on physical or environmental context per se. However, observation of the body language of participants especially during the FGD exercise was used in a limited sense to gauge the veracity of their response and comportment to determine their level of comfort or discomfort in the context of their specific responses or contribution during the session. Observation was also made in terms of the condition of the school premises, such as classrooms, toilet facilities, if available hostels, and playgrounds.

4.4 Procedure

The procedure for conducting the administration of the instruments was meticulously done to ensure a systematic implementation of the data collection processes. The data collection was conducted in different stages and different locations to ensure comprehensive coverage depth of information, and to accommodate participants' schedules. Most of the data collection took place in the school premises for teachers and students, offices for stakeholders within the Ministry, and houses and farms of stakeholders within the villages visited. Interviews and Focus Groups lasted approximately 45 minutes per session with a minimum of eight and a maximum of twelve persons in each FGD. The moderators and interviewers have considerable years (>2) of experience in conducting focus groups and interviews.

At the start of the interview or focus group, the moderator or interviewer introduced him or

herself. In cases where there was a language barrier, an interpreter from the MRL[®] Public Sector Consultants Team interpreted the discussion or question to the participant(s). Thereafter, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the expectations of the moderator or the interviewers, the risks involved, and their right to withdraw their participation at any time. The anonymity of all participants was guaranteed to ensure that their responses were not traced back to their identities. After participants indicated an understanding of all the details of the interview protocol, consents were sought through verbal acceptance. Participants were encouraged to speak in any language they felt more comfortable with. This was to ensure participants were able to communicate without any barriers or interference. All interviews were audio-recorded. Data collection lasted for 7 days.

4.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analytic framework. This rigorous approach involved verbatim transcriptions of 742 minutes of recorded interviews, ensuring that participants' details and responses were captured accurately. The richness and authenticity of the data were preserved through meticulous transcription. Coding and theme development proceeded following transcription. This involved pattern identification and theme development

within participants' responses. To allow for theme refinement as new insight emerged, the coding process was iterative. All analyses were conducted using NVivo 14 software, which is used mostly for organizing and analysing qualitative data. NVivo was used to facilitate the efficiency of the large volume of data which enables effective data categorisation and cross-referencing.

THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding Chapters has outlined some of the problems and challenges of the education sector of Niger State especially those that were thrown up by the peculiar nature of the features and the level of the educational development of the State. Consequently, this section presents additional problems and challenges of education beyond those already highlighted by the review of its educational landscape undertaking in the preceding section.

The findings of this study to be presented in this section come from two key sources as explained by the methodology of the study. The first source of the findings to be presented is the desk research that reviewed various available records and documents. However, it needs to be stressed that the review of past strategic plans for the sector was given more emphasis to take advantage of the fact each of such documents undertakes a review of the extant status of educational provisions, including identified challenges at the time they were developed. This gives the reason

for the special attention paid to the recent Medium-Term Basic Education Strategic Plan (2021 to 2024) and the Medium-Term Education Sector Plan.

The second source of the problems and challenges of the education sector of Niger State is the qualitative research undertaken to gain access to the thinking and insights provided by critical stakeholders as to what the problems and challenges of education are in the State. The results of this component of the study are vital to give the interpretative validity to the understanding of what the desk research and quantitative results found as to what constitutes the educational problems and challenges of the State. In handling the qualitative element, data were triangulated by cross-validating the interview and focus group data with direct observation to create a map showing the complex web of multifaceted problems and challenges facing the education sector in the State.



5.2 Findings of the Study

The study's findings are presented here, commencing with the results of the desk research and, subsequently, the qualitative research based on interviews, focus group discussions, and observations.



5.2.1 Results of the Desk Research

Since the review of different records, publications and plans constituted the strategy for the desk research, it should be noted that the challenges of educational provisions in the State were glimpsed from multiple documentary sources. The list of the problems and challenges identified from different sources was developed and compared against the most recent document which happens to be the MTBESP, 2021 – 2024 already mentioned. Items on the generated list of problems and challenges were compared with those highlighted by the Plan. The result was a match with over 80% concurrence.

The results of the desk research are summarized below as follows drawing from the Niger State Medium Term Basic Education Strategic Plan, 2021 to 2024 (SUBEB, 2022: 25 – 26).

Enrollment Gaps

There are consistent gaps between enrolment figures and the actual projected population of children of the ages of ECCDE, Primary and Junior Secondary Schools reflecting out-of-school children, dropouts and Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). This reaffirms the extant status of Out of School Children as a recurrent problem and challenge confronting the Education System in the State. A separate piece of work looking into the issue of out of school children is one of the deliverables under the TENS II Programme.

Non-responsive to Inclusion Issues

There is a serious challenge in the capacity and potential of the school system to address and meet the necessity for enhancing the inclusiveness of the overall educational provisions across gender and special needs. Access and availability of user – friendly provisions have been gravely limited due few special schools, limited use of special curriculum and the opportunity for progression for the limited number that was able to enter the educational system

Persistence of Quality Drawbacks and Poor Outcomes

The issues of quality, outcome delivery and functionality remain constant problems and constitute serious challenges to the effective and efficient provision of education across the Basic and Secondary Education continuum. Quality in inputs and outputs has remained elusive and requires to be confronted with utmost seriousness the situation deserves. Performance of pupils/students in national examinations has remained below the national average, and the absence of life and employable skills has put into question the functionality of the system.

Security and Safety

In the last half decade or more, school security and learner safety featured as a very serious problem confronting the delivery of education in the State. Schools lack physical fencing and adequate and effective lighting, security guards have disappeared from the school system and necessary security measures have not been marshalled and institutionalized. It is important to note the continuing closure of the schools that were overrun by bandits and the absence of learning opportunities in Internally Displaced People's camps.

Lack of coordinated Implementation of Projects

Government is involved with the implementation of many viable projects or programme focus on different aspect of educational provision in the State. However, these projects are managed and delivered independent of each leading to missed opportunity for gaining more leveraged for their coordinated delivery. This scenario has led to missed opportunity for getting the utmost from a coordinated implemented of the various programmes or interventions.

Federal Dominance of Policy Formulation

Niger State has its own peculiarities unique to it and desiring a more local response away from the federal approach. Yet, it has become a challenge for the State education system to deploy this approach because of the over-reliance on federal policies, advisories and guides. Unfortunately, even the federal policies that should be relevant to the State have not been domesticated and therefore hardly use to meet the needs of the state education system.

Concurrent Management of Education

All three tiers of government are engaged in managing education. Yet, there is little interface among them, leading to a situation where confusion prevails and critical matters are left unattended with justification that the relevant tier will address them. Often, a lower tier always believes that the problem or challenge will be solved by the upper tier, especially where resources are required.

A cursory review of the above problems and challenges brought up by the desk research reveals the tenacity of issues to remain consistently as potent as they have always been. Yet, less focused and dedicated attention appears to be paid to confronting policymakers and system managers.



To substantiate this, results from the quantitative census showed that only 24,405 early child education and primary school classrooms and 7858 secondary school classrooms are functional, with fifty percent of these classrooms found in private schools. The results above also showed the state's poor infrastructure condition and its consequential impact on teachers' quality of teaching across primary, secondary, and higher institutions. This is also negatively reflected in students' learning outcomes. This challenge is more pronounced in rural schools than in urban ones.

The shortage of qualified teachers presents a significant challenge within the educational system. Observations indicate that some schools, accommodating over one thousand students, employ approximately 30 qualified teachers. This results in an excessively high student-teacher ratio, which adversely impacts teachers' motivation and morale. Without addressing the issues of teacher employment and equitable distribution, other critical educational concerns may remain unresolved. For instance, one participant noted the absence of Mathematics and English teachers from Junior Secondary School 1 to Junior Secondary School 3. Additionally, a principal highlighted the multifaceted roles they must undertake, stating, "In this school, I serve as the Mathematics teacher, English teacher, Islamic Religious Knowledge teacher, Social Studies teacher, Agricultural Science teacher, examination officer, and school messenger." This underscores the urgent need for strategic teacher recruitment and redistribution to ensure a balanced and effective educational environment. Furthermore, quantitative data on the number of primary and secondary school teachers also supports this challenge. The statistics reveal a significant shortfall in the number of qualified teachers, further emphasizing the need for immediate action to address this critical issue.

Financial challenges, both from the government and key stakeholders, including household levels, limit resource availability for the education sector. From the government standpoint, there was poor funding of schools which resulted in poor monitoring and infrastructural decay. On the part of parents, low parental financial status and the belief that they are not responsible for providing basic needs for their children due to free education declared by the government has resulted in a lack of basic amenities available for students and schools. According to one of the parents,

"We should not pay any money or provide anything since the government said it is a free education for our children".

One of the school administrators also confirmed this,

"We cannot collect any money from the students because the government said it is free education. Therefore, parents are not willing to contribute any dime."

This challenge underscores the need for a reassessment of funding policies and responsibilities of stakeholders to ensure provision of adequate resources to the education sector.

There are also systemic challenges. This is evident in cultural beliefs that girls are not school-worthy, and boys are financial providers for the family. This is more common in rural regions with more financial and systemic constraints. When asked about the child labour law and the compulsory education law in the state, one of the respondents said

“I think even the issue of early marriage, there is no law enforcement”.

Another said,

“Due to the issue of boys fending for their families, you only see these students during exams. If the schools are not good and functional, how do you encourage them to stop going to the farm during rainy seasons to come to school?”.

Systemic issues negatively affect parents' and students' attitudes towards education. For instance, some of the respondents compared their schools to non-existent structures, while some parents argued they are waiting to have enough funds to be able to send their children to private schools. This systemic challenge results from the effects of previous ones discussed. According to a respondent,

“Some of the students absconding use to say school is a scam because there are no teachers, no roof, and everything in the school is just looking so bad. They will tell their parents to change their school. Their parents will tell them to stay at home until they have money to change their school”.

Respondents also indicated that the lack of a well-rounded curriculum that includes technical and practical skills limits students' readiness for life after school. This includes activities both in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools. Due to the urgency level of previous challenges, the criticality of this is rated as moderate as it is dependent on other factors highlighted earlier. The following section discusses these results.





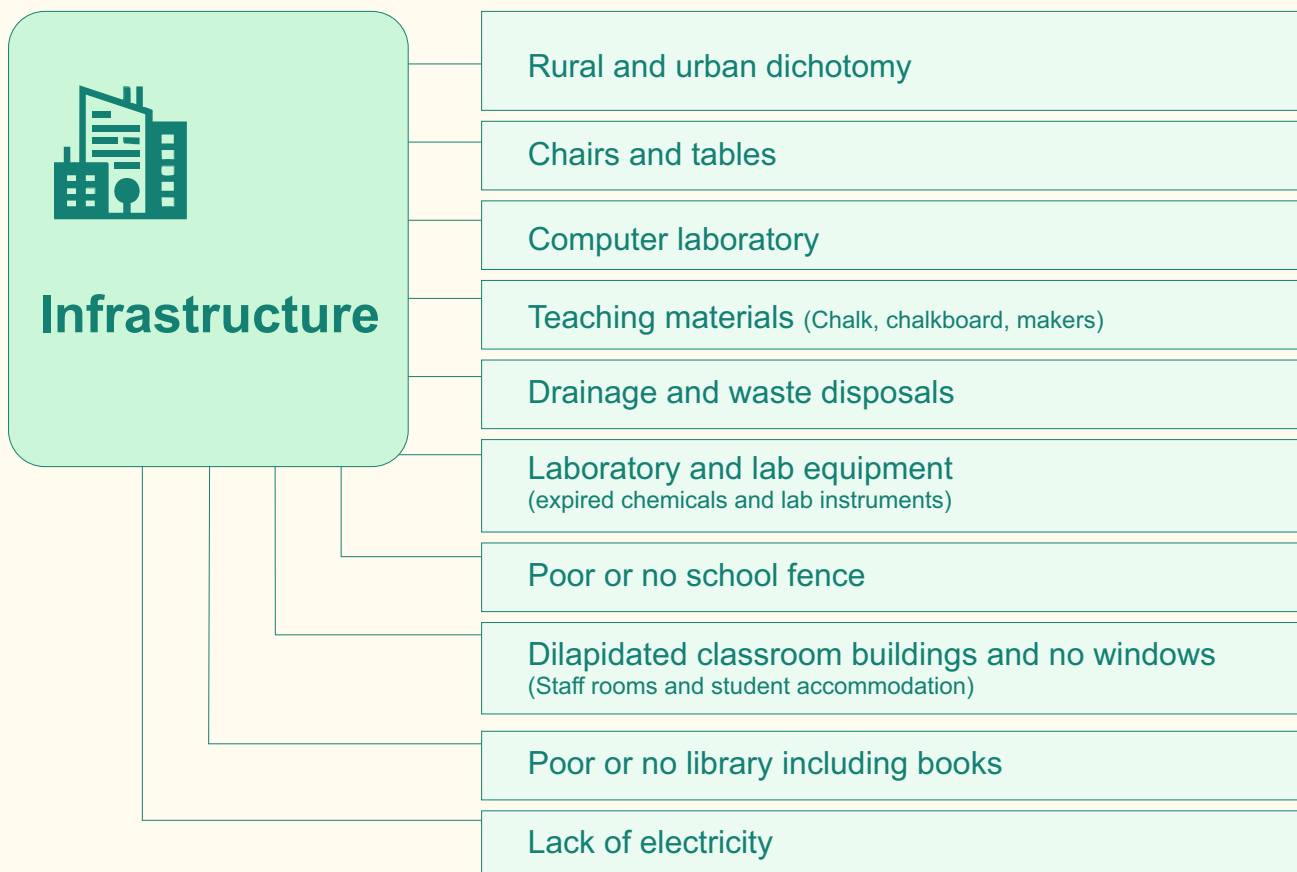
5.2.2 Results of the Qualitative Research

The results produced by the interview, focus group discussion and observations were analysed using NVivo special software dedicated to the analyses of qualitative data. The first step taken was to use the analyses to create a map showing the complex web of multifaceted problems facing the education sector in the State.

This is what is subsequently indicated in Figure 5. Refer to and review the figure to appreciate the complexity of the problems and challenges facing the education system in Niger State. From the map, we are able to create hierarchical model of the challenges identified, from the most critical to those considered moderately critical challenges.

This includes poor infrastructure, lack of or insufficient teachers, poor school funding or financial constraints, systemic challenges, security concerns, student and parental attitudes to education, and curricular and extracurricular activities.

Figure 3: Coding Map showing the problems of the education sector





Teacher's Employment

Quality teachers

Teachers' training



Security

Banditry

Fencing and security personnels

Security Officials



Systemic Challenges

Early Marriages



Lack of Teachers

Insufficient teachers

Minimal core subject teachers

Quality teachers

Teachers' remuneration

Large teachers-student ratio

Uneven teachers' distribution



Security

Non-payment of PTA

Parents' perspectives on free education

Poor laboratory funding

Poor school funding



Government

Free education not free

Child labour law

Lack of government resources

Poor government supervision

Seasonal law (rainy season)

Compulsory education and early marriage



Parents

Parent education

Parent occupation (Farmers)

Lack of financial resources

Parental support and perception

Student as breadwinners



Students /Children

Lack of motivation

Late coming

Poor attitude to education

Thuggery

Student as breadwinners

The use of the coded map enabled the creation of the subsequent table 2 where each of the problem or challenge is rated in terms of its criticality ranging from very high to low. As indicated in the table, by criticality we mean the magnitude of the severity or danger or threat the challenge exposes the education system to.

Table 2 Education challenges in Niger State with their level of criticality

Challenges	Urgency Level
Poor Infrastructure	Very High
Insufficient teachers	Very high
Financial constraints	Very high
Systemic Challenge	High
Security Concerns	High
Curricular and extracurricular activities	High
Student and parental perception	High

Source: TENS II Programme Field Work

As indicated in Table 2, poor infrastructure is the most critical and pressing challenge in the state's education sector. Based on data from the interview, focus group, and direct observation, the nature of the poor infrastructure includes dilapidated classrooms, the absence of sanitary facilities, insufficient functional classrooms, the absence of or broken tables and chairs, lack of recreational facilities, laboratories, especially for rural schools, and no teaching materials, including books and chalk.

The absence of basic facilities like laboratories and equipment for practical's, toilets for staff and students, libraries and books, computer laboratories, chairs, and desks, school perimeter fence/ boundary walls, and sanitation materials severely create barriers to education. Due to the significant number of schools across the entire state facing these issues, as further validated by the quantitative survey, there is a need for an urgent intervention by the State government.

According to some participants,

"We are sitting on the ground. If we see new chairs and classes, everything will change in our school".

Another said,

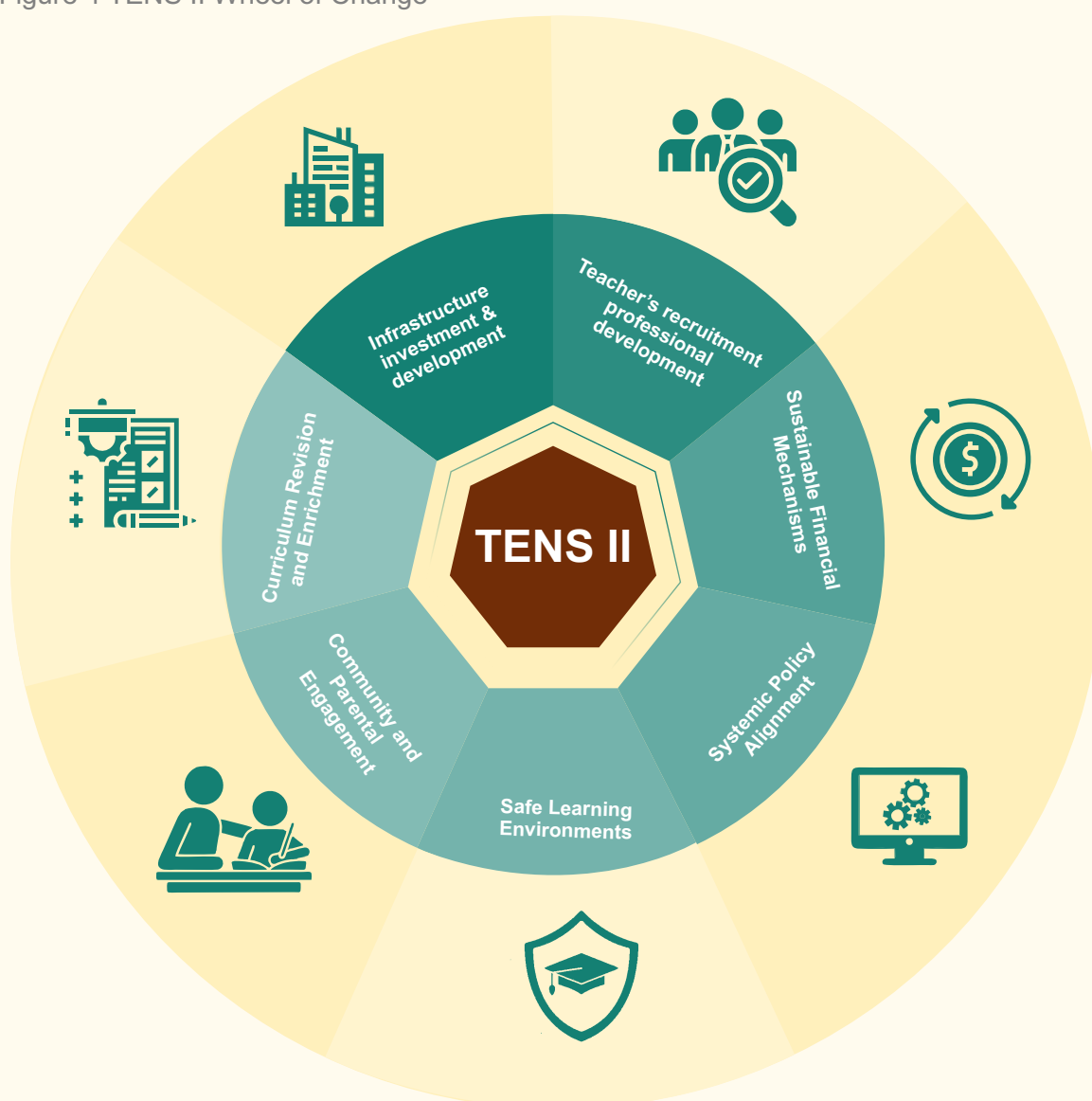
"We only have four functional classes, and we are catering to over a thousand students."

5.3 Discussions

The results showed the significant intertwining of the identified challenges, which serve as hindrances to education development in Niger State. Addressing these challenges requires strategic approaches prioritising the most critical needs to ensure sustainable investment and solid education foundations.

Based on these, a conceptualised “Wheel of Change” that provides a holistic framework for transforming education in Niger State is proposed. Each spoke of the wheel represents a key area of intervention that collectively works to create a sustainable educational system in Niger State. This is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 4 TENS II Wheel of Change



Change the brown in eh wheel



5.3.1 Spoke 1: Infrastructure Investment and Development

In the short term, there is a critical need for immediate and urgent renovations of existing schools. Priorities should be given to rural schools that are currently in dilapidated conditions. In the Long term, the state needs to establish critical collaborations with local communities for the maintenance and creation of infrastructure collaborative fundings for building new state-approved model schools.

An example is drawn from a secondary school that was built by a local community to accommodate more students within the locality. Construction of new buildings or schools should be done to reflect an equipped simple model.



5.3.2 Spoke 2: Teachers' Recruitment and Professional Development

A short-term strategy requires the immediate recruitment of teachers in critical subject areas, particularly mathematics, English, and the Sciences (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology). A further short-term strategy includes the institutionalisation of professional development programmes that focus on pedagogical training and subject-specific expertise. The Niger State Teachers Professional Development Institute (NSTPDI) should be fully utilised and a comprehensive teachers' training programme should commence.

Prior to the commencement of the teacher training programme, an audit of the number of teachers in the State and their skill sets should be captured immediately. Future initiatives should include creating teacher exchange programmes both locally and internationally to foster skill-sharing and motivation among teachers.



5.3.3 Spoke 3: Sustainable Financial Mechanisms

Short-term actions should see an increase in budget spending for education in the 2025, 2026 and 2027 budgets, especially in foundational or early childhood education. Furthermore, a digital platform should be created where school challenges, such as leaking roofs, broken windows, etc., with financial mark-ups proportional to the needs of the school are lodged with pictorial evidence to justify the work to be undertaken.



5.3.4 Spoke 4: Systemic Policy Alignment and Implementation

Strengthen enforcement of existing education laws, particularly those related to compulsory education, irrespective of location and religion. Establish a digitally centralised monitoring and data-driven evaluation system that accommodates community participation and gender equity.



5.3.5 Spoke 5: Safe Learning Environments

Construction of perimeter fences and safety protocols. In cases where the school land is expansive, a centrally approved measurement should be available to accommodate the necessary security and safety requirements. This will ensure that all schools are adequately monitored and protected by State regulations. Promote initiatives to establish a safety culture for students and education property and assets.





5.3.6 Spoke 6: Community and Parental Engagement

Parents and guardians should be targeted with aggressive campaigns that emphasise the value of education both for girls and boys. Encourage initiatives where students can tour renowned institutions across the country and the world. Recognise top students in every school through statewide scholarships and recognitions for top performing students.



5.3.7 Spoke 7: Curriculum Revision and Enrichment

Revise the curriculum to include practical and technical skills that prepare students for life after school or beyond the classroom. Introduce entrepreneurship programs in partnership with key industries as part of the school curriculum. Foster partnerships with key industries to provide internships and hands-on learning opportunities for students, especially those in secondary schools. Establish summer schools solely for practical skills development.



5.4 Recommendations

Education stakeholders have clear expectations for basic infrastructure in schools. This is irrespective of local economic opportunities or circumstances. These expectations should be the basic starting point for school designs, planning, and support. The fundamental role of education in improving socioeconomic conditions was acknowledged by all stakeholders who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions. Based on this, the following recommendations are proposed.

No curves - use straight.

Recommendation 1

Given the numerous challenges in the Education System, **the State should declare a State of Emergency in Education**. This will ensure that funding for Education is given priority and the impetus to address the numerous challenges in the sector. It would also enable the federal government to provide additional support to the State. The declaration by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Niger State, Honourable Mohammed Umaru Bago to make education as one of the key priorities for 2025 will also support the need for urgent attention in the sector.

Recommendation 2

To achieve a sustainable transformation of the education sector in Niger State, a targeted infrastructure investment strategy is crucial. This should include a rapid deployment of plans to renovate existing schools, which are mostly in rural areas. The state should launch a “quick win infrastructure initiative” that focuses on the stabilisation of critical facilities that provide basic amenities like desks, blackboards, water, and sanitation facilities.

This should involve establishing public-private partnerships (PPPs) and leveraging community-based participatory models to fund and build new state-of-the-art schools. This should be supported by a “Model School Initiative” that focuses on scalable, cost-effective designs with ICT integration, inclusive learning environments, and climate-resilient structures with a state-wide digital platform for infrastructure monitoring and predictive maintenance to optimise resources and extend the lifecycle of educational facilities, ensuring sustainable investment over time.

Recommendation 3

The quality of education in Niger State hinges on attracting, developing, and retaining high-calibre educators who should focus on a targeted recruitment drive to fill gaps in critical subject areas such as STEM and English. The state should implement a “fast-track recruitment scheme” for qualified teachers and a continuous professional development framework involving in-service training, mentorship, and coaching programmes tailored to enhance subject matter expertise and pedagogical skills.

The state should incorporate local and international exchange programs to foster cross-knowledge teaching practice. For research, innovation in teaching methods, and leadership training, the centre of excellence in teacher education should be established through the Niger State Teachers Professional Development Institute, which is to serve as a professional training hub.

Recommendation 4

]Driving long-term educational outcomes requires a sustainable financial model. This should include increasing budget allocations for education to at least twenty-five per cent, especially for early childhood education, recall school feeding programmes, and rolling out conditional cash transfers to boost girls' enrolment. To achieve this, a transparent school funding portal should be established to enable the monitoring of budget allocations and expenditures in real-time.

This would enable accountability. The State should set-up an “education investment fund” to leverage outcome-based funds, education bonds, corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions, and donor funding. The state should also focus on building capacity at the school and community levels for financial management and introducing a decentralised “Education Financing Hub” to diversify and stabilise funding streams.



Recommendation 5

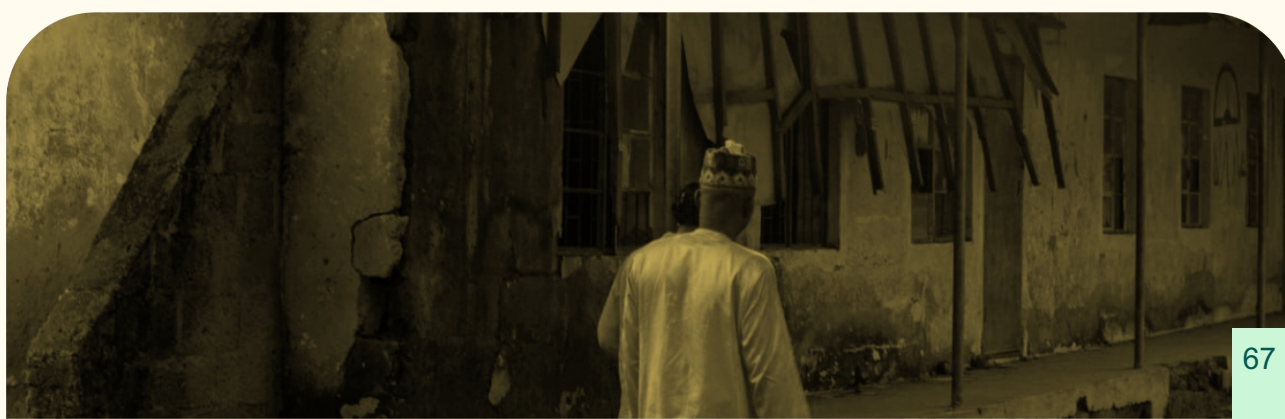
To ensure that all stakeholder initiatives have impactful meanings, there is a need for effective policy alignment and implementation that is coordinated using proper project management methodologies and governance structures. There is also need for policy gap re-evaluation to identify policy gaps and flaws which involves digitising the education system.

This digitisation would use data to inform decisions and policymaking, enabling continuous updates of education policies in line with international best standards. This would promote stakeholder engagement and collaboration and encourage the adaptation of government models to respond to emerging or recurrent opportunities and challenges.

Recommendation 6

A safe and inclusive educational environment is important to achieving effective teaching and learning. The Niger State government should therefore create a “safe school initiative” that prioritises physical structure improvements. This will include perimeter fencing, security personnel deployment, and safety security protocols. All schools should be equipped with safety equipment and adequate emergency training should be provided to both security personnel, teachers, and students for emergency preparedness.

The State in partnership with community organisations and law enforcement agencies such as the police, should establish safe zones for each school. Frequent safety drills should be carried out to train students, teachers, and staff in emergency response procedures, ensuring preparedness for scenarios such as security threats by religious extremists, bandits and terrorists.



Recommendation 7

To booster the educational reforms, there should be aggressive community engagement campaign that build coalition with religious and traditional leaders to advocate for school enrolment and equal education opportunities for both boys and girls. There should be a partnership program for parent and communities to encourage direct involvement in fundraising and monitoring.

Recommendation 8

Students should be prepared for the 21st century work demands. Therefore, there should a rapid review of the curriculum for update. This should accommodate technical skills, numeracy, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and life skills. There should be industry education where local industries collaborate to provide apprenticeships, internships, and real-life learning experiences.

There should be summer schools and skill development centers that provide students with hands-on training opportunities in vocational skills, which align with educational outcomes needed for 21st-century job markets. On the other hand, the training would help foster innovation and problem-solving skills.



5.5 Conclusion

The TENS II Programme solution wheel provides a comprehensive, integrated approach to solving the complex challenges of the Niger State education sector. By addressing the identified challenges through the solution wheel, stakeholders can ensure the systematic implementation of educational reforms. Rolling and sustaining the wheel depends on all stakeholders' collaboration and commitments. This will help to drive the transformation needed to secure education in Niger State.



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APPENDIX A LIST OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS VISITED

Appendix A List of Local Governments visited

List of Local Governments visited for interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations.

Local Government Area
Agaie
Bida
Edati
Gbako
Katcha
Lapai
Lavun
Mokwa
Borgu
Kontagora
Magama
Mariga
Mashegu
Rijau
Wushishi
Rafi
Chanchaga
Gurara
Munya
Shiroro
Suleja

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme

Focus Groups Questionnaire Template

Exploring the problems within the education system and possible solutions in Niger State, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Participants per focus group

- Head Teacher
- Teacher
- LGA Chairmen
- Community Leader
- Religious Leader
- Education Quality Assurance Officer
- Parents
- Women
- Education Director

We aim to have a representative from each focus group category to ensure views from different stakeholders in the education sector (as applicable).

Introduction

Please Introduce Yourself

Greetings (Sannu)! Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme Focus Group.

Please note the interview will be recorded as stated in the consent letter.

The main purpose of the focus group is to explore the problems within the education system in Niger State and to identify possible solutions as part of the TENS II Programme. More specifically, your views and thoughts on how to improve the education system and make it globally competitive would be appreciated.

Please note that there is no right or wrong answer, and the questions are not aimed at testing your knowledge. Please feel free to express yourself in any language you prefer. The focus group is an open discussion. Therefore, every participant's views are respected and considered important. The discussion is confidential, and all participant's responses will be kept anonymous.

Interviewer: Please let me know if you have any questions before we commence. If there are no questions, the interviewer says, please let me know when you are ready so I can start the recording and ask the questions. (Wait for a verbal response and ensure each participant has signed the consent form).

Questions:

Current Educational Challenges

1. What do you think are the main challenges facing the educational system in Niger State?
2. How do these challenges impact students and teachers both in rural and urban areas?
3. What resources or support are currently lacking in most schools?
4. How can schools better utilise their resources?

Impact on Education Quality

1. How do these challenges affect the quality of education and teaching?
2. Do you think students fare better or worse because of these challenges?
3. What measures are in place to address challenges that have been identified?

Student Absenteeism and Dropout Rates

1. What influences student attendance?
2. What do you think are the causes of children not attending school?

Follow up with the sub-questions to explore responses.

- a. Parents' contributions?
 - b. Religious institutions?
 - c. Governments?
 - d. The child?
- How do you address issues of student absenteeism and dropout rates?
 - What factors do you think contribute mostly to these issues?

Role of Stakeholders

- What role do you think local government, religious, and community leaders can play in improving children's access to education?
- Are there any cultural or religious barriers to education?
 - Are these common in a particular gender?
- What challenges do girls face in attending school?

Suggestions for Improvement

- What improvements would you suggest to enhance the educational access to education in Niger State?
- What improvements would you suggest to enhance the quality of education in Niger State?
- How can the current education system support students, families, and the society at large?

Additional Information

Interviewer: Ask participants if they have any additional information to contribute.

Closing Remarks: Thank you for your time and insights.



CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the TENS II Programme, please get in touch with our offices at

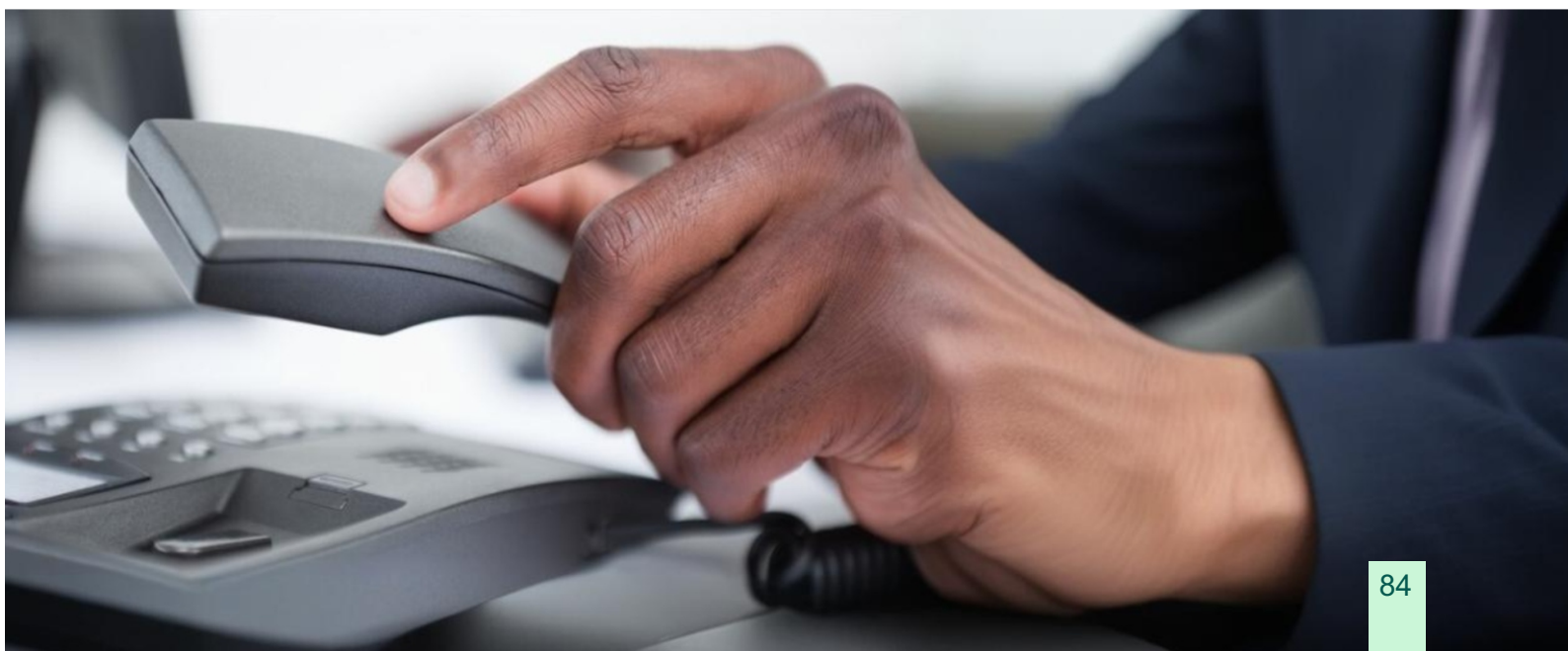
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