

Financing School Physical Education Programmes in Nigeria: Policy Gaps and Budgetary Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Physical education (PE) is a recognized component of Nigeria's school curriculum, yet its effective delivery remains constrained by weak financing, inadequate facilities, and limited policy enforcement. This study examined the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria, with emphasis on policy gaps and budgetary challenges. The study adopted a mixed-methods policy analysis design involving the review of education policy documents, analysis of federal and state education budgets, and semi-structured interviews with selected school administrators and PE teachers. The findings revealed that although education spending has increased in nominal terms, budgetary provision for physical education remains low and poorly specified. Many schools lacked adequate sports equipment, functional facilities, and dedicated funds for PE activities. The study further found that weak policy implementation, poor monitoring, competing education priorities, and dependence on parent-teacher associations or informal funding sources limited the sustainability of PE programmes. These findings suggest that the formal inclusion of physical education in the curriculum has not been matched with adequate financial and institutional support. The study recommends clearer budget lines for school PE, stronger monitoring of policy implementation, improved investment in sports facilities and equipment, and structured collaboration among education authorities, school administrators, and community stakeholders.

Keywords: Physical education financing; school sports funding; education budget allocation; policy implementation; budgetary challenges; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) is an important part of holistic education because it supports learners' physical health, motor skills, mental alertness, social development, and lifelong interest in physical activity. In many education systems, PE is no longer treated as a recreational activity alone but as a curriculum subject that contributes to student wellbeing and broader learning outcomes (Bailey et al., 2022; Kirk & Haerens, 2021). Effective PE programmes require trained teachers, adequate sports facilities, instructional materials, equipment, and regular school-based physical activity programmes (Kirk, 2020; Penney et al., 2021).

Despite this importance, financing remains a major constraint to the effective delivery of PE in schools. Many countries recognise PE in education policies, but the financial commitment required for implementation is often weak. Where funding is inadequate, schools struggle to provide safe play spaces, functional sports equipment, qualified personnel, and organised sporting activities. This problem is more severe in developing countries, where governments face competing demands for limited education funds. In such contexts, available resources are often directed to teacher salaries, classrooms, examinations, and core academic subjects, leaving PE with limited financial support (Oketch et al., 2021; Aladejana, 2022).

In Nigeria, physical and health education is included in the school curriculum and remains relevant to student health, talent development, social participation, and national sports development. However, many schools lack the facilities, equipment, and trained personnel needed to implement PE effectively. The problem is not only the existence of policy but the weak connection between policy commitments and actual funding. Although national education and sports policies recognise the value of PE, they often provide limited guidance on dedicated budgetary allocation, implementation monitoring, and accountability. As a result, school administrators are frequently left to manage PE activities through scarce school funds, parent-teacher association support, donations, or occasional community assistance.

The financing problem also creates inequality in access to quality PE. Schools in urban and better-funded areas are more likely to have usable sports spaces, equipment, and trained teachers, while rural and underserved schools often operate with poor facilities or none at all. These differences limit students' participation in structured physical activity and weaken the contribution of PE to health, learning, and talent discovery.

Existing studies on physical education in Nigeria have focused largely on curriculum implementation, teacher availability, sports participation, and school facilities. Less attention has been given to how PE is financed, how education budgets provide for PE, and how policy gaps affect school-level implementation. There is also limited evidence on the experiences of school administrators who manage PE programmes under tight budgetary conditions. This study addresses that gap by examining the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria, with emphasis on policy gaps and budgetary challenges.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do education budgets provide for physical education programmes in Nigerian schools?
2. What policy gaps affect the financing and implementation of school physical education programmes?
3. What budgetary and administrative challenges do school administrators face in financing physical education programmes?

This study is significant because it draws attention to the financial and institutional conditions required for effective PE delivery in Nigerian schools. It contributes to education finance literature by linking PE implementation with budget allocation, policy support, and school-level administrative capacity. The findings are useful to education policymakers, school administrators, sports development agencies, and community stakeholders seeking to improve the funding and sustainability of PE programmes in Nigeria. The study also provides a basis for more deliberate budget planning, stronger monitoring, and clearer policy provisions for school-based physical education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Physical education (PE) programmes refer to structured school-based learning activities designed to develop learners' physical fitness, motor skills, health awareness, teamwork, discipline, and positive attitudes toward physical activity. In modern education systems, PE is treated as part of holistic learning because it contributes to learners' physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Bailey et al., 2022; Kirk & Haerens, 2021). Effective PE programmes require more than curriculum inclusion. They depend on trained teachers, safe spaces, sports equipment, regular activities, and administrative support.

Education financing refers to the process through which financial resources are generated, allocated, and used to support teaching, learning, infrastructure, staffing, instructional materials, and school programmes. In the context of physical education, financing covers the funds required for sports facilities, equipment, teacher training, programme organisation, facility maintenance, and school sports activities. Without adequate financing, PE may remain formally recognised in the curriculum but weakly implemented in practice.

The financing of PE programmes has several core components. The first is infrastructure financing. PE requires playgrounds, sports fields, courts, gymnasias, changing rooms, and other safe spaces where learners can participate in physical activity. The construction and maintenance of these facilities require regular funding. Where schools lack such facilities, PE lessons become irregular, theoretical, or poorly delivered.

The second component is equipment provision. PE teachers need basic sports equipment such as balls, nets, cones, mats, measuring tools, first-aid materials, and safety gear. These resources allow teachers to organise practical lessons and expose learners to different physical activities. In many schools, however, equipment shortages reduce the quality of PE instruction and limit student participation.

The third component is teacher training and professional support. Qualified PE teachers are needed to plan lessons, teach movement skills, promote safe participation, and organise sporting activities. Financing is therefore required for teacher recruitment, in-service training, workshops, and professional development. Where trained PE teachers are unavailable, schools may assign the subject to non-specialist teachers, weakening programme quality.

The fourth component is programme development. PE financing also supports inter-house sports, interschool competitions, health education campaigns, fitness programmes, talent development activities, and community-based sports events. These activities strengthen the practical value of PE, but they are often reduced or cancelled when schools lack funds.

Policy support is another important concept in PE financing. Education policies define curriculum priorities, implementation standards, funding responsibilities, and monitoring arrangements. However, policy recognition alone does not guarantee effective implementation. PE programmes may still suffer where policies fail to specify funding mechanisms, responsible institutions, accountability procedures, and minimum facility or equipment standards. This creates a policy-implementation gap between what is stated in official documents and what schools can actually provide.

In Nigeria, education financing is shaped by the federal structure of government. The federal government provides policy direction and funding support, while state and local governments play major roles in school administration and resource allocation. Community groups and parent-teacher associations also provide support in many schools. Although this multi-level structure can widen funding sources, it may also create coordination problems, uneven resource distribution, and weak accountability. These challenges affect PE because the subject often competes with salaries, classrooms, examinations, textbooks, and other urgent school needs.

School funding sources are therefore central to PE programme sustainability. These sources may include government allocations, funds internally generated funds, parent-teacher associations, donations, community support, and occasional sports development interventions. Where public funding is inadequate, schools rely heavily on informal or community-based support. This arrangement may help some schools, but it can widen inequality because schools in poorer communities may be unable to raise enough funds.

Administrative capacity also influences PE financing. School administrators make practical decisions on how limited funds are distributed among competing needs. Their ability to plan, prioritise, mobilise resources, maintain facilities, and monitor expenditure affects whether PE receives meaningful support. Even where funds are available, weak administrative capacity can lead to poor allocation, delayed implementation, or neglect of PE activities.

This conceptual review shows that the financing of school physical education programmes depends on the interaction of budget allocation, policy support, funding sources, and administrative capacity. In the Nigerian school context, these factors determine whether PE is delivered as a functional curriculum programme or remains a poorly funded subject with limited practical impact.

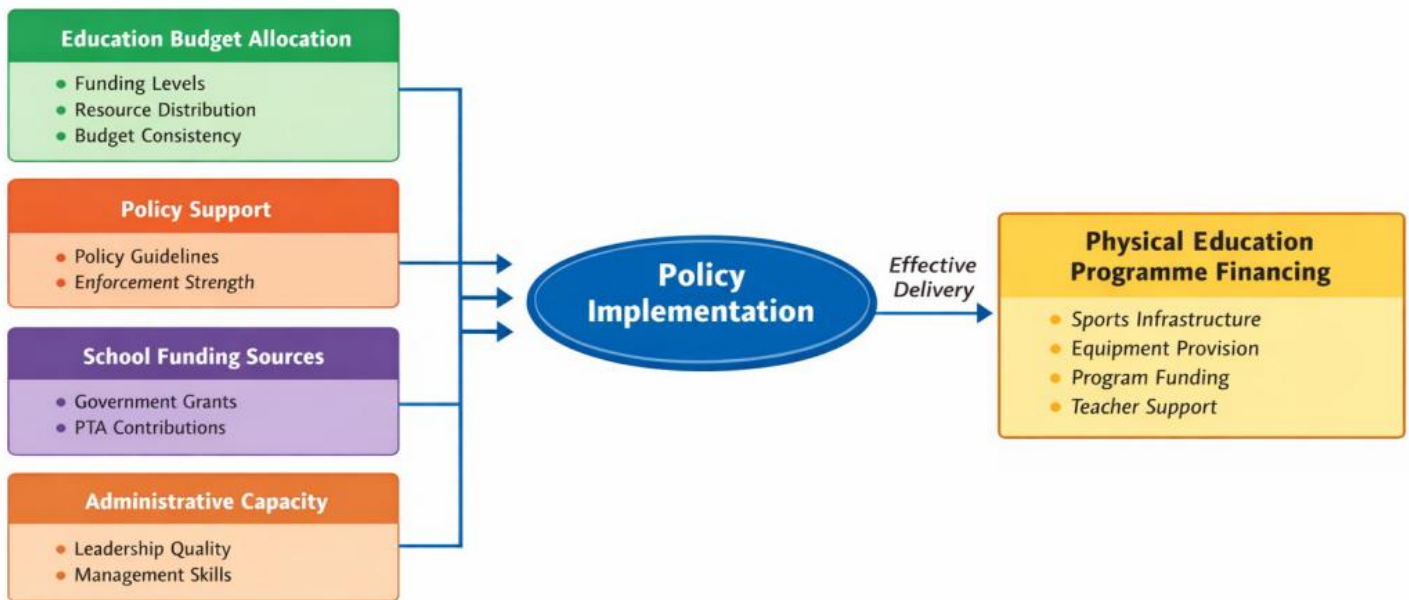


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Physical Education Programme Financing in Nigerian Schools

Source: Author’s conceptualisation based on the reviewed literature and the study’s analytical framework, 2026.

The framework shows that the financing of school physical education programmes is shaped by four major factors: education budget allocation, policy support, school funding sources, and administrative capacity. These factors operate through policy implementation to determine the availability of sports facilities, equipment, teacher support, and programme funding in Nigerian schools.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the theory of public policy implementation. The theory explains how public policies move from official formulation to practical execution. It argues that the adoption of a policy does not automatically produce the intended outcome. Effective implementation depends on adequate funding, institutional coordination, administrative capacity, monitoring, and the commitment of the actors responsible for putting the policy into practice.

Public policy implementation theory is useful in education research because many education policies fail at the point of execution. Governments may introduce policies with clear objectives, but schools may lack the resources, personnel, facilities, and administrative support required to implement them. In such cases, the problem is not necessarily the absence of policy, but the gap between policy intention and institutional capacity.

The theory is relevant to this study because physical education is formally recognised in Nigeria’s school curriculum, yet many schools struggle to deliver it effectively. This gap reflects a common implementation problem. PE may be stated in policy documents, but schools still require dedicated budgetary allocation, trained teachers, sports equipment, safe facilities, and regular monitoring before the policy can achieve its intended purpose.

The theory also explains how competing priorities affect programme implementation. In the education sector, limited funds are often directed toward salaries, classrooms, examinations, textbooks, and core academic subjects. As a result, physical education may receive less attention because it is not always treated as a priority area in school budgeting. This weakens the practical delivery of PE programmes, especially in poorly funded schools.

Another important aspect of the theory is the role of institutional coordination. School physical education financing involves several actors, including education ministries, sports authorities, state governments, school

administrators, teachers, parent-teacher associations, and community stakeholders. Where coordination is weak, financial responsibility becomes unclear, monitoring becomes ineffective, and schools are left to manage PE activities with limited support.

The theory further draws attention to the role of local-level implementers. School administrators and PE teachers translate policy into practice. Their ability to mobilise resources, allocate funds, maintain facilities, and organise PE activities affects programme outcomes. Even where national policy recognises PE, weak administrative capacity at the school level can limit implementation.

In this study, public policy implementation theory provides a suitable lens for examining why school physical education programmes in Nigeria remain poorly financed despite their formal inclusion in the curriculum. The theory helps explain the relationship among policy gaps, budgetary constraints, administrative capacity, and the actual delivery of PE programmes in schools.

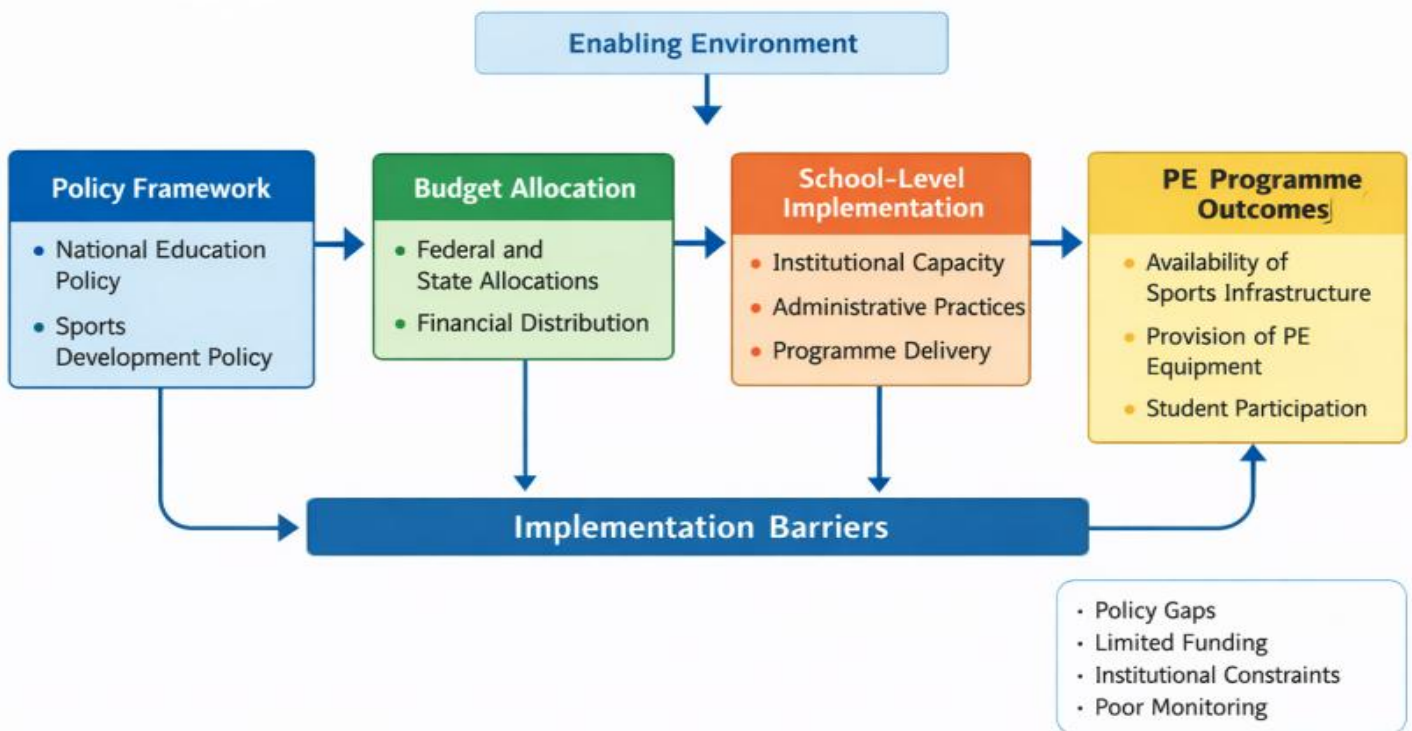


Figure 2: Policy–Budget–Implementation Analytical Framework for School Physical Education Programmes

Source: Author’s conceptualisation based on Public Policy Implementation Theory and the reviewed literature, 2026.

The framework explains how education and sports policies influence budgetary decisions, which in turn affect the implementation of physical education programmes at school level. It shows that adequate funding, institutional capacity, coordination, and monitoring are required before policy commitments can translate into functional PE facilities, equipment, teacher support, and programme delivery.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on education financing and policy implementation show that adequate funding, efficient allocation, institutional capacity, and monitoring are important conditions for effective programme delivery. In education systems, financial allocation alone does not guarantee results unless the funds are properly directed to priority areas and supported by capable administrators. Hassan et al. (2025) examined education finance, institutional efficiency, and educational outcomes in Nigeria’s Unity Schools. The study found that education finance was positively associated with educational outcomes, but the efficiency of fund allocation varied across schools. This finding suggests that the financing of physical education cannot be understood only in terms of the amount allocated; the use, targeting, and administration of funds are equally important.

Studies on physical education policy implementation also show that curriculum recognition does not automatically translate into effective school-level delivery. Ma'mun et al. (2025) compared physical education policy implementation in Indonesia and Turkey and found that PE policies were weakened by inadequate infrastructure, poor coordination, and weak alignment between policy goals and available resources. The study is relevant to Nigeria because PE is recognised in policy documents but remains poorly implemented in many schools due to funding and institutional constraints.

Resource disparity is another major issue in the empirical literature. Xu et al. (2025) examined regional disparities in physical education resources in Shaanxi Province and found that schools in more developed areas had better funding, facilities, and qualified teachers than schools in less developed areas. This finding is relevant to Nigeria, where differences between urban and rural schools influence access to PE facilities, equipment, and trained teachers. It also shows that PE financing should be examined beyond total budget allocation by considering how resources are distributed among schools.

The link between implementation intensity and PE outcomes has also been established. Wang et al. (2025) conducted a longitudinal study on school physical education policy implementation and adolescent fitness outcomes in China. The study found that stronger implementation of PE policy was associated with better student fitness outcomes. This suggests that PE policies produce meaningful results only when they are backed by adequate funding, institutional commitment, and consistent implementation.

Within Nigeria, available studies confirm the importance of financing in school facility management and programme delivery. Asuquo and Eboh (2025) examined financing and the management of school facilities and programmes in secondary schools in Rivers State. The study found that low financing affected facility maintenance and programme implementation. Although the study did not focus specifically on physical education, its findings are relevant because PE depends heavily on sports facilities, equipment, and regular maintenance.

Afonyaa-Harry and Akpan (2025) examined barriers to educational policy implementation in rural Nigerian schools. The study identified inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of skilled teachers, poor administrative capacity, low financing, and weak monitoring as major constraints. These findings support the view that PE financing problems are not only financial but also institutional. Where schools lack administrative support and monitoring structures, PE programmes are unlikely to be implemented effectively.

Studies that focus directly on PE delivery in Nigeria also show the importance of resources and trained personnel. Ajadi and Kayode (2022) examined the effect of teaching resources on the efficiency of PE teachers in Kwara State and found that the availability of teaching materials improved PE lesson delivery. Similarly, Onyeneke et al. (2023) studied teacher training and PE facilities in public schools in Imo State and reported that both variables significantly influenced the effectiveness of PE teaching. Ibrahim (2021) also found that the shortage of trained teachers hindered the implementation of the secondary school PE curriculum in Nigeria. These studies show that PE delivery depends on sustained investment in equipment, facilities, and teacher development.

Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa further supports this position. Chikoko and Mthembu (2020) reviewed education financing in the region and observed persistent challenges in funding school facilities, teaching resources, and programme delivery. Their findings show that public financing remains central to basic and secondary education, but available resources are often insufficient to meet all programme needs. This regional evidence places Nigeria's PE financing problem within a wider African education financing challenge.

Overall, the empirical literature shows four main patterns. First, adequate and efficient financing improves education programme delivery. Second, policy recognition does not guarantee implementation unless it is supported by funding, coordination, and monitoring. Third, PE effectiveness depends on facilities, equipment, trained teachers, and programme support. Fourth, resource disparities affect access to quality PE, especially between urban and rural schools.

Despite these contributions, important gaps remain. Much of the existing literature focuses on PE delivery, teaching resources, facilities, and curriculum implementation. Fewer studies examine how education budgets

provide for PE programmes, how policy gaps affect PE financing, and how school administrators manage PE under budgetary constraints. This study addresses these gaps by examining the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria through policy analysis, budget review, and interviews with school-level implementers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods policy analysis design to examine the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria. The design combined a documentary review, budget analysis, and semi-structured interviews. This approach was considered appropriate because the financing of physical education involves policy commitments, budgetary decisions, institutional arrangements, and practical school-level implementation.

The documentary review focused on national and state-level education policy documents, school curriculum guidelines, sports development policy documents, and education budget reports. Budget analysis was used to examine the extent to which physical education received identifiable financial provision within education expenditure. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain the views of school administrators and physical education teachers on funding sources, facility conditions, equipment availability, implementation gaps, and administrative challenges affecting PE delivery.

The use of mixed methods allowed the study to compare official policy and budgetary provisions with the experiences of school-level implementers. This strengthened the reliability of the findings by drawing evidence from multiple sources rather than relying on a single method.

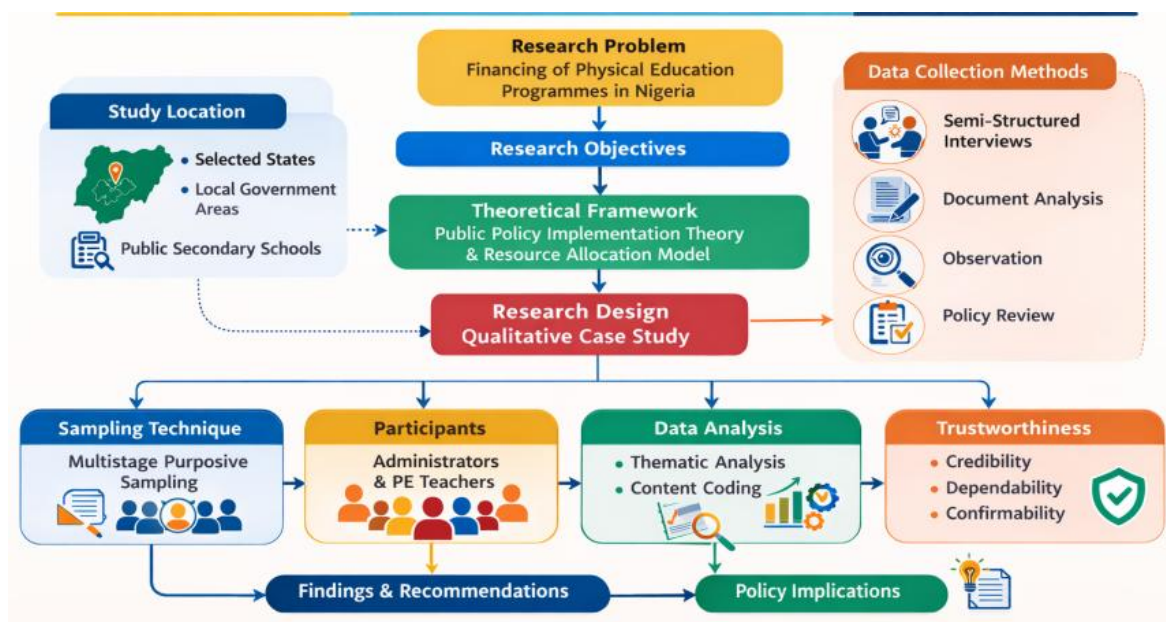


Figure 5: Research Design Flow Diagram for the Study

Source: Author’s design based on the mixed-methods policy analysis approach adopted for the study, 2026.

The diagram presents the methodological flow of the study. It shows how the research problem informed the objectives, theoretical framework, sampling procedure, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used to examine the financing of physical education programmes in Nigerian schools.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in four states in South-West and North-Central Nigeria, namely Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kwara States. These states were selected because they provide useful

variation in education funding capacity, urban-rural school distribution, and public school infrastructure conditions. Lagos and Oyo provided large urban and peri-urban school contexts, while Ekiti and Kwara provided smaller state systems with a wider spread of semi-urban and rural public schools.

The study covered eight Local Government Areas, two from each state. In each state, one urban Local Government Area and one rural or semi-urban Local Government Area were selected. This allowed the study to compare PE financing conditions across schools with different levels of government support, community support, facility availability, and administrative capacity.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study adopted a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, four states were purposively selected: Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kwara. In the second stage, two Local Government Areas were selected from each state, giving a total of eight Local Government Areas. In the third stage, two public secondary schools were selected from each Local Government Area, giving a total of sixteen public secondary schools.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants within the schools and relevant education offices. This ensured that only respondents with direct knowledge of school budgeting, PE delivery, facility management, school sports activities, and policy implementation were included.

A total of 42 participants took part in the study. This comprised 16 school administrators, 20 physical education teachers, and 6 education officials. The school administrators consisted of principals and vice-principals, while the physical education teachers were those directly responsible for PE lessons and school sports activities. The education officials were selected because of their roles in school supervision, education planning, and policy implementation.

Participant Characteristics

The participants consisted of 16 school administrators, 20 physical education teachers, and 6 education officials. The school administrators were responsible for school-level planning, resource allocation, supervision of teachers, and coordination of school activities. The PE teachers were responsible for delivering physical education lessons, organising sporting activities, managing available equipment, and advising school management on PE-related needs. The education officials provided information on policy implementation, budgetary priorities, school inspection, and monitoring arrangements.

The respondents had between 5 and 28 years of professional experience. This range was useful because it allowed the study to capture both recent and long-term experiences of PE financing and implementation in public secondary schools. The inclusion of administrators, PE teachers, and education officials also allowed the study to compare policy-level expectations with school-level realities.

Sources of Data

The study used both secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained from education policy documents, national and state education budget reports, school curriculum guidelines, sports development policy documents, and relevant government publications. These documents were reviewed to identify policy provisions for physical education, education financing priorities, and whether physical education had clear budgetary support within the school funding structure.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected school administrators, physical education teachers, and education officials. The interviews provided practical evidence on how PE programmes were financed at the school level, the adequacy of sports facilities and equipment, the role of parent-teacher associations and community support, and the challenges faced by schools in implementing PE programmes.

The use of both primary and secondary data allowed the study to compare official policy and budgetary provisions with the lived experiences of school-level implementers. This helped strengthen the reliability of the findings by ensuring that the analysis was based on documentary evidence as well as field-based responses.

Analytical Framework

The study was guided by an analytical framework linking physical education financing to four major determinants: education budget allocation, policy gaps, school funding sources, and administrative capacity. The framework assumes that the financing of PE improves when education budgets provide clear support, policies specify funding responsibilities, schools have reliable funding sources, and administrators possess the capacity to plan and manage available resources.

The relationship is expressed as follows:

$$\text{PEF} = f(\text{EBA}, \text{PG}, \text{SFS}, \text{AC})$$

Where:

PEF = Physical Education Financing;

EBA = Education Budget Allocation;

PG = Policy Gaps affecting programme implementation;

SFS = School Funding Sources;

AC = Administrative Capacity.

This framework was not used as a strict econometric estimation model. Rather, it provided a guide for organising the study's policy review, budget analysis, interview questions, and interpretation of findings. Education budget allocation was examined through federal and state education budget documents. Policy gaps were examined through education and sports policy documents. School funding sources and administrative capacity were examined through interviews with school administrators, physical education teachers, and education officials.

The framework therefore helped the study to connect policy commitments, budgetary provisions, school-level resource mobilisation, and administrative capacity with the actual financing and delivery of physical education programmes in Nigerian schools.

Interview Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 participants between March and May 2026. The interviews were guided by an interview schedule developed around the research questions. The questions focused on PE funding sources, the availability of sports facilities and equipment, budgetary constraints, school-level decision-making, policy implementation, monitoring, and reliance on alternative funding sources.

Each interview lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. With the consent of participants, responses were recorded through written notes and, where permitted, audio recording. Participants were informed that the study was for academic purposes and that their identities and school names would not be disclosed. To protect confidentiality, participants were coded as Administrator 1 to Administrator 16, PE Teacher 1 to PE Teacher 20, and Education Official 1 to Education Official 6.

Budget Analysis Procedure

Budget analysis was conducted using federal and selected state education budget documents for the 2024 fiscal year. The analysis focused on total budget size, education allocation, education's share of the total budget, sports-related expenditure, and the extent to which physical education or school sports received identifiable budgetary provision.

The selected states were Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kwara. Lagos State's 2024 budget was reviewed because of its large education and sports-related allocations. Oyo State was included because its 2024 budget gave education

a clearly stated allocation of ₦90.65 billion, representing 20.88 percent of the total budget. Kwara State was included because its approved 2024 budget showed education capital expenditure of ₦22.82 billion and total budget expenditure of ₦292.74 billion. Ekiti State was included to provide comparison with a smaller state education system.

The budget documents were examined to determine whether physical education had a dedicated budget line or whether funding for PE was merged under broader categories such as education services, school infrastructure, youth development, sports development, or extracurricular activities. Descriptive analysis was used to compare allocations across the selected states. The study also examined whether the budgetary provisions were specific enough to support school-level PE delivery.

Method of Data Analysis

The study used policy analysis, budget analysis, and thematic analysis.

Policy analysis was used to examine relevant education and sports policy documents. The analysis focused on whether PE was clearly recognised, whether implementation responsibilities were assigned, whether funding mechanisms were specified, and whether monitoring arrangements were provided.

Budget analysis was used to examine education spending patterns and the extent to which PE received identifiable financial support. The analysis compared federal and state education allocations, recurrent and capital expenditure patterns, and available budget lines related to sports facilities, school sports, PE equipment, and extracurricular activities.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data. The responses were read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas. Codes were developed around funding constraints, equipment shortages, facility inadequacy, weak policy enforcement, dependence on parent-teacher associations, administrative difficulties, and inequality between schools. These codes were grouped into major themes and interpreted in relation to the research questions and public policy implementation theory.

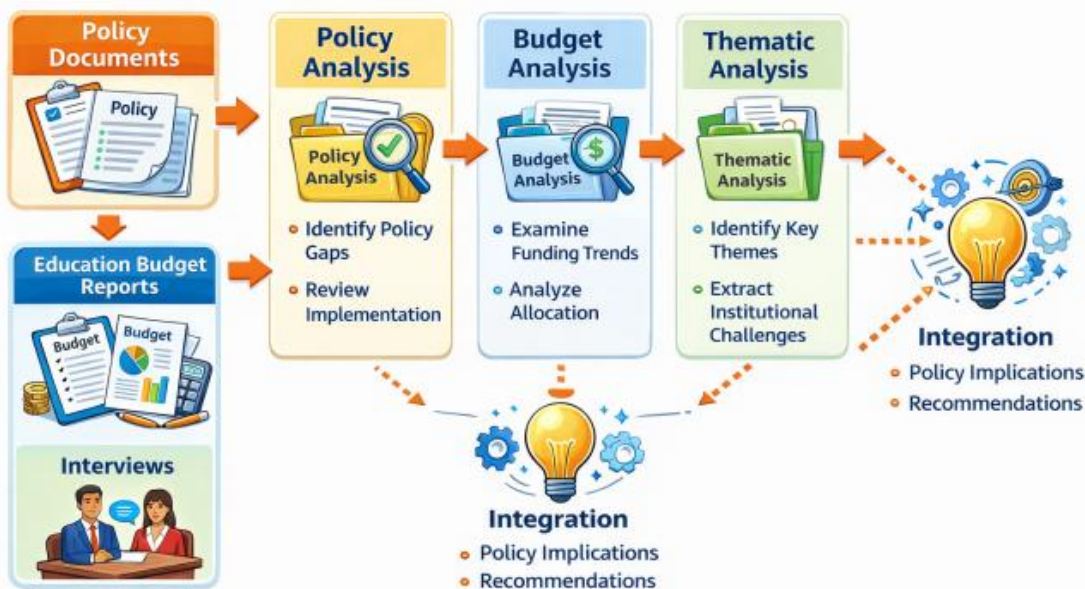


Figure 6: Data Analysis Process for the Study

Source: Author’s design based on the policy analysis, budget analysis, and thematic analysis procedures adopted for the study, 2026.

The diagram shows how data from policy documents, education budget reports, and interviews were analysed. Policy analysis was used to examine policy gaps, budget analysis was used to identify funding patterns, and thematic analysis was used to interpret the views of school administrators and PE teachers.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

The credibility of the study was strengthened through triangulation. Evidence was drawn from policy documents, budget reports, and interviews. This allowed the study to compare official provisions with school-level experiences. The interview guide was structured around the research questions to ensure consistency across respondents.

To improve dependability, the study followed a clear coding procedure for the interview data. Similar responses were grouped under common themes, while divergent views were noted. Documentary evidence from policy and budget reports was used to support the interpretation of interview responses. This helped to reduce over-reliance on personal opinions and improve the reliability of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed basic ethical principles in the collection and use of primary data. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to decline participation. Their responses were used only for academic purposes. No personal information was reported in a way that could identify individual participants or schools. Codes were used instead of names to protect confidentiality.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section discusses the findings on the financing of physical education programmes in Nigerian schools. The discussion is organised around education budget allocation, funding for physical education, policy implementation gaps, school-level budgetary constraints, and the views of school administrators and PE teachers.

Education Budget Allocation and PE Financing

The findings revealed that education spending in Nigeria has increased in nominal terms, but this increase has not translated into adequate financing for physical education programmes. Budget review showed that a large share of education expenditure was directed toward recurrent costs such as salaries, administration, school operations, and examination-related activities. Although these expenditures are important, they left limited funds for programme-based activities such as physical education.

This finding suggests that PE financing is affected by the broader structure of education budgeting. Physical education competes with other urgent school needs, including classrooms, textbooks, teacher recruitment, school repairs, and instructional materials. As a result, PE is often treated as a lower-priority activity even though it is formally included in the school curriculum.

The results support previous studies which reported that education financing in developing countries is often constrained by competing priorities and limited public resources (Akinwale & Grobler, 2021; Oketch et al., 2021). It also confirms the argument that the implementation of school programmes depends not only on policy recognition but also on the actual availability of funds.

Table 1: Comparative Education and Sports-Related Budget Allocation in Selected States, 2024

State	Total 2024 Budget	Education Allocation / Education-Related Provision	Sports-Related Provision	Approximate Education Share	Observation
Lagos	#2.268 trillion	#180.693 billion for education projects	#13.613 billion for Lagos State Sports Commission	7.97% based on education project provision	Education and sports have visible allocations, but school PE is not clearly separated as a dedicated budget line.
Oyo	#434.222 billion	#90.655 billion for education	Not clearly specified as school PE funding	20.88%	Education receives a strong share of the budget, but PE-specific provision is not clearly identified.

Kwara	#292.741 billion	#22.816 billion education expenditure	billion capital	Recreation, culture and religion capital allocation of #4.992 billion	7.79% based on education capital provision	Education capital allocation is visible, but PE funding appears merged under broader education or recreation categories.
Ekiti	#159.572 billion	#43.000 billion estimated education sector allocation	billion	Not clearly specified as school PE funding	26.95%	Education receives priority attention, but PE-specific financing still requires clearer budget classification.

Source: Author’s compilation from selected 2024 state budget documents and budget speeches.

The table shows that education received visible budgetary attention in the selected states, but physical education was not clearly presented as a separate school-level budget item. Lagos showed a large education project provision and a separate sports commission allocation, while Oyo allocated 20.88 percent of its total budget to education. Kwara’s budget showed education capital expenditure, but the provision did not clearly identify school physical education, equipment, or facility maintenance. This supports the finding that PE is recognised within the education system but remains weakly specified in budgetary terms.

Inadequate Funding for PE Facilities and Equipment

The study found that many schools lacked adequate sports facilities, equipment, and instructional materials for effective PE delivery. Interview responses showed that several schools had old or poorly maintained sports facilities, while others lacked basic equipment required for practical PE lessons. This affected the quality and regularity of PE activities.

The shortage of equipment limited the range of activities that PE teachers could conduct. In some schools, practical lessons were reduced, irregular, or handled mainly as theoretical instruction. This weakens the purpose of PE because the subject requires physical participation, skills development, and structured movement activities.

This finding agrees with Ajadi and Kayode (2022), who found that teaching resources influenced the effectiveness of PE teachers. It also aligns with Onyeneke et al. (2023), who reported that teacher training and PE facilities significantly affected the delivery of physical education in public schools. The implication is clear: without regular investment in facilities, equipment, and teacher support, PE cannot function as an effective curriculum subject.

Table 2: Physical Education Financing Challenges Identified in the Study

Challenge Area	Specific Problem	Effect on PE Programme Delivery
Budgetary allocation	No clear or dedicated PE budget line	PE activities are irregular or poorly funded
Facilities	Old, inadequate, or poorly maintained sports spaces	Practical lessons become limited
Equipment	Shortage of balls, nets, cones, mats, and safety materials	Teachers cannot conduct varied PE activities
Teacher support	Limited training and professional development	PE delivery quality declines
Policy implementation	Weak monitoring and unclear responsibility	Schools do not prioritise PE consistently
Alternative funding	Dependence on PTA, donations, and community support	Creates inequality among schools

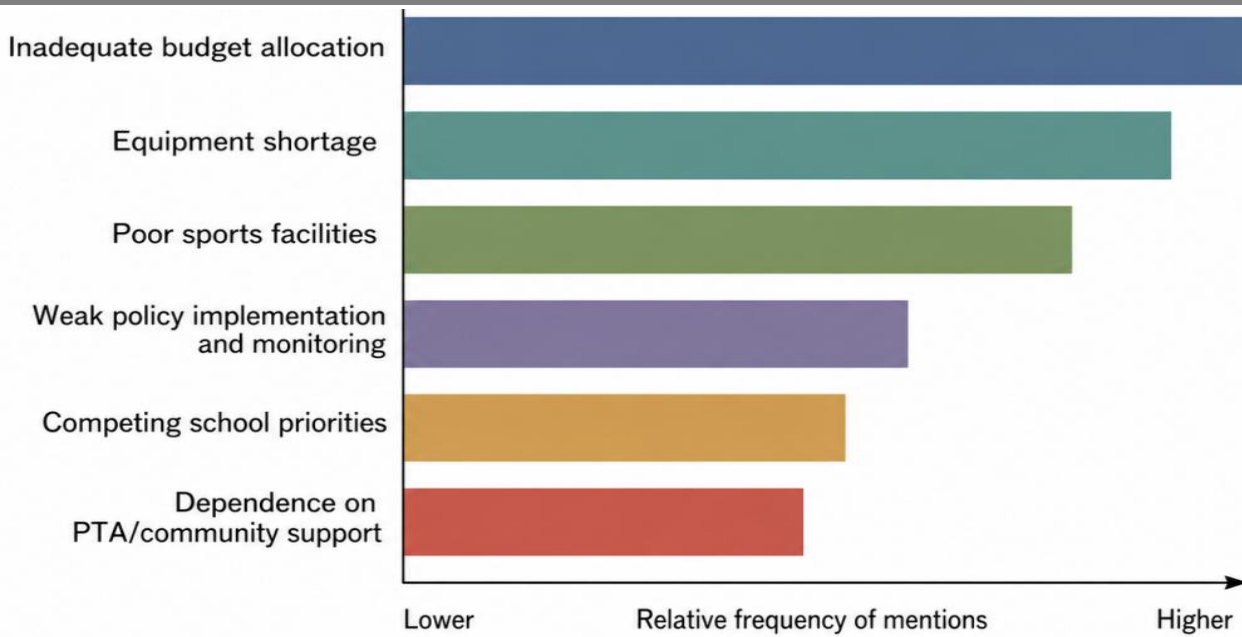


Figure 7: Major PE Financing Challenges Reported by Schools

Source: Author’s analysis based on interview responses and thematic discussion of PE financing challenges, 2026.

The chart presents the relative prominence of major financing challenges reported by schools. It shows that inadequate budget allocation, equipment shortages, and poor sports facilities were the most frequently emphasized constraints, while weak policy implementation, competing school priorities, and dependence on PTA/community support also affected PE programme delivery.

Policy Gaps and Weak Implementation

The findings showed that physical education is recognised in education policy, but the policy framework does not provide sufficient direction on funding, implementation monitoring, and accountability. This created a gap between policy intention and school-level practice.

Although PE is included in the curriculum, many schools did not receive dedicated funds for PE activities. The responsibility for financing PE was often left to school administrators, who had to make difficult decisions within limited budgets. This reflects a policy-implementation gap, where a programme exists in official documents but lacks the financial and institutional backing needed for effective delivery.

Weak monitoring also affected implementation. The study found limited evidence of consistent supervision to ensure that schools provided PE facilities, maintained equipment, or organised regular PE activities. Where monitoring is weak, schools may prioritise examination-oriented subjects and neglect PE, especially when resources are limited.

This finding supports Public Policy Implementation Theory, which argues that policies do not produce results automatically. Effective implementation requires funding, coordination, administrative capacity, and monitoring. In this study, weak policy enforcement and unclear financial responsibility contributed to poor PE financing.

Interview evidence supported the budget analysis. Most respondents stated that physical education appeared on the school timetable but did not receive a separate financial allocation. One school administrator explained:

“Physical education is part of the timetable, but there is no separate money released to the school for PE. When we need balls, jerseys, or repairs to the field, we have to use PTA support or small internal funds.” (Administrator 4, urban public secondary school)

A physical education teacher described how equipment shortages affected practical lessons:

“Sometimes I teach the students the rules of games in the classroom because the equipment is not enough. For practical work, one or two balls may have to serve many students, so full participation becomes difficult.”
 (PE Teacher 7, semi-urban public secondary school)

Another PE teacher linked weak funding to poor facility maintenance:

“The field is available, but it is not properly maintained. During the rainy season, we cannot use it well. We have reported it several times, but there is no specific fund for that kind of repair.”
 (PE Teacher 12, rural public secondary school)

An education official also confirmed the problem of weak budget classification:

“Most education budgets provide for schools generally, but they do not usually separate physical education as a specific programme. This makes it difficult to track what is actually spent on PE facilities, equipment, and school sports.”
 (Education Official 2)

These responses show that the financing problem is not only the size of education budgets. The stronger issue is the absence of a clearly defined PE budget line, weak monitoring of PE implementation, and dependence on unstable school-level support sources.

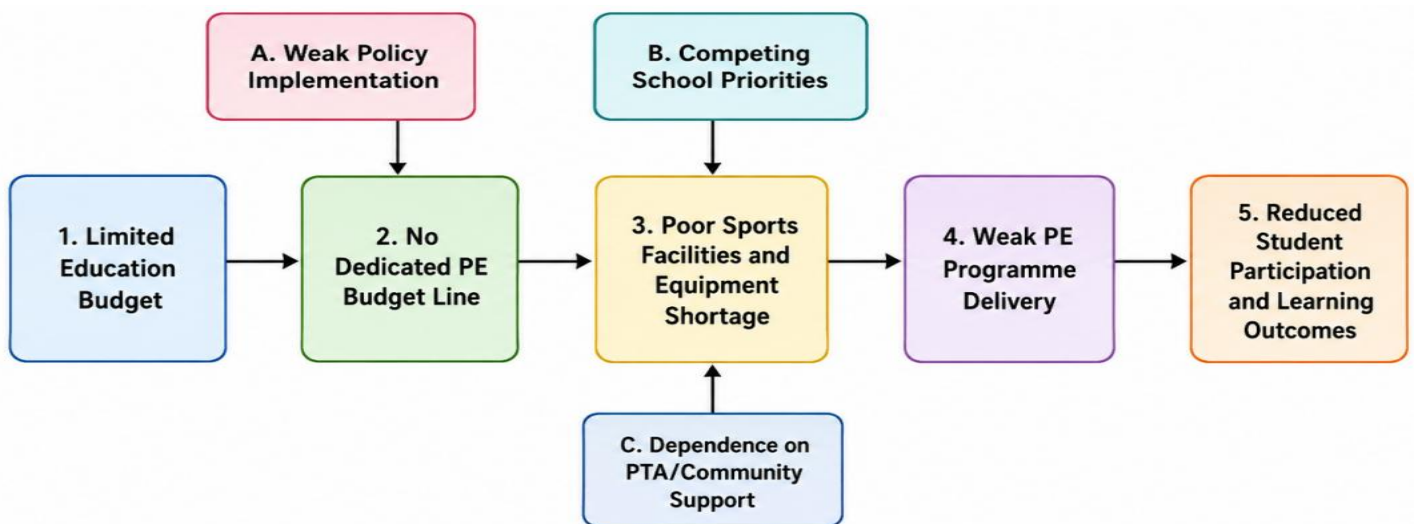


Figure 8: PE Financing Constraint Pathway in Nigerian Schools

Source: Author’s analysis based on policy review, budget analysis, and interview findings, 2026.

The diagram shows how weak policy implementation, competing school priorities, and dependence on PTA or community support contribute to the absence of a dedicated PE budget line, poor sports facilities and equipment shortages, weak programme delivery, and reduced student participation and learning outcomes.

Competing School Priorities and Budgetary Constraints

The study found that school administrators operated under tight financial conditions. Available funds were often used for urgent needs such as classroom repairs, teaching materials, staff-related expenses, security, utilities, and administrative costs. PE activities were therefore postponed or funded only when extra resources became available.

This result shows that PE financing is not only a national budget issue but also a school-level allocation problem. Even where schools receive general funds, PE may not receive a defined share. The absence of a dedicated PE budget line makes the subject vulnerable to neglect when schools face financial pressure.

The findings also showed that inter-house sports, interschool competitions, fitness activities, and extracurricular sports programmes were often affected by funding shortages. These activities require transport, equipment, uniforms, refreshments, officiating, first-aid support, and facility preparation. Without budgetary provision, schools either cancel such activities or depend on informal support.

Reliance on Alternative Funding Sources

The study found that some schools relied on parent-teacher associations, community donations, old students' associations, and occasional private support to finance PE activities. These alternative sources helped schools purchase basic equipment, repair facilities, or organise sports events.

However, reliance on informal funding created inequality among schools. Schools located in wealthier communities were more likely to receive support, while schools in poorer communities struggled to raise funds. This widened the gap between schools with functional PE programmes and those with weak or irregular PE activities.

The findings suggest that alternative funding can support PE, but it cannot replace structured public financing. Sustainable PE delivery requires clear government funding, defined school-level budgetary provision, and accountability for the use of funds.

Table 3: Sources of PE Funding in Nigerian Schools

Funding Source	Nature of Support	Strength	Limitation
Government allocation	General school funding and occasional education support	Formal and potentially sustainable	Often not PE-specific
School internal funds	Minor school-level spending	Flexible for urgent needs	Usually inadequate
Parent-teacher associations	Contributions for sports events or equipment	Useful for immediate support	Depends on parents' income level
Community donations	Support from individuals or local groups	Can assist poor schools occasionally	Irregular and unpredictable
Old students' associations	Facility repair or equipment donations	Helpful where alumni networks are strong	Not available to all schools
Private sponsors	Sports competition or equipment support	Can improve programme visibility	Usually short-term

Administrative Capacity and PE Programme Delivery

The findings showed that school administrators played an important role in determining the level of support given to PE. Their decisions influenced whether funds were allocated to equipment, facility maintenance, competitions, and teacher support. However, administrators were constrained by limited funds and lack of clear policy direction.

Administrative capacity was also important in resource mobilisation. Some administrators were able to secure support from parent-teacher associations and community stakeholders, while others had limited access to external support. This shows that PE financing depends partly on the ability of school leaders to plan, prioritise, and mobilise resources.

Nevertheless, placing too much responsibility on school administrators without adequate public funding is not sustainable. School-level initiatives can improve PE delivery, but they should operate within a stronger policy and budgetary framework.

Summary of Discussion

The Findings showed that the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria is constrained by weak budgetary provision, poor policy implementation, inadequate facilities, shortages of equipment, limited administrative capacity, and dependence on informal funding sources. Although PE is recognised in the

curriculum, it has not received the level of financial and institutional support required for effective implementation.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study examined the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria, with emphasis on policy gaps and budgetary challenges. The study adopted a mixed-methods policy analysis approach involving policy document review, education budget analysis, and semi-structured interviews with school administrators, physical education teachers, and education officials. The study covered selected public secondary schools in Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kwara States, with evidence drawn from 42 participants comprising 16 school administrators, 20 physical education teachers, and 6 education officials.

The findings showed that physical education is formally recognised in the Nigerian school curriculum, but its implementation is weakened by inadequate and poorly specified financing. The review of selected state budget documents showed that education received visible allocations in the 2024 fiscal year. For instance, Oyo State allocated ₦90.655 billion to education, representing 20.88 percent of its total budget, while Kwara State recorded ₦22.816 billion as education capital expenditure. Lagos State also had substantial education and sports-related allocations. However, the budget analysis showed that physical education was rarely presented as a separate school-level budget line. This made it difficult to identify specific allocations for PE equipment, sports facility maintenance, teacher support, and school sports activities.

The interview findings supported the budget evidence. Many respondents reported that PE appeared on school timetables but lacked dedicated funding. School administrators and PE teachers explained that schools often relied on parent-teacher associations, internal funds, community donations, old students' associations, and occasional private support to purchase sports equipment or organise PE activities. This funding arrangement was irregular and unequal, as schools in poorer communities had fewer opportunities to mobilise external support.

The study also found that inadequate sports facilities, a shortage of equipment, poor maintenance of playgrounds, weak monitoring, and unclear funding responsibility limited effective PE delivery. In some schools, practical PE lessons were reduced or replaced with classroom-based explanations because sports materials were insufficient. The findings therefore show that the major problem is not simply the absence of policy, but the weak connection between policy recognition, budgetary provision, institutional monitoring, and school-level implementation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the financing of school physical education programmes in Nigeria remains weak despite the formal recognition of PE in the curriculum. The evidence from budget reviews and interviews shows that education may receive substantial allocations in state budgets, but physical education is often hidden under broad education, youth development, sports, or school administration votes. This weak budget classification makes PE financing difficult to track, monitor, and sustain.

The study further concludes that physical education cannot function effectively where schools lack dedicated funds for sports equipment, facility maintenance, teacher support, interschool competitions, and regular physical activity programmes. Treating PE as a minor or optional school activity undermines its contribution to learners' health, discipline, teamwork, talent development, and holistic education.

The findings also show that reliance on informal funding sources cannot provide a sustainable solution. Although parent-teacher associations, community donations, old students' associations, and private sponsors can assist schools, they cannot replace structured public financing. Such sources are irregular and depend heavily on the income level and social networks of each school community. This creates inequality between schools in well-resourced communities and those in poorer or rural areas.

The study therefore concludes that sustainable PE delivery requires clear budget lines, stronger policy implementation, improved monitoring, better school-level planning, and accountability for PE-related expenditure. Physical education financing should be treated as part of education quality, student well-being, and national sports development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that federal and state education authorities should create dedicated budget lines for school physical education programmes. These budget lines should cover sports equipment, facility maintenance, PE teacher support, interschool competitions, first-aid materials, and other school-based physical activity programmes.

Education ministries should improve budget classification so that PE-related allocations can be clearly identified and tracked. Budget items for school sports, sports facilities, physical education equipment, and extracurricular physical activity should not be hidden under broad administrative or infrastructure headings. Clear classification will improve transparency and make it easier to assess whether schools are receiving adequate support for PE.

Government should increase investment in school sports infrastructure. Priority should be given to the rehabilitation of playgrounds, the provision of multipurpose courts, the purchase of basic sports equipment, and the maintenance of safe spaces for physical activity. Rural and underserved schools should receive special attention because they are less able to mobilise alternative funding from parents, alumni, or private sponsors.

Education inspectors and relevant sports authorities should strengthen monitoring of PE implementation. School inspection should go beyond general academic supervision to include the availability of PE teachers, usable sports facilities, functional equipment, regular PE lessons, and evidence of student participation in physical activity.

School administrators should receive training in PE-related budget planning, facility maintenance, and responsible resource mobilisation. This will help them make better use of limited resources and attract support from parent-teacher associations, old students' associations, local governments, community leaders, and private sponsors.

Education authorities should also strengthen collaboration between schools, sports councils, local governments, parent-teacher associations, and community stakeholders. Such collaboration should be properly documented and monitored so that external support complements government funding rather than replacing it.

Finally, PE teachers should receive regular professional development. Training should focus on modern PE teaching methods, inclusive participation, safety management, low-cost equipment use, and effective organisation of school sports. This will improve the quality of PE delivery, especially in schools facing serious resource constraints.

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