

# Assessment of Diagnostic Parameters for Access to Basic Education in Akko Local Government Area, Gombe State

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## ABSTRACT

A well-educated population is essential for driving economic growth and organising innovation, as well as competitiveness, leading to improved economic outcomes and reduced poverty. The study assessed the diagnostic parameters for access to basic education in Akko Local Government Area, Gombe State. The study employed survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the 1,984 primary schools and lower junior secondary schools' teachers in Akko L.G.A where a sample of 322 respondents were drawn from the population using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was used for data collection and was validated and tested for reliability (a crumbach alpha of 0.723 was recorded). Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that students/pupils in Akko L.G.A, Gombe State need basic education but are faced with some difficulties in getting learning resources. Also, there is a wide gender disparity of learners that exist in all the basic education schools. It was recommended that the government should develop policies that will reduce difficulties faced by learners to avert its effect on the basic education programme. Further, the government should organize campaigns to create awareness against gender bias in school enrolment and learning.

**Keywords:** Access, Basic education needs, Gender disparity, Learners' challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is internationally recognised as a vital human right and a crucial driver of individual empowerment, societal harmony, and national progress. Globally, access to quality basic education is crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016; United Nations, 2020). Fundamental education serves as the foundation for literacy, numeracy, critical analysis, and civic participation. This represents the initial step toward further study and a lucrative employment opportunity. Despite longstanding commitments from nations and the global community, achieving equitable access to fundamental education remains a challenge in numerous poor countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) initiative in Nigeria officially delivers fundamental education. It comprises nine years of uninterrupted education, consisting of six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary schooling. The UBE policy was established to address historical issues of unequal educational access and to ensure that all school-age children get free, compulsory, and universal basic education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2019). Since the inception of the UBE plan, significant advances have been made in increasing student enrolment; nonetheless, access to fundamental education remains inequitable across regions, social strata, and communities. Nigeria continues to have a significant number of children out of school, predominantly in the northern region (UNICEF, 2022). The Northeast geographical zone of Nigeria, encompassing Gombe State, faces numerous social, economic, and contextual challenges that hinder access to education. The issues encompass pervasive poverty, insecurity, population displacement, poor adult literacy rates, gender disparities, inadequate educational infrastructure, and a deficiency of competent educators (UNICEF, 2022; the World Bank, 2020). Gombe State has remained relatively stable in comparison to

neighbouring states; yet, numerous communities continue to have significant challenges accessing education, particularly at the primary level. Children from rural regions, nomadic families, displaced households, and low-income urban communities predominantly experience the impact.

The concept of access to basic education includes not only the physical presence of schools but also many additional factors. Contemporary educational research emphasises that access must be assessed using multiple diagnostic criteria, such as geographical proximity to educational institutions, affordability, safety and security, availability of learning resources, adequacy of infrastructure, teacher accessibility, socio-cultural acceptance, parental support, and the effectiveness of policy implementation (Lewin, 2015; UNESCO, 2021). These characteristics collectively influence children's capacity to engage in, persist in, and complete basic education. Consequently, if you do not methodically assess these interconnected aspects prior to evaluating access, you may fail to obtain a comprehensive understanding of policy responses. Recently, diagnostic methodologies have gained prominence in educational planning since they assist policymakers and academics in identifying critical issues within education systems and concentrating on context-specific responses (UNESCO, 2021). In Nigeria's decentralised education system, where local governments oversee school monitoring, community mobilisation, and infrastructure development, diagnostic indicators are particularly helpful. Effective planning and resource allocation necessitate a clear understanding of the specific issues present in each locality.

The Akko Local Government Area (LGA) of Gombe State is a distinctive environment for education due to its combination of rural and semi-urban characteristics. The LGA encompasses diverse populations characterised by varying cultural practices, social origins, and lifestyles. Numerous public primary and junior secondary schools exist within the LGA; yet, disparities in school participation, attendance, and completion rates persist among children of basic education age. Unofficial reports from community leaders and educational stakeholders indicate that factors such as distance to schools, household poverty, early marriage, child labour, insufficient learning facilities, and inadequate instructional materials continue to impede access to education for certain individuals in the LGA. However, empirical and thoroughly documented evidence concerning the relative influence of these factors within Akko LGA remains inadequate. Furthermore, national data and statewide educational records frequently obscure disparities in access circumstances at the local level. Policies and intervention initiatives based solely on aggregate statistics may insufficiently address the specific issues encountered by grassroots groups. This underscores the importance of localised diagnostic evaluations that focus on clearly defined access criteria within particular local government jurisdictions.

This study seeks to assess the diagnostic criteria for access to basic education in the Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State. The objective of the study is to furnish evidence-based insights that assist local and state education authorities in enhancing equitable access to fundamental education by examining critical factors such as school availability and proximity, infrastructure and learning facility quality, teacher supply, household socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, safety and school environment, and community engagement. The study's findings are expected to enhance planning, improve targeting of UBE interventions, and strengthen strategies for delivering inclusive and sustainable basic education in Akko LGA and comparable regions in North-East Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The ongoing national and international pledges to universal basic education, access to fundamental education in Nigeria continues to be inequitable and significantly restricted, especially in the northern region. Despite the establishment of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) project to ensure free and compulsory education for all children, a significant number of school-age children in the Northeast region still face restricted access, inconsistent attendance, and premature withdrawal from school. This issue continues to exist even in comparatively secure regions like Gombe, where enhancements in policy frameworks have not reliably resulted in equitable access at the community level. In the Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State, notable discrepancies are seen in school engagement, attendance, and the transfer from primary to junior secondary education among children of basic education age. Available state and national education statistics offer only aggregated data and fail to sufficiently reflect the various local factors influencing access to education within the varied communities of Akko LGA. As a result, educational planning and intervention initiatives are

frequently executed without adequate empirical knowledge regarding the genuine obstacles encountered by learners at the grassroots level.

Moreover, access to basic education is affected by various interconnected diagnostic factors, such as the availability and proximity of schools, the adequacy of infrastructure and learning resources, the presence of qualified educators, household socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, safety and the school environment, and community support for education. Anecdotal evidence in Akko LGA indicates that long distances to schools in certain settlements, insufficient classroom space, inadequate instructional materials, poverty-related challenges, early marriage, child labour, and weak community engagement persistently hinder children's opportunities to enrol, attend, and complete basic education. The relative contribution and severity of these characteristics have not been carefully investigated.

The lack of a systematic and contextually relevant evaluation of diagnostic criteria for access to basic education in Akko Local Government Area results in a significant deficiency in evidence for informed decision-making. In the absence of explicit identification and prioritisation of the primary limitations on access, actions under the UBE program and associated governmental initiatives may be inadequately targeted and insufficiently attuned to local conditions. This study is essential to empirically evaluate the diagnostic parameters influencing access to basic education in Akko LGA, aiming to provide reliable, localised evidence that can guide policy formulation, planning, and implementation strategies to enhance equitable access to basic education in the region.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to assess the diagnostic parameters influencing access to basic education in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1 assess the extent to which basic education needs are adequately provided for learners in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State;
- 2 examine the extent to which difficulties faced by learners influence the effectiveness of basic education programmes in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State; and
- 3 determine whether gender disparity exists in access to basic education among learners in basic education schools in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1 To what extent are the basic education needs of learners adequately provided in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State?
- 2 To what extent do the difficulties faced by learners affect the effectiveness of basic education programmes in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State?
- 3 To what extent does gender disparity exist in access to basic education among learners in basic education schools in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the difficulties faced by learners and the effectiveness of basic education programmes in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant gender disparity in access to basic education among learners in basic education schools in Akko Local Government Area of Gombe State.

## METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component will measure diagnostic parameters of access to basic education (e.g., enrolment rates, teacher-pupil ratios, infrastructure availability), while the qualitative component will explore perceptions and lived experiences of teachers, parents, and education officials. A convergent parallel design will be used, whereby both strands are collected simultaneously and then integrated during analysis. Mixed methods ensure both breadth and depth in assessing access barriers and facilitating more comprehensive recommendations. The population comprised all the 1984 primary schools and lower secondary schools' teachers in Akko LGA where a sample of 322 teachers was drawn from the population using the proportionate stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was used for data collection. A multistage sampling technique was used: Stage 1: School Selection: A List of all primary/basic schools in Akko LGA will be obtained from the Local Education Authority. A stratified random sample of schools will be selected to represent urban and rural areas. Stage 2: Participant Selection: From selected schools, pupils will be chosen using systematic random sampling; teachers and parents will be selected using simple random sampling. The sample size will be determined using an established formula (e.g., Krejcie & Morgan's table or Cochran's formula) to ensure representativeness and statistical power for quantitative analysis.

The study used a structured questionnaire titled "Diagnostic Parameters for Access to Basic Education Questionnaire", which was administered to pupils and teachers. The questionnaire collected numerical data on diagnostic parameters such as enrolment and attendance patterns, distance to schoolteacher-pupil ratio, availability of classroom materials, and perceptions of barriers to access. The instrument used four scale rating items. A checklist was used to record observable diagnostic factors in schools; Classroom conditions, Sanitation facilities, Library and learning resources, and Teacher presence during class hours. Content validity was ensured through expert review by educational researchers and basic education authorities. The questionnaire undergoes reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.70 was established, which suggested a higher level of consistency. Ethical clearance was sought from the university research board and permissions from the Gombe State Ministry of Education and the Akko LGA education office. The instruments were piloted to check clarity and timing. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires and conducted the checklist observations. Data was entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics using means and Standard deviation were used to summarise diagnostic parameters. Inferential statistics such as Chi-square and t-tests were used to examine relationships between variables (e.g., distance to school and attendance).

## RESULTS

Table 1. Basic Education Needs in Akko LGA

S/N	Items	Mean	Std Deviation
1	Children in my area don't need basic education	2.91	0.768
2	Students/pupils are aware of the importance of basic education	2.71	0.736
3	students/pupils in my area need education to survive in the society	2.87	0.801
4	student/pupils in my area only prefer agricultural education	2.47	1.056
5	Children in my area have much interest in education	3.11	0.725
6	learners do well in the field of educational technology	2.80	0.898

7	students/ pupils in my area have access to scholarship in technology	2.88	0.783
8	Student/pupils in my area generally have access to scholarships	3.13	1.251
9	student/pupils in my area often get aid from international donors	2.64	0.689
10	students/pupils in my area need secured and learning	2.88	0.957
11	Curriculum use for learners in my area basic education is entrepreneurial in nature	3.33	0.718
12	Student/pupils in basic education in my area are interested in learning skills acquisitions	2.89	0.938
13	Teachers of basic education schools use curriculum relevant to the needs of learners	3.12	0.815
14	Teachers of basic education in my area expose the learners to the present-day technology	3.13	0.744
15	Teachers of basic education in my area encourage learners to develop better in their skills	2.89	0.955
	Grand Mean	2.91	0.862

Decision Rule: 2.50

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions of basic education needs. The average score of 2.91 (SD = 0.862) is higher than the benchmark of 2.50, which means that respondents mostly agreed that students in the area have significant basic education needs and that while current resources are useful, they still need to be improved. Specifically, respondents agreed that children show interest in education (M = 3.11), that learners generally have access to scholarships (M = 3.13), and that teachers use curricula relevant to learners' needs (M = 3.12). Teachers were also thought to show students how to use modern technology (M = 3.13) and to help them learn useful skills (M = 2.89). But when it came to issues like international aid and technology-based support, there was moderate agreement, with means ranging from 2.64 to 2.88. The highest mean score (M = 3.33) was recorded on the entrepreneurial nature of the curriculum, suggesting that basic education in the area is increasingly orientated towards employability and skills acquisition. Overall, the findings indicate that, although learners' needs are being recognised and partly addressed, gaps still exist in technology exposure and external support.

Table 2: Difficulties faced by learners in Akko LGA

S/N	Items	Mean	Std Derivation
1.	Learners in my area do not learn fast as a result of poor unfriendly learning environment.	3:00	0.815
2.	Student/pupils in my area learn in overcrowded classes	2.91	1.186
3.	Student in my area trek a long distance to access basic education	2.95	0.840
4.	No provision of learning materials for learners in basic education schools in my area.	2.87	0.737

5.	There is no provision for adequate number of teachers in basic education in my area.	2.79	1.012
6.	There is no adequate provision for quality teachers in basic education in my area.	2.73	0.991
7.	There is no adequate provision of ICT faculties in basic education in my area.	2.76	0.842
8.	Student/pupils in basic education in area can manipulate ICT facilities provided	3.09	0.960
9.	Student /pupils in basic education in my area find it difficult to learn skill development subject.	3.2	0.855
10.	Educational resources allocation to the basic education in my area are not adequate to cater for the number of student/pupils	2.76	0.927
11.	Student/pupils in basic education schools in Akko LGA do not have access to clean drinking.	2.85	0.795
12.	Provision of infrastructural facilities in the basic school in my area is adequate.	3.04	0.705
13.	There is no provision for first aid facilities for basic education in my area.	2.92	0.643
14.	There is no functional library facilities in basic education in my area	2.78	1.006
15.	There is no provision for sporting facilities for pupils in basic education in my area	2.91	0.775
	Grand Mean	2.89	0.872

Decision Rule: 2.50

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 shows the difficulties encountered by learners in basic education. The grand mean of 2.89 (SD = 0.872), which is above the decision rule of 2.50, reveals that respondents agreed that learners face considerable challenges. Some of the biggest problems are unfriendly learning environments that slow down learning (M = 3.00), classrooms that are too full (M = 2.91), and long distances that students have to walk to get to school (M = 2.95). Respondents also indicated inadequate provision of learning materials (M = 2.87), insufficient numbers of teachers (M = 2.79), and inadequate availability of quality teachers (M = 2.73). Challenges related to ICT infrastructure were also evident, as respondents agreed that ICT facilities are not adequately provided (M = 2.76). In addition, learners were perceived to experience difficulty in skill-development subjects (M = 3.20), while educational resource allocation was considered inadequate for the size of the learner population (M = 2.76). Other critical constraints include limited access to clean drinking water (M = 2.85), lack of first-aid facilities (M = 2.92), absence of functional libraries (M = 2.78), and inadequate sporting facilities (M = 2.91). These results suggest that structural, instructional, and environmental constraints significantly hinder the effective delivery of basic education in the area.

Table 3: Gender disparity of learners in Akko LGA

S/N	Items	Mean	Std/ Deviation
1.	More children are enrolled in basic educate school in Akko LGA than their Female, counter parts	3.06	0.616

2.	There are female dropouts than their male counter parts in basic education school in my area	2.86	0.589
3.	Teachers give equal attention to male and female student/pupils	3.16	0.939
4.	There are more of male dropouts than female	3.16	0.939
5.	Parents are more interested in the enrolment of male children than the female children in basic education school	2.97	0.907
6.	Enrolment in basic education schools favours male students/pupils than the female in my area.	3.06	0.815
7.	Culture gives more preference to male students than the female student in basic education in my area	2.96	0.746
8.	The basic education in my area promotes a culture of gender equality.	2.93	0.888
9.	Female leaners are encourage to pursue careers in traditionally male dominated field in basic education schools	2.80	0.763
10.	The basic schools in my area provide support serves specifically for female students.	2.86	0.889
11.	Students/Pupils enrolments to basic education schools in my area is gender inclusive	3.06	0.616
12.	Female students/pupils of basic education schools in my area access more financial aid than their male counter parts	2.86	0.889
13.	Both male and female students/pupils have the same level of accessibility to their teachers in basic education schools in my area.	3.16	0.823
14.	Practical exhibition in basic education school in my area are more of male oriented jobs	2.97	0.939
15.	Male students/pupils have more opportunities to participate in extra circular activities than their female counter parts in basic education in my area	3.06	0.907
	<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.922</b>

Decision Rule: 2.50

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents the responses regarding gender disparity in basic education. The grand mean score of 2.97 (SD = 0.922) indicates general agreement that gender-related differences and inequalities exist in school participation and opportunities. Respondents agreed that enrolment in basic education favours male learners more than females (M = 3.06) and that parents show greater interest in enrolling male children than female children (M = 2.97). Cultural preference for male learners was also acknowledged (M = 2.96). Although teachers were perceived to give equal attention to male and female pupils (M = 3.16) and both genders were reported to have similar access to teachers (M = 3.16), concerns remain regarding female participation and opportunities. Respondents further indicated that practical activities tend to be male-orientated (M = 2.97) and that male pupils enjoy more opportunities in extracurricular activities than their female counterparts (M = 3.06). While the schools were perceived to promote gender inclusion to some extent (M = 3.06), the overall results reveal persistent structural and cultural barriers affecting female learners.

Table 4: Chi – Square of significance of the learner’s difficulties and basic education programme.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly Disagreed	51	80.5	-29.5
Disagreed	52	80.5	-28.5
Strongly Agreed	84	80.5	-3.5
Agreed	135	80.5	54.5
Total	322		

**Test Statistics**

	Availability
Chi – Square	424.0029
DF	3
Asymp Sig	.000

p < 0.05

Table 4 presents the chi-square test, which examines the relationship between learners' difficulties and the basic education program. The results indicate a chi-square value of  $\chi^2 = 424.0029$ , with degrees of freedom (df) = 3 and a significance value (p) = .000, which is below 0.05. This result indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between learners’ difficulties and the effectiveness of the basic education program. Hence, the null hypothesis that learners’ difficulties are significantly related to the basic education programme is supported. This implies that challenges such as infrastructure, learning environments, teacher availability, and learning resources significantly influence the implementation and outcomes of basic education.

Table 5: Gender Disparity in Basic Education schools

		Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly Agreed	Agree	Total
Gender	Male	9	33	60	77	179
	Female	2	21	69	51	143
	Total	11	54	129	128	322

**Chi- square tests.**

	Value	DF	Asymp Sig (2-Sides)
Pearson chi-square	666.7969	3	0.002
Likelihood ratio	81.016	3	0.000
Linear-by-linear association	1.517	1	0.218
Nof Valid Cases	322		

p<0.05

Table 5 presents the chi-square analysis of gender disparity in basic education schools. The Pearson chi-square value of  $\chi^2 = 666.7969$ , with  $df = 3$  and  $p = 0.002$ , indicates a statistically significant association between gender and patterns of participation in basic education. The likelihood ratio test is also significant ( $\chi^2 = 81.016$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). These findings validate that gender disparity constitutes a significant concern in basic education institutions within the study area. Although some measures supporting gender inclusion exist, the distribution of opportunities and participation still differs significantly between male and female learners.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results indicate that basic educational needs such as materials, funds, and friendly environments are largely unavailable and non-functional in 77.4% of the schools visited in Akko LGA. The findings suggest a positive community attitude toward education in Akko LGA, yet this is undermined by a "poor, unfriendly learning environment." While the curriculum is perceived as entrepreneurial and relevant, the lack of ICT facilities and overcrowded classrooms creates a "knowledge gap" where the theoretical desire for education meets the physical reality of inadequate infrastructure. This finding is in agreement with Lawal et al. (2022), who stated that children's education needs in the study area remained predominantly poor due to poverty and inhibitive socio-cultural practices.

Furthermore, the study revealed that difficulties faced by learners affect basic education programs at Akko LGA. The statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) regarding learner difficulties highlights that education cannot be successful in a vacuum. Long trekking distances and the absence of clean drinking water or first aid facilities suggest that basic physiological and safety needs are not being met, which directly correlates with the difficulty students face in mastering skill-based subjects. This finding is in line with Garba (2014), which stated that the socio-economic status of most parents and guardians, as well as cultural factors, are responsible for these conditions.

Finally, the findings revealed a gender disparity in learners across all basic education schools in Akko LGA. The results confirm that traditional and cultural preferences for male education remain prevalent in Akko LGA. Despite teachers reportedly giving equal attention to both genders, societal "pull" factors, such as higher female dropout rates and male-oriented practical exhibitions, continue to favour male students. The results prove that gender disparity is not just a perception but a statistically significant reality in the region. The result disagreed with the Nigeria Philosophy of Education, which stated that education is the compulsory right of every Nigerian child, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, or any individual with peculiar challenges (FGN, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study conducted in Akko LGA, the following conclusions are drawn; There is a high level of interest in education among children and a curriculum that is perceived as relevant and entrepreneurial. However, severe infrastructural deficits, such as overcrowded classrooms and a lack of functional libraries and ICT facilities, undermine these positive factors. The statistical significance of learner difficulties ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirms that the "unfriendly learning environment" and the long distances students must trek are active deterrents to educational success in the region. Gender disparity remains a significant challenge, with a statistically significant preference for male enrolment over female counterparts ( $p = 0.002$ ). This trend is largely driven by cultural preferences and higher dropout rates among female students. Despite the lack of resources, teachers are actively encouraging skill development and attempting to expose learners to present-day technology where possible.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges identified in the survey, the following actions are recommended

- 1 The local government should prioritise the construction of additional classrooms to address the issue of overcrowded learning environments
- 2 Efforts should be made to provide functional libraries and ICT laboratories to support the entrepreneurial curriculum that is already in place

- 3 Ensuring access to clean drinking water and first aid facilities within school premises is essential to improve the overall health and focus of the learners.
- 4 Traditional and religious leaders in Akko LGA should be engaged to sensitise parents on the importance of female education to counter the cultural preference for male enrolment.
- 5 While some scholarships exist, specific financial aid and support services should be directed toward female students to reduce their high dropout rates.
- 6 Since learners find it difficult to master skill development subjects due to lack of materials, the government should supply modern tools and equipment to facilitate hands-on learning.
- 7 Teachers should receive continuous training on the use of educational technology to better bridge the gap between the curriculum and the learners' practical needs.
- 8 To minimise the long distances students trek, new basic education schools should be established in underserved clusters within the LGA.

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