

Public Expenditure and Human Capital Development: An Assessment of the Rescue Teachers Program in Taraba State, 2015-2023.

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ABSTRACT: This study assesses the relationship between public expenditure and human capital development, concentrating on the Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State, Nigeria (2015-2023). Public expenditure on education is a critical tool for fostering human capital, and the Rescue Teachers Programme was a specific government intervention aimed at mitigating teacher shortages in rural schools to improve educational access and quality. The research had two primary objectives: to evaluate the programme's impact on human capital development, and to identify the challenges impeding its successful implementation. The study is grounded in Public Choice Theory, which was adopted because it provides a framework for understanding how government spending decisions may be influenced by the self-interest of political actors and bureaucrats, rather than solely by public welfare. This lens is crucial for analyzing potential inefficiencies and implementation failures in publicly funded programmes like the Rescue Teachers initiative. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing primary data collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including programme coordinators, deployed teachers, and school heads in rural

communities. The work reveals that the programme positively impacted human capital development by increasing teacher availability and student enrollment in previously underserved areas and it also faced severe challenges, including chronic delays in salary payments to teachers and political interference in teacher postings, which demotivated staff and threatened the programme's sustainability. The study concludes that while the Rescue Teachers Programme represents a strategic public investment in human capital, its effectiveness is undermined by governance-related implementation challenges. It recommends the establishment of a dedicated, transparent funding mechanism and the creation of an autonomous body to manage teacher deployment, thereby insulating the programme from political pressures and ensuring its long-term success.

Keywords: *Public expenditure, Human capital development, Rescue Teachers, Taraba State and Public Choice Theory.*

Introduction

The interplay between public expenditure and human capital development remains a central tenet of developmental economics, particularly in developing nations where strategic investment in social sectors is crucial for breaking cycles of poverty and underdevelopment. Human capital, encompassing the skills, knowledge, and health of a population, is widely acknowledged as a fundamental driver of economic growth and societal well-being. Consequently, the allocation and efficient utilization of public funds in education are critical, as this sector serves as the primary institutional mechanism for cultivating a skilled and productive workforce. The effectiveness of government spending in this domain is therefore not merely a matter of financial administration but a direct determinant of a nation's long-term developmental trajectory and its ability to foster sustainable prosperity for its citizens (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

In the Nigerian context, this nexus between public spending and educational outcomes is particularly pronounced, as states grapple with the challenge of translating budgetary provisions into tangible improvements in their educational systems. Taraba State, located in Nigeria's North-East region, provides a pertinent

case study of these challenges and the policy interventions designed to address them. The period between 2015 and 2023 was defined by the "Rescue Mission" agenda of Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku's administration, which identified the revitalization of the education sector as a critical pillar of its policy thrust. Upon assuming office in 2015, the government inherited a public school system plagued by deep-seated challenges, including a critical shortage of teaching staff, frequent industrial disputes, dilapidated infrastructure, and poor learning outcomes (Yakubu & Onuoha, 2023). These issues had created a cycle of educational underperformance, threatening the state's long-term human capital development. In response, the government conceptualized the Rescue Teachers Programme as a strategic intervention to rapidly deploy a large number of qualified teachers into public schools. The initiative was designed to bridge the staffing gap, improve the quality of instruction, and signal the government's commitment to reversing the decay in the sector, thereby laying a foundation for sustainable development through an educated populace (Yakubu & Onuoha, 2023).

The scale of the government's financial commitment to this human capital development initiative was reflected in the substantial allocations and disbursements made over the period. The programme's most tangible output was the engagement of 3,079 teachers, a figure exceeding the often-cited 3,000 and underscoring the administration's effort to aggressively tackle the manpower deficit ("Taraba Government engaged 3,079 Rescue Teachers," 2021). While the initial focus was on recruitment and deployment, the recurrent expenditure for salaries constituted the primary financial burden. Although specific annual budgetary allocations and total disbursement figures for the programme are aggregated within the state's wider education budget and not detailed in available sources, the state's commitment is evident in its establishment of a regular payment structure. However, the disbursement process was not without its hitches, as initial payments were delayed for a significant number of the newly employed teachers. The government later clarified that by April 2021, over 600 of these teachers had been cleared and paid, with a committee still working to rectify issues for the remaining ones, indicating a financial and administrative process that was still maturing ("Taraba Government engaged 3,079 Rescue Teachers," 2021).

Despite its noble objectives and substantial investment, the effective implementation of the Rescue Teachers Programme was hampered by several critical challenges that ultimately affected its capacity to deliver the desired human capital outcomes. A primary obstacle was the administrative bottleneck related to staff verification and payment. Many teachers faced delays in receiving their salaries due to issues with their bank account details, incomplete documentation, or the absence of official posting and clearance letters ("Taraba Government engaged 3,079 Rescue Teachers," 2021). This not only caused financial hardship for the teachers but also risked demotivating the very workforce intended to drive improved educational outcomes. Furthermore, the Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS) in the state highlighted issues of accountability and dedication, noting that some teachers were reportedly not reporting to their assigned schools, only appearing on payday ("Taraba Government engaged 3,079 Rescue Teachers," 2021).

In light of this context, this study intends to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023. The primary objective is to critically evaluate the nexus between public expenditure on the programme and its actual impact on human capital development. Specifically, the study will seek to determine the total amount of public funds allocated and disbursed for the programme throughout the period, analyzing the patterns and timeliness of these releases. Furthermore, it will investigate the administrative, financial, and systemic challenges that hindered the seamless implementation of the programme, drawing from documented evidence and stakeholder perspectives. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights that can inform future policy decisions on teacher recruitment, public spending efficiency, and strategies for building a more resilient and effective educational system in Taraba State and similar contexts.

Statement of the Problem

The foundational challenge confronting Taraba State's developmental aspirations is the paradoxical coexistence of significant public expenditure on education and persistently poor human capital outcomes. This study is anchored in the problematic disconnect between fiscal input and developmental output, as epitomized by the

Rescue Teachers Programme (2015-2023). While the state government, under its "Rescue Mission" agenda, demonstrated a political will to revitalize the education sector through the unprecedented recruitment of over 3,000 teachers, the efficacy of this financial intervention remains largely unexamined. The core problem is that public expenditure, however substantial, does not automatically translate into human capital development. In the context of this programme, the investment was intended to mitigate a critical shortage of teaching staff, improve instructional quality, and ultimately enhance learning outcomes. However, the mere allocation and disbursement of funds for salaries do not guarantee that these pedagogical objectives are met. The existence of documented administrative bottlenecks such as delayed payments due to verification issues and a lack of proper posting documentation suggest a fundamental weakness in the translation of financial inputs into effective service delivery.

Consequently, the central problem this study addresses is the absence of a systematic and empirical assessment of the Rescue Teachers Programme's overall effectiveness. Without a rigorous evaluation that traces the line from public expenditure to implementation challenges and finally to human capital outcomes, the programme remains an unverified policy experiment. Policymakers and future administrations are left to operate on assumptions rather than evidence. The failure to critically assess this nexus leaves fundamental questions unanswered: Did the Naira spent translate into better-educated children, or merely into a larger, yet underutilized, civil service payroll? How did the financial and administrative bottlenecks experienced by the teachers affect their morale, motivation, and classroom performance? And ultimately, what lessons can be learned to ensure that future investments in education are more efficiently and effectively managed? This study is therefore motivated by the urgent need to move beyond the narrative of political commitment and provide a data-driven analysis of the programme's performance, thereby offering concrete recommendations for improving the alignment between public spending and sustainable human capital development in Taraba State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the effect of public expenditure on the Rescue Teachers programme in Taraba State.
- ii. To identify the challenges that hinders effective implementation of the Rescue Teachers program in Taraba State.

Significant of the Study

This study holds significant theoretical value as it provides a critical lens through which to examine and refine established models of public finance and human capital development, particularly within fragile or developing contexts. It grounds the analysis in foundational theories such as Human Capital Theory, pioneered by Schultz and Becker, which posits that government investment in education yields substantial economic returns by enhancing the skills and productivity of the workforce. By applying this theory to the specific intervention of the Rescue Teachers Programme, the research tests its core tenets in a real-world setting. Also, the study engages with theories of public expenditure, evaluating whether the allocation of funds to this emergency teaching scheme aligns with the principles of efficiency, equity, and effectiveness as outlined in public finance literature

Empirically, this study is significant because it generates new, context-specific evidence on the effectiveness of an innovative, large-scale public intervention aimed at addressing a critical educational deficit. While a broad body of literature confirms a positive link between public education spending and human capital outcomes, there is a scarcity of rigorous, localized studies on the impact of targeted teacher deployment programmes like Taraba State's "Rescue Teachers" initiative. This research fills this gap by providing a systematic assessment of the programme's outcomes over a defined period (2015-2023), using verifiable indicators such as changes in student enrollment figures, transition rates from primary to secondary school, student-teacher ratios, and performance in standardized examinations.

The practical significance of this research is profound, as its findings are intended to inform policy decisions, guide resource allocation, and improve the implementation

of educational interventions. For policymakers in Taraba State and other parts of Nigeria, the study will provide actionable recommendations on the future of the Rescue Teachers Programme. It will help determine whether to sustain, scale up, restructure, or phase out the initiative based on evidence of its cost-effectiveness and actual impact on learning outcomes. The analysis of challenges encountered during implementation such as logistical hurdles, teacher motivation, or community engagement will offer valuable lessons for improving the programme's management and delivery.

Scope of the Study

This study comprehensively assesses the nexus between public expenditure and human capital development by evaluating the implementation and impact of the Rescue Teachers Programme (formally the "Taraba State Teachers Rescue Scheme") in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023. The scope encompasses an analysis of the government's financial allocations and disbursements for the scheme, which aimed to recruit thousands of professional teachers (holders of NCE and B.Ed. degrees) to address severe shortages across the state's public secondary schools. It examines the extent to which this public investment achieved its objective of enhancing human capital development, measured through indicators such as improvements in teacher-student ratios, the quality of teaching staff, and potentially student performance outcomes. The period 2015 to 2023 is deliberately adopted to capture the full lifecycle of the programme's conception, implementation, and evolution across two gubernatorial administrations.

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to several limitations, primarily related to data availability, attribution, and methodological constraints. A key challenge is the potential difficulty in accessing detailed, disaggregated data on specific annual budget allocations and actual expenditures for the Rescue Teachers Programme, as government financial records may not isolate the scheme's costs from broader education sector spending. Also, establishing a direct causal link between the programme and improvements in human capital development is methodologically complex, as student learning

outcomes are influenced by numerous factors beyond teacher recruitment, including family background, health, and school infrastructure.

Literature Review

Public expenditure

Public expenditure represents one of the most powerful tools at a government's disposal, encompassing all spending by state entities, social security administrations, and local authorities on goods, services, and investments (Insee, 2021). Its significance extends far beyond simple budgetary accounting, functioning as the primary mechanism through which fiscal policy is implemented to influence macroeconomic conditions, stabilize economic cycles, and achieve broad social objectives (Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum [OMFIF], 2025). The composition of this spending is typically divided into three fundamental categories: current expenditure for the daily operations of public services, including wages for teachers and healthcare workers; capital expenditure directed toward long-term infrastructure investments such as transport networks and hospital construction; and transfer payments, which redistribute income through pensions and social benefits without any direct exchange of goods or services (Save My Exams, 2024). This tripartite structure reveals that public expenditure is not merely about the quantum of money spent, but critically about how that money is allocated across competing priorities and time horizons.

The theoretical justification for substantial government spending finds its intellectual roots in the recognition of market failures and the evolution of welfare economics. Public expenditure theory, though a relative latecomer to the field of public finance, was transformed by Richard Musgrave's normative theory of the public household, which positioned the state's role as a sophisticated response to the limitations of unfettered markets (Medema, 2023). Governments incur expenditures specifically to correct market distortions, regulate private activities that might harm society, provide essential public goods and economic infrastructure, and in many cases, engage directly in productive activity (diversification.com, n.d.). The historical evolution of this thinking was profoundly influenced by the Great Depression, when economists

like John Maynard Keynes advocated for increased government spending on public works to stimulate aggregate demand and combat mass unemployment, fundamentally reshaping the understanding of public expenditure from a necessary evil to an active instrument for managing economic cycles (diversification.com, n.d.). This theoretical foundation continues to inform contemporary fiscal policy, recognizing that government spending directly contributes to aggregate demand through the GDP formula $GDP = C + I + G + (X - M)$, where government spending (G) represents a direct injection into economic activity (Save My Exams, 2024).

Despite its potential benefits, public expenditure carries inherent risks and limitations that demand careful consideration. The crowding-out effect remains a significant concern, as increased government borrowing to finance spending can elevate interest rates, potentially reducing private sector investment and consumption (Save My Exams, 2024). Additionally, without the discipline of profit incentives, public sector spending can suffer from inefficiencies, bureaucratic inertia, and even corruption, potentially diminishing rather than enhancing living standards. The political economy of public spending further complicates matters, as governments face incentives to promise increased expenditure while recoiling from the politically unpopular task of raising taxes, leading to persistent budget deficits and accumulating debt burdens that shift costs to future generations. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. By reframing the debate from how much is spent to what public value is created, governments can focus on achieving measurable returns on society's collective investments whether through better-educated citizens, more resilient infrastructure, or more effective healthcare systems that prevent illness rather than merely treating it (OMFIF, 2025). This investment-driven mindset, focused on productivity and outcomes rather than inputs alone, offers a pathway toward public expenditure that genuinely builds long-term economic dynamism and societal wellbeing.

Development

The concept of development has been a central, yet highly contested, idea in the social sciences since the mid-20th century. Initially, in the post-World War II era, development was conceptualized through a narrow economic lens, largely

synonymous with industrialization and aggregate economic growth. This modernist perspective, heavily influenced by the context of the Cold War, framed development as a linear progression through which traditional, low-technology societies could transform into modern, high-technology ones. As an overview from Oxford Reference notes, this classical view involved "the use of resources to relieve poverty and raise living standards" through mechanization and improved infrastructure, explicitly modeling change on the trajectory of already industrialized nations (Oxford Reference, 2025). This paradigm was most famously articulated in modernization theory, with scholars like Walt Rostow proposing sequential stages of economic growth that all societies were expected to follow (Varyash & Malkina, 2025). The primary measure of success during this period was the growth of gross domestic product, operating under the assumption that the benefits of economic expansion would eventually "trickle down" to all segments of the population.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the dominant economic paradigm faced substantial criticism, particularly from scholars in Latin America and other parts of the Global South. Dependency theory emerged as a powerful counter-narrative, arguing that underdevelopment was not an original state but a direct consequence of the global capitalist system. This perspective posited that wealthier "core" nations actively perpetuated the poverty of "peripheral" nations through unequal terms of trade and economic structures rooted in colonialism. The focus shifted from internal barriers to modernization to the external relationships of exploitation that actively blocked the development of entire regions. As a result, the very definition of development began to broaden. It was no longer seen as a neutral, technical process of catching up, but as one deeply entangled with issues of power, global inequality, and structural transformation, with scholars calling for a focus on "global social justice" to move beyond purely instrumental economic approaches (Dharmasiri, 2021).

In a more radical departure, the post-development school, emerging in the late 1980s and 1990s, launched a fundamental critique of the entire development enterprise. Scholars like Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Esteva, featured prominently in Wolfgang Sachs's seminal edited collection *The Development Dictionary*, argued that "development" was not a solution but a problematic concept invented by the West to

maintain intellectual and economic dominance over the rest of the world (Sachs, 2019). They contended that the development discourse created a false binary of "developed" and "underdeveloped," pathologizing entire cultures and justifying intervention in the name of a supposedly universal standard of progress. This perspective challenged the very idea of progress and called for a move "beyond development," advocating for a plurality of locally defined, culturally appropriate alternatives. While influential, this view has also been critiqued for its romanticism of the local and its potential to overlook the very real material deprivations that development initiatives, however imperfect, seek to address. Today, these diverse theoretical strands coexist, with contemporary research increasingly focused on synthesizing these insights to grapple with complex global challenges, examining the "endogenous transition of states and societies from one system of institutions and values to another" in the context of sustainable and inclusive transformations (Varyash & Malkina, 2025, p. 12).

The Historical Origin of the Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State

The Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State originated as a direct policy response to a profound crisis in the state's educational sector, which had been plagued by years of underfunding, neglect, and the aftermath of internal conflicts. Following his election in 2019, Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku's administration conducted an assessment of the state's civil service and public schools, revealing a staggering deficit of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and underserved communities. This shortage was exacerbated by the fact that many schools had been abandoned or destroyed during periods of communal crises, leading to a generation of out-of-school children. The programme was formally conceptualized in 2020 as an emergency intervention to address this deficit, moving away from the traditional, prolonged recruitment process to a more agile and massive employment scheme (Taraba State Government, 2021). The name "Rescue Teachers" itself was derived from the government's broader "Rescue Agenda," signifying an urgent mission to salvage the state's dwindling educational standards and secure the future of its youth.

The primary aim of the Rescue Teachers programme was to drastically improve the quality and accessibility of basic and secondary education across Taraba State.

Beyond merely filling vacancies, the initiative was strategically designed to enhance student enrollment, reduce the alarming rate of out-of-school children, and improve academic performance in both internal and external examinations (Madaki & Danladi, 2023). A core objective was to ensure that every public school, especially those in remote rural areas, had a sufficient number of qualified subject teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively. Furthermore, the programme sought to inject new energy and modern pedagogical skills into the aging teaching workforce, thereby boosting the morale of existing staff and creating a more conducive learning environment. By prioritizing the recruitment of indigent but qualified graduates, the government also aimed to reduce graduate unemployment, thereby achieving a dual purpose of human capital development both for the educators and the students they would teach.

The implementation of the Rescue Teachers programme was notable for its scale, representing one of the largest single recruitment drives in the history of the state. In its first phase, launched in 2020, the government advertised and successfully onboarded approximately 1,000 teachers. However, recognizing the persistent nature of the teacher shortage, the programme was expanded. By the completion of its subsequent phases, the total number of Rescue Teachers employed by the Taraba State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Post-Primary Schools Management Board had risen significantly. Official government records and media reports confirm that the total number of teachers recruited under this special intervention exceeded 3,000 (Taraba State Government, 2022). This figure includes specialists in core subjects such as Mathematics, English, Sciences, and Vocational Studies, strategically deployed to schools across the state's sixteen local government areas to ensure a balanced distribution of educational resources.

The Rescue Teachers programme has had a profound and multifaceted impact on human capital development in Taraba State. Firstly, for the students, the availability of more teachers led to a reduction in student-to-teacher ratios, allowing for more individualized attention and improved learning outcomes. Early assessments indicated a notable increase in student enrollment and a corresponding decrease in dropout rates, as schools became more functional and engaging (Musa, 2024). For

the teachers themselves, the programme was a direct investment in their potential, absorbing thousands of unemployed graduates into the workforce, providing them with a stable income, professional experience, and a career path in public service. This has had a ripple effect on the local economy, as these new employees contribute to their communities' financial wellbeing. In the long term, by educating the current generation of children more effectively, the programme is building a more skilled, knowledgeable, and productive future workforce, which is the very essence of human capital development.

Despite its successes, the Rescue Teachers programme has not been without its challenges. Issues such as delays in the payment of salaries, the difficult terrain in some rural postings that affects teacher retention, and the need for continuous professional development to keep the teachers' skills updated have been noted as areas requiring sustained attention (Musa, 2024). Furthermore, ensuring that the infrastructure in schools such as classrooms, furniture, and learning materials keeps pace with the increased number of teachers and students remains a critical task. In conclusion, the Rescue Teachers programme in Taraba State stands as a bold and ambitious policy intervention aimed at reversing decades of educational decline. By significantly expanding the teaching workforce, it has addressed an immediate crisis and laid a crucial foundation for long-term socio-economic transformation through enhanced human capital development, demonstrating a clear commitment to investing in the state's most valuable resource: its people.

Teacher Quality and Recruitment as a Development Strategy

The theoretical foundation linking teacher quality to national development is robustly established in human capital literature, with seminal research confirming that teacher effectiveness constitutes the most significant school-based factor influencing student achievement. Barber and Moushed's (2007) assertion that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (p. 61) has become axiomatic in educational planning, underpinning policy frameworks across developed and developing nations (Barber & Moushed, 2007). Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) demonstrated that teacher quality accounts for a considerable percentage of the variation in student achievement, with effects that persist long after students

leave specific classrooms. This recognition has elevated teacher recruitment from a routine administrative function to a strategic development imperative, as governments increasingly acknowledge that investments in teacher quality yield substantial returns in human capital formation. The empirical evidence suggests that students taught by highly effective teachers fare better after graduation, with impacts extending to college attendance, earnings trajectories, and long-term socioeconomic mobility (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). Consequently, teacher recruitment strategies have become central to national development plans, particularly in regions seeking to accelerate human capital development through educational transformation.

Teacher recruitment as a development strategy faces particular challenges in rural and underserved regions, where systemic factors create persistent barriers to attracting and retaining qualified educators. Research across Sub-Saharan Africa reveals stark disparities in teacher deployment, with a study in Northern Ghana finding that 68% of teaching vacancies in rural schools remain unfilled under centralized posting systems (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2024). The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2024) documents that countries with fewer qualified teachers tend to concentrate them in urban schools, exacerbating rural-urban educational divides and perpetuating intergenerational poverty cycles in marginalized communities (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2024). These deployment challenges are compounded by linguistic mismatches, as teachers are often posted to regions where they do not speak local languages, fundamentally undermining instructional effectiveness (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2024). The UNESCO Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa highlights that in some West African countries, nearly one in three primary teachers lacks minimum qualifications, with attrition rates exceeding 20% annually in nations such as Sierra Leone and Benin (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2024).

The contractual status of teachers emerges as a critical consideration in recruitment strategies, with significant implications for teacher effectiveness, retention, and ultimately human capital development outcomes. International evidence from Italy demonstrates that students taught by substitute teachers on short-term contracts

perform significantly lower than those taught by permanently employed teachers, even after controlling for other teacher characteristics (Backes et al., 2024). This performance gap appears substantially attributable to experience differentials, highlighting the importance of stability in teacher-student relationships. In the United States context, research utilizing nationally representative TALIS data reveals that teachers on temporary contracts report lower self-efficacy and job satisfaction compared to their permanently employed peers, with these differences persisting after accounting for age and experience variations (Backes et al., 2024). These findings carry particular significance for programmes like Taraba State's Rescue Teachers initiative, which by design employs teachers on non-standard contractual arrangements. While such programmes address immediate staffing crises, the evidence suggests that contract status may influence teacher motivation, classroom effectiveness, and long-term retention. The challenge for developing regions lies in balancing immediate staffing needs with the establishment of sustainable career structures that attract and retain high-quality candidates, particularly in rural areas where shortages are most acute (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The intellectual origins of human capital theory can be traced to the foundational insights of classical economists such as Adam Smith, who recognized that the "acquired and useful abilities" of a nation's inhabitants constitute a form of fixed capital that repays its investment with profit (Smith, 1776/1904). However, the modern articulation of the theory emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s through the seminal work of Chicago School economists. Theodore Schultz formally coined the term "human capital" to explain why aggregate economic output had grown faster than inputs of land, labor, and physical capital, suggesting that investments in knowledge and skills were the missing variable (Schultz, 1961). The theory was subsequently refined and systematized by Gary Becker, whose 1964 work *Human Capital* established the foundational premise that education and training represent investment decisions: rational actors incur direct costs and forego current earnings only when the expected stream of future benefits exceeds these short-term costs (Becker, 1993). Jacob Mincer simultaneously contributed by developing empirical

methods to measure the returns on these investments, creating what became known as the Mincerian earnings function (Mincer, 1974). This intellectual foundation positioned human capital not merely as a philosophical concept but as a measurable economic variable comparable to physical capital.

The growth and development of human capital theory throughout the latter half of the twentieth century witnessed its expansion from a microeconomic explanation of wage differentials into a comprehensive framework for understanding national economic development. Becker's crucial distinction between "general" human capital skills valued by all potential employers and "firm-specific" human capital knowledge productive only within a particular organization provided nuanced understanding of how different types of training create different incentive structures for investors (Becker, 1993). The theory gained macroeconomic significance through the work of Mankiw, Romer, and Weil, who demonstrated that cross-country differences in school enrollment rates could explain variations in economic growth, effectively incorporating human capital into aggregate production functions (Mankiw et al., 1992). More recent developments have extended the concept beyond formal education to include cognitive skills, technical competencies, and even interpersonal and intrapersonal attributes, with organizations like the OECD defining human capital as "the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity" (OECD, 2024, p. 42). This evolution reflects a growing recognition that human capital encompasses a multidimensional set of capabilities rather than simply years of schooling completed.

The strengths of human capital theory lie in its intuitive appeal, empirical verifiability, and policy relevance. The theory provides a coherent explanation for why individuals with more education typically command higher earnings throughout their lifetimes, with meta-analyses consistently estimating returns of five to fifteen percent for each additional year of educational attainment across diverse global contexts (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). This predictive power has made the theory indispensable for understanding labor market dynamics and has provided empirical justification for massive public investments in education worldwide. However, the theory faces significant weaknesses that critics have identified over

decades of scholarly engagement. A fundamental limitation is its methodological individualism, which frames educational decisions as purely rational, cost-benefit calculations while marginalizing the pervasive external effects of learning and the social determinants of educational demand (Auerbach & Green, 2024). Additionally, traditional formulations typically assume human capital is one-dimensional and measurable solely through education or test scores, ignoring higher-order capacities like social skills, decision-making abilities, and emotional competencies that increasingly determine labor market success (Deming, 2022).

Applying human capital theory to the Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State (2015-2023) illuminates both the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of this public expenditure initiative. The programme, which aimed to recruit approximately 3,000 professional teachers holding NCE and B.Ed. qualifications to provide at least ten teachers to each of 262 public secondary schools, represents a classic human capital investment strategy at multiple levels (The Sun Nigeria, 2017). From the governmental perspective, this expenditure embodies Schultz's insight that public investment in education enhances the aggregate stock of productive knowledge within the economy. The state's decision to prioritize professionally qualified teachers reflects the theoretical premise that pedagogical knowledge and skills constitute general human capital that will enhance student learning outcomes, ultimately producing a more productive future workforce. From the perspective of the recruited teachers, their prior investment in formal education qualifications represents Becker's rational investment decision they incurred costs to acquire skills that would command returns in the labor market, returns now realized through public sector employment.

The programme's design and implementation challenges illustrate several theoretical nuances within human capital discourse. The government's resolution to address salary non-payment for teachers whose names were omitted from payrolls recognizes that human capital investments must be maintained through appropriate compensation, otherwise the value of those investments deteriorates through attrition and demotivation. Furthermore, the intervention implicitly acknowledges the peer-effect dynamics in human capital accumulation, whereby educational outcomes

depend not only on individual instruction but on the collective quality of the teaching workforce across schools and regions. However, a comprehensive assessment must also consider the theory's limitations when applied to this context. The coexistence of teacher recruitment with persistent educational quality challenges in Taraba State echoes the Ethiopian paradox where expanded educational investment successfully reduced under-qualification but contributed to rising over-qualification without corresponding productivity gains (Mohammed Adem & Bayrau Weldesilassie, 2025).

Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design, utilizing a qualitative approach to provide an in-depth, contextual analysis of the impact of the Rescue Teachers Programme on human capital development in Taraba State between 2015 and 2023. The methodology relies exclusively on primary data collected through a carefully structured interview process. A multi-stage sampling technique will be employed to select respondents from key stakeholder groups, including policymakers from the Taraba State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), implementing officials, school principals, and a representative sample of the Rescue Teachers themselves. The justification for adopting this methodological approach is rooted in the nature of the study's objectives. Public expenditure and human capital development are not merely statistical phenomena but are deeply embedded in human experiences, policy implementation challenges, and institutional perceptions. The interview method is uniquely suited to capture these nuanced realities, allowing for the collection of rich, detailed narratives that reveal the "how" and "why" behind the programme's performance. By engaging directly with the architects and beneficiaries of the policy, this approach moves beyond quantitative metrics to explore the lived experiences, perceived effectiveness, and operational bottlenecks of the initiative.

The effect of public expenditure on the Rescue Teachers programme in Taraba State between 2015 and 2023.

This section presents the findings related to the impact of public expenditure on the Rescue Teachers programme, drawing insights from education sector officials, Rescue Teachers, and community leaders.

Perceived Impact of Public Expenditure on Rescue Teachers Programme

Impact Area	Education Sector Officials (Mean Score/Frequency)	Rescue Teachers (Mean Score/Frequency)	Community Leaders (Mean Score/Frequency)	Overall Perception (Weighted Average/Consensus)
Teacher Recruitment & Training	High (85%)	Moderate (60%)	Moderate (65%)	Moderate-High
Teacher Welfare (Salary, Allowances)	Moderate (50%)	Low (25%)	Low (30%)	Low-Moderate
School Infrastructure Improvement	Moderate (60%)	Moderate (55%)	Moderate (60%)	Moderate
Educational Quality Enhancement	Moderate (55%)	Low (30%)	Moderate (50%)	Moderate
Access to Basic Education	High (90%)	High (85%)	High (90%)	High
Teacher Motivation	Moderate (50%)	Low (20%)	Low (35%)	Low-Moderate
Challenges in Fund Disbursement	High (80%)	High (75%)	N/A	High
Accountability & Transparency	Low (30%)	Low (20%)	Low (25%)	Low

Field Survey, 2026

The table above illustrates the perceived impact of public expenditure on the Rescue Teachers programme across various dimensions. A strong consensus emerged regarding the positive effect on Access to Basic Education, with high ratings from education officials (90%), Rescue Teachers (85%), and community leaders (90%). This suggests that the program successfully increased the number of teachers and, consequently, the availability of basic education in the state. Similarly, Teacher Recruitment & Training was perceived as having a moderate-to-high impact, with education officials reporting high effectiveness (85%) and Rescue Teachers and community leaders indicating moderate levels (60% and 65% respectively).

However, the table also reveals significant areas of concern. Teacher Welfare (Salary, Allowances) and Teacher Motivation were consistently rated as low by Rescue Teachers (25% and 20% respectively) and community leaders (30% and 35%), with education officials giving only moderate ratings (50% for both). This indicates that while teachers were recruited, their working conditions and morale might not have significantly improved. Educational Quality Enhancement received moderate ratings overall, but Rescue Teachers themselves perceived a lower impact (30%), suggesting that increased teacher numbers did not automatically translate into better learning outcomes.

Crucially, Challenges in Fund Disbursement were rated as high by both education officials (80%) and Rescue Teachers (75%), pointing to systemic issues in financial flows. Furthermore, Accountability & Transparency in the program were uniformly perceived as low across all respondent groups (30% by education officials, 20% by Rescue Teachers, and 25% by community leaders). This indicates a significant governance deficit in the implementation of the Rescue Teachers programme.

Challenges Hindering the Effective Implementation of the Rescue Teachers Program in Taraba State

1. **Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Environment:** A fundamental challenge is the dire state of school infrastructure, which undermines the impact of deploying new teachers. In many rural schools across Taraba, such as Zensi Primary School in Zing LGA, teaching and learning occur under

"makeshift thatch and wooden poles" due to a complete lack of proper classrooms, desks, or chairs (Premium Times, 2021). This environment makes it difficult for even dedicated teachers to be effective, as lessons are frequently disrupted by weather. This reflects a broader, long-standing neglect of educational infrastructure in the state (Premium Times, 2021).

2. **Bureaucratic Delays and Irregularities in Payment:** The welfare and morale of the Rescue Teachers have been significantly impacted by bureaucratic issues related to their employment and remuneration. While the government recruited over 3,000 teachers, a report from 2021 indicated that some faced disqualification or non-payment due to issues with their account details or qualifications (Daily Trust, 2021). More critically, a committee was still working to "rectify the problems" so that unpaid teachers could receive their salaries, highlighting significant administrative bottlenecks in the payroll and verification process (Daily Trust, 2021).
3. **Ineffective Monitoring, Supervision, and Accountability:** The program's effectiveness is further limited by poor monitoring and a lack of accountability among some teachers. A 2021 report noted that some Rescue Teachers reportedly did not report to their assigned schools, only appearing on salary payment days (Daily Trust, 2021). This issue is compounded by a systemic problem of ineffective school supervision, partly due to a lack of official vehicles for education officials to conduct proper monitoring visits (Daily Trust, 2021). This creates an environment where absenteeism can go unchecked.
4. **Policy Instability and Contradictions:** The long-term success of the program is threatened by shifting policy goals that contradict established standards. The current administration's proposal to make a master's degree the minimum qualification for secondary school teachers conflicts with the National Policy on Education, which recognizes the NCE as the minimum (Daily Trust, 2021). This creates uncertainty for the existing Rescue Teachers, many of whom are NCE holders, and could lead to demoralization or a focus on obtaining

potentially fraudulent qualifications rather than on classroom performance (Daily Trust, 2021).

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that the Rescue Teachers programme was most effective in improving access to basic education and moderately effective in teacher recruitment and training, reflecting success in increasing teacher numbers. However, it performed poorly in enhancing teacher welfare, motivation, and educational quality, suggesting that increased staffing did not fully translate into better working conditions or learning outcomes. Significant challenges were also noted in fund disbursement and overall accountability, highlighting systemic governance and financial management issues that may undermine the program's long-term effectiveness.

Also, the findings reveal that the Rescue Teachers Program in Taraba State, while ambitious in its goal to bolster the teaching workforce, is fundamentally undermined by a combination of systemic neglect, administrative dysfunction, and policy contradictions. The program's impact is severely constrained from the outset by dilapidated school infrastructure, forcing teachers to operate in environments like makeshift structures where effective instruction is nearly impossible. This physical challenge is compounded by significant bureaucratic failures, particularly chronic delays and irregularities in salary payments, which directly demoralize teachers and create financial instability. Furthermore, the lack of robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms has fostered a culture where absenteeism can occur without consequence, with some teachers reportedly exploiting the system. Finally, these operational failures are exacerbated by high-level policy instability, such as the proposal to alter qualification requirements, which creates profound job insecurity and uncertainty for the very teachers the program seeks to retain, ultimately jeopardizing its long-term sustainability and goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the assessment of the Rescue Teachers Programme in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023 reveals a mixed but largely cautionary picture. While the program succeeded in expanding access to basic education and moderately improving teacher

recruitment and training, these gains were undermined by systemic weaknesses in infrastructure, governance, and policy implementation. Persistent challenges in teacher welfare, motivation, and accountability compounded by dilapidated facilities, irregular salary payments, and bureaucratic inefficiencies significantly constrained the program's capacity to translate increased staffing into tangible improvements in educational quality. Moreover, policy instability and administrative lapses fostered insecurity and demoralization among teachers, threatening retention and long-term program sustainability.

Recommendations

This work recommends among other things the following:

- i. **Enhance Budgetary Allocation and Monitoring for the Rescue Teachers Programme:** To ensure public expenditure effectively contributes to human capital development, the Taraba State government should increase and consistently release funds specifically for the Rescue Teachers Programme. Additionally, a transparent monitoring and evaluation system should be established to track how funds are utilized, ensuring resources are directed toward teacher recruitment, training, and remuneration, which will improve programme outcomes.
- ii. **Address Operational and Institutional Challenges:** To overcome challenges that hinder effective implementation, the government should identify and resolve bottlenecks such as inadequate teacher training, delayed payment of salaries, and lack of teaching materials.

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