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"Assessment of Policy Responses to School Infrastructure and Inclusive Education in Bayelsa State, Nigeria"

Assessment of Policy Responses to School Infrastructure and Inclusive Education in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed policy responses to school infrastructure and inclusive education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It examined government policy responses on infrastructure development and inclusive education, challenges confronting policy implementation, and strategies for improvement. Using a descriptive survey design, the study identified a population of 1,860 educational stakeholders and selected 320 respondents through multistage sampling across 20 public secondary schools in the state's eight Local Government Areas. The researcher developed a questionnaire instrument to collect data, which was analysed using the mean, standard deviation, and a one-sample *t*-test. Findings showed that policy responses to infrastructure development were generally inadequate, with a cluster mean of 2.43, below the criterion mean of 2.50. Infrastructure adequacy for inclusive education was also low (M = 2.32), while implementation of inclusive education policies remained below the criterion (M = 2.44). Major challenges included difficult terrain, negative societal attitudes, inadequate funding, corruption, shortage of assistive materials, weak enforcement and inadequate monitoring. All proposed improvement strategies were accepted. The study concludes that stakeholder participation is critical to translating policies into effective inclusive education practices and outcomes. In addition, stronger funding, inclusive planning, specialised personnel, accessibility standards, and monitoring are needed.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; School Infrastructure; Educational Policy; Educational Planning; Accessibility; Bayelsa State; Nigeria

Introduction

Education, a fundamental human right, is a critical instrument for social transformation and sustainable development and is therefore central to Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4), which emphasises inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Achieving this requires educational systems that accommodate all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023a; Ukala & Adieme, 2024).

Inclusive education facilitates and ensures the integration of all learners into mainstream educational settings by addressing their diverse learning needs. Effective implementation depends significantly on adequate school infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, laboratories, water and sanitation facilities, playgrounds, accessibility structures, and technological resources (Angwaomaodoko, 2023a; Bright-George & Bobmanuel, 2025).

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In Nigeria, several policies including the National Policy on Education, National Policy on Inclusive Education, Universal Basic Education Programme, and state-level reforms have been initiated and implemented to promote educational infrastructure and inclusion.

Nigeria is a federation of 36 states, and ecah of these states have aligned with federal govwrnment in its quest to provide education for all. In this regard, the Bayelsa State government has implemented interventions involving school construction and renovation, teacher recruitment, and learning materials. However, infrastructural deficits persist, particularly in schools serving learners with special educational needs (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015, 2023b; Omede, 2016; Orlunga & Alikor, 2023).

Riverine settlements, dispersed communities, and infrastructural challenges significantly complicate implementing inclusive education policy. Assessing policy responses to school infrastructure and inclusion is therefore important for evidence-based educational planning and policy formulation (Alikor, 2026; Hussaini & Jabbi, 2025).

Statement of the Problem.

Despite investments in school infrastructure and other policy interventions, concerns remain about the extent to which schools in Bayelsa State provide inclusive learning environments. Although government reports indicate improvements in facilities, empirical evidence on the adequacy of these interventions remains limited. In particular, the availability of accessibility facilities, assistive technologies, and specialised learning resources remains uncertain. This gap necessitates systematic assessment of policy responses to school infrastructure and inclusive education in the state (Angwaomaodoko, 2023b; Isaac et al., 2025).

Objectives of the Study.

The study sought to:

1. Assess government policy responses to school infrastructure development in Bayelsa State.
2. Examine whether school infrastructure adequately supports inclusive education.
3. Identify challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education policies in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

1. What policy responses have been implemented to improve school infrastructure in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent are school infrastructures adequate for inclusive education?
3. What challenges hinder effective implementation of inclusive education policies?

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Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant positive assessment of government policy responses to school infrastructure development in Bayelsa State.

H_{02}: Respondents do not significantly assess the adequacy of school infrastructure for inclusive education in Bayelsa State.

H_{03}: Respondents do not significantly agree on the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive education policies in Bayelsa State.

Literature Review

Concept of School Infrastructure.

School infrastructure is part of school climate and comprises the physical and material facilities that support educational activities. Adequate infrastructure supports learning outcomes, student retention, teacher effectiveness, and educational quality, with evidence showing a positive relationship between infrastructure quality and student achievement (Isaac et al., 2025).

Inclusive Education.

Inclusive education provides equal education opportunities for all, regardless of disability, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or learning differences. It emphasises equal participation, accessibility, and educational equity. Effective inclusion requires physical accessibility, specialised instructional resources, trained personnel, and supportive policies (Angwaomaodoko, 2023a; Bright-George & Bobmanuel, 2025).

Policy Responses to Inclusive Education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the federal government has adopted policy initiatives to promote inclusive education. For example, the National Policy on Education and National Policy on Inclusive Education recognise equal educational opportunities and accessible learning environments. However, implementation challenges continue to affect inclusion, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015, 2023; Omede, 2016; Orlunga & Alikor, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The **Systems Theory**, as developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, was used as the theoretical framework. The theory views education as an interconnected system comprising inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback mechanisms. It provides a framework for viewing school infrastructure as a critical input that influences educational outcomes, while effective policy responses improve system functionality and inclusive educational outcomes.

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Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive survey design** and a quantitative method to assess policy responses to school infrastructure and inclusive education in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, without manipulating variables.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, which comprises eight Local Government Areas (LGAs): Brass, Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Nembe, Ogbia, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw, and Yenagoa.

Population of the Study

The population comprised 1,860 educational stakeholders involved in policy implementation.

Category	Population
Principals	212
Vice Principals	318
Teachers	1,220
Education Officers	70
Special Education Officers	40
Total	**1,860**

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table determined a sample of 320 respondents. Multistage sampling involved stratification by professional category, proportionate selection of **20 public secondary schools** across the eight LGAs to reflect urban and rural locations, and simple random sampling.

Respondent Category Sample

Respondent Category	Sample
Principals	40
Vice Principals	20
Teachers	220
Education Officers	40
Total	**320**

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher collected data using the researcher-developed **Assessment of Policy Responses to School Infrastructure and Inclusive Education Questionnaire (APRSIIEQ)**. The 35-item instrument comprised four clusters: infrastructure policy responses (10), infrastructure adequacy

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(10), challenges to inclusive education (8), and improvement strategies (7). Respondents rated questionnaire items on a four-point Likert scale ranging from four (4) Strongly Agree to one (1) Strongly Disagree, with a criterion mean of 2.50.

Validity and Reliability

Three experts in Educational Management and Planning, and Measurement and Evaluation assessed the instrument's face and content validity. A pilot test involving 30 respondents in Delta State produced Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.82, 0.86, 0.81, and 0.84, with an overall reliability coefficient of **0.84**, indicating high internal consistency.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaires with the support of two trained research assistants. Of the 320 questionnaires distributed, 268 were returned and usable, representing an 83.8% response rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data from the study were coded and analysed with **SPSS Version 27**. The researcher answered the research questions using means and standard deviations, and tested the three null hypotheses using a one-sample **t-test** at the 0.05 significance level, with 2.50 as the criterion mean. A mean of 2.50 or above indicated a high extent/acceptance, while a mean below 2.50 indicated a low extent/rejection. The Null hypothesis is rejected when $p \leq 0.05$ and not rejected when $p > 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary and based on informed consent. The study maintained respondents' anonymity and confidentiality; participants could withdraw at any time, and the data were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results And Findings

Of the 320 copies of the questionnaire administered, 268 were correctly completed and returned, giving a return rate of 83.8 per cent. Items were scored from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), so the criterion mean is 2.50. Items with a mean of 2.50 or above were accepted, and items below 2.50 were rejected.

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Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Per cent
Gender	n = 268	
Male	106	39.6
Female	162	60.4
Age	n = 268	
Below 30 years	80	29.9
31-40 years	76	28.4
41-50 years	69	25.7
51 years and above	43	16.0
Educational qualification	n = 268	
NCE	38	14.2
B.Ed./B.Sc./B.A.	136	50.7
PGDE	55	20.5
Master's Degree	32	11.9
Doctorate Degree	7	2.6
Designation	n = 218	
Principal	26	11.9
Vice Principal	17	7.8
Teacher	138	63.3
Education Officer	37	17.0
Years of work experience	n = 268	
Below 5 years	76	28.4
5-10 years	62	23.1
11-15 years	55	20.5
16-20 years	45	16.8
Above 20 years	30	11.2

Note. Percentages are computed within each characteristic on the number of valid responses. Fifty respondents did not indicate a designation.

Table 1 shows that female respondents outnumbered male respondents, with 162 respondents (60.4 per cent) compared with 106 male respondents (39.6 per cent). By age, respondents below 30 years formed the largest group, with 80 respondents (29.9 per cent), followed by those aged 31 to 40 years (76 respondents, 28.4 per cent) and those aged 41 to 50 years (69 respondents, 25.7 per cent). Respondents aged 51 years and above were the smallest group with 43 respondents or 16.0 per cent. Taken together, 156 respondents or 58.3 per cent of the sample, were below 41 years of age.

With respect to educational qualification, holders of a first degree in the form of the B.Ed., B.Sc. or B.A. constituted half of the sample with 136 respondents or 50.7 per cent. This was followed by

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holders of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (55 respondents, 20.5 per cent), the Nigeria Certificate in Education (38 respondents, 14.2 per cent), and a master's degree (32 respondents, 11.9 per cent). Only 7 respondents or 2.6 per cent held a doctorate, making this the smallest qualification category in the study. Regarding stakeholder designation, responses varied. 218 respondents indicated their position; teachers formed the clear majority (138 respondents, 63.3 per cent), followed by education officers (37 respondents, 17.0 per cent), principals (26 respondents, 11.9 per cent), and vice principals (17 respondents, 7.8 per cent). Fifty respondents did not state a designation, and the percentages for this characteristic are therefore computed on 218 rather than 268.

The distribution of years of work experience shows that respondents with below 5 years of service formed the largest group with 76 respondents or 28.4 per cent, followed by those with 5 to 10 years with 62 respondents or 23.1 per cent, 11 to 15 years with 55 respondents or 20.5 per cent, 16 to 20 years with 45 respondents or 16.8 per cent and above 20 years with 30 respondents or 11.2 per cent. On this basis, 138 respondents, or 51.5 per cent, had spent ten years or less in service. In comparison, 130 respondents or 48.5 per cent, had more than ten years of experience, indicating that the sample was drawn in roughly equal measure from less experienced and more experienced personnel.

Cluster A: Policy responses to school infrastructure development

Table 2: Policy responses to school infrastructure development

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
10	School infrastructure policies have enhanced students' learning outcomes.	267	2.85	1.05	64.8	5.40***	26.41***	Agree
1	The government has constructed new classroom blocks in public secondary schools.	265	2.73	1.08	60.0	3.44***	11.75**	Agree
3	School infrastructure policies have improved the learning environment in schools.	261	2.73	1.12	59.8	3.30**	11.54**	Agree
2	Existing school buildings have been adequately renovated through government intervention.	256	2.57	1.07	51.6	1.11	4.78	Agree
9	Budgetary allocations for school infrastructure have increased in recent years.	267	2.50	1.09	49.1	-0.03	1.75	Disagree
7	School infrastructure projects are implemented in accordance with policy provisions.	262	2.43	1.11	46.9	-1.06	1.18	Disagree

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S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
4	The government regularly provides classroom furniture to schools.	265	2.40	1.13	46.4	-1.39	2.18	Disagree
11	Government has provided ICT facilities to support teaching and learning.	256	2.39	1.19	46.5	-1.47	11.09*	Disagree
13	Educational policies adequately address infrastructure deficits in schools.	255	2.39	1.22	47.8	-1.46	20.84***	Disagree
12	School infrastructure development receives adequate political support.	260	2.32	1.12	41.2	-2.65**	8.58*	Disagree
5	Educational policies have improved access to electricity in schools.	266	2.29	1.10	40.2	-3.18**	10.54*	Disagree
8	Educational authorities regularly monitor infrastructure development projects.	264	2.27	1.10	39.8	-3.36***	11.61**	Disagree
15	Infrastructure projects are equitably distributed among schools.	262	2.27	1.09	39.7	-3.45***	11.89**	Disagree
14	School maintenance policies are effectively implemented.	259	2.21	1.11	36.3	-4.17***	20.52***	Disagree
6	Government has improved water supply facilities in schools.	263	2.17	1.09	34.2	-4.85***	26.60***	Disagree
	Cluster grand mean		**2.43**	**1.11**	**46.9**			**Disagree**

*Note. % Agree combines Strongly Agree and Agree. t tests the item mean against the criterion mean of 2.50. χ^2 tests whether responses were evenly distributed across the four options. Items are ordered by descending mean. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Item 9 is displayed as 2.50; its unrounded mean of 2.498 falls below the criterion.*

Table 2 shows that four of the fifteen items in this cluster were accepted and eleven were rejected, and that the cluster returned a grand mean of 2.43, which falls below the criterion mean of 2.50. Mean agreement across the fifteen items stood at 46.9 per cent. The highest-rated item was that school infrastructure policies have enhanced students' learning outcomes, with a recorded mean of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 1.05, endorsed by 64.8 per cent of respondents and significantly above the criterion mean ($t = 5.40$, $p < .001$). This was followed by the construction of new classroom blocks in public secondary schools, with a mean of 2.73, a standard deviation of 1.08 and agreement of 60.0 per cent, $t = 3.44$, $p < .001$, and by the improvement of the learning environment, also with a mean of 2.73, a standard deviation of 1.12 and agreement of 59.8 per cent, $t = 3.30$, $p < .01$. The fourth

accepted item, the adequate renovation of existing school buildings through government intervention, returned a mean of 2.57 with agreement of 51.6 per cent, but its distance from the criterion mean was not statistically significant, $t = 1.11$, $p > .05$, indicating that acceptance of this item rests on a mean that is only marginally above the cut-off point.

Among the rejected items, five lay close to the criterion mean and were not significantly different from it. These were the increase in budgetary allocations for school infrastructure, with a mean of 2.50 and agreement of 49.1 per cent, $t = -0.03$, the implementation of infrastructure projects in accordance with policy provisions, with a mean of 2.43 and agreement of 46.9 per cent, $t = -1.06$, the regular provision of classroom furniture, with a mean of 2.40 and agreement of 46.4 per cent, $t = -1.39$, the provision of ICT facilities, with a mean of 2.39 and agreement of 46.5 per cent, $t = -1.47$, and the adequacy with which educational policies address infrastructure deficits, with a mean of 2.39 and agreement of 47.8 per cent, $t = -1.46$. The remaining six items were rejected at conventional levels of significance. Respondents disagreed that school infrastructure development receives adequate political support, with a mean of 2.32 and agreement of 41.2 per cent, $t = -2.65$, $p < .01$, that educational policies have improved access to electricity, with a mean of 2.29 and agreement of 40.2 per cent, $t = -3.18$, $p < .01$, that educational authorities regularly monitor infrastructure projects, with a mean of 2.27 and agreement of 39.8 per cent, $t = -3.36$, $p < .001$, and that infrastructure projects are equitably distributed among schools, with a mean of 2.27 and agreement of 39.7 per cent, $t = -3.45$, $p < .001$. The two lowest rated items in the cluster were the effective implementation of school maintenance policies, with a mean of 2.21, a standard deviation of 1.11 and agreement of 36.3 per cent, $t = -4.17$, $p < .001$, and the improvement of water supply facilities in schools, with a mean of 2.17, a standard deviation of 1.09 and agreement of 34.2 per cent, $t = -4.85$, $p < .001$.

The chi-square values in Table 2 show that responses were unevenly distributed across the four options for eleven of the fifteen items. The strongest deviations from an even spread were recorded on water supply facilities, $\chi^2 = 26.60$, $p < .001$, learning outcomes, $\chi^2 = 26.41$, $p < .001$, the adequacy with which policies address infrastructure deficits, $\chi^2 = 20.84$, $p < .001$, and the implementation of maintenance policies, $\chi^2 = 20.52$, $p < .001$. Four items produced no significant departure from an even distribution, namely the renovation of existing buildings, $\chi^2 = 4.78$, budgetary allocations, $\chi^2 = 1.75$, the implementation of projects in accordance with policy, $\chi^2 = 1.18$, and the provision of classroom furniture, $\chi^2 = 2.18$, showing that responses on these four statements were spread almost evenly across the four options. Standard deviations across the cluster ranged from 1.05 to 1.22, and the number of valid responses ranged from 255 to 267.

Cluster B: Adequacy of school infrastructure for inclusive education

Table 3: Adequacy of school infrastructure for inclusive education

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S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
25	School libraries provide accessible learning materials for all learners.	259	2.68	1.14	57.1	2.58*	9.03*	Agree
27	School playgrounds are accessible to all learner categories.	260	2.50	1.11	49.6	-0.06	0.09	Disagree
26	School laboratories are designed to accommodate learners with disabilities.	267	2.46	1.13	47.9	-0.52	0.58	Disagree
29	Emergency facilities adequately cater for learners with disabilities.	259	2.45	1.12	47.1	-0.69	1.00	Disagree
24	Sign language resources are available for deaf students.	261	2.41	1.14	46.4	-1.33	2.49	Disagree
21	Schools possess assistive learning technologies for students with disabilities.	264	2.33	1.13	42.4	-2.39*	7.27	Disagree
22	Braille instructional materials are available where required.	262	2.29	1.10	40.8	-3.04**	9.36*	Disagree
20	Classrooms provide adequate space for learners with special needs.	267	2.29	1.12	39.7	-3.04**	11.64**	Disagree
30	Existing school infrastructure promotes educational inclusion.	268	2.26	1.09	38.8	-3.64***	13.82**	Disagree
18	Handrails are installed to assist learners with mobility challenges.	263	2.22	1.09	37.3	-4.22***	17.96***	Disagree
23	Schools have audio learning aids for visually impaired learners.	258	2.21	1.10	35.3	-4.26***	22.65***	Disagree
28	School transportation systems support learners with special needs.	256	2.21	1.10	35.9	-4.26***	20.78***	Disagree
19	Schools have disability-friendly toilet facilities.	266	2.19	1.11	36.5	-4.51***	22.81***	Disagree
16	School buildings are accessible to learners with physical disabilities.	263	2.17	1.07	35.7	-4.94***	23.10***	Disagree
17	Wheelchair ramps are available in most school buildings.	268	2.16	1.08	34.3	-5.16***	27.19***	Disagree
	Cluster grand mean		**2.32**	**1.11**	**41.7**			**Disagree**

Note. % Agree combines Strongly Agree and Agree. t tests the item mean against the criterion mean of 2.50. χ^2 tests whether responses were evenly distributed across the four options. Items are

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*ordered by descending mean. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Item 27 is displayed as 2.50; its unrounded mean of 2.496 falls below the criterion.*

Table 3 shows that only one of the fifteen items in this cluster was accepted while fourteen were rejected. The cluster returned a grand mean of 2.32, the lowest of the five clusters, with mean agreement of 41.7 per cent. The single accepted item was that school libraries provide accessible learning materials for all learners, with a mean of 2.68, a standard deviation of 1.15 and agreement of 57.1 per cent, significantly above the criterion mean at $t = 2.58$, $p < .05$. No other item in the cluster reached the criterion mean of 2.50.

Four rejected items were not significantly different from the criterion mean and therefore fell in the borderline region. These were the accessibility of school playgrounds to all categories of learners, with a mean of 2.50 and agreement of 49.6 per cent, $t = -0.06$, the design of school laboratories to accommodate learners with disabilities, with a mean of 2.46 and agreement of 47.9 per cent, $t = -0.52$, the adequacy of emergency facilities for learners with disabilities, with a mean of 2.45 and agreement of 47.1 per cent, $t = -0.69$, and the availability of sign language resources for deaf students, with a mean of 2.41 and agreement of 46.4 per cent, $t = -1.33$. The remaining ten items were rejected at conventional levels of significance. Respondents disagreed that schools possess assistive learning technologies, with a mean of 2.33 and agreement of 42.4 per cent, $t = -2.39$, $p < .05$, that Braille instructional materials are available where required, with a mean of 2.29 and agreement of 40.8 per cent, $t = -3.04$, $p < .01$, and that classrooms provide adequate space for learners with special needs, with a mean of 2.29 and agreement of 39.7 per cent, $t = -3.04$, $p < .01$.

The lowest-rated items in the cluster were rejected at $p < .001$ in every case. These were the summary statement that existing school infrastructure promotes educational inclusion, with a mean of 2.26 and agreement of 38.8 per cent, $t = -3.64$, the installation of handrails to assist learners with mobility challenges, with a mean of 2.22 and agreement of 37.3 per cent, $t = -4.22$, the availability of audio learning aids for visually impaired learners, with a mean of 2.21 and agreement of 35.3 per cent, $t = -4.26$, the support given by school transportation systems to learners with special needs, with a mean of 2.21 and agreement of 35.9 per cent, $t = -4.26$, the availability of disability friendly toilet facilities, with a mean of 2.19 and agreement of 36.5 per cent, $t = -4.51$, the accessibility of school buildings to learners with physical disabilities, with a mean of 2.17 and agreement of 35.7 per cent, $t = -4.94$, and the availability of wheelchair ramps in most school buildings, which recorded the lowest mean in the entire study at 2.16 with agreement of 34.3 per cent, $t = -5.16$.

The chi-square results show significant departures from an even spread of responses on ten of the fifteen items, concentrated among the lowest-rated statements. The largest values were recorded on wheelchair ramps, $\chi^2 = 27.19$, $p < .001$, accessible school buildings, $\chi^2 = 23.10$, $p < .001$, disability friendly toilets, $\chi^2 = 22.81$, $p < .001$, audio learning aids, $\chi^2 = 22.65$, $p < .001$, and school transportation, $\chi^2 = 20.78$, $p < .001$. Responses were distributed evenly across five items:

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playgrounds, $\chi^2 = 0.09$; laboratories, $\chi^2 = 0.58$; emergency facilities, $\chi^2 = 1.00$; sign language resources, $\chi^2 = 2.49$; and assistive learning technologies, $\chi^2 = 7.27$, all of which are among the higher-rated statements in the cluster. Standard deviations ranged from 1.07 to 1.15, and valid responses ranged from 256 to 268.

Cluster C: Implementation of inclusive education policies

Table 4: Implementation of inclusive education policies

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
45	Inclusive education policies have improved access to education for learners with disabilities.	257	2.71	1.08	61.5	3.10**	14.67**	Agree
33	Teachers receive adequate training on inclusive education practices.	267	2.54	1.11	50.9	0.58	0.58	Agree
42	Government agencies coordinate effectively in implementing inclusive education policies.	262	2.51	1.13	50.0	0.16	0.20	Agree
38	School management teams support inclusive education initiatives.	259	2.51	1.05	47.5	0.09	9.77*	Agree
32	School administrators understand inclusive education policy requirements.	268	2.50	1.11	48.9	-0.06	0.75	Disagree
39	Teachers are involved in policy implementation decisions.	268	2.49	1.08	45.1	-0.17	12.57**	Disagree
36	Educational authorities regularly evaluate policy implementation.	265	2.45	1.12	47.9	-0.74	0.55	Disagree
43	School communities support inclusive education programmes.	266	2.43	1.11	47.4	-1.05	1.25	Disagree
37	Stakeholders participate in implementing inclusive education policies.	267	2.43	1.10	46.1	-1.08	1.99	Disagree
31	Inclusive education policies are clearly communicated to schools.	260	2.42	1.13	46.5	-1.10	1.45	Disagree
34	The government provides sufficient support for policy implementation.	251	2.37	1.10	42.6	-1.80	6.04	Disagree

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S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
44	Existing educational policies adequately promote equity and inclusion.	267	2.37	1.11	44.9	-1.90	3.58	Disagree
40	Inclusive education policy objectives are being achieved in schools.	264	2.34	1.14	43.2	-2.32*	6.88	Disagree
41	Funding allocated for inclusive education is adequate.	257	2.32	1.12	41.6	-2.54*	7.48	Disagree
35	Inclusive education policies are effectively enforced in schools.	261	2.15	1.06	33.7	-5.40***	28.55***	Disagree
	Cluster grand mean		**2.44**	**1.10**	**46.5**			**Disagree**

*Note. % Agree combines Strongly Agree and Agree. t tests the item mean against the criterion mean of 2.50. χ^2 tests whether responses were evenly distributed across the four options. Items are ordered by descending mean. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Items 32 (M = 2.496) and 39 (M = 2.489) fall below the criterion, while items 38 (M = 2.506) and 42 (M = 2.511) fall marginally above it.*

Table 4 shows that four of the fifteen items were accepted and eleven were rejected, with a cluster grand mean of 2.44 and mean agreement of 46.5 per cent. The highest rated item was that inclusive education policies have improved access to education for learners with disabilities, with a mean of 2.71, a standard deviation of 1.08 and agreement of 61.5 per cent, significantly above the criterion mean at t = 3.10, p < .01. The other three accepted items exceeded the criterion mean only marginally. None of them differed significantly from it. These were the adequacy of teacher training on inclusive education practices, with a mean of 2.54 and agreement of 50.9 per cent, t = 0.58, the effective coordination of government agencies in implementation, with a mean of 2.51 and agreement of 50.0 per cent, t = 0.16, and the support of school management teams for inclusive education initiatives, with a mean of 2.51 and agreement of 47.5 per cent, t = 0.09.

Of the eleven rejected items, eight were not significantly different from the criterion mean, so that this cluster contains the largest concentration of borderline results in the study. These were the understanding of policy requirements by school administrators, with a mean of 2.50 and agreement of 48.9 per cent, t = -0.06, the involvement of teachers in policy implementation decisions, with a mean of 2.49 and agreement of 45.1 per cent, t = -0.17, the regular evaluation of implementation by educational authorities, with a mean of 2.45 and agreement of 47.9 per cent, t = -0.74, the support of school communities for inclusive education programmes, with a mean of 2.43 and agreement of 47.4 per cent, t = -1.05, the participation of stakeholders in implementation, with a mean of 2.43 and agreement of 46.1 per cent, t = -1.08, the clear communication of inclusive education policies to schools, with a mean of 2.42 and agreement of 46.5 per cent, t = -1.10, the sufficiency of government support for implementation, with a mean of 2.37 and agreement of 42.6 per cent, t = -1.80, and the

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adequacy with which existing policies promote equity and inclusion, with a mean of 2.37 and agreement of 44.9 per cent, t = -1.90.

Three items were rejected at conventional levels of significance. Respondents disagreed that inclusive education policy objectives are being achieved in schools, with a mean of 2.34 and agreement of 43.2 per cent, t = -2.32, $p < .05$, and that the funding allocated for inclusive education is adequate, with a mean of 2.32 and agreement of 41.6 per cent, t = -2.54, $p < .05$. The lowest rated item in the cluster by a clear margin was the effective enforcement of inclusive education policies in schools, with a mean of 2.15, a standard deviation of 1.06 and agreement of only 33.7 per cent, t = -5.40, $p < .001$. The chi-square results reinforce the borderline character of this cluster, since only four of the fifteen items departed significantly from an even spread of responses. These were policy enforcement, $\chi^2 = 28.55$, $p < .001$, improved access for learners with disabilities, $\chi^2 = 14.67$, $p < .01$, the involvement of teachers in policy decisions, $\chi^2 = 12.57$, $p < .01$, and the support of school management teams, $\chi^2 = 9.77$, $p < .05$. For the remaining eleven items the four response options were selected in almost equal proportions, with chi-square values as low as 0.20 for the coordination of government agencies and 0.55 for the regular evaluation of implementation. Standard deviations ranged from 1.05 to 1.14, and valid responses ranged from 251 to 268, the lowest valid N recorded in the study.

Cluster D: Challenges affecting policy responses

Table 5: Challenges affecting policy responses

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
54	Difficult terrain affects infrastructure provision in Bayelsa State.	264	2.91	1.05	70.1	6.40***	42.76***	Agree
55	Negative societal attitudes hinder inclusive education.	267	2.91	1.03	70.0	6.51***	43.16***	Agree
49	Corruption undermines school infrastructure projects.	260	2.88	1.06	67.3	5.84***	32.83***	Agree
56	Shortage of assistive learning materials affects inclusion.	268	2.88	1.06	67.5	5.94***	34.24***	Agree
48	Delays in project execution affect infrastructure development.	263	2.87	1.06	67.7	5.71***	33.44***	Agree
60	Inadequate budgetary allocation limits infrastructure development.	257	2.87	1.06	68.1	5.54***	33.72***	Agree
46	Inadequate funding affects school infrastructure development.	268	2.86	1.05	67.2	5.65***	32.09***	Agree

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S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
59	Insufficient stakeholder collaboration affects policy implementation.	268	2.81	1.06	65.3	4.77***	25.34***	Agree
57	Weak policy enforcement affects educational inclusion.	267	2.81	1.07	64.0	4.73***	22.00***	Agree
51	Lack of specialised personnel hinders inclusive education implementation.	266	2.80	1.07	62.8	4.59***	19.68***	Agree
52	Teachers lack adequate training in special needs education.	267	2.78	1.10	62.2	4.14***	17.48***	Agree
53	Rural schools experience greater infrastructural challenges than urban schools.	268	2.77	1.08	61.2	4.12***	15.97**	Agree
58	Lack of data on learners with disabilities affects planning.	261	2.77	1.07	63.2	4.03***	18.71***	Agree
50	Inadequate monitoring affects policy implementation.	265	2.75	1.10	60.8	3.70***	13.81**	Agree
47	Poor maintenance culture contributes to infrastructure deterioration.	267	2.71	1.12	58.8	3.03**	9.99*	Agree
	Cluster grand mean		**2.83**	**1.07**	**65.1**			**Agree**

*Note. % Agree combines Strongly Agree and Agree. t tests the item mean against the criterion mean of 2.50. χ^2 tests whether responses were evenly distributed across the four options. Items are ordered by descending mean. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.*

Table 5 shows that all fifteen items in this cluster were accepted and that each was significantly above the criterion mean. The cluster returned a grand mean of 2.83 and a mean agreement of 65.1 per cent, both substantially higher than the corresponding values for the three preceding clusters. Fourteen items were significant at $p < .001$ and one at $p < .01$, and agreement ranged from 58.8 per cent to 70.1 per cent, so that no item in the cluster attracted the endorsement of fewer than three respondents in five.

The most strongly endorsed challenges were the effect of difficult terrain on infrastructure provision in Bayelsa State, with a mean of 2.91, a standard deviation of 1.05 and agreement of 70.1 per cent, $t = 6.40$, $p < .001$, and negative societal attitudes towards inclusive education, with a mean of 2.91, a standard deviation of 1.03 and agreement of 70.0 per cent, $t = 6.51$, $p < .001$. These were followed by corruption in the execution of school infrastructure projects, with a mean of 2.88 and agreement of 67.3 per cent, $t = 5.84$, the shortage of assistive learning materials, with a mean of 2.88 and agreement of 67.5 per cent, $t = 5.94$, delays in project execution, with a mean of 2.87 and agreement of 67.7 per cent, $t = 5.71$, inadequate budgetary allocation, with a mean of 2.87 and agreement of

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68.1 per cent, t = 5.54, and inadequate funding for school infrastructure development, with a mean of 2.86 and agreement of 67.2 per cent, t = 5.65.

The remaining items were endorsed at a similar level. Respondents agreed that insufficient stakeholder collaboration affects policy implementation, with a mean of 2.81 and agreement of 65.3 per cent, that weak policy enforcement affects educational inclusion, with a mean of 2.81 and agreement of 64.0 per cent, that the lack of specialised personnel hinders implementation, with a mean of 2.80 and agreement of 62.8 per cent, that teachers lack adequate training in special needs education, with a mean of 2.78 and agreement of 62.2 per cent, that rural schools experience greater infrastructural challenges than urban schools, with a mean of 2.77 and agreement of 61.2 per cent, that the lack of data on learners with disabilities affects planning, with a mean of 2.77 and agreement of 63.2 per cent, and that inadequate monitoring affects policy implementation, with a mean of 2.75 and agreement of 60.8 per cent. The lowest-rated item in the cluster was the contribution of a poor maintenance culture to infrastructure deterioration, with a mean of 2.71, a standard deviation of 1.12, and agreement of 58.8 per cent, t = 3.03, $p < .01$, which remains an accepted item. The chi-square values were significant for every item in the cluster, ranging from 9.99 at $p < .05$ for the maintenance culture item to 43.16 and 42.76 at $p < .001$ for negative societal attitudes and difficult terrain, respectively, indicating that responses were unevenly distributed across the four options throughout the cluster. Standard deviations ranged from 1.03 to 1.12, and valid responses ranged from 257 to 268.

Cluster E: Strategies for improving school infrastructure and inclusive education

Table 6: Strategies for improving school infrastructure and inclusive education

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
75	Inclusive education indicators should be integrated into educational planning processes.	260	2.95	1.02	71.9	7.08***	50.18***	Agree
68	Rural schools should receive special infrastructure intervention funds.	268	2.94	1.02	71.3	6.98***	48.69***	Agree
65	Schools should recruit special education personnel.	262	2.94	1.02	71.4	6.90***	48.08***	Agree
69	Communities should participate in school infrastructure maintenance.	266	2.93	1.02	70.7	6.90***	46.00***	Agree
71	The government should establish a dedicated inclusive education fund.	258	2.92	1.05	70.5	6.43***	43.67***	Agree

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S/N	Item statement	N	Mean	SD	% Agree	t (vs 2.50)	χ^2 (df = 3)	Decision
64	Teachers should receive regular training on inclusive education.	259	2.92	1.03	69.9	6.50***	41.46***	Agree
73	Development partners should support inclusive education initiatives.	265	2.91	1.05	69.8	6.32***	41.70***	Agree
70	Educational planners should incorporate disability-inclusive standards into all school projects.	267	2.90	1.07	69.3	6.11***	40.37***	Agree
61	Government should increase funding for inclusive education infrastructure.	264	2.89	1.07	67.4	5.85***	34.12***	Agree
74	School-based management committees should monitor infrastructure projects.	256	2.86	1.05	67.6	5.39***	31.72***	Agree
72	School infrastructure audits should be conducted regularly.	260	2.85	1.06	66.9	5.37***	30.03***	Agree
63	Schools should provide modern assistive technologies.	262	2.83	1.06	66.4	5.03***	28.47***	Agree
67	Public-private partnerships should support school infrastructure development.	264	2.79	1.06	64.8	4.47***	23.61***	Agree
66	Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure projects.	267	2.79	1.08	64.0	4.41***	21.19***	Agree
62	Accessibility standards should be compulsory in all school construction projects.	260	2.77	1.07	63.8	4.12***	20.34***	Agree
	Cluster grand mean		**2.88**	**1.05**	**68.4**			**Agree**

*Note. % Agree combines Strongly Agree and Agree. t tests the item mean against the criterion mean of 2.50. χ^2 tests whether responses were evenly distributed across the four options. Items are ordered by descending mean. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.*

Table 6 shows that all fifteen strategies in this cluster were accepted and that each was significantly above the criterion mean at $p < .001$. The cluster returned a grand mean of 2.88, the highest in the study, with mean agreement of 68.4 per cent. Agreement ranged from 63.8 per cent to 71.9 per cent, and standard deviations ranged from 1.02 to 1.08, the narrowest recorded in any cluster.

The most strongly supported strategy was integrating inclusive education indicators into educational planning processes, with a mean of 2.95, a standard deviation of 1.02, and agreement of 71.9 per cent, $t = 7.08$, $p < .001$. This was followed by the provision of special infrastructure intervention funds for rural schools, with a mean of 2.94 and agreement of 71.3 per cent, $t = 6.98$, the recruitment

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of special education personnel into schools, with a mean of 2.94 and agreement of 71.4 per cent, t = 6.90, community participation in school infrastructure maintenance, with a mean of 2.93 and agreement of 70.7 per cent, t = 6.90, the establishment of a dedicated inclusive education fund, with a mean of 2.92 and agreement of 70.5 per cent, t = 6.43, and regular teacher training on inclusive education, with a mean of 2.92 and agreement of 69.9 per cent, t = 6.50.

Support for the remaining strategies was only slightly lower. Respondents agreed that development partners should support inclusive education initiatives, with a mean of 2.91 and agreement of 69.8 per cent, that educational planners should incorporate disability inclusive standards into all school projects, with a mean of 2.90 and agreement of 69.3 per cent, that government should increase funding for inclusive education infrastructure, with a mean of 2.89 and agreement of 67.4 per cent, that school based management committees should monitor infrastructure projects, with a mean of 2.86 and agreement of 67.6 per cent, that school infrastructure audits should be conducted regularly, with a mean of 2.85 and agreement of 66.9 per cent, and that schools should be provided with modern assistive technologies, with a mean of 2.83 and agreement of 66.4 per cent. The three lowest rated strategies were public-private partnerships in school infrastructure development, with a mean of 2.79 and agreement of 64.8 per cent; the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure projects, with a mean of 2.79 and agreement of 64.0 per cent; and the compulsory application of accessibility standards in all school construction projects, with a mean of 2.77 and agreement of 63.8 per cent, t = 4.12, $p < .001$. The chi-square values were significant at $p < .001$ for all fifteen items, ranging from 20.34 for the compulsory accessibility standards item to 50.18 for the integration of inclusion indicators into planning, which is the largest chi-square value recorded in the study. Valid responses ranged from 256 to 268.

Discussion of Findings.

The findings reveal a substantial gap between inclusive education policy commitments and implementation in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Government responses to infrastructure development were below the criterion mean (cluster mean = 2.43). Although improvements were reported in learning outcomes, classroom construction, learning environments and renovations, concerns remained about funding, furniture, ICT, electricity, monitoring, equitable distribution, maintenance and water supply. Infrastructure policies received the highest rating (M = 2.85) for their contribution to learning outcomes, while water supply (M = 2.17) and maintenance implementation (M = 2.21) received the lowest. This supports evidence of persistent implementation challenges in Nigeria (Omede, 2016; Orlunga & Alikor, 2023; Alikor, 2026).

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Infrastructure for inclusive education was found to be inadequate as it fell below the criterion mean (cluster mean = 2.32), as only accessibility of library learning materials was accepted (M = 2.68). The key deficiencies identified included assistive technologies, Braille materials, classroom space, handrails, audio aids, disability-friendly toilets, accessible buildings, and wheelchair ramps. Wheelchair ramps (M = 2.16) and building accessibility (M = 2.17) received the lowest ratings. This reinforces concerns that inclusion requires more than placing learners with diverse needs in mainstream schools (Angwaomaodoko, 2023a; Bright-George & Bobmanuel, 2025). Isaac et al. (2025) similarly question whether inclusive education has moved beyond policy rhetoric to practical reality.

Similarly, while the implementation of inclusive education policies was below the criterion mean (cluster mean = 2.44; criterion = 2.50), access for learners with disabilities showed some improvement (M = 2.71); funding (M = 2.32), achievement of policy objectives (M = 2.34) and policy enforcement (M = 2.15) were poorly rated. This accords with Angwaomaodoko (2023b) and Hussaini and Jabbi (2025), who identify persistent implementation challenges and emphasise the need to translate policy commitments into effective institutional practice.

Significantly, all 15 identified challenges to inclusive education were accepted (cluster mean = 2.83). Difficult terrain and negative societal attitudes ranked highest (both M = 2.91). Other challenges included corruption, inadequate funding and budgetary allocation, shortages of assistive materials and specialised personnel, project delays, weak stakeholder collaboration and enforcement, inadequate teacher training, rural disparities, insufficient disability data, weak monitoring and poor maintenance. These findings align with barriers to inclusive education such as funding, human resources, and institutional capacity, as identified by Hussaini & Jabbi (2025), Omede (2016), and Orlunga & Alikor (2023). Significantly, the state's difficult geographical terrain, which is about 75 per cent riverine, is noted as a context-specific infrastructure development constraint that requires targeted intervention.

Similarly, all 15 proposed strategies for improving inclusive education were accepted, with a cluster mean of 2.88 and 68.4% mean agreement. The key intervention strategies, identified as integrating inclusive education indicators into educational planning, funding rural infrastructure, recruiting special education personnel, involving communities in maintenance, establishing a dedicated

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inclusive education fund and providing regular teacher training, align with the emphasis on coordinated implementation, adequate resources and professional capacity as earlier noted by Bright-George & Bobmanuel (2025) and Hussaini & Jabbi (2025). Overall, the findings indicate that the central challenge is not policy absence but inadequate implementation capacity, infrastructure, financing, monitoring and institutional coordination.

Conclusion

The study concludes that policy responses to school infrastructure and inclusive education in Bayelsa State have produced some improvements but remain insufficient to provide a consistently inclusive learning environment. Infrastructure responses, infrastructure adequacy and policy implementation all fell below the acceptable threshold. Major deficiencies include accessibility facilities, assistive technologies, specialised learning resources, water supply, electricity, maintenance, funding and policy enforcement.

Difficult terrain and negative societal attitudes further complicate implementation, while inadequate funding, weak monitoring, insufficient specialised personnel and limited stakeholder collaboration constrain policy effectiveness. However, the strong acceptance of all proposed improvement strategies demonstrates substantial stakeholder support for a more systematic approach to inclusive education. Effective inclusion in Bayelsa State therefore requires sustained investment, context-sensitive planning, stronger implementation mechanisms and continuous monitoring.

Recommendations

The following recommendations, drawn from the findings, are hereby made to address the identified infrastructure, funding, accessibility, and implementation gaps affecting inclusive education in Bayelsa State.

1. The Bayelsa State Government should provide a clearly identifiable funding window for inclusive education infrastructure, assistive technologies, accessibility facilities and specialised learning resources.
2. Direct special infrastructure intervention funds to rural and riverine schools, where difficult terrain creates additional barriers to infrastructure provision and accessibility.
3. All new and renovated school projects should incorporate disability-inclusive standards, including wheelchair ramps, accessible buildings, disability-friendly toilets, handrails and appropriate emergency facilities.

4. The government is enjoined to recruit adequate special education personnel and provide regular professional development for teachers on inclusive education, disability support, and the use of assistive learning technologies.
5. Infrastructure projects and inclusive education programmes should be subjected to regular monitoring and independent audits, with school-based management committees, teachers, parents and communities involved in oversight and maintenance.
6. Inclusive education in
7. dicators should be part ofIncorporate inclusive education indicators into educational planning, budgeting, and project design, supported by reliable data on learners with disabilities to improve resource allocation, monitoring, and policy evaluation.

Together, these recommendations provide a practical framework for strengthening inclusive education through improved financing, accessible infrastructure, specialised capacity, effective monitoring and evidence-based educational planning.

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