



**SYSTEM  
STRATEGY  
AND POLICY  
LAB**

# **Nigeria's Plan to Adopt a **12-Year** Basic Education System:**

A Strategic and  
Justified Reform?

# Nigeria's Plan to Adopt a 12-Year Basic Education System: A Strategic and Justified Reform?



Nigeria is set to undertake a significant reform in its education system by extending compulsory schooling to 12 years, integrating secondary education into the basic education framework. This shift, which aligns with global best practices, aims to address systemic challenges, enhance educational continuity, and equip students with the necessary skills for higher education and workforce readiness.

The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, has proposed transitioning from Nigeria's current **9-3-4 education model** to a **12-4 structure**, ensuring uninterrupted learning for all students up to the age of 16. Speaking at the **2025 Extraordinary National Council on Education (NCE) Meeting** in Abuja on **February 6, 2025**, Dr. Alausa emphasized that this reform is crucial for aligning Nigeria's education system with **international standards** and fostering national development. The **NCE, Nigeria's highest policymaking body on education**, convened to deliberate on this landmark policy shift and its potential implications.

At **System Strategy and Policy Lab (SSPL)**, we have critically examined this proposal. As a **private-sector-led policy, planning, governance, and development think tank**, we offer insights into the proposed reform, highlighting key implementation strategies and recommendations to ensure its success.

# Rationale for Extending Basic Education to 12 Years

## Reducing Dropout Rates and Addressing Barriers to Completion

A major challenge in Nigeria's education system is the high dropout rate, particularly at the secondary school level. Financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and systemic inefficiencies often force students to abandon their education before completing secondary school. By extending basic education to cover the full 12 years, Nigeria aims to remove financial and systemic barriers, ensuring that every child completes their schooling up to the age of 16. This initiative will make education more inclusive and accessible, reducing the number of out-of-school children.

1

2



2

## Ensuring Standardized Curriculum and Educational Continuity

A 12-year basic education system will streamline the curriculum across all states, ensuring that learning is consistent and standardized throughout the country. This approach minimizes disparities in educational quality, providing all students with equal learning opportunities regardless of their geographic or socio-economic background. A uniform curriculum will also facilitate better teacher training and resource allocation, leading to improved learning outcomes.

# Early Exposure to Vocational and Entrepreneurial Skills

One of the critical gaps in Nigeria's current education system is the delayed introduction of vocational and entrepreneurial training. By integrating secondary education into the basic education framework, students will be exposed to hands-on skills at an earlier stage, preparing them for multiple career pathways, including self-employment, technical professions, and higher education. This reform will help bridge the skills gap, making Nigerian graduates more competitive in both local and global labor markets.

3



4

## Alignment with **International Standards**

Many developed nations, such as Finland, Canada, and Germany, have successfully implemented 12-year uninterrupted basic education systems. This model ensures that students acquire foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills before advancing to tertiary education or specialized training. Adopting this system in Nigeria will position the country to compete favorably on the global stage, attract international partnerships, and improve educational quality to meet global benchmarks.

# Economic and Social Impact of a **Well-Educated** Youth Population

Investing in a longer compulsory education period has profound social and economic benefits. Educated youth contribute to national development, economic productivity, and social stability. With a better-educated workforce, Nigeria can reduce unemployment rates, drive innovation, and create a knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, keeping children in school for a longer period will help curb child labor, crime, and other social vices, fostering a safer and more prosperous society.

5



# Implementation Strategies for the 12-Year Basic Education Reform

To successfully integrate secondary education into basic education, Nigeria will adopt a **multi-faceted implementation strategy** focusing on the following key areas:



## Policy Reforms

The government will enact legislation and policy frameworks to enforce 12 years of free and compulsory education across the country. This will include amendments to the Universal Basic Education Act to reflect the new education structure.



## Cost Analysis and Financing Framework for Nigeria's 12-Year Basic Education Reform

Implementing Nigeria's 12-year basic education system requires a well-structured financing strategy to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. With the current 2% Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) allocation to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), there is a need for increased funding and strategic resource allocation to cover up to secondary education.





## Infrastructure Expansion

To accommodate the expected increase in student enrollment, Nigeria will invest in building and upgrading schools, particularly in underserved rural areas. More classrooms, laboratories, and digital learning centers will be established.



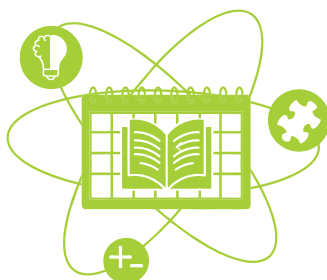
## Teacher Training and Recruitment

The success of this reform depends on the capacity and quality of teachers. The government will enhance teacher training programs, improve remuneration, and recruit more educators to meet the growing demand.



## Funding and Partnerships

Expanding education will require sustainable funding mechanisms. The government will explore public-private partnerships, international aid, and increased budgetary allocation to finance expansion.



## Curriculum Enhancement

The new education structure will incorporate modernized curricula, emphasizing STEM education, digital literacy, and vocational training to ensure students acquire relevant 21st-century skills.

# Recommendations for Successful Implementation

## 1. Lessons from Other Countries

- **Finland:** Finland's education system is known for its student-centered approach and strong teacher training programs. Nigeria should invest in continuous teacher development and ensure that educators are well-equipped to implement the new curriculum.
- **United States & Canada:** The K-12 system in North America incorporates strong tracking mechanisms to monitor student progress. Nigeria should develop a robust data management system to track student performance, attendance, and school completion rates.
- **India:** India successfully implemented a Right to Education (RTE) Act, making education free and compulsory. Nigeria should adopt a similar legal framework to enforce compulsory 12-year education and ensure its proper implementation.

## 2. Strengthening Coordination Among Stakeholders

The success of the 12-year basic education reform will require strong coordination among government agencies, private sector players, development partners, and civil society organizations. A centralized coordination body should be established to oversee the implementation process.

## 3. Tracking and Evaluation of Performance

The Nigerian government should implement a real-time monitoring and evaluation system that tracks:

- **Enrollment rates and school attendance**
- **Teacher-student ratios**
- **Infrastructure development and resource allocation**
- **Learning outcomes and literacy rates**

This tracking system should be digitalized and linked to a national education database to ensure transparency and data-driven decision-making.

## 4. Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers

In some parts of Nigeria, cultural beliefs and economic conditions prevent children, especially girls, from completing their education. The government should work with traditional leaders, religious groups, and community organizations to encourage enrollment and retention.

## 5. Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

To ensure financial sustainability, Nigeria should:

- Increase the percentage of GDP allocated to education
- Establish an Education Trust Fund for infrastructure and scholarships
- Encourage corporate sponsorship and donor funding

**Nigeria: Adopting a 12-year uninterrupted basic education system,** Nigeria is taking a bold step toward improving educational access, quality, and outcomes. This reform is not only a response to current challenges but also a strategic move to align with global best practices and equip the next generation with the skills needed for national development. Ensuring equitable, standardized, and skill-oriented education will position Nigeria as a leading force in Africa's educational advancement and contribute significantly to its socio-economic growth.

### What Do You Know About 12-K Model of Education?

The K-12 education model represents a comprehensive educational framework encompassing 12/13 years of schooling, from Kindergarten (K) through 12th grade. This structure is designed to provide a continuous and cohesive learning experience, ensuring that students develop foundational skills in the early years and progressively build upon them through secondary education.

## Understanding the K-12 Model:

- 1. Kindergarten (K):** Typically for children aged 5–6, this initial year focuses on introducing basic concepts such as letters, numbers, and social interaction skills.
- 2. Elementary School (Grades 1–5/6):** Covering early literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies, these years lay the groundwork for critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
- 3. Middle School (Grades 6/7–8):** Students delve deeper into core subjects and begin exploring electives, fostering a broader understanding of various disciplines.

**4. High School (Grades 9-12):** Emphasis is placed on advanced coursework, specialization options, and preparation for higher education or vocational paths.

This uninterrupted sequence ensures that students receive a well-rounded education, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate both academic pursuits and real-world challenges effectively.

**Comparative Overview of K-12 Implementation and Costs:**

The implementation and funding of the K-12 model vary across countries. Below is a comparative overview of how **India, Finland,** and the **United States** structure their K-12 education systems, along with the approximate annual expenditure per student:

Aspect	India	Finland	United States
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Primary Education:</b> Grades 1–5 (ages 6–10)</li> <li>- <b>Upper Primary:</b> Grades 6–8 (ages 11–13)</li> <li>- <b>Secondary Education:</b> Grades 9–12 (ages 14–17)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Basic Education:</b> Grades 1–9 (ages 7–16)</li> <li>- <b>Upper Secondary Education:</b> Grades 10–12 (ages 16–19)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Elementary School:</b> Grades K–5 (ages 5–11)</li> <li>- <b>Middle School:</b> Grades 6–8 (ages 11–14)</li> <li>- <b>High School:</b> Grades 9–12 (ages 14–18)</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on core subjects: Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Languages</li> <li>- Recent integration of vocational training and digital literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Holistic approach focusing on critical thinking, creativity, and student well-being</li> <li>- Minimal standardized testing; personalized learning paths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standards-based curriculum with a focus on standardized testing</li> <li>- Emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Varies by region; efforts underway to improve teacher training and certification standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All teachers required to hold master's degrees</li> <li>- Teaching is a highly respected and competitive profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requirements vary by state; typically a bachelor's degree and teaching certification are mandatory</li> </ul>
<b>Annual Expenditure per Student</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approximately \$1,100 per student</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://businessday.ng">businessday.ng</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approximately \$12,000 per student</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://businessday.ng">businessday.ng</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approximately \$15,500 per student</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://NationalCenterforEducationStatistics">National Center for Education Statistics</a></p>

## Key Differences:

- » **Educational Philosophy:** Finland emphasizes holistic development and minimal standardized testing, fostering critical thinking and creativity. In contrast, the United States focuses on standardized assessments to measure educational outcomes, while India is transitioning towards integrating vocational training and digital literacy into its traditional curriculum.
- » **Teacher Qualifications:** Finnish teachers are required to hold master's degrees, reflecting the high status of the teaching profession. In the United States, requirements vary by state but generally include a bachelor's degree and certification. In India, teacher qualifications vary significantly across regions, with ongoing efforts to standardize and enhance training programs.
- » **Funding:** There is a notable disparity in annual educational expenditure per student, with India spending approximately \$1,100, Finland around \$12,000, and the United States about \$15,500. These differences impact resources, class sizes, and educational infrastructure.

Understanding these variations provides insight into how different countries approach the implementation of the K-12 model, reflecting their unique cultural values, economic capabilities, and educational priorities.

References:

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Education expenditures by country.

[National Center for Education Statistics](#)

Michael, C. (2025, February 24). K-12 education: 7 countries delivering value for cost. BusinessDay.

# About Murtala Adogi Mohammed PhD

## Dr. Murtala Adogi – Planning and Policy Expert, Governance Reformer, and Development Specialist

Dr. Murtala Adogi is a distinguished expert in social sector, environmental sustainability, and governance reform, with nearly two decades of experience in policy design, results delivery, and system strengthening. His career spans public institutions, international development organizations, and high-level government advisory roles.

As the founder of **System Strategy and Policy Lab (SSPL)**, Dr. Adogi leads a premier policy think-tank specializing in **policy design, implementation support, advocacy, research, third-party monitoring, capacity building, and project execution**. SSPL collaborates with government ministries, agencies, NGOs, and international organizations to drive impactful reforms and enhance service delivery.

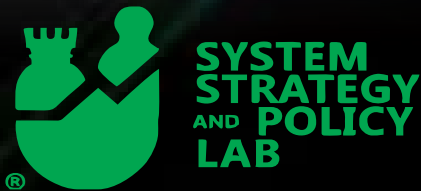
Dr. Adogi has played a critical role in shaping Nigeria's education and governance landscape. He served as an **Education Adviser for the UK Government's DFID/FCDO Northern Nigeria Office in Kano** and as an **Education Specialist at UNICEF Nigeria**. In these capacities, he worked with **22 State Governors in 17 Nigerian states, Ministers, Heads of MDAs and Senior Government officials**, providing strategic support to strengthen institutions, systems and governance. His academic journey reflects his commitment to expertise and innovation. He holds a **Ph.D. in Climate Change, Livelihoods & Rural Development** from the **University of Port Harcourt**, an **MSc in Ecology and Environmental Sustainability** from the **University of Aberdeen**, and an **MA in Development Studies** from **Bayero University Kano**. He earned his **BSc. Ed in Biological Sciences Education** with Second Class Upper Honors from **Ahmadu Bello University Zaria**.



A **Chevening Scholar**, Dr. Adogi has enhanced his expertise through specialized training, including **Youth and Education in Post-Conflict Communities** at the **University of Groningen, Netherlands**, and **Working with Ministers** at the **Institute for Government, London**.

Most recently, Dr. Adogi convened the **Northern Nigeria Development Dialogue (NNDD)**, where he unveiled the **Northern Nigeria Development Goals (NNDGs) 2045** as the **Lead Advocate**. This visionary framework aims to drive long-term development and structural transformation across Northern Nigeria, focusing on governance, economic growth, human capital development, and sustainability.


Beyond his professional achievements, he is a dedicated family man, happily married with four children,



 [info@sspolicylab.com](mailto:info@sspolicylab.com)

 [SystemStrategyandPolicyLab](https://www.linkedin.com/company/SystemStrategyandPolicyLab)

 [SystemStrategyandPolicyLab](https://www.facebook.com/SystemStrategyandPolicyLab)

 (+234)8061546680

 @SSPL\_Nigeria

 [www.sspolicylab.com](http://www.sspolicylab.com)