

Political Leadership and Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: An Assessment of Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Uyo

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Abstract

Education for sustainable Development (ESD) targets at acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudinal changes in both formal and informal sectors to increased productive population in the state for job creation and economic self-reliance of the people in present generation without compromising the future generations. However, a gap exists as most leaders in the state failed to give top priority to education as potential nexus for development in Nigeria. Corruption among leaders in the education sector was identified as a major drawback to education in developing economies. The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between political leadership and ESD in Nigeria with reference to Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) using Education Index proxied by literacy rate (average adult year of schooling and expected year of schooling), education budget/implementation, quality and access to education. Descriptive research and Survey of study population of about 40,266 comprising of appointed education officials in 2,826 schools affiliated to SUBEB with sample size of 380 determined using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970). Simple random and stratified random sampling techniques were used to administer 12 items questionnaire on the respondents. Simple percentage, Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient and tabular form were adopted for data presentation and analysis. The study among others revealed that: Political leadership has significant direct relationship with ESD in Akwa Ibom State. It recommended policy reforms to reduce anomalies in educational management and adequate funding to meet UNESCO education budget baseline of 26%, employment of more qualified teachers, training and re-training of teachers to develop technical skills in entrepreneurship education; provision of libraries, laboratories and other facilities for modern research/innovations.

Keywords: *Akwa Ibom State, Development, Education, Sustainable Development, Political Leadership*

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Background to the Study

Education in all ramifications plays significant role in the social, economic and political development of the state. Many scholars see education for sustainable development as critical instrument of empowering the people through training and learning processes that can lead to acquisition of skills and expertise knowledge needed for wealth creation and self-reliance of the populace in the state. Education act as the livewire for human development and technological advancement in many countries especially in advance nations such as USA, Canada, France, England, as well as the Asian Miracle States of China, Singapore, Dubai, South and North Korea etc. where education is used to transform the States.

However, education in the developing economy like Akwa Ibom State still lack the needed attention due to various factors such as corrupt leadership, unaffordability of education as a result of poverty, unemployment, inequality, social instability, cultural/ religious practices which discouraged peoples' participation in both formal and informal schoolings.

In line with this assertion, the establishment of Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in 1999 was to provide universally free and compulsory basic education for all citizens in the state in line with the National Policy on Education (2004, as cited in Ukpong, 2014) and Sustainable Development Goal number 4 targeted at education for all by 2030 (UN, 2015). SUBEB or Universal Basic Education (UBE) as often referred to, offers 9 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education, and it covers three areas namely: formal basic education, nomadic education, and non-formal education (Ukpong, 2014). Scholars like (Enoch and Okpede 2002; Babalola 2006; Okowori and Ede, 2012; as cited in Ukpong, 2014) subscribed to the fact that, the high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria and the subsequent need to eradicate illiteracy brought about the universalization of basic education with the theme “Education for All” by the year 2000 in Nigeria.

However, despite the introduction of UBE in Nigeria in collaboration with AKSUBEB, educational gaps still exist in the areas of high rate of illiteracy, increased number of out-of-school children, decay in schools infrastructure/facilities in Akwa Ibom State, and these factors are often linked to corruption and policy inconsistency among leaders and educational workers which hinder smooth implementation of the lofty educational programmes of the AKSUBEB to meet the desired goal. Hence, political leadership supposed to drive the implementation of educational policies that can empower the populace to fulfil their potentials in line with human development index without undermining present and future generations of people in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the study became necessary to identify the problems and make recommendations on how to remedy the gaps which exist as a result of high level of corruption in the education sector caused by greed, poverty, illiteracy, absent of good morals/ethics among workers, poor pay and other incentives, lack of patriotism, transparency and accountability among the appointed education workers in the state. These has resulted in unrealistic goals, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds meant for educational development, and also contributes to inadequate trained/qualified personnel as well as decay of infrastructure amongst schools in the state (Aberu and Lawal, 2022; Ekpo, 2023).

The study would be of great important to students in secondary and tertiary institutions as the theoretical and empirical exposition of the study will broaden their knowledge about education for sustainable development in the state, and at the same time serve as referenced material for future researchers. To the policy makers and government officials, it would provide them with pragmatic theories for effective policy making and implementation geared towards state development. To the public, it will broaden their knowledge about who makes public policies and for whose interest, thereby enlightening them on how to hold their leaders accountable for their actions. The study would also contribute to the existing knowledge on transformational and pragmatic leadership for effective educational development in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria and society at large.

Statement of Problem

One of the major problems of educational development in Nigeria is lack of effective leadership. Our leaders' weak leadership style is a contributing factor to the state's high rates of illiteracy, poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In Nigeria, the country had over 10.5 million out-of-school children as at 2022 (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2022), whereas Akwa Ibom recorded 581,800 out-of-school children and was ranked 2nd among states with the highest out-of-school children in the country (NBS, 2020; Federal Ministry of education, 2020 as cited Premium Times August 8, 2021; UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2022). Education funding in Akwa Ibom as at 2022 was below 7% of the total education budget allocation as against UNESCO benchmark of 20 – 26% spending in education.

In the same vein, Essien and Edemekong (2023); Ekpo, Umo-Udo, Umoh, and Udo, (2023) opine that political leaders while aspiring for leadership position in Nigeria will promise the people total transformation of the state and when given opportunity to governed, their behaviour changes to the old culture of corruption, graft, nepotism, embezzlement, elephantine and unrealistic projects as well as impunity. Many scholars like Claude Ake, Chinua Achebe and Barack Obama have argued that leadership deficits are problems facing most African states. In the case of Nigeria, credible people are often denied opportunity to win election into high political offices such as president, governors, legislatures and council chairmen etc. rather what we often see in return are leaders with questionable characters and incompetency occupying the highest political offices in the country.

In fact, corruption in Nigeria is everywhere including education, legal system, economic and religion sectors among others, the leaders' character reflects corruption in various forms and corruption is a monster that destroy everything good and useful in the state (Essien and Edemekong, 2023). To Claude Ake, corruption is also seen as the ganga worm which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the state to destroy it. Hence, his conception of corruption as the bane of African society. Despite the fact that Akwa Ibom is rated number 9 in the list of top educated states in Nigeria, with 88.90% literacy rate, we still have high number of school dropout (Nigerianinfo.com, 2022). Looking at previous budgets over the years, one would see that budget performance level for education has been fluctuating downwards as follows 53% (2013), 64% (2014), 36% (2015) and 43% (2016), as reported in (Policy Alert, 2019). As it is

observed, the downward slash in the allocation to education sector affects AKSUBEB implementation of their programmes in the opinion of (Uche, 2019, as cited in Policy Alert, 2019). The question is, why is it that credible and competence persons' are denied access to leadership position in higher offices in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria? The study will further deliberate on it as we proceed.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between political leadership and education for sustainable development in Nigeria with specific reference to Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Board (AKSUBEB), Uyo.

Other specific objectives include to:

- i. Investigate how political leadership affected education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Highlight the challenges/constraints to effective political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Make useful suggestions on the ways to improved political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

- i. How has the political leadership affected education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the impact of political leadership on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What are the challenges/constraints to effective political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

- H_0 – Political leadership tend not to have any significant relationship with education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.
- H_1 – Political leadership tend to have significant relationship with education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Political Leadership

Drucker (2010, as cited in Akpakpan and Okpata, 2021) opined that leadership is concern with lifting of people's vision to a high rationale, raising of their performance to a higher standard, as well as building their capacity and personality to be more productive in the society. Leadership connotes the capacity of a superior to set goals or objectives and inspire or influence the action of the subordinate towards accomplishment of set goals.

In the same vein, Ekpo (2023), maintains that political leadership from all ramification is about giving direction and making policies that can propel socio-economic and political development aim at advancement of the well-being of the populace as well as the economic growth and development of the state. In addition, a leader is expected to have certain positive

traits like rationality or knowledge, trustworthiness, loyalty to the organization, performance of selfless services, and taking personal responsibility. They are also expected to have good character or traits like honesty, competence, candour, commitment, integrity, courage, straightforwardness, imagination, proficiency, and the ability to train others in their tasks (British Essay, 2017; British Essay, 2010 cited in Ekpo, 2023). The various types of Leadership according to article in Management study (2021) and Berlinsky-Schine (2016) all cited in Ekpo (2023) include: Autocratic Leadership; Charismatic Leadership; Transformational Leadership; Laissez-faire Leadership; Transactional Leadership and Democratic Leadership etc.

To support the definition of leadership, World Bank Institute report (2015) opined that effective political leadership must reflect the six indicators of good governance which include:

1. Transparency and accountability.
2. Political participation and stability of the economy.
3. Government effectiveness which involves quality and efficient service delivery in the civil service.
4. Provision of enabling environment for investment by implementation of viable economic/market friendly policies.
5. Strict adherence to the rule of law which deals with perception of crime, effective judiciary and justice system; and lastly,
6. Combating corruption in both public and private sectors.

Consequently, political leadership in Akwa Ibom State intensify self-aggrandizement, corruption, and often seek to promote the leaders' interest at the detriment of the interest of the masses thereby leaving the populace in abject poverty, hunger and unemployment which in turn hinders socio-economic development in the state. Hence, the public institutions through which legitimate power is exercised and enforced, is germane to corruption so as to meet the ends of these corrupt leaders in the state (Yagboyaju and Akinola, 2019 cited in Ekpo, 2023). The fact remains that corruption in any forms ranging from embezzlement, bribery, misappropriation and diversion of funds, nepotism, sadism, godfatherism and contract inflation etc. impede education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State and indeed Nigeria. Obviously, leadership supposed to affect the institutions of governance and the institution in turn affects the peoples' lives positively. Rather what we have in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria are strong men as leaders who imposes their will on the masses, but we lack strong institutions to bring about the needed socio-economic transformation and development in the state (Essien and Edemekong, 2023; Ekpo, Umoh and Utok, 2023).

Concept of Education

Education as perceived by Kneller (1963); Phenics (1964); Farrant (1964); Hirst (1966) and Cermin (1978 as cited in UNESCO, 2000; Azikiwe, 2007) is a process of learning to live as useful and acceptable members of society. In addition, education as an activity is as old as man across cultures. It is therefore a concept that people have severally defined according to their own perceptions. According to Emenike (2004, as cited in Azikiwe, 2007) education is the acquisition of knowledge that tends to train and develop the individual. Education embraces

not only school experiences (formal education) but also indirect or incidental influences (informal education) which help us to learn, such influences and activities that affect our character, behaviours and perceptions. As a social institution, Emile Durkheim (1956: 28) defined education as:

The influence exercised by adult generations on those that are yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which is specifically destined. The matters arising from this definition are twofold. The first is that education is the process by which individuals are selected and assigned social roles while the second shows that the level of development in a society is dependent on the type (or quality) of education given to its members. All in all, education is a continuous learning process through which members of a society acquire requisite knowledge and skills to facilitate effective performance of assigned social responsibilities (Azikiwe, 2007).

In the views of Ekpo (2023) Education is the process of learning and imparting skills, moral, social and intellectual values of the society on the citizens through teaching and training in order to develop the entire human being for the general advancement of the well-being of the populace in the state. Its incorporate the formal and informal aspect of training. The state government has its educational development plan proposed by the education think tanks and vigorously pursued by the government MDAs.

Concept of Development

According to Phahari (2022 cited in Ekpo, 2023) development is human centered and not alone GDP/ per capita, and this signify that the development of good quality human capital (resources) and the subsequent utilization of their potentials guarantee the development of the state.

The Human Development Index (HDI) has indicators to include: Health care (life expectancy), education (rate of literacy), and a higher standard of living/Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment (Tom, Bassey, Ekpo, and Ebong, 2021; cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Griffin revealed that the HDI tracks changes in the level of development of states over time (Griffin, 2010 cited in Ekpo, 2023). The HDI has two main features: A scale from 0 (no development) to 1 (complete development), as well as an index, which is based on three equally weighted components:

1. Longevity, measured by life expectancy at birth.
2. Knowledge, measured by literacy rate and number of years children are enrolled at school.
3. Standard of living, measured by real GDP per capita at purchasing power parity (Phahari, 2022; Umoinyang and Effiong, 2018 cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Concept of Sustainable Development

In that same vein, United Nations report (1987, cited in Erinsakin, Erinsakin, and Olalekan, 2022) defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. The International Institute for Sustainable development (IISD), conceived it to mean activities or actions taken to improve the economic and social well-being of persons as well as environmental sustainability for today and future generation, to include such elements as equality between ages, gender, classes and races; social development, inclusiveness of everyone, human and environmental harmony that promotes environments' interdependency and transfer of technology; and cooperation among developing and developed countries (Erinsakin, Erinsakin, and Olalekan, 2022).

Concept of Education for Sustainable Development

Education is the driving force for socio-economic development of any state, but in Nigeria very little is committed to investment in education, hence, Nigeria is still rated as one of the country with higher number of illiteracy. In recent time, Mauritius and Rwanda have committed more resources to the development of the education sector and we can say that the socio-economic and political development recorded in these economies is attributed to the leaders' interest in improving educational sector. In the Education Index, part of the Human Development Index (HDI) cited in (Ibrahim, 2018, quoted in Ekpo, 2023), Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa constitute the top three scoring African countries. Looking ahead, and as the economy of Akwa Ibom State transit more and more towards market economies, we will need the necessary education to harness the market hardware (such as physical infrastructure) as well as macroeconomic fundamentals, a business-friendly environment, a culture of saving, a legal system, and other factors to enable the market system to function and generate growth and development.

Theoretical Review

There are several theories of leadership as propounded by eminent authors and some include:

Behavioural Theory- This is sometimes referred to as the "personality or style theory," it contends that leaders can be developed through learnable behaviours rather than just being born. It placed a strong emphasis on a leader's behaviour and actions and ignore other attributes of leadership (Business Magazine, 2020 cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Contingency Theory: It contextualize leadership in relationship to situation surrounding leader's action that may lead to efficacy. It was recommended by Fred E. Fiedler, an Australian Psychologist in 1964, it anchored on leader – member relations which can lead to trust, loyalty and confidence on the leader; task specification/clarity and means of actualizing goals; the position of power in reward – punishment by authority. It maintains that leader's success is determined by situation/environment and scenario in which they find themselves not their personality. (Northhouse, 2007 cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Great Man Theory: This holds the opinion that effective leaders are born great and not made. They are great because of natural qualities and abilities that cannot be taught or acquired. The theory was popularized by an historian, Thomas Carlyle in the 19th century. According to the trait theory, leaders are in their position because of their unique traits. The characteristic theory is subject to a significant deal of criticism, most notably the claim that leaders are either born or they are not and that being a leader requires no work or effort.

Management Theory: It is also known as transactional leadership, emphasizes organization, supervision, and team performance. Business frequently employs transactional leadership, which is a system of incentives and sanctions. Frederick Winslow Taylor is one of the major proponents of management theory, he applied it in 1909 in his work, the principles of Scientific Management, the one best way of doing things to get maximum result (efficiency), and others are Max Weber (1864- 1920) Henri Fayol (1841 – 1925) etc. Managers commend their staff for a job well done and might punished staff if they don't succeed. Based on performance, transactional awards and penalties are issued. They perceived people as being motivated by rewards, which drives them to act. The criticism is that human beings are treated like machine without accorded human dignity.

Power Theory: It examines how a leader uses their position of authority and influence to accomplish goals. A well-known leadership power theory is French and Raven's Five Forms of Power. It examines the effects of positional and individual power on the decisions and results made by leaders (Business Magazine, 2020 cited in Ekpo, 2023). Most Nigerian authorities, including those in Akwa Ibom State, favour the power theory.

In addition, the study adopts Structural Functionalism and Transformational leadership theories as theoretical framework of analysis.

Structural Functional Theory (SFT): It was popularized by Emile Durkheim (1917), Robert K. Merton (1968), Gabriel Almond (1960) and Talcott Parson (1979). It was first adopted to analyse political systems and processes, and subsequently applied in management of organization. Its basic tenets include: seeing organization as a living organism made up of component parts which function interdependently for the survival of the whole system. It stipulates the performance of specific functions as requisite to the maintenance of the whole system. It maintained that malfunction of the parts can lead to malfunctionality of the whole system (Eminue, 2001 cited in Ekpo and Umoh, 2022).

Transformational Leadership Theory: This type of leadership theory holds that "leaders and followers make each other advance to a higher level by motivation". James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard M. Bass (1985) are two academics that are affiliated with transformational leadership theory. James V. Downton was the one who initially introduce it. For instance, James MacGregor Burns used the notions of transformational leadership to analyze political leadership in the state, which helped to popularize the theory. Burns claims that transformational leadership occurs when "leaders and followers make each other advance to a higher level by motivation". Through their vision and personalities, transformational leaders

are able to inspire their followers to alter their expectations and perceptions as well as motivate them to work toward shared objectives. Additionally, according to Burns, transformational leaders are those that are able to advance their followers up Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

According to Bass (1985, as quoted in Wikipedia, 2021; Fong-Yi Lai, 2020; Khan, Khan, and Khan, 2016 cited in Ekpo, 2023), transformational leadership can be categorized according to the effect the leader has on their followers. Bass argued that followers of transformational leaders show them respect, adoration, and trust. People are motivated to accomplish unexpected or spectacular achievements via transformational leadership. As a result, the followers' or employees' attitudes improve, as does the organization as a whole. Four unique actions, usually referred to as the four dimensions of leadership, are typically carried out by transformational leaders. These behaviours consist of motivating inspiration, idealizing influence, stimulating the mind, and giving each person their due regard (Khan, Khan, and Khan, 2016; cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Application of the theories shows that it offers a framework for effective leadership that improves followers' motivation, morale, and job performance through a variety of mechanisms. These mechanisms include inspiring and stimulating followers' interest in state development by serving as role models, connecting followers' sense of identity and self to a project and to the collective identity of the organization or state, and challenging followers to upgrade. Setting excessively high standards for team members might be risky for transformational leaders.

In the normal perspective, leadership is about service delivery and not self-gains. It is pertinent to note that, corruption has eaten deep into the lives of some of Akwa Ibom leaders thereby resulting in compromise of standard and service for self-gains at the detriment of the welfare of the masses. Our leaders have severally failed to build human capacity and the needed infrastructure in education and industries but some of them rely on stomach infrastructure and prefers self-satisfaction by enriching themselves and allies even at the expense of vast majority of the population in the state. As a result of corruption among the appointed public officials in the education sector, we witnessed increase in poverty, hunger and unemployment in the state. The research is of the opinion that our leaders should see their position as an avenue to serve with the spirit of patriotism and have interest of the people at heart, practice political inclusiveness, unity and integration to improved human capacity development, health care services, education and economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

Empirical Review

Adekola (2020), examines political leadership and its impact on entrepreneurship for human development in Nigeria. The study relying on secondary data advocated that developing economies like Nigeria and others should imbibe entrepreneurship development culture as the major driving force that has transformed several developed economies. It observed that socio-economic and political imperative of creating jobs to absorb the unemployed graduates in Nigeria is one of the greatest challenges faced by successive governments. It concluded that there exist linkages between political leadership, entrepreneurship culture and human development that must be cultivated to make Nigeria to experience substantive growth.

Aberu and Lawal (2022) investigates the relationship between education and sustainable development in Nigeria using ex-post-facto research design and utilized time series data which were sourced from CBN Statistical Bulletin from 1992 to 2021. The ARDL model was used to determine both the long run and short run relationships between the variables. Data showed that education crowd-out Sustainable Development with a negative and significant relationship. The study concluded that education is significant but with weak effect on sustainable development. It recommended that Nigerian government should ensure quality control and result oriented policies at all levels of education, and adequate funding of education in Nigeria to enhance conducive learning environment.

Political Leadership and Education in Akwa Ibom State

Education is a core sector of any modern development. Awareness in this direction propel government to invest enormous resources and make efforts in ensuring that education of Akwa Ibom Children is given the necessary attention. According to Mrs. Idongesit Etiebiet, honourable commissioners for education, she opined that both government and parent have significant role to play, parents have a great if not greater role in shaping and distilling the right values into the lives of their wards. They must inculcate in them the fear of God and the acute moral values of understanding of the principles of right and wrong (AKSG, 2022).

In Akwa Ibom State, machineries of government under the ministry of education and boards have been reinvigorated to deliver on the targets set by the proposal in line with achieving universal primary education. To this effect, the state government made education in Primary and secondary schools free and compulsory, so as to pursue the SDGs no. 4, which sought to attain inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all the citizens by 2030.

The targets is to ensure that all citizens of school year acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development including among others through education for sustainable development, lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development. This includes: building and upgrading educational facilities for inclusive and effective learning environments for all; expanding the number of scholarships available in the state, and encourage more enrolment in secondary and higher education, including vocational training, information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes in the state (AKSG, 2022; Ekpo, 2023).

Substantially, to increase the supply of qualified teachers and teachers training in the state, in which the state government has demonstrated capacity in this area recently by employing over 5000 teachers with the needed qualifications and competency in teaching profession and as well trained over 2000 teachers in the state in disputable institutions in the nation and abroad to boost human resources in the education sector (AKSG, 2022). The revolution in the education sector forms the crux of the Akwa Ibom State Government's focus and this revolution, best described as war in the education sector, comes with a physical revamp of infrastructure, retraining of teachers, employment of new ones and security of facilities (AKSG, 2021, 2022).

According to Policy Alert (2019) about N4.98 billion proposed as the capital budget for the education sector in Akwa Ibom State has drawn criticisms from individuals, civil society organizations and the organized labour. The allocation which represents 0.83 per cent of the total budget for 2020 is said to be too small for a sector as critical as education. Some analysts have gone further to say, though erroneously, that the allocation shows that the state administration does not place a premium on education. In previous years, the administration budgeted above N10 billion for capital expenditure in the education sector. For instance, in 2019, N13.74 billion was the total approved capital for education in the state. But was it able to implement up to 50% of that estimate to meet the required standard of education budget in the nation. Global budgeting standards are rapidly changing from bogus fiscal permutations to more realizable budgeting. Akwa Ibom state is following this standard trend. This has informed the decision of the government to keep the 2020 proposals as realizable as possible. That is why it is proposing N597.8 billion for 2020, which is about N75.1b lower than its total approved budget for 2019 (Policy Alert, 2019). Lead research and policy analyst at BudgIT, Ojiugo Uche have noted rightly that “reducing the probability, the unreality of inflated budget is the new way to go.” This is exactly the new way the Akwa Ibom is going (Policy Alert, 2019).

It is obvious that State administration has shown sufficient commitment in the development of education at all levels. Recently, the state convened the first education summit which was attended by over 3000 stakeholders. The government has put a technical committee in education to review the recommendations of the summit which the government is intended to holistically restructure the education system in the State. The state government said they are desirous to drive our development through education (AKSG, 2022). The state administration has in the past four years been paying N600 million annually as examination fee for students in the State who wrote the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in addition to the payment of subvention to teachers. About 4800 teachers have been added to the personnel pool; currently, the process for targeted recruitment of more teachers to fill specific subject needs is ongoing. The administration has renovated more than 100 blocks of classrooms in primary and secondary schools in the last four years and has given serious facelift to other infrastructure such as roads, laboratories, lecture theatres, libraries in state-owned tertiary institutions including state-owned College of Education, Afaha Nsit; Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden; Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua; College of Health Technology, Etinan; and the College of Arts and Science, Nung Ukim, and established and commission to full operation two new command schools in the state (AKSG, 2022, Policy Alert, 219).

Repeatedly, the state administration is working hard to give the state the kind of education system the state needs to build a pool of manpower that will match its new skill needs of an industrialized state (AKSG, 2022). Matching words with action, the government recently ordered complete reconstruction of the moribund Government Technical College, Ikot Adaidem. Education and human capacity development are among the strong points in the state government's completion agenda (AKSG, 2021). The state administration is much more interested in the performance of the budget than posting bogus figures that would not be realizable in the end (Policy Alert, 2019). The only way Akwa Ibom State can create a truly

inclusive society where every individual has an equal chance to realize their potential, achieve the best quality of life, and live free from exclusion and prejudice is in education of the populace. The reduction of inequality is only effective and long-lasting at that point. Despite significant investment in the educational sector, Akwa Ibom State's infrastructure and institutions of higher learning have deteriorated, and the state's educational standards have not improved.

Methods and Materials

This research adopts qualitative and quantitative research method. In the qualitative/descriptive research data were obtained from secondary source. Education Index was proxied by literacy rate (average adult year of schooling and expected year of schooling), quality of education and accessibility with measures indicators like number of schools, teachers and qualifications, total attendance/enrolment of children, education budget/percentage of implementation. Taking political leadership regimes from 1999 - 2023.

Survey questionnaire was used to elicit primary data from the projected population of about 40,266 comprising of appointed education officials in 2,826 schools affiliated to SUBEB with sample size of 380 determined using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970). Simple random and stratified random sampling techniques were used to administer 12 items questionnaire on the respondents. Simple percentage, Pearson Product Moment Correction Coefficient (PPMCC) and tabular presentation were adopted for data presentation and analysis. Secondary data from textbooks, Government publications, Journals and internet materials etc. were analyzed contextually.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, data obtained from literature (secondary) and survey (primary) methods were presented in tables, while hypothesis were tested using PPMCC to determine the degree of relationship among variables, and the analysis based on the research questions that guided the study.

Table 1: Sample Questionnaire and responses by respondents in Likert format

S/N	Questions	SA	A	U	SD	D
1	Lack of good Political Leadership (PL) limits access to basic education among the citizens and has significant effect on human development in AKS?	95	120	2	25	130
2	Free and compulsory education introduced by Political leadership enhance increased enrollment of children in schools to encouraged ESD in AKS?	100	121	3	30	118
3	Inadequate funding and budgeting for education by political leadership contributes to increase in the number of out-of school children in AKS?	27	149	3	75	118
4	The qualification of teachers employed by the Political leadership in Akwa Ibom State meets minimum requirements of National Teachers Certificate (NCE) and above for effective education development?	62	87	3	73	147
5	Lack of infrastructure and other facilities in basic schools in Akwa Ibom State affects the quality of education provided by political leaders to citizens?	102	116	2	35	117
Sample Questionnaire and responses by respondents in dichotomous format (Yes/No)						
6	Provision of a conducive working environment in AKSUBEB for both teachers and pupils/students act as a drive for ESD in AKS?	207 (55.65%)		165 (44.35%)		
7	Introduction of vocational/entrepreneurship education in primary and junior secondary schools can enhanced the goal of ESD in Akwa Ibom State?	225 (60.48%)		147 (39.52%)		
8	Prompt payment of salary and other incentive to teachers and other staff of SUBEB encouraged teachers' performance in ESD in AKS?	260 (69.89%)		112 (30.11%)		
9	Workers attitude towards work in SUBEB contributes to poor attainment of the goal of education for all and cause setback to ESD in AKS?	212 (58.99%)		160 (43.01%)		
10	Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the activities of SUBEB staff by the state government contribute to high rate of corrupt practices and also affects implementation of ESD in AKS?	198 (53.23%)		174 (46.77%)		
11	Corruption among education workers in SUBEB contribute to increase in rate of out-of-school children and hinder ESD in AKS?	195 (53.42%)		177 (47.58%)		
12	Pupils/students loss of interest in technical/vocational education in basic schools hinders ESD in AKS?	214 (57.53%)		158 (42.47%)		

Source: Computed by the researcher using 372 correctly retrieved questionnaire from field data (2023)

Testing of Hypothesis

Political leadership tend not to have any significant relationship with education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State

The hypothesis is re-stated in the null and alternate hypothesis form as follows:

H_0 – There is no significant relationship between political leadership and education for

sustainable. development in Akwa Ibom State.
H_i– There is significant relationship between political leadership and education for sustainable. development in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Questionnaire responses of three hundred and seventy-two respondents to questions 1 – 5 in Likert format

Questions in appendix	SA	A	SA+A= Yes(x)	SDA	DA	SDA+DA = No(y)	No ideas	Total
1	95	120	215 (57.380%)	25	130	155 (41.67%)	2	372
2	100	121	221 (59.41%)	30	118	148 (39.78%)	3	372
3	27	149	176 (47.31%)	75	118	193 (51.88%)	3	372
4	62	87	149 (40.05%)	73	147	220 (59.12%)	3	372
5	102	116	218 (58.60%)	35	117	152 (40.86%)	2	372
Total	386	593	979	238	630	868	13	1860

Source: Computed by the researcher using 372 correctly retrieved questionnaire from field data (2023)

Table 3: Contingency table showing relationship between political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State (X and Y).

Questions in Appendix	Responses		(x) ²	(y) ²	Xy
	Yes= x	No= y			
1	215 (57.80%)	155 (41.67%)	46225	24025	33325
2	221 (59.41%)	148 (39.78%)	48841	21904	32708
3	176 (47.31%)	193 (51.88%)	30976	37249	33968
4	149 (40.05%)	220 (59.12%)	22201	48400	32780
5	218 (58.60%)	152 (40.86%)	47524	23104	33136
Total = ∑	979	868	195767	154682	165917

Source: Computed by the researcher using 372 correctly retrieved questionnaire from field data (2023)

Table 3 shows that 57.80% of respondents agreed that lack of basic education among the citizens significantly affect education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State while 41.67% stated they disagreed. 59.41% agreed that the free and compulsory education introduced by political leadership in Akwa Ibom State enhances increased in enrollment in schools for socio-economic development of the state while 39.78% stated that they disagreed, 47.31% of respondents stated they agreed that inadequate funding and budgeting for education by political leadership contributes to increase in the number of out-of-school children in Akwa Ibom state, whereas 51.88% stated that they disagreed.

Concerning the issue of Teachers' qualifications, 40.05% of respondents agreed that the qualification of teachers employed by the political leadership in Akwa Ibom State meets minimum requirements of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and above for effective education service delivery while 59.12% said they disagree, and this implies that above 50% of teachers' still lack the basic qualification. 58.60% of respondents agreed that lack of

infrastructure and other facilities in schools in Akwa Ibom State affects the quality of education provided by political leaders to the citizens whereas 40.86% indicated they disagreed.

Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula:

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum(x)^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum(y)^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

$$= \frac{5(165917) - (979)(868)}{\sqrt{[5(195767) - (979)^2][5(154682) - (868)^2]}}$$

$$= \frac{829585 - 849772}{\sqrt{[978835 - 958441][773410 - 753424]}}$$

$$= \frac{-20187}{\sqrt{[20394][19986]}}$$

$$= \frac{-20187}{\sqrt{407594484}}$$

$$= \frac{-20187}{20188.97}$$

$$= 0.999 \sim 0.99$$

$\therefore r = 0.99$

(a) The relationship between X and Y is positive and is of very high correlation (0.99), this means that increase in variable X (political leadership) would have significant and direct effect on variable Y (education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State). If the value of the correlation is squared, we obtain the coefficient of determination. Hence $(0.99)^2 = 0.9801$ which = 98.01%. This means that about 98.01% of the variation in Y (independent variable) is explained by X (dependent variable).

(b) To test the significance of the correlation coefficient, we make use of the t- test given as thus:

Ho: The correlation is not significant.	} Two tailed Test.
Hi: The correlation is significant.	

$$\begin{aligned}
t &= r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \\
&= 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{5-2}{1-0.99^2}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{3}{1-0.98}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{3}{0.02}} \\
&= 0.99 \sqrt{150} = 0.99 \times 12.25 = 12.128 \sim 12.13
\end{aligned}$$

Calculated value = 12.13

D/F = N-2 = 5-2 = 3

Table value = 3.18 at 0.05 two tailed tests.

Decision: Since the calculated value (12.13) is greater than the table value (3.18), then, the researcher reject H_0 and accept H_1 , that the very high correlation coefficient of 0.98 is in fact very significant.

I therefore accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1) which states that there is significant direct relationship between political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State. This mean that the r value did not occur by chance. If another sample is collected, it will still end up with the same conclusion.

Research Question Two

What is the impact of political leadership on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State?

The perception of respondents to Q 6 & 8 provides answer to help in determining the level of impact of political leadership on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State as 207 respondents which represented 55.65% agreed that provision of a conducive working environment in AKSUBEB for both teachers and pupils/students act as a drive for ESD in AKS while 165 respondents which made up 44.35% disagreed. In the same vein, 225 respondents which made up 60.48% agreed that introduction of vocational/entrepreneurship education in primary and junior secondary schools can enhance the goal of ESD in Akwa Ibom State while 147 respondents which represented 39.52% disagreed. 260 respondents which made up 69.68% agreed that prompt payment of salary and other incentive to teachers and other staff of SUBEB encouraged teachers' performance in ESD in AKS while 112 respondents which made up 30.11% disagreed. Data revealed that political leadership has significant impact on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question Three

What are the challenges/constraints to effective political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State?

The perception of respondents to Q 9 & 12 provides answer to the challenges/constraints to effective political leadership and education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State. Concerning whether the workers attitude towards work in SUBEB contributes to poor attainment of the goal of education for all and cause setback to ESD in AKS, 212 respondents which made up 56.99% maintained that workers attitude to work contributes to poor attainment of the goal of education for all and cause setback to ESD in AKS whereas 160 respondents which constitutes 43.01% disagreed. 198 respondents which constitutes 53.23% opine that inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the activities of SUBEB staff by the state government contribute to high rate of corrupt practices and also affects implementation of ESD in AKS while 174 respondents representing 46.77% did not agree. In addition, 195 respondents which represented 52.42% agreed that Corruption among education workers in SUBEB contribute to increase in rate of out-of-school children and hinder ESD in AKS while 177 respondents which represented 47.58% did not agree. 214 respondents which represented 57.53% agreed that pupils/student's loss of interest in technical/vocational education in basic schools hinders ESD in AKS whereas 158 respondents which represented 42.58% did not agree. The result showed workers poor attitudes to work, corruption among SUBEB staff as well as pupils/students' loss of interest in technical/vocational education are drawback to ESD in AKS.

Stylized Fact on Indicators of Socio-economic Development in Akwa Ibom State

Table 4: Total Number of Public and Private (Primary – Junior Secondary) Schools in the State

S/N	Public/Private Schools	Total Number	Remarks
1	Public Primary Schools	1167	
2	Private Primary Schools	1568	
3	Junior Secondary Public Schools	263	
4	Junior Secondary Private Schools	374	
5	Senior Secondary Public Schools	261	
6	Senior Secondary Private Schools	354	
7	Teachers in Public Primary Schools	15, 187	
8	Teachers in Public Junior Secondary Schools	6,225	
9	Teachers in Private Primary Schools	14, 682	
10	Teachers in Private Junior Secondary Schools	4, 172	

Source: Akwa Ibom State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Uyo as at February, 2023.

Table 5: Education indicators in Akwa Ibom State from 1999 - 2023

S/N	No. of Schools		No. of Teachers		Total Learners enrollment	Total out-of-school children	Scholarship	Expenditure	% of Implementation
	Pri.	Sec.	Pri.	Sec.					
1999 – 2003	1138	221	14201	5483	325,765	-	Tuition fee	34%	-
2003 – 2007	1146	221	14525	5813	356,823	14,679	Tuition fee	38%	7%
2007 – 2011	1147	227	14774	5813	497,729	-	Free & comp.	53%	9%
2011 – 2015	1154	242	14782	6011	576,217	23%	Free & comp.	64%	10%
2015 – 2019	1164	251	15223	6011	663,453	581,800	Free & comp.	36%	7%
2019 – 2023	1167	264	15187	6,225	709,633	41%	Free & comp.	43%	8%
Total	1431		21,412		3,129,620				

Source: Ministry of Economic Development, Uyo, 2013; Education Statistics Publication 2007 – 2013; NBS, 2020, as cited in Premium Times, 2021; National Personnel Budget, 2008; SUBEB, 2023, Ministry of Education, Uyo, 2023; Researcher Computation, 2023.

Table 5 shows number of schools, the state had about 1146 primary schools and 221 secondary schools within 1999 – 2007; about 1154 primary schools and 242 secondary school within 2007 – 2015 whereas total number of education facilities in AKS within 2015 – 2023 are primary schools 1167 and secondary schools 264 totaling 1431, while others include vocational/ technical schools 12; special education 3, adult/non formal education 888, higher institutions 9, thereby making a total of 2343 education facilities (SUBEB, 2023; Ministry of Education, Uyo as at March, 2023).

Concerning number of teachers, the state had about 14525 and 5813 teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively within 1999 – 2007; while it had about 14782 and 6011 teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively within 2007 – 2015 whereas about 15187 and 6,225 teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively within 2015 – 2023, there has been increase in the numbers of teachers over the years in the educational sector in AKS as well as increase in leaners' enrollment from about 325,765 in 1999 to about 576,217 in 2015 and recently to about 709,633 learners' enrollment as at 2022. Hence, the total learner's enrollment from 1999 – 2023 are about 3,129,620 in primary and secondary categories only. Despite this improvement in learners' enrollment, the state still encounters out-of-school children.

Within 2003 – 2007 about 14,679 were recorded while about 581,800 out-of-school children recorded within 2015 – 2019. Therefore, the implication is that much is needed to be done in addition to the free and compulsory education policy of Akwa Ibom State. In term of educational funding, inadequate funds have been budgeted for education over the years, the state have never met the UNESCO budget baseline of 26%, only within 2011 – 2015 that the

state recorded up to about 10% implementation whereas the rest are as low as 7% and below. Hence, there is need for increase in budgeting for education to meet the baseline by UNESCO and its implementation should be followed properly.

This implies that there is needs for more funding by state government and commitment on the part of ministry of education and other implementation agencies to ensure effective utilization of the funds to provide the needed teaching aids and facilities instead of misappropriation of the money for personal gains.

Table 6: Average Percentage (%) of Education and Health development using School Enrollment/Literacy rate and Life Expectancy/Infant Mortality at 0-5 in Akwa Ibom State from 1999 – 2023 Contd

Regime	Education			Health care Service			
	Attendance of children 6-8	Attendance of children 15-17	Attendance of children 21-23	Literacy rate	Life Expectancy	Infant Mortality at 0-5	Stunted Children (Malnutrition)
1999 - 2003	83.88	80.00	44.88	-	46.6	153.5	32.58
2003 - 2007	88.35	82.7	40.08	-	48.7	154.3	25.1
2007 - 2011	92.45	82.7	29.1	89.5	51.1	127.5	26.95
2011 - 2015	94.9	83.9	23.00	66.3	56.4	85.4	22.18
2015 - 2019	93.18	78.45	18.0	78.1	52.8	96.43	20.00
2019 - 2023	91.65	73.95	14.5	78.1	53.1	108	18.5

Source: Computed by Researcher (2023), using data from UNESCO, 2012, Global Data Lab, 2022.

In table 6 data revealed improved attendance of children 6-8 from 83.88% within 1999 – 2003 to 94.9% within 2011 – 2015 but declined in attendance to 91.65% from 2019 – 2023; while attendance of children 15-17 was high to about 83.9% within 2011 – 2015 but declined to about 73.95% within 2019 – 2023. The attendance of children 21 – 23 which is at the higher institutions as observed kept declining from 44.88% within 1999 – 2003 to 23% within 2011 – 2015 and to 14.5% from 2019 – 2023, thereby making up 40% total enrollment within 2016 – 2018 while estimate of about 581,800 children dropped out from school making up about 23% out-of-school children thus, making the state highest out-of-school children in South-South region of Nigeria as at 2020 and about 59% literacy rate and 41% illiteracy rate respectively as at 2020; as well as literacy rate of about 78.1% as at November, 2022 (NBS, 2020; Premium Times 2021, Global Data Lab 2022).

Table 7: Akwa Ibom State Human Development index (1999-2022)

Years	Life expectancy at adult	Expected year of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP\$)	HDI value
1999	46.1	6.7	5.9	2,743	0.513
2003	46.1	7.2	5.9	2,529	0.513
2005	46.6	8.0	5.8	2,378	0.513
2007	48.7	9.0	5.2	2,779	0.538
2010	51.3	9.6	5.2	2,779	0.538
2011	51.7	9.7	5.5	2,795	0.564
2013	52.1	9.8	5.7	2,873	0.564
2015	56.4	10.0	5.9	2,259	0.564
2018	52.8	10.0	5.9	6,120	0.565
2022	53.1	10.0	6.0	7.77trn	0.608

Source: UNDP, 2012, 2016, NBS, 2018 as cited in State of state Kingmakers, 2022; BudgIT, 2022)

The table 7 contains data on human development index in Akwa Ibom State from 1999 – 2022. Data revealed that life expectancy at mean years as at 1999 was 46.1 increased to about 48.7, 51.7, 52.1 in 2007, 2011 and 2013 respectively, but it recorded the highest score of about 56.4 in 2015 but declined to about 52.8 in 2018 while improving again to about 53.1 in 2022. Hence, expected year of schooling ranges from 6.7 in 1999 to 9.0 in 2007, to 9.8 in 2013 and to 10.0 within 2015 – 2022. Mean years of schooling as at 1999 was 5.9 move to 5.2 in 2010 and then back to 5.9 in 2015 – 2018 and to 6.0 in 2022. Concerning the GNI/per capita income, the state recorded about 2,743bn in 1999 improved to about 2,873bn in 2013, and then to about 6,120bn and above within 2018 – 2022.

Major Findings

The major findings for this study include:

- i. Political leadership has significant and direct impact on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State
- ii. Political leadership has significant role in providing a conducive working environment in AKSUBEB for both teachers and pupils/students, and act as a drive for ESD in AKS.
- iii. Workers poor attitudes to work, corruption among SUBEB staff as well as pupils/students' loss of interest in technical/vocational education are drawback to ESD in AKS.

Discussion of Findings

According to Human Capital Index (HCI), published by the World Bank Group in October (2020, as cited in Ekpo, 2023) opines that nearly 60% of children born today will be, at best, only half as productive as they could be with complete education and full health. This implies a serious human capital crisis, with strong consequences for economic growth and the world's collective ability to end extreme poverty by 2030. Gaps in human capital in AKS are at risk of

widening as global technology and environmental/climate keep changes. There is need to create the political space for state/national leaders to prioritize transformational investments in health, education, and social protection with the objective of increasing progress toward sustainable education in which all children are well-nourished and ready to learn, and those that attain real learning in schools can enter the job market as healthy, skilled, and productive adults as supported by (Nigeria HCI, 2020, cited in Ekpo, 2023).

Additionally, the high rate of unemployment in the state, particularly among young people, is a result of the state's resources being mismanaged. Record revealed Unemployment rate of 67.69%, making Akwa Ibom to be ranked 1st in unemployment amongst south-south states, followed by Rivers State 2nd with 63.50% while Delta became 3rd with 60.40%. (NBS, 2021, cited in BudgIT, 2021). In poverty rating, Akwa Ibom recorded 26.82%, and ranked 2nd highest in poverty rate in south-south after Cross River which was ranked 1st with 36.90% as reported by (BudgIT, 2021), it shows that these factors also act as drawback to education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State. On the basis of their social capital value for education and health, populations are traditionally classed. It is believed that without investing in education, economic policies will be ineffectual. It has been demonstrated that states with a high level of education are in a better position than those with a low level of education for a given level of GDP per capita. These factors compel Akwa Ibom authorities to accept invitations from foreign development organizations to make significant investment in the building of social capital as a helpful way of development and growth, as observed in (Igué, 2010, cited in Ekpo, 2023; Adekola, 2020).

Political leadership has significant and direct impact on education for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State. Data also revealed that 57.80% of respondents agreed that, lack of basic education among the citizens significantly affect socio-economic development in Akwa Ibom State while 41.67% stated they disagreed, 59.41% agreed that, the free and compulsory education introduced by political leadership in Akwa Ibom State enhances increase in enrollment in schools for socio-economic development of the state while 39.78% stated that they disagreed, 47.31% of respondents stated they agreed that inadequate funding and budgeting for education by political leadership contributes to increase in the number of out-of-school children in Akwa Ibom state, whereas 51.88% stated that they disagreed.

Concerning the issue of Teachers' qualifications, 40.05% of respondents agreed that the qualification of teachers employed by the political leadership in Akwa Ibom State meets minimum requirements of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and above for effective education service delivery while 59.12% said they disagree, and this implies that above 50% of teachers' still lack the basic qualification. 58.60% of respondents agreed that lack of infrastructure and other facilities in schools in Akwa Ibom State affects the quality of education provided by political leaders to the citizens whereas 40.86% indicated they disagreed.

Nevertheless, the state have recorded impressive successes in the educational sector in the following areas: sustenance of the free and compulsory education policy for citizens and

residents for primary and secondary schools; provision of infrastructures such as over 230 new class room blocks, renovation of about 355 classroom blocks, provision of science laboratories, libraries and numerous teaching aids to schools; scholarship for 500 indigenes in undergraduates schools in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State; establishment of new schools such as model school Awa, community secondary school, Afaha Atai, Eket, Government Girls' Model secondary school, Ikot Ekang, command secondary school, Efa in Etinna, Nigerian Navy Military School, Ikot Ntuen Ekparakwa, Oruk Anam etc.; payment of WASSCE and NABTEB fee for students; payment of subvention to primary, secondary and technical/vocational schools in the state; renovation of schools, erecting parameter fencing and building of toilets and borehole water in the schools etc. as referred by (Akwa Ibom Impact, 2022; Explore Akwa Ibom, 2022). On the other hand, Akwa Ibom State is also at the top of the list of states in the country with the highest number of children out of school with about 581,800 as supported by (NBS, 2020; Federal Ministry of education, 2020 as cited Premium Times August 8, 2021). According to the DHS 2013, millions of children in Akwa Ibom State, about 60% are not in formal learning, and the number of out-of-school children has increased to about 40% since 1999, following the return to democratic rule.

In addition, the study posits that adult and non-formal education also plays vital role in the informal sector in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria which occupy approximately 70% of the state's working population in which the economy depends upon for entrepreneurial sustainable development. Adopting entrepreneurship education to train more youths and adults in skills acquisition and vocational development for effective entrepreneurship has help and would continue to help in tackling poverty and unemployment in Akwa Ibom State and reducing it to the minimal and this is supported by (Adekola, 2020; Aberu and Lawal, 2022). Akwa Ibom is the 5th most indebted state in the country with a total debt of N249.02bn as at December 31st, 2021. However, data revealed about 1.19% decline from a total debt of N252.02bn recorded in the previous year. The state's debt per capita of about N39,648 is significantly higher than the average debt per capita of N27,316 for all 36 states in the country as referenced by (BudgIT Research, 2021).

As at 2020, 67.69% of the state's 2.48m labour force were unable to contribute meaningfully to the state's revenue generation pool through income taxes to support public infrastructure as they were either unemployed or underemployed. Akwa Ibom has the second highest number of unemployed people, 1.26m in the South-South representing 51.00% of the state's labour force, while 16.69% or 413,272 are underemployed (BudgIT Research, 2021). Akwa Ibom state government should invest in creating infrastructure; this can be done through well-designed Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), and this finding is supported by (Adekola, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Education is fundamental to the development of every state and should be given top priority in the state budget in order to convert government policies into development projects. If government spending is carefully watched over and regularly audited, corruption can be prevented while also increasing accountability and openness. The major findings of the study shows that political leadership has significant and direct impact on education for sustainable

development in Akwa Ibom State; Political leadership has significant role in providing a conducive working environment in AKSUBEB for both teachers and pupils/students, and act as a drive for ESD in AKS and also, Workers poor attitudes to work, corruption among SUBEB staff as well as pupils/students loss of interest in technical/vocational education are drawback to ESD in AKS.

To guarantee that budgets are implemented as planned without leakages, Akwa Ibomites should be given the right to participate in budget hearings, budget town hall meetings, community needs assessments, and lastly in monitoring education programmes etc.

The study recommended the followings:

1. There is a need for policy reforms in the education sector to curb mismanagement of public funds in the state and backed up by political goodwill and commitment on the part of the leaders and workers to implement these policies to the later, hence, the reforms should include:
 - i. Introduction of vocational and entrepreneurship education into basic school curriculum and it should be made compulsory for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
 - ii. The free and compulsory education policy of the state should be adequately funded to meet the UNESCO budget baseline of 26% and it should be extended to tertiary institutions, rural areas, riverine communities where we have high number of misery children.
 - iii. Enforcement mechanism should be put in place to monitor and evaluate SUBEB education programmes by the ministry of education, civil societies and enlightened/proactive citizens' participation and ownership of the education policies in order to prevent Corruption in AKSUBEB; Also, any staff found guilty of corrupt practices should be penalize by dismissal from service.
2. There is need for political leadership that promote human capacity building in order to increase attendance and access to education (literacy), and skills/technology for sustainable entrepreneurship and industrialization as tools for curbing unemployment, poverty and inequality in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Training and re-training of education workers and teachers is regularly needed so as to improve their skills and competence in handling modern educational technology and innovation.
4. Provision of modern infrastructures such as school's classroom blocks, hospitals, potable water, electricity, good road network and transportation, as well as equipment and effective libraries, science laboratories, internet and other teaching aids for researches in order to bring about new inventions and innovations in the state.
5. The state policy should encourage Public-Private Partnership for more accessibility to fund and investment in the education and economy of Akwa Ibom State.

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