

# Examining the Effects of Public Policy on Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State: Strategic Solutions for Effective Implementation

David Aniefiok Titus, PhD

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0078>

Received: 30 January 2025; Accepted: 06 February 2025; Published: 10 March 2025

## ABSTRACT

The Free and Compulsory Education program in Akwa Ibom State faces significant challenges in achieving its policy objectives, resulting in gaps between intended outcomes and actual impacts. This study evaluates the influence of public policy on this educational initiative, grounded in Human Capital Development and Liberal Educational Theory. A survey design was utilized, selecting a sample of 40 individuals from a diverse population of 45 using the Taro Yamane statistical method. Data was collected via a structured questionnaire titled “Effects of Public Opinion on Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire (EFPFCEIASQ)” and analyzed using mean statistics, standard deviation, and one-sample t-test at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicate a positive and significant impact of public perception on the policy, alongside improved governmental commitment and substantial budgetary allocations since the program's inception in 2007. Recommendations include ensuring quality through increased and sustained funding, prioritizing infrastructure and human resource development, and adopting new administrative strategies to address implementation challenges effectively.

**Keywords:** Free and Compulsory Education, Akwa Ibom State, Public Policy, Human Capital Development, Implementation Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

A policy on Education as in other fields of human endeavors whether publicly or privately formulated solidifies and gives backing to every official action of government. Public policy is a predetermined decision of the government in addressing public problems (Babatunde and Adefabi, (2005; Titus, Mbon and Edem, 2024:67). The declaration of this all-important educational policy by the Akwa Ibom State Government has become one of the essentials of public policy roadmap that has shaped, emboldened, and enliven the educational burden of the needy, downtrodden and the have nots in the society with feasible results in an unprecedented proportion. This goes to endorse the fact that, the activities of citizens wherever are shaped by public policies, whether they are abreast of them or not (Ahmadi and Laei, 2012; Titus, Mbon and Edem, 2024:66).

Akin to other academic disciplines such as political science, public administration, economics and business management, public policy forms a significant component in many dimensional ways and thus can be described as a “bye-products of Government decisions”. Globally, every nation has a unique or policy directional means to strive for the enthronement of formal Education with Nigeria without exemption. Thus, Public policy as exemplified by the free and compulsory Education is regarded as one of the means of developing sound human capital for the growth and development.

This lends credence to the fact that, the public policy bearing of any government should be synonymous with development which education propels (Joshua and Essen, 2014). Hence, the concept of public policy

presupposes that, there is a domain of life which is vested with public interest. This revelation has become the paradigm shift that has altered the narrative in the role of the State in a contemporary society where public policies expanded their scope from merely that of regulation to that of development (Obidike, Ngozi, Diwunma and Onwuka, 2013). Interestingly, in the classical capitalist society, the State was assigned a limited role with the view that; the State would merely act as a regulator of educational, social and economic activity and not its promoter. But, with the advent of planned view of development, States began to be perceived as an active agent in 'promoting and shaping societies in its various activities. This expansion in scope has led to several other consequences like many more government agencies as well as institutions re-inventing to formulate and implement policies. Empirically, the declaration of the free and compulsory education by the Akwa Ibom State Government since 2007 has yielded varying impacts with mixed results in academic literature. Some scholars like (Effiong and Akpan, 2020) see both the enrollment and completion rates differing significantly between the period before the introduction of free and compulsory education and the period after the programme at the secondary school level.

By evaluation, these contributions have been and/or are exercised, benefitted, felt and viewed by Akwa Ibomites and Nigerians in different perspectives which are laced by their opinions, counter-opinions, feelings, agitations and drawbacks defining the demesnes and purview of the public policy. Whereas some findings condemned its insufficient funding mechanisms and poor implementation by states Governors, others call for its expansion in scope of coverage to tertiary levels of education which its provision and coverage differs depending on the peculiarity of states' implementation in Nigeria. These variations create lapses and gaps in knowledge and academic literature which this study seeks to investigate. Hinging on this reason therefore, this study is carried out to examine the effects of public policy on the free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State, as a domestic-policy related programme, appears to be suffering from the usual gaps between policy objectives on one hand, and policy outputs; policy outcomes and policy impact on the other hand - leading to non - performance or policy failure.

Invariably, these gaps are not natural but artificial, as empirically, the Awolowo's UPN's Free Education Programme in the 70s in the then South-Western States of Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Bendel and Ondo (LOOBO States) paid off by producing more academic professors in Nigeria than any other geo-political zone.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State has recorded a high degree of affirmative annotations from people generally, especially during the administrations of former Governors Godswill Akpabio and Udom Emmanuel, this has not translated to considerable results, as there have been records of poor infrastructure, inadequate qualified teachers and some schools marked with overpopulation with students sitting on the windows and some under the trees to receive their lessons.

These and many more became the rationale why this study is carried out to examine the effects of Public Policy on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

## Research Objective

The main objective of this study is other objectives are to:

- i. Examine the effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Ascertain the impact has budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Establish the effects of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

- iv. Know the effect of cultural, educational, social and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

### Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. Is there any significant effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What significant impact has budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What are the effects of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
- iv. What effect has cultural, educational, social, and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

### Research Hypotheses stated in the null form

1. There is no significant effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
2. There is no significant impact of budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
3. There is no effects of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?
4. There is no effect of cultural, educational, social and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

**Free and Compulsory Education:** Free and Compulsory Education is a government programme designed to encourage participation by children and youth of a country in their self-development through formal education. As the name implies, it supposes not only to be free of charge, but mandatory.

**Public Policy:** Policy is simply a statement of the goals and objectives of government in relation to a particular subject and the description of the strategies by which the goals and objectives are to be achieved. A policy may be viewed of consisting of a series of disparate decisions made with respect to a particular problem, but which is wider in dimension or scope, longer in time-span and broader in terms of goals.

**Implementation strategy:** This involves moving forward a policy objective by means of administrative and practical steps or the process of converting inputs (informational, financial, human, material, technical, demands and support etc.) into outputs of goods and services through well thought out plan.

**Akwa Ibom State:** It is a state in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Interestingly, it is the highest oil producing state in the country

**Human Capital Development:** This is a development strategy aimed at building up potentials of people toward growth and fulfilment.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Public Policy

There is no commonly accepted definition of Public Policy. Thus, it is defined in diverse ways by Scholars. For instance, Dye, (1975) cited in Eminue, (2005) sees public policy as whatever government chooses as a decision. Okoroma (2006) considers that “a policy” is an overall guide that gives the general limits and

direction in which administrative action will take place”. According to him, “a policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made but it does not give the decision”. A policy breaches the gap between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. It is crucial to note that “policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated”.

Succinctly, this implies that, public policy entails the association between government and its environment. It is true that, there may be a departure from “what government decides to do and what they actually do”. However, whether some activities of government have policy significance or not, the role of information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be overemphasized (Titus and Akpan, 2019: 1117; Akpan and Titus, 2019:241).

### **Free and Compulsory Education**

Free and compulsory Education policy of government in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State remains one of the public policies that have a vital component for social concern. Educational policy is directed towards uplifting the quality of life of a people with the objective to placate individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands (Titus and Onwuhanze, 2023:166; Babatunde and Adefabi, (2005; Anam, Arugu and Utulu, (2014). Educational policies are ingenuities mostly by governments that dictate the direction of an educational system (Okoroma, 2000).

### **Free and Compulsory Education Policy**

Obviously, education builds up respect for human rights and freedoms and empowers people to participate optimally in the development of society. By imposing free and compulsory education, states ensure that all school going- age- children get education, for even children from poor families get opportunity to attend school. (Heyman, 2014) asserted that, secondary education is a critical level in the education system, for it links early childhood and primary education to higher education, besides connecting school system to the labour market.

As enunciated by the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) takes account of the right to education. Article 26 (1) of the declaration stipulates that one and all has the right to free and compulsory education, at least in the basic and fundamental stages. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989 in section 28 (a) and (b) requires; Every country to enact legislations that decrease social and financial barriers to primary and secondary schooling (UNICEF (2005).

### **Education in Post-colonial Africa**

There have been enormities of policies aimed at engendering education in Africa over the years. In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals. More specifically, "to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (Eminue, 2005). Same year also, the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, Senegal, adopted the Dakar Framework for Action reaffirming the commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015 (The World Bank (2012).

Following the expiration of the MDGs in 2015, the UN adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2030. The fourth goal addressed education, with the stated aim to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."(Effiong and Akpan, 2020). The World Education Forum also convened in Incheon, Korea to discuss the implementation of this goal, and adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030. At the time, according to UNESCO, only 57% of African children were enrolled in primary schools, the lowest enrollment rate of any region surveyed (Stiglitz, 1974). The report also showed marked gender inequalities: in almost all countries enrollment of boys far outpaced that of girls. However, in some countries, education was relatively strong. In Zimbabwe, literacy has stretch to 92% (Rosenzweig, 1995). Further steps: such as the obliteration of school fees, investments in teaching

infrastructure and resources, and school-meals from the World Food Programme helped drive enrollment up by millions.

Nevertheless, despite the significant progress of many countries, the world fell short of meeting its goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE). In sub-Saharan Africa as of 2013, only about 79% of primary school-age children were enrolled in school (UNICEF, 2017) 59 million children of primary-school age was out of school (Uyanga, 2012) and enrollment of girls continued to lag behind that of boys. Disparity between genders is partially due to females being excluded from school for being pregnant (Rosenzweig, 1995). Data reflecting the effects the latest measures have on the state of education participation in African countries is not readily available. There are many underlying causes that deter progress towards education equity, such as high attrition rates of students, teacher shortages, poor infrastructure and supplies, access to education for rural and remote areas, and stigmas surrounding marginalized groups, among many others UNICEF (2005).

### **Historical Foundations of the Concept of Free and Compulsory Education in Nigeria**

As noted by Salami, (2004), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Act which emanated from World Conference on 'Education for All (EFA)', held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, gave rise to the universal, free and compulsory education in Nigeria. This program was launched by the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Matthew Obasanjo on September 30th, 1999. This was subsequently signed into law in May 2004 UNICEF (2005). The aim of the scheme was to make education universal, free and compulsory from primary up to the junior secondary schools for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, race, religion, occupation or location. The UBE would thus, lay the foundation for basic literacy, numeracy and communication in the society (Uyanga, 2012).

### **Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State**

Legally, education for the citizens is a right that should not be infringed. Meanwhile, education in Nigeria has been regarded to be free and compulsory up to the senior secondary level, with substantial subsidization at the tertiary level (Okon and Israel, 2016; Akpan and Titus, 2019:241). when the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme was launched in 1999s with the aim of providing free and compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian of school-going age.

The launching of the Universal Basic Education Programme was strong evidence of Nigeria's commitment to the international conventions for the promotion of Basic Education in the country. Complementing the Federal Government's efforts, several states key into the programme. Akwa Ibom State, during the Administration of Governor Godswill Obot Akpabio in 2009, keyed into the programme by declaring a free and compulsory education from primary to secondary levels. Such gesture was followed with the distribution of free exercise books to schools; science and technology equipment for science laboratories and technology workshops; books for libraries; payments of subventions to schools; and payment of students' final examination registration fees. Also, children of school age were banned from street hawking within school hours with offender/parents duly dealt with if the order is compromised (NBS, 2016). According to the then Governor, illiteracy compounds poverty, while education does not only enlighten but also empowers. The implementation of the free and compulsory education in the State witnessed tremendous changes in enrollment at both the primary and secondary levels. Statistic from the (FME, 2016) indicated a significant increase in both male and female enrollments, since Fourteen (14) years of implementation of the programme.

Till date, the free and compulsory education policy of Akwa Ibom State is still being implemented currently by the Governor, Pastor Umo Bassey Eno. The Governor reiterated this on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 during his presentation of the 2024 ₦845Billion "Arise Budget for Growth and Expansion" to the State House of Assembly. In his Speech, Governor Umo Eno re-affirmed that, Education remains free and compulsory at the Primary to secondary levels. He resolved to provide conducive environment complemented by free uniforms, books, and shoes to accelerate the increase in enrollment. While payments of WAEC fees and subventions to the tertiary institutions will be given a priority laced with Bursary payment and ₦100million financial support to physically challenged students in tertiary institutions.

## **Policy Demands (Government Spending on the education Sector) and implementation of Free and Compulsory Education**

Education, being capital intensive, requires marginal costs (consisting of direct cost, like tuition fees, and opportunity cost arising from foregone income) to the marginal benefits due to a higher present value of lifetime income. As an asset, there is both a demand and supply repercussions associated with its cost and benefits. Thus, Policy demands for the implementation of the Free and Compulsory educations entails the innumerable financial and economic spending and obligations, government has to encounter to ensure its effectiveness and implementation (Wodon, 2016).

Government over the years have spent huge amount of money in enhancing and sustaining the free and compulsory education in areas of; payment of Remunerations, school fees, books, ICT facilities, subventions, provision of infrastructure, building and renovation of schools, among others. Notably among these areas of government spending is the provision of infrastructure, which is regarded as the bedrock upon which educational foundation is rooted.

Invariably, infrastructure is part of ecosystem of students' attainment. Hence, the school's infrastructure quality influences students' attendance, attitude towards the school, time on task and school's climate.

These imply that lack of or inadequate school infrastructure has the potential to dampen both transition and completion rates. From these assertions, it is averred that, school infrastructure appropriateness (through government provision and spending) accelerates the implementation of free and compulsory education in Nigeria.

### **The Theory of Human Capital Development (THCD)**

The theory was advanced by Theodore Schultz in 1960. It embraces that, the most appreciated of all capital is in human beings. However, THCD is also in the form of knowledge and skills that can be assimilated through education and training. It is the most influential economic theory of Western education, setting the framework of government policies like the Free and Compulsory Education. Education has been known to bridge the gap between technology and the society. Corroboratively, Gary Becker (1964) sees human capital as a valuable resource that can be invested in and developed to increase productivity.

### **The Liberal Educational Theory (LET)**

The Liberal Educational Theory proposes that each country's citizen needs to be accorded freedom and opportunity to acquire education without any form of discrimination. It was postulated by John Henry Newman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (en.wikipedia.org). LET accentuates a commitment to liberal principles such as non-discrimination, non-repression, and tolerance. School learners have responsibility of utilizing the opportunities by attending and completing schooling and that their parents have duty of providing school requirements and ensuring that the children attend schools (Fleisher and Zhao, 2010).

Economic theory predicts that lowering the private costs of education leads to increased school enrollment due to both price and income effects. However, the positive effects of school subsidy programs on contemporaneous school enrollment in other developing countries may not apply to the free compulsory education reform in rural China, where primary and junior high school enrollment rates were already high before the reform. Even in the most extreme case where the reform only increases the investment in education, the reform could have the second order effects on cognitive achievement and health, through the causal relation running from more education to better cognitive achievement (Silles, 2009). This paper, therefore, provides a more complete picture of the reform effects on human capital.

The reform effect on human capital development in the long run is mainly driven by the income effect from the reform. Our treatment measure, i.e., the duration of reform exposure, can better reflect the income effect than a dummy variable indicating program participation. With a longer exposure to the reform, households could

receive more cash transfers and invest more in the beneficiary child, leading to an improvement in human capital. In addition to income effect, the reform may also affect children’s human capital through other channels that are less dependent on the duration of reform exposure, such as peer effects, changing social norms toward education and changing the quality of education due to increasing enrollment (Behrman et al., 2011).

### Empirical Review

With data from Federal Ministry of Education, National Bureau of Statistics, and UBE Digest, the study employed the t – test approach to assess both the enrollment and completion rates in the primary and secondary school levels between the period before the implementation of the programme (1997 – 2008) and the period after the implementation of the programme (2009 – 2018). The result showed that, both the enrollment and completion rates contrast significantly between the period before the introduction of free and compulsory education and the period of the pro gramme at the secondary school level. However, it was observed that the programme exerted no significant influence at the primary school level. Hence, the implementation of the free and compulsory education in the state exerted great significance toward its goal in illiteracy eradication.

Okoroma, (2006), studied the educational policies and problems of implementation in Nigeria. The author discovered that, the abysmal performance of the education sector in Nigeria has become very bothersome. The findings of the study, impugned the distortions in the educational system on the ineffective implementation engendered primarily by lack of political will, lack of continuity of programmes, and corruption (Atakpa, Udoms, Titus and Akpan, 2020:62; Ifeanyichukwu and Titus, 2014:115). Findings also revealed that, the situation has hindered national development and, until urgent action is taken to review Nigeria’s educational system, its national aspirations will continue to be compromised.

## METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted survey design and selected a sample size of 40 individuals from diverse population of 45 using the Yaro Yamane statistical method. Data were collected via questionnaire and analyzed using mean statistics, standard deviation, and one-sample t-test at a 0.05 significant level.

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, result of data analyzed are presented on tables via research questions and the null hypotheses that guided the study

### Research Questions 1

What is the effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education (FCE) in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Mean Score showing influence of public perception on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	X	SD	Decision
1 The public perceive free and compulsory education as enhancing their way of life	2.7	1.2	Agreed
2 People perceive FCE as a way of empowering their children and make them well-prepared for their future.	3.48	0.93	Agreed
3 Parents perceive that FCE ensures availability of instructional materials and tools and equipment in schools for learning	3.5	0.51	Agreed
4 The public perceive FCE as a way of reducing the financial burden of poor parents	3.25	0.95	Agreed
5 The presence of the policy is positively related to the development of the State	3.6	0.81	Agreed
Cluster Mean	3.36	0.88	Agreed

N = 40

Table 1 shows the mean responses on influence of public perception on free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. It further reveals that public perception of free and compulsory education as enhancing their way of life ( $\bar{X} = 2.70$ ), perception of FCE as a way of empowering their children and future ( $\bar{X} = 3.48$ ), Parents perception of ensuring the availability of instructional materials, tools and equipment for learning ( $\bar{X} = 3.50$ ), enhancement of quality Education in Primary schools to foster quality performance and service delivery ( $\bar{X} = 3.25$ ) as well as positive contribution of the policy to the development of the State ( $\bar{X} = 3.60$ ) entails a positive perception of the free and compulsory education policy to the people of Akwa Ibom State. Hence, FCE promotes the availability of instructional materials, tools and equipment for learning and improves the quality of Education in Primary schools in the State.

### Research Question 2

How does budgetary provision for Education impacts the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Mean Score showing the impacts of budgetary provision for Education on the Free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1 There is a serious commitment of the Government about the success of the FCE policy	3.4	0.5	Agreed
2 Akwa Ibom State Government earmarks good percentage of her budget for education to ensure the implementation of the FCE policy in the state.	3.11	1.36	Agreed
3 The State makes good budgetary provision for the implementation of the policy	3.38	1.07	Agreed
4 Improved funding and monitoring measures are made to make the policy effective	3.3	0.46	Agreed
5 Supply of these financial and budgetary provisions enhance efficiency in the performance of the policy	3.48	0.96	Agreed
Cluster Mean	3.33	0.87	Agreed

N = 40

Table 2 shows the mean responses on impacts of budgetary provision for Education on the Free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. It further reveals that serious commitment of the Government ( $\bar{X} = 3.40$ ), huge percentage of budget for education ( $\bar{X} = 3.11$ ), good budgetary provision ( $\bar{X} = 3.38$ ), Improved funding and monitoring measures ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ ) and Supply of these financial and budgetary provisions ( $\bar{X} = 3.48$ ) foster effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of the policy in Akwa Ibom State. Hence, improved, serious commitment of the Government, huge budgetary provision and monitoring measures impacts on the implementation of Free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State over the years since its introduction in 2007.

### Research Question 3

What are the effects of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3: Mean Score showing influence of Government spending on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1 State Government spends meaningfully to fund the free and compulsory education	3.2	0.99	Agreed
2 Akwa Ibom State Government makes huge financial release to ensure the implementation of the FCE policy	3.15	0.92	Agreed
3 Improved funding, building/renovation of schools and provision of tools, equipment and instructional materials	3.3	0.88	Agreed



4	Access to free and compulsory Education is enhanced by government	3.28	0.85	Agreed
5	Regular payment of teachers' entitlements stimulates the access and implementation of the FCE policy.	3.23	0.77	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	3.23	0.88	Agreed

N = 40

Table 3 shows the mean responses on effects of Policy demands (Government spending) on the free and compulsory education. It further reveals that, Meaningful government spending ( $\bar{X} = 3.20$ ), huge financial release ( $\bar{X} = 3.15$ ), Improved funding, building/renovation of schools and provision of tools, equipment and instructional materials ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ ), accessibility of the policy ( $\bar{X} = 3.28$ ) and regular payment of teachers' entitlements ( $\bar{X} = 3.23$ ) stimulates the implementation of the FCE policy. Hence, the meaningful spending, financial releases for building/renovation of schools and payments of teachers' entitlements as well as provision of tools, equipment and instructional materials by the government have increase the accessibility and effectiveness of the policy in the State.

#### Research Question 4

How does cultural, educational, social, and economic factors affect the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4: Mean Score showing effects of cultural, educational, social, and economic factors affecting the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Unsatisfactory and unpalatable social and economic situations affect the effectiveness of FCE policy	3.5	0.78	Agreed
2	There are still imposition/collection of tuition fees and levies in some schools n Akwa Ibom State	3.5	0.68	Agreed
3	The secret imposition of these illegal fees and levies stifles the goals of FCE policy	2.85	1.17	Agreed
4	Some parents/Guardians are still illiterate, poor and unaware of the benefits of FCE policy	3.15	1.29	Agreed
5	There is still income/wealth inequality and disparity factors that affects the implementation of the policy by the government at the grassroot	3.45	0.68	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	3.29	0.92	Agreed

N = 40

Table 4 shows the mean responses on effects cultural, educational, social, and economic factors affecting the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. It reveals the presence of Unsatisfactory and unpalatable social and economic situations ( $\bar{X} = 3.50$ ), imposition/collection of tuition fees and levies ( $\bar{X} = 3.50$ ), illegal fees and levies stifles the goals of FCE policy ( $\bar{X} = 2.85$ ), illiteracy level of some parent to the benefits of the policy ( $\bar{X} = 3.15$ ) and existence of income/wealth inequality and disparity factors that affects the implementation of the policy by the government at the grassroot ( $\bar{X} = 3.45$ ) that affects the implementation of the policy by the government in the State, especially at the grassroot. Hence, cultural, educational, social and economic factors affect the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

#### Test of Research Hypotheses

##### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Sample t-test Analysis showing the effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal t-value	p-value	Decision
Public perception or opinion						
	16.53	2.67	39	39.46	0	Rejected
Free and Compulsory Education in Aks						

N = 40,  $p > .05$

Table 5 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 39.46 and the p-value is .000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom of 39 thus the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. Hence, there is a significant effect of public perception or opinion on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant impact of budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 6: Sample t-test Analysis showing impact of budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal t-value	p-value	Decision
Budgetary provision for education						
	15.85	2.98	39	33.6	0	Rejected
Free and Compulsory education in Aks						

N = 40,  $p > .05$

Table 6 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 33.60 and the p-value is .000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom of 39 thus the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant impact of budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. Hence, there is a positive and significant impact of budgetary provision for Education on the implementation of the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant effect of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 9: Sample t-test Analysis showing the effect of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Cal t-value	p-value	Decision
Policy demands						
	16.15	2.58	39	39.63	0	Rejected
Free and Compulsory education in Aks						

N = 40,  $p > .05$

Table 6 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 39.63 and the p-value is .000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom of 39 thus the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. Hence, there is a significant effect of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

#### Hypothesis 4

There is no significant effect of cultural, educational, social and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 10: Sample t-test Analysis showing influence of cultural, educational, social and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

Variables	X	SD	Df	Cal t-value	Crit t-value	Decision
Cultural, educational, social and economic factors						
	16.45	2.46	39	42.3	0	Rejected
Free and Compulsory education in Aks						

N = 40, p > .05

Table 8 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 42.30 and the p-value is .000. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom of 39 thus the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effects of cultural, educational, social and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. Hence, there is a positive and significant effects of cultural, educational, social, and economic factors on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the results of the study and analysis of empirical results presented above, the following findings were obtained and summarized that:

1. The results in hypothesis one showed that there is a positive and significant effect of public perception of the free and compulsory education policy to the people of Akwa Ibom State. Hence, the people of Akwa Ibom State seem to believe that Free and Compulsory education (FCE) reduces parents' education burden and promotes the availability of instructional materials, tools and equipment for learning and improves the quality of Education in Primary schools in the State.
2. The results in hypothesis two showed that there is an improved, continuous commitment of the Government and huge budgetary provision impacts on the implementation of Free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State over the years since its introduction in 2007.
3. The results in hypothesis three showed that there are positive effects of policy demands (Government spending on Education sector) on the Free and Compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that, there are meaningful spending, financial releases for infrastructure provisions in building/renovation of schools and payments of teachers' entitlements as well as provision of tools, equipment and instructional materials by the government on the free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, there is increased accessibility and usefulness of the policy in the State translating into human capital gains.
4. The results in hypothesis four showed that there are still unsatisfactory and unpalatable social and economic situations and factors that affect the effectiveness of FCE policy in Akwa Ibom State. These factors include but not limited to; Poor quality control and management of public schools, corruption, educational imbalances, illegal imposition/collection of tuition fees and levies in some schools, persistent illiteracy level of some parents/Guardians and high income/wealth inequality cum disparity

gap (that public schools are for children of poor parents) that affects the implementation strategies of the policy by the government.

5. However, it must be stated at this point that while this study provides valuable insights with commendable contributions, it is not without limitations such as the relatively small sample size (40) capable of limiting the generalizability of the findings. To this end future studies with larger sizes are solicited to confirm and expand upon these findings.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Based on the above findings, there is need for a quality and sustainable running of the programme to obtain maximum benefit of developing the state to a greater level and drastically eradicating illiteracy in accordance with the UBE policy objectives. The importance of achieving and maintaining quality in the implementation of the free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria at large cannot be over emphasized. In recognition to these facts, the Nigeria policy of education stipulates that Basic Education shall be all inclusive and qualitative. It forms the springboard from which careers in all fields can be developed. It serves as the backbone of educational and professional development.

The programme has achieved remarkable increase in the net enrolment of primary school children in the states, the pertinent question and challenge to contend with is, whether this increase has translated into qualitative education in Akwa Ibom State and the country and if the objectives of the policy are met. However, a developing challenge for basic Education programme in Nigeria is the increasing inadequate funding of FCE hitting all three tiers of government in Nigeria. Some state governments have started cutting funds for the programme, under the disguise that the free and compulsory basic education is not yielding the anticipated results. Thus, the basic education programme has entered a critical stage, where it has to reinvent itself in the face of internal and external challenges.

In addition, Infrastructural facilities such as building for classroom, laboratories, workshops, student's hostels, administrative blocks, even recreation centres are basic requirements for effective Whereas, Education accord Therefore, the level of the ineffectiveness of the system has caused parents to prefer sending their wards to private institutions including the very teachers of public schools where the FCE is in force. Proactive administrative and funding measures are paramount in enhancing the achievements of Education for all thereby stimulating the Educational, social and economic growth in all spheres of Akwa Ibom State.

### Recommendations

1. There is the need to ensure quality in the implementation of FCE in Akwa Ibom State to bolster the public confidence and support for the policy to ensure that increases in enrolment but also to issues of relevance, quality, efficiency, and equity, such that, while the FCE has enhance increase in enrolments, the educational system transforms the 'increase' into critical mass of educated persons needed for national development.
2. There should be continuous and increase budgetary allocations to the Education sector of the State to ease the financial challenges encountered in the policy implementation. This is because, some state governments have started cutting funds for the programme, under the disguise that the free and compulsory basic education is not yielding the anticipated result
3. The pivotal policy demands of infrastructure provision and human resource development of the Free and compulsory Education should be given a priority by the Government, individuals, Parent Teachers Association, corporate bodies and the organized private sector. Because increased enrolments in schools directly places demand on an increase in human resource availability.
4. New administrative and implementation strategies should be adopted to properly identified, carefully defined, and correctly analyzed to proffer proper solutions to the problems bedeviling the effectiveness

of the free and compulsory Education. Since Nigeria is faced with challenges of arresting precarious situations in the educational system.

## REFERENCES

1. Ahmadi, A. and, Laei, S. (2012) Public Education: Compulsory and Free? A Paradox. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences Publishers, ELSEVIER*. 47 (2): 868 – 873
2. Anam B., Arugu L., and Utulu P. (2014). Nigerian universities and the dire of infrastructural facilities. *Institute of Public Policy and Administration; University of Calabar, Nigeria*. 238p.
3. Akpan, A. G. and Titus, D. A. (2019). Assessing E-Governance Implementation in Nigeria Through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). *Global Scientific Journals*, 7(5), 240-248
4. Atakpa, O. E., Udoms, B. E., Titus, D. A. and Akpan, C. S. (2020). The Nigerian Legislature and the Fight against Corruption: Focus on the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly. *International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research*, 2(6), 60-70
5. Babatunde, M. A., and Adefabi, R. A. (2005). Long run relationship between education and economic growth in Nigeria: Evidence from the Johansen's cointegration approach. Department of economics, university of Ibadan, and Oyo State College of Education, Nigeria. *Basic Education in Nigeria*. 421p.
6. Behrman, J. R., Parker, S. W., & Todd, P. E. (2011). Do conditional cash transfers for schooling generate lasting benefits? A five-year followup of PROGRESA/Oportunidades. *Journal of Human Resources*, 46(1), 93–122.
7. Effiong, U. E., and Akpan, O. M., (2020) The Free and Compulsory Education in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: A Panacea for National Development. *East African Scholars Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature*. East African Scholars Publisher, Kenya, Volume-3(10) :18 – 25
8. Eminue, O. E., (2005) Public Policy Analysis and decision-Making. Concept Publication Limited, Lagos. Concept Human Science series, P. 596.
9. en.wikipedia.org
10. Federal Ministry of Education (FME), Nigeria Education Indicators. Abuja, Nigeria, 2016. *Flags Vulnerabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en>
11. Fleisher, B. M., Li, H., & Zhao, M. Q. (2010). Human Capital, Economic Growth, and Regional Inequality in China. *Journal of Development Economics*, 93(1), 138-149
12. Havema, R. H., & Wolfe, B. L. (1984). Schooling and Economic Well-being: The Tale of Nonmarket Effects. *Journal of Human Resources*, 19(7) 377– 407.
13. Ifeanyichukwu, E. O. and Titus, D. A. (2014). Privatization and Corruption in Nigeria (1996-2011). *International Journal of Advancement in Development Studies*, 9(2), 114-120
14. Joshua, M. T., Essen C. B., (2014). Funding and Quality of Higher Education in Nigeria in 21st *Journal of African American Studies* (7)(1): 24-31.
15. Melara, E. J., Ayele, B. M., and Blaustein, S. M. (2014). *Education Infrastructure Challenges in East and North Ayawaso Sub-Metros, Accra*,
16. Mincer, J. (1958). Investment in Human Capital and Personal Income Distribution. *Journal of political Economy*, 66(1):281-302.
17. National Bureau of Statistics and UBEC, Education Data (2016): Selected Basic Public Education Statistics in Nigeria 2013 – 2014”. Abuja, Nigeria,
18. Obidike, et al. (2013). Enhancing the implementation of universal basic education in Nigeria. *Research Journal In: Organizational Psychology and Educational studies*2(4):185-190
19. Okon, U. A. and Israel, E. E., (2016) Influence of Free and Compulsory Education on the Quality of Basic Education in Nigeria. *International journal of educational benchmark (IJEB)*, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria. Vol. 3(1) 81 – 90.
20. Okoroma, N.S. (2001). ‘An evaluation study of the 3-3 aspect of the National Policy on Education in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government areas of Rivers State’, *Journal of Technical and Science Education*, vol. 10, nos. 1 & 2. 432 – 487.
21. Oni, J.O. (2008). Universality of primary education in Nigeria: Trends and issues. *International Political Economy*, 66(1):281-302.

22. Rosenzweig, M. R. (1995). Why are there Returns to schooling? *American Economic Review*. Papers and Proceedings. 85:153-158.
23. Salami, K. A. (2004). Provision and management of school facilities for the implementation of UBE. The Ogun state experience. In Fagbemiye, E. O., & Babalola, J. B. (Eds): *Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan. NAEP. Universal Basic Education, UBE Digest.
24. Stiglitz, J. E. (1974). The Demand for Education in Public and Private School Systems. *Journal of Public Economics*, 3(3):349-385.
25. The World Bank (2012, February 29). World Bank Sees Progress Against Extreme Poverty, But Flags Vulnerability. <http://www.worldbank.org/en>
26. Titus, D. A. and Akpan, G. A. (2019). Harnessing E-Governance for Quality Service Delivery in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: Benefits and Challenges. *European Journal of Business & Social Sciences*, 7(5), 1117-1127
27. Titus, D. A., Mbon, N. and Edem, M. I. (2024). The Role of Public Administration in Managing War Between Russia and Ukraine. *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance*, 4(1), 60-70
28. Titus, D. A. and Onwuhanze, J. U. (2023). Sanitizing Politics in Nigeria for Sustainable Development through Tupocracy. In: I. V. O. Modo (Eds): *Academic Practitioners' Research for Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: A Book of Readings*. Pp. 163-17
29. UNICEF (2005). The Nigerian Children Education. Retrieved on date from <http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/children>
30. Uyanga, R. E. (2012). The Provision of universal basic education in Nigeria. Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> *International journal of diversity in organizations communities and nations*, 11(6): 60-79
31. Wodon, Q. (2016). *School Infrastructure in Paraguay: Needs, Investments and Costs*. World Bank Studies. Washington, DC: World Bank.