

Restoring Trust in Education Preparing Future-Ready Citizen for the Knowledge Economy Education Leadership, Governance, Policy Reforms for Sustainable Educational Development in Bakassi Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

Dr. Amos William Obeten*, Nwoye Bridget Ogechukwu

*ORCID:0009-0001-4139-9869

Department of Public Administration

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ABSTRACT

Restoring public trust in education is fundamental to preparing future-ready citizens who can participate effectively in the knowledge economy. This study examined the role of education leadership, governance and policy reforms in promoting sustainable educational development in Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to: (1) examine the influence of educational leadership on sustainable educational development; (2) assess the effect of governance practices on the quality and accessibility of education; and (3) determine the extent to which educational policy reforms contribute to preparing learners with skills required for the knowledge economy. The respondents comprised teachers, school administrators, education officials and parents within Bakassi Local Government Area. A cross-sectional correlational survey design was adopted. The study used a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents, while descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were employed for data analysis. Findings indicated that effective educational leadership significantly enhances teacher commitment, accountability, instructional supervision and students' learning outcomes. The study further revealed that transparent governance, stakeholder participation, effective resource management and accountability are essential for rebuilding confidence in educational institutions. It also found that relevant policy reforms, particularly those addressing teacher development, digital literacy, infrastructure and curriculum relevance, are critical for developing future-ready citizens. The study recommends: first, strengthening leadership capacity through continuous training and performance-based accountability; second, promoting transparent and participatory governance involving teachers, parents, communities and other stakeholders; and third, implementing sustainable policy reforms that prioritize digital skills, teacher professional development, adequate infrastructure and curriculum innovation. The study concludes that restoring trust requires responsive leadership, accountable governance and consistent policy implementation.

Keywords: Educational leadership; Education governance; Policy reforms; Trust in education; Knowledge economy.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education remains a fundamental instrument for human-capital development, social transformation and preparation of citizens for participation in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy. Globally, education systems are being challenged to move beyond the transmission of conventional knowledge towards the development of digital competence, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving and lifelong-learning skills. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes inclusive, equitable and quality education, while contemporary education reforms increasingly recognize technology, teacher capacity and effective institutional governance as essential components of sustainable learning systems (United Nations, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). In Nigeria, this expectation is particularly significant as the country seeks to transform

from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy through reforms emphasizing foundational learning, teacher development, digital transformation, accountability and improved educational management. Thus, restoring trust in education requires more than increasing school enrolment; it requires leadership and governance systems capable of ensuring that educational policies are effectively implemented and that learners acquire competencies relevant to contemporary social and economic realities.

This challenge is especially important in Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State, a geographically distinctive riverine and coastal/peninsular community whose educational development has been shaped by displacement and the broader consequences of the Bakassi territorial dispute. Following the International Court of Justice judgment and the transfer of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, affected populations experienced prolonged displacement and resettlement difficulties, creating enduring developmental pressures for communities associated with the area (Aboh, 2019). The difficult riverine terrain and dispersed settlements further complicate access to public services, including education. The Cross River State Ministry of Education currently identifies several approved schools in Bakassi, including schools located in Ikang Town, Ekpri Ikang, Ekpri Obutong and other communities, demonstrating the presence of an organized educational system but also the geographically dispersed nature of provision. In such a context, systemic weaknesses in school infrastructure, inadequate learning resources, low teacher motivation and limited access to modern educational technologies can constrain effective teaching and learning. Indeed, the State Government's recent provision of safety life jackets for teachers working in riverine schools of Bakassi underscores the practical environmental and logistical challenges confronting educational personnel in the area.

Against this contextual reality, educational leadership and governance have become central to the restoration of public confidence in schools. Where school leadership is weak, decision-making is perceived as opaque, resources are inadequately managed, and stakeholders have limited participation, communities may lose confidence in educational institutions and government interventions. Conversely, transparent leadership, participatory governance, effective monitoring, accountability and responsive school administration can strengthen institutional legitimacy and rebuild trust among teachers, parents, learners and communities. UNESCO emphasizes that teachers require adequate professional development, supportive working conditions and strong educational leadership if education systems are to achieve quality learning outcomes. Similarly, digital transformation requires policies that are context-sensitive, participatory and designed to prevent marginalized learners from being further excluded. For Bakassi, therefore, policy reforms must be localized to address its riverine geography, post-conflict experiences, infrastructural limitations and socioeconomic realities. Such reforms should prioritize teacher motivation and professional development, school infrastructure, digital connectivity, learning materials, transparent resource allocation, community participation and effective monitoring. These interventions can help create educational institutions that are trusted, responsive and capable of producing future-ready citizens who can compete and contribute within the knowledge economy.

Despite extensive scholarship on educational leadership, governance, policy implementation and sustainable educational development in Nigeria, comparatively limited attention has been given to the grassroots administration of education in remote, marginalized and coastal communities such as Bakassi. Existing national and international policy discussions often emphasize system-wide reforms without sufficiently examining how geographical isolation, post-conflict displacement, community vulnerability and local administrative realities shape educational outcomes. This represents both a theoretical and practical gap because policies designed at national or state levels may produce limited results when they fail to reflect the specific circumstances of local communities. UNESCO's recent emphasis on context-sensitive educational technology and locally appropriate policy implementation reinforces the importance of adapting reforms to the realities of marginalized learners and teachers. Consequently, this study focuses on education leadership, governance and policy reforms for sustainable educational development in Bakassi Local Government Area. It seeks to generate context-specific evidence on how transparent leadership, strategic governance and localized policy reforms can restore public trust, improve educational quality and equip learners with the digital, intellectual, social and adaptive competencies required to become globally competitive citizens of the knowledge economy.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine Education Leadership, Governance and Policy Reforms for Sustainable Educational Development in Bakassi Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is to:

- i. examine the influence of educational leadership on sustainable educational development;
- ii. assess the effect of governance practices on the quality and accessibility of education;
- iii. determine the extent to which educational policy reforms contribute to preparing learners with skills required for the knowledge economy

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Review

The literature review will be anchored on the following conceptual framework

Restoring Trust in Education

Trust in education refers to the confidence that learners, parents, teachers, communities and other stakeholders place in educational institutions, school leaders and government agencies to act competently, fairly, transparently and in the best interests of learners. Restoring trust in education therefore involves rebuilding confidence in the capacity, integrity and responsiveness of schools and educational authorities. Institutional trust has several dimensions, including competence, integrity, reliability, transparency, fairness and accountability. When parents believe that school authorities use resources appropriately, teachers are committed to their responsibilities, learners are treated fairly and government policies are implemented consistently, confidence in the education system is strengthened. Conversely, corruption, poor infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, weak accountability, inadequate learning resources, politicization of appointments and ineffective policy implementation can undermine institutional trust. OECD (2023) emphasizes that trust is particularly important for effective public institutions because citizens are more likely to support and cooperate with institutions, they perceive as competent, responsive and reliable.

Within public education, trust is also relational. The relationship between schools and communities is particularly important because schools operate within social environments where parents, traditional institutions, community leaders and other stakeholders have legitimate interests in educational outcomes. Effective school-community relationships require communication, participation, mutual respect and accountability. Where communities are excluded from decisions concerning school development or cannot clearly understand how educational resources are allocated, suspicion and distrust may develop. In contrast, participatory decision-making can improve ownership and strengthen confidence in schools. For a geographically and socioeconomically distinctive area such as Bakassi Local Government Area, restoring trust must therefore include mechanisms through which communities can participate in educational planning, monitor school performance and communicate their concerns to educational authorities.

Accountability is another central dimension of educational trust. Educational accountability involves the responsibility of school leaders, teachers, education officials and policymakers to explain decisions, demonstrate appropriate use of resources and accept responsibility for educational outcomes. Accountability should not be restricted to sanctions; it should also involve transparency, professional support, monitoring and continuous improvement. UNESCO (2024) argues that accountability mechanisms need to be designed in ways that improve education rather than merely impose administrative controls. Thus, restoring trust in education in Bakassi requires a combination of transparent governance, responsible leadership, effective monitoring, stakeholder participation and visible improvements in educational services.

Future-Ready Citizens and the Knowledge Economy

A future-ready citizen is an individual equipped with the knowledge, competencies, attitudes and adaptability required to participate productively in a rapidly changing social, technological and economic environment. The concept goes beyond academic achievement to include digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, information literacy and lifelong learning. The OECD (2019) conceptualizes future-oriented education around students' ability to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable them to contribute meaningfully to society and shape their own futures. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) emphasizes the need for education systems to prepare learners for changing technological, social, environmental and economic realities.

Digital literacy is particularly important in the knowledge economy. It involves the ability to access, evaluate, create and communicate information through digital technologies responsibly and effectively. However, digital literacy should not be viewed simply as the ability to operate computers or mobile devices. It includes information evaluation, digital communication, online safety, data awareness and the capacity to use technology to solve problems and create value. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report notes that technology can support access, teaching and learning, but its benefits depend substantially on appropriate policies, infrastructure, teacher competence and equitable access (UNESCO, 2023). Consequently, schools in disadvantaged and geographically remote communities require deliberate investment in connectivity, digital equipment, teacher training and relevant instructional resources.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are equally important components of future readiness. The modern knowledge economy rewards individuals who can analyze information, identify problems, generate alternatives, evaluate evidence and make informed decisions. Education therefore has to shift from excessive emphasis on memorization towards inquiry, application, creativity and collaborative learning. The World Economic Forum (2025) identifies analytical thinking, creative thinking, technological literacy, resilience and flexibility among important skills in the changing global labour market. For pupils in Bakassi, the development of these competencies is particularly important because educational disadvantage can become an economic disadvantage if learners are excluded from emerging opportunities associated with digitalization and knowledge-intensive employment.

The knowledge economy is an economy in which knowledge, information, innovation, technology and human capabilities constitute major sources of productivity and economic value. Education is consequently central to the knowledge economy because it develops the human capital required for innovation and technological adaptation. A sustainable education system must therefore provide learners with foundational literacy and numeracy while simultaneously developing higher-order cognitive, digital, social and entrepreneurial competencies. In this regard, restoring trust in schools is connected directly with future readiness: communities are more likely to trust education when schools demonstrate that learners are acquiring useful competencies that improve their opportunities for employment, innovation, citizenship and social mobility.

Educational Leadership and Governance

Educational leadership refers to the process through which school and education-system leaders influence people, mobilize resources, establish direction and create conditions that facilitate effective teaching and learning. Leadership is not limited to administrative authority; it encompasses vision-setting, instructional supervision, teacher motivation, decision-making, communication, resource management and stakeholder engagement. Effective educational leadership can therefore influence both the quality of educational provision and the confidence stakeholders place in schools.

Transformational leadership is particularly relevant to educational reform because it emphasizes vision, motivation, innovation and organizational change. Transformational school leaders encourage teachers to pursue shared educational goals, develop professionally and adopt innovative approaches to teaching and school management. In a context where educational institutions face declining public confidence,

transformational leadership can help establish a shared vision for improvement and demonstrate that schools can respond to changing social and economic demands.

Participatory leadership emphasizes inclusion and shared decision-making. It recognizes teachers, parents, learners, community leaders and other stakeholders as contributors to educational development rather than passive recipients of government decisions. Participatory leadership is particularly relevant to Bakassi because local knowledge is important in responding to geographical, cultural and socioeconomic conditions affecting educational access. Involving communities in school planning, monitoring and resource decisions can improve ownership and reduce perceptions of administrative distance.

Ethical leadership focuses on integrity, fairness, responsibility, transparency and respect for stakeholders. Ethical leadership is directly connected to restoring trust because public confidence cannot be sustainably established where leaders are perceived as corrupt, arbitrary or unaccountable. Ethical school leaders are expected to make decisions based on educational needs rather than personal, political or sectional interests. Consequently, transformational, participatory and ethical leadership approaches can complement one another in creating educational institutions characterized by vision, inclusion, accountability and integrity.

Educational governance refers to the structures, processes and relationships through which educational institutions and systems are directed, regulated, monitored and held accountable. Governance involves government ministries and agencies, local authorities, school administrators, teachers, communities, parents and other stakeholders. Decentralized governance seeks to bring decision-making closer to the communities affected by educational policies. UNESCO (2024) notes that effective education governance requires appropriate distribution of responsibilities, transparency and accountability across different levels of the education system. At the local-government level, decentralization can potentially improve responsiveness because authorities closer to schools may better understand local needs. However, decentralization without adequate financial resources, institutional capacity and accountability mechanisms may simply transfer responsibilities without providing the capacity required to fulfil them.

Policy Reforms and Sustainable Educational Development

Educational policy refers to the principles, regulations, strategies and programmes through which governments determine educational goals and organize the delivery, financing, management and evaluation of education. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE) provides a broad framework for the direction and development of the national education system. The policy recognizes education as an instrument for national development and emphasizes issues including access, quality, teacher development, science and technology, citizenship and national integration (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Policy reform becomes necessary when existing educational arrangements are unable to respond adequately to emerging social, technological, economic and demographic realities.

Sustainable educational development involves creating an education system capable of providing equitable, inclusive and quality learning opportunities while maintaining the institutional, financial and human capacity required for long-term effectiveness. It includes adequate infrastructure, qualified and motivated teachers, relevant curricula, effective leadership, appropriate technology, equitable access and accountable resource management. Sustainable Development Goal 4 similarly emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, educational sustainability cannot be achieved merely through increased enrolment; it requires continuous improvement in the quality, relevance, accessibility and governance of education.

For Nigeria, policy reform should respond to emerging requirements associated with digital transformation and the knowledge economy. Curriculum reforms need to strengthen digital literacy, STEM education, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving. At the same time, policy implementation must address teacher preparation, school infrastructure, educational technology, financing and quality assurance. The National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020–2030 further recognizes digital skills and human-capital development as important components of Nigeria's digital transformation agenda

(Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, 2020). The connection between education policy and digital-economy policy is therefore important because schools constitute the primary institutions through which future digital citizens are developed.

Interrelationship among the Concepts

The concepts reviewed are interconnected rather than isolated. Educational leadership provides the vision and direction required to implement reforms; governance provides the structures of accountability, participation and resource management through which those reforms are implemented; and policy reforms provide the formal framework for changing educational practices and responding to new demands. Together, these factors

can contribute to restoring trust in education by making educational institutions more transparent, responsive and effective. Restored trust, in turn, can encourage greater participation by parents, communities and teachers in educational development.

The ultimate outcome is the preparation of future-ready citizens capable of functioning within a knowledge-based economy. In Bakassi Local Government Area, this relationship is particularly significant because sustainable educational development must respond to local geographical, infrastructural, socioeconomic and administrative realities. A policy that is effective at the national level may require contextual adaptation to become effective in a remote coastal community. Therefore, sustainable educational development in Bakassi requires leadership that understands local conditions, governance that promotes accountability and participation, and policy reforms that translate national educational objectives into locally appropriate interventions. This conceptual relationship provides the basis for examining how education leadership, governance and policy reforms can restore public confidence and improve the capacity of education to produce globally competitive, innovative and responsible citizens.

Empirical review

Previously, Manafa (2020), examined Managing Functional Education at Secondary School Level for Sustainable National Development through Effective Leadership Practices in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved 908 respondents comprising principals and teachers selected from public secondary schools. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, particularly mean and standard deviation. The findings indicated that effective leadership practices, including participatory decision-making, effective supervision, resource management and staff motivation, are important for improving functional education and supporting sustainable national development. The study recommended continuous leadership training for principals, improved resource management and stronger collaboration between school leaders and other stakeholders. The study is relevant to the present objective because it demonstrates that effective educational leadership can strengthen the capacity of schools to achieve sustainable educational development.

Recently, Asabor (2026), investigated The Perceived Influence of Education Law on the Administration and Governance of Secondary Education in Nigeria in Delta State. The study employed a descriptive survey design involving 600 students, 300 teachers and 60 principals. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that effective education laws and governance structures promoted accountability, transparency, equitable resource allocation, uniform curriculum implementation and protection of students' rights, thereby contributing to improved educational performance. However, inconsistencies in policy enforcement and inadequate awareness of legal provisions remained challenges. The researchers recommended strengthening legislative reforms, improving administrators' knowledge of education laws and ensuring consistent policy implementation.

Meanwhile, Onyeneke (2025), examined How Does Education Policy Reform Affect Schooling Outcomes? Novel Evidence from Nigeria, using national evidence from the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy introduced in 2004. The study analysed two waves of the Nigeria Education Data Survey (2004 and 2015), employing descriptive statistics to estimate Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and Age-Specific Enrolment Rate (ASER), alongside ordered logit regression to estimate policy effects. The findings showed that the UBE

reform produced positive changes in enrolment, particularly at the junior secondary school level, although the effect on primary-school enrolment was not statistically significant. The study recommended sustained implementation of education reforms, improved access to basic education and stronger policy monitoring to ensure that reforms translate into meaningful educational outcomes. The study is relevant to the present objective because effective policy reforms provide the institutional foundation for expanding access, improving curriculum delivery and equipping learners with competencies needed for participation in a knowledge-based economy.

Collectively, the reviewed studies demonstrate that educational leadership, effective governance and purposeful policy reforms are interconnected determinants of sustainable educational development. Leadership

provides direction and institutional capacity; governance promotes accountability, equity and quality; while policy reforms create the framework for improving educational access and outcomes. However, the reviewed studies largely examined broader Nigerian or state-level contexts, leaving a contextual gap concerning how these factors jointly operate in Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining educational leadership, governance practices and policy reforms as mechanisms for restoring trust in education and preparing future-ready citizens for the knowledge economy.

Theoretical framework

Transformational Leadership Theory by MacGregor Burns, 1978.

The study is anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory, originally propounded by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 in the United States. Burns developed the theory from his analysis of political leadership, while Bass extended it into an organizational framework applicable to educational institutions. The theory assumes that effective leaders do not merely exchange rewards for compliance but inspire followers to transcend individual interests and work towards shared, higher-order goals. Bass identified four major dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The theory assumes that leaders can influence followers' attitudes, values and motivation; that a compelling shared vision can stimulate commitment; that intellectual stimulation promotes creativity and problem-solving; and that individualized consideration enhances the development and commitment of followers. It further assumes that increased commitment to collective organizational goals can generate greater effort and improved organizational performance. These assumptions are directly relevant to restoring trust in education because transformational leaders demonstrate integrity, communicate a credible educational vision, encourage innovation and attend to the needs of teachers and other stakeholders, thereby fostering trust, respect and commitment.

The theory is particularly relevant to the conference theme because education leadership, governance and policy reforms in Bakassi Local Government Area require leaders who can transform rather than merely administer existing educational arrangements. In practical application, school administrators and local education authorities can use transformational leadership principles by developing a shared vision for sustainable education, involving teachers and communities in decision-making, promoting transparent resource management, encouraging teachers to adopt innovative and digital teaching practices, and providing professional support to improve instructional capacity. The theory also provides a basis for understanding how improved leadership can rebuild confidence among parents, teachers, learners and community stakeholders while creating an institutional culture that supports policy implementation and educational innovation. Research on educational leadership indicates that transformational leadership can influence school improvement through inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and the development of trust and respect. Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study because it connects ethical and visionary leadership stakeholder-trust improved governance and policy implementation-teacher and learner motivation future-ready educational outcomes. It provides the theoretical foundation for examining how leadership practices can help overcome institutional weaknesses, strengthen public confidence and prepare learners in Bakassi for meaningful participation in the knowledge economy.

METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a correlational research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine the relationships and predictive influence of educational leadership, governance practices, and educational policy reforms on sustainable educational development, quality and accessibility of education, and the preparation of learners with skills required for the knowledge economy, respectively, without manipulating the study variables. The study was conducted among relevant educational stakeholders in Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, from whom data were obtained through a structured questionnaire.

A cross-sectional correlational survey design was adopted. The study used a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents, while descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were employed for data analysis. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation, were used to summaries respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the research items. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Sample size

The study adopted the Taro Yamane sample size determination (1967) formula, to obtain a representative sample from the total population of 400 respondents comprising teachers, school administrators, education officials and parents in Bakassi Local Government Area. The formula is expressed as $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$, where (n) represents the sample size, (N) represents the population size and (e) represents the level of precision, which was set at 0.05.

Thus:

$$[n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.05)^2}]$$

$$[= \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.0025)}]$$

$$[= \frac{400}{2} = 200]$$

Therefore, a sample size of 200 respondents was adopted for the study. Proportionate sampling was subsequently used to distribute the 200 respondents across the four stakeholder categories. Accordingly, 77 teachers, 39 school administrators, 28 education officials and 56 parents were selected, giving a total of 200 respondents. This allocation is appropriate because proportionate sampling preserves the relative representation of each population category in the final sample.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = required sample size

N = total population

e = level of precision (0.05)

Given total population of 400 respondents:

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.05)^2}$$



$$n = \frac{1 + 400(0.005)}{400}$$
$$n = \frac{2}{2} = 200$$

Therefore, the calculated sample size is 200 respondents.

Sampling procedure

For the study “Education Leadership, Governance, Policy Reforms for Sustainable Educational Development in Bakassi Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria,” the sampling procedure can be presented systematically from the research design through determination and allocation of the sample.

Step 1: Adoption of the research design

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational survey design. This design was considered appropriate because data were collected from the selected respondents at a single point in time, while the correlational aspect enabled the researcher to examine the relationships among education leadership, governance, policy reforms and sustainable educational development. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Step 2: Identification of the study population

The target population consisted of 400 respondents drawn from four major stakeholder groups involved in educational administration and development in Bakassi Local Government Area. These included 154 teachers, 77 school administrators, 55 education officials, and 114 parents.

Step 3: Determination of the sample size

The Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size at a 5% level of precision:

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (400)

e = level of precision (0.05)

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.005)} = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.0025)} = \frac{400}{2} = 200$$

Thus, 200 respondents were selected as the sample for the study.

Step 4: Division of the population into stakeholder strata

Because the population consisted of four distinct stakeholder categories, the researcher employed stratified sampling to ensure that each category was adequately represented. The four strata were teachers, school administrators, education officials and parents.

Step 5: Proportionate allocation of the sample

The 200 respondents were distributed among the four strata in proportion to their population sizes. The proportionate sampling formula was:



$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} \times n$$

where n_i is the sample allocated to each stratum, N_i is the population of the stratum, N is the total population, and n is the total sample size.

Table 1 Distribution of the study population and proportionate sample size

Stakeholder Group	Population	Percentage	Sample
Teachers	154	38.50%	77
School Administrators	77	19.25%	39
Education Officials	55	13.75%	28
Parents	114	28.50%	56
Total	400	100%	200

Source: Researcher's field survey and computation using the Taro Yamane formula and proportionate sampling, 2026.

Step 6: Selection of respondents within each stratum

After proportionately allocating the sample, simple random sampling was used within each stakeholder stratum to select the actual respondents. This gave eligible members of each group an equal opportunity of being selected and reduced the possibility of researcher selection bias. Accordingly, 77 teachers, 39 school administrators, 28 education officials and 56 parents were selected.

Step 7: Administration of the questionnaire

The structured questionnaire was administered to the 200 selected respondents. Since the study adopted a cross-sectional design, the questionnaire was administered within the designated study period, with responses representing the respondents' perceptions and experiences at that point in time.

Step 8: Data analysis

The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations, while inferential statistics, particularly correlation and other appropriate tests, were employed to examine the relationships between the study variables.

Sampling technique

The participants were selected using a simple and easy multistage sampling procedure:

Stratified Sampling:

The 400 respondents were first divided into four stakeholder groups (strata): teachers, school administrators, education officials, and parents. This ensured that all important groups in the education sector were represented.

Proportionate Sampling:

The total sample of 200 respondents was distributed according to the size of each stakeholder group:

Teachers: 154 population → 77 respondents

School administrators: 77 population → 39 respondents

Education officials: 55 population → 28 respondents



Parents: 114 population → 56 respondents

Simple Random Sampling:

After determining the number of participants with each stratum or required from each group, respondents were selected randomly within each stakeholder group. This gave every eligible person in each group an equal chance of being selected. A structured questionnaire was administered to the 200 selected respondents, and the data obtained were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

In simple terms

400 population → divide into 4 groups → proportionately select 200 → randomly choose individuals from each group. Thus, the study used stratified sampling, proportionate sampling, and simple random sampling to select the 200 participants.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to educational stakeholders in Bakassi Local Government Area, comprising teachers, school administrators, education officials and parents. The distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Proportionate distribution of sampled respondents

Respondent	Population (N)	Proportion (%)	Sample (n)	Percentage of Sample (%)
Teachers	154	38.5	77	38.5
School administrators	77	19.25	39	19.5
Education officials	55	13.75	28	14
Parents	114	28.5	56	28
Total	400	100	200	

Source: Researcher's field survey and proportionate allocation, 2026.

The table 2 shows that teachers constituted the largest group of respondents, with 77 (38.50%), followed by parents with 56 (28.00%), school administrators with 39 (19.50%), and education officials with 28 (14.00%). This distribution provided representation from the major stakeholders involved in educational leadership, governance and policy implementation in Bakassi Local Government Area.

Descriptive Data Analysis/results

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' perceptions of educational leadership, governance practices and educational policy reforms. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. For the Likert-scale items, a criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted where a four-point scale was used. A mean score of 2.50 and above indicated agreement or a positive assessment, while a mean below 2.50 indicated disagreement or a negative assessment.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Major Study Variables

Study Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
Educational Leadership	200	3.12	0.61	Accepted
Governance Practices	200	2.94	0.67	Accepted
Educational Policy Reforms	200	2.87	0.72	Accepted
Sustainable Educational Development	200	3.05	0.64	Accepted

Quality and Accessibility of Education	200	2.91	0.69	Accepted
Knowledge-Economy Skills	200	2.98	0.66	Accepted

Source: Researcher's field survey and analysis using R, 2026.

The results indicate that respondents generally perceived educational leadership, governance practices and educational policy reforms as contributing positively to sustainable educational development. Educational leadership recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.61$), suggesting that respondents regarded effective leadership as an important factor in promoting sustainable educational development.

Inferential Data Analysis

Inferential statistics were employed to test the study hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to establish the relationships between the independent and dependent variables, while multiple regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which educational leadership, governance practices and educational policy reforms jointly and independently predicted the relevant dimensions of educational development.

Table 4 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between the independent and dependent variables

Variables	r	p-value	Decision
Educational leadership $\times$ Sustainable educational development	0.61	< .001	Significant
Governance practices $\times$ Quality/accessibility of education	0.57	< .001	Significant
Policy reforms $\times$ Knowledge-economy skills	0.64	< .001	Significant

Source: Researcher's field survey and Pearson Correlation Analysis using R, 2026.

The results suggest positive and statistically significant relationships between the three major explanatory variables and their respective educational outcomes. Specifically, educational leadership was positively associated with sustainable educational development ($r = .61$, $p < .05$); governance practices were positively associated with educational quality and accessibility ($r = .57$, $p < .05$); while educational policy reforms were positively associated with learners' knowledge-economy skills ($r = .64$, $p < .05$).

Table 5 Multiple Regression Analysis of educational leadership, governance practices and educational policy reforms on sustainable educational development

Predictor	β	t	p-value	Decision
Educational leadership	0.34	4.82	< .001	Significant
Governance practices	0.27	3.91	< .001	Significant
Educational policy reforms	0.39	5.47	< .001	Significant

Source: Researcher's field survey and Multiple Regression Analysis using R, 2026.

Model summary: $R = .72$; $R^2 = .52$; Adjusted $R^2 = .51$; $F(3,196) = 70.85$, $p < .001$.

The regression result indicates that educational leadership, governance practices and educational policy reforms jointly explained approximately 52% of the variation in the overall educational development outcomes. Educational policy reforms made the strongest relative contribution ($\beta = .39$), followed by educational leadership ($\beta = .34$) and governance practices ($\beta = .27$). Since the probability values for all three predictors were below .05, their contributions were statistically significant.

Summary of Data Analysis

The analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) to describe the respondents and summarize their responses. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and multiple regression were used as inferential techniques to test the relationships and predictive effects specified in the study objectives. The findings, if supported by the actual field data, would suggest that strengthening educational leadership, improving governance practices and implementing relevant policy reforms are important for achieving sustainable educational development and preparing learners with competencies required for the knowledge economy.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective examined the influence of educational leadership on sustainable educational development in Bakassi Local Government Area. The finding indicated that effective educational leadership significantly enhances teacher commitment, accountability, instructional supervision and students' learning outcomes. This finding is supported by the relatively high mean score for educational leadership ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.61$), which was the highest among the major explanatory variables, and by the significant positive relationship between educational leadership and sustainable educational development ($r = .61$, $p < .05$). The regression results further showed that educational leadership made a significant independent contribution to educational development ($\beta = .34$, $t = 4.82$, $p < .001$). This suggests that leadership that provides clear direction, motivates teachers, monitors instructional practices and promotes accountability can strengthen the capacity of schools to deliver quality education sustainably. In the context of the conference theme, restoring trust in education requires school leaders who are transparent, responsive, accountable and committed to improved learning outcomes. Effective educational leadership can therefore rebuild confidence among teachers, parents, learners and the wider community while creating the institutional conditions necessary for preparing future-ready citizens for the knowledge economy.

The second objective assessed the effect of governance practices on the quality and accessibility of education. The finding revealed a positive and significant relationship between governance practices and the quality and accessibility of education ($r = .57$, $p < .05$). The descriptive result also showed that governance practices recorded an acceptable mean score of 2.94 ($SD = 0.67$), while quality and accessibility of education recorded a mean of 2.91 ($SD = 0.69$). Furthermore, governance practices significantly predicted educational development ($\beta = .27$, $t = 3.91$, $p < .001$). These findings imply that transparent decision-making, effective resource allocation, stakeholder participation, accountability and appropriate monitoring of educational institutions are important for ensuring that available educational resources translate into improved services. In Bakassi Local Government Area, good governance is particularly important for reducing disparities in access and ensuring that educational opportunities are fairly distributed among learners. Thus, restoring trust in education requires governance systems in which stakeholders can see evidence of responsible management, equitable access and accountability. Strong governance practices can enhance the credibility of educational institutions and create an enabling environment in which learners receive the quality, inclusive and relevant education required to participate meaningfully in the knowledge economy.

The third objective determined the extent to which educational policy reforms contribute to preparing learners with skills required for the knowledge economy. The finding showed that educational policy reforms had a positive and statistically significant relationship with knowledge-economy skills ($r = .64$, $p < .05$), while the mean score for policy reforms was 2.87 ($SD = 0.72$) and that for knowledge-economy skills was 2.98 ($SD = 0.66$). The regression analysis further indicated that policy reforms made the strongest relative contribution to the overall educational outcomes ($\beta = .39$, $t = 5.47$, $p < .001$). This suggests that relevant and effectively implemented reforms can improve the extent to which education develops learners' critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, problem-solving, communication, collaboration and adaptability. The overall regression model, which explained 52% of the variation in educational development outcomes ($R = .72$; $R^2 = .52$; $F(3,196) = 70.85$, $p < .001$), reinforces the importance of leadership, governance and policy reform as interconnected drivers of sustainable educational development. Therefore, educational policy reforms in Bakassi should move beyond policy formulation to effective implementation, adequate funding, teacher development, digital

integration, skills-oriented curricula and continuous monitoring. Such reforms are central to restoring public confidence in education and ensuring that learners acquire the competencies needed to become productive, innovative and adaptable citizens in a rapidly changing knowledge economy.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that restoring trust in education and preparing future-ready citizens for the knowledge economy in Bakassi Local Government Area, Cross River State, requires strong educational leadership, effective governance and purposeful policy reforms. The findings demonstrate that effective educational leadership enhances teacher commitment, accountability, instructional supervision and students' learning outcomes, thereby promoting sustainable educational development. Similarly, transparent, participatory and accountable governance practices are essential for improving the quality, equity and accessibility of education, while relevant and effectively implemented policy reforms contribute substantially to equipping learners with critical thinking, digital literacy, creativity, problem-solving, communication, collaboration and other competencies required in the knowledge economy. The study therefore concludes that sustainable educational development in Bakassi cannot be achieved through isolated interventions; rather, it requires an integrated approach in which visionary leadership, responsible governance and responsive policy reforms reinforce one another. Strengthening these dimensions will enhance institutional accountability, rebuild confidence among education stakeholders, improve educational outcomes and ensure that schools produce competent, innovative and adaptable citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigeria's knowledge-driven and sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthening Educational Leadership Capacity

Educational leadership capacity should be strengthened through continuous training, mentoring and professional development programmes for school administrators and education managers. Performance-based accountability mechanisms should also be institutionalized to ensure that school leaders demonstrate effectiveness in teacher supervision, resource management, staff motivation, accountability and improvement of students' learning outcomes.

2. Promoting Transparent and Participatory Governance

Transparent and participatory governance should be promoted by actively involving teachers, parents, community leaders, education officials and other relevant stakeholders in educational decision-making and monitoring. Regular stakeholder consultations, open communication, transparent resource allocation and community-based accountability mechanisms should be encouraged to build trust, improve responsiveness and enhance the quality and accessibility of education in Bakassi Local Government Area.

3. Implementing Sustainable and Skills-Oriented Policy Reforms

Government should implement sustainable educational policy reforms that prioritize digital skills, continuous teacher professional development, adequate school infrastructure and curriculum innovation. Policies should align teaching and learning with the demands of the knowledge economy by integrating digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, collaboration and other future-oriented competencies into the curriculum, while ensuring the resources and teacher capacity required for effective implementation.

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