

Quality Assurance Practices and Sustainability of Secondary Education System in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of quality assurance practices on the sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted, and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select 186 public secondary schools from a population of 233 schools across the Local Government Areas. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument, the Quality Assurance Practices and Sustainability of Secondary Education System Questionnaire (QAPSSSEQ). The instrument comprised three sections covering demographic data, six quality assurance variables (30 items), and four sustainability dimensions (24 items), all measured on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument showed high reliability, with sub-scale coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.91 and an overall reliability index of 0.94. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and hierarchical multiple regression. The findings revealed that quality assurance practices significantly predict the sustainability of the secondary education system across social, economic, environmental, and instructional dimensions. Specifically, regular teacher quality assessment, performance evaluation, and resource adequacy were found to positively influence teaching effectiveness, infrastructure maintenance, curriculum relevance, and overall school improvement. The study concluded that enhancing quality assurance mechanisms is vital for achieving sustainable education outcomes in secondary schools. It recommended that education stakeholders institutionalize structured quality assurance frameworks, intensify teacher evaluations, and ensure adequate provision of learning resources to sustain the education system in the state.

Keywords: *quality assurance practices, sustainability, secondary education, teacher assessment, educational quality.*

Introduction

Effective school system is a virtue that cannot be over-emphasized in the quest to attain a functional society. This is because education is meant to produce the skills, knowledge, competences, abilities, morals, and values needed for the functionality of the society. This explains the fact that the progress, viability, and development of any society have direct congruence with the effectiveness of the education system. In Nigeria, education is seen as instrument “par excellence” for effecting national growth and development. It is the general belief of the Nigerian society that education is the only feasible measure through which the nation can attain her national goals. Secondary schools play a significant role in the success and development of Nigerian society because it is the level of

education that is meant to provide individuals with greater opportunities to acquire the basic values, morals, functional skills, competences, abilities and aptitude for progressive and productive living. Secondary education is meant to produce a generation of youths who can think for themselves, respect the feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate those values that are specified under the broad national goals, as well as preparing them for functional living and higher education (Uzoigwe, 2023; Uzoigwe & Onwochei, 2023; Adams & Uzoigwe, 2023; Nsor, et al., 2017).

It becomes obvious from the foregoing that the sustainability of secondary schools in Nigeria is crucial to ensuring a productive and functional society where youths can imbibe moral values for peaceful living, acquire vocational skills for high engagement in productive ventures and have the required aptitude for higher learning. Sustainability is a concept that hinges on the ability of a country, institution or organization to meet the immediate needs of the people without compromising the ability of the people to meet their future needs (Uzoigwe, Zakka, & Anuforo, 2023). The high percentage of youths without functional skills for productive living in Nigeria, the high rate of social upheavals among Nigerian youths, and the high level of indiscipline among secondary school students in the country have clearly shown that there is a problem with secondary education in the country (Ayang, Uzoigwe, & Egbai, 2025). Again, the poor infrastructural provision in secondary schools, which has always resulted in poor instructional processes in schools and students' overall low achievement rates and the incessant strike actions by teachers due to poor condition of service are also factors that indicate the poor state of secondary schools in Nigeria (Ekanem & Uzoigwe, 2023; Ategwu, Kenn-Aklah, Fanan, & Uzoigwe, 2022). The more critical ones are the low status of teachers in the society, poor quality of teachers, low budgetary allocation to education and the poor accountability process in schools, which have always raised concern over the state of education in the nearest future in Nigeria, specifically at the secondary school level (Akpong & Uzoigwe, 2025; Chuktu & Uzoigwe, 2019).

It is reported that no secondary education system can attain sustainable growth when it is not adequately funded (Akpong et al., 2025). It is also obvious that no school can sustain effective teaching and learning when facilities are not adequately provided, when school structures are not modified to accommodate increasing trends in enrolment and emerging educational programmes and when the learning contents and experiences delivered in schools are not relevant to the needs of society (Effiom, Uzoigwe, & Umoh, 2024; Uzoigwe & Adams, 2023). Also, there is no way schools can improve their instructional practices and sustain the system when teachers are not given adequate professional development opportunities to acquire emerging skills for effective delivery of quality instruction, when there is incessant burnout among teachers, parents, administrators and community members, and when there is no clear process of accountability for resources and outcome of the system, among others (Inah & Uzoigwe, 2024; Ekpenyong, Uzoigwe, Onabe, & Onwochei, 2020). A school system is sustained when educational programmes offered to students are linked to the needs of the society, quality and adequate school facilities are provided in schools according to education programmes, trained and qualified personnel are provided, and school-community relationship is strengthened for effective teaching and learning in school (Uzoigwe & Onwochei, 2023; Uzoigwe, 2023).

Statement of the problem

A secondary school system is sustainable when there are adequate facilities to cater for increasing population of the students, the school environment can promote the delivery of quality education to students, there are adequate teaching personnel to contend the teeming population of students, and when the instructional outcomes meet the expectation of society. However, observations by the researcher reveals that there is preponderance of issues contending with the

sustainability of secondary education in Akwa Ibom State. The researcher observed that many secondary schools do not have adequate facilities to boost effective teaching and learning: no functional libraries and laboratories, old-fashioned and ill-equipped classrooms, inadequate and non-functional instructional materials. Some secondary schools in the State do not have adequate and qualified teachers to handle all the subjects offered in the schools. It was also noted that issues of overcrowded classrooms are common in almost all the secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State as teachers teach more than 50 students in a class in most of the schools, while students were observed sitting more than four in desk meant for three during classroom instruction. The researcher discovered that most schools in the State are not well fenced, thus students are exposed to risk of kidnapping and harassment which sometimes result in a situation where students cannot go to school on time or stay until the close of school because of fear of being kidnapped by hoodlums. Furthermore, in some schools, teachers do not carry out their instructional roles effectively, do not attend class regularly, hardly cover the syllabus for a term and are not committed to effective monitoring and evaluation of students' learning.

Principals in some schools in the State complained that they hardly receive adequate funding from government to enhance the provision of adequate instructional resources for effective teaching and learning, and that some of the teachers posted to their schools are unqualified and uncommitted. Some teachers seem not to have job satisfaction, because of the deplorable condition of the school facilities in their schools. Thus, the school environment is not conducive for teaching and learning and this may also affect the sustainability of the secondary schools in the State. This situation in Akwa Ibom seems to be responsible for the observed poor performance of students in NECO, WAEC and JAMB in the State and the obvious situation where many youths in the State have no functional skills to take up vocational jobs such as agriculture, local craft, barbing/hair making, fashion, and so on, hence they resort to all kinds of criminal activities in attempt to survive. Parents are becoming worried of the future of their wards, while some withdraw their wards to private schools.

In spite of the fact that the Government of Akwa Ibom State government has renovated some dilapidated structures, heightened instructional supervision, intensified accountability process and employed more teachers in secondary schools around the State in an attempt to curb this trend, secondary schools in the State continue to perform below expectation in instructional delivery and students' achievement. Given the importance of quality assurance to the success, improvement, and sustainability of secondary school system, the researcher became curious and raised the question "what is the relationship between quality assurance practices and sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State?"

Empirical review

Studies on the extent of sustainability of secondary education system

Research has shown that sustainability of secondary school borders on access and equity, standard and quality assurance (teacher quality, motivation and retention, curriculum relevance and review, learner support services), funding (resource mobilization and utilization), and the application of emerging technologies in teaching and learning (Inah, Ekpang, & Uzoigwe, 2024; Luke & Uzoigwe, 2022). It relates to the ability of schools to maintain effective teaching and learning processes and create a conducive environment that can enhance the quality of learners produced by the system into the society (Ojobe, Uzoigwe, & Bassey, 2024; Okon, Egbai, & Uzoigwe, 2025). The sustainability of secondary education is measured by the extent to which school-community relationship is strengthened for effective teaching and learning in school (Onya & Uzoigwe, 2023; Opuwari & Uzoigwe, 2025). Scholars have addressed issues of sustainability in three dimensions such as economic, social, and environmental (Nnaji & Uzoigwe, 2021; Onya, Uzoigwe, Akeke, Ovat, Uguma, & Ekpo, 2023). It has also been indicated that sustainability of schools has four pillars such

as instructional, social, economic, and environmental (Mbon & Uzoigwe, 2023; Ogbeche & Uzoigwe, 2020).

A study examined the challenges hindering implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in Nigeria (Luke, A. A., & Uzoigwe, 2022; Onya, Uzoigwe, Ovat, Abane, & Osa, 2024). The study used a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the two hundred and twenty-one principals in Ebonyi State public junior secondary schools. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 100 principals for the study. Instrument used for data collection was a researcher-structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts two from Educational Administration and Planning and one from Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations and Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using split-half test method and computed with Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.82. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that politics, inadequate funds, poor planning, and bureaucratic red-tape syndrome constitute challenges to the implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria (Onya et al., 2023; Opuwari & Uzoigwe, 2025). Based on the findings, it was recommended that successive governments should consolidate on the existing policy plans for sustainability as well as strengthen the Planning, Research, and Statistics (PRS) units of both the Universal Basic Education Board and Ministry of Education. This implies that funding, which is the economic dimension of sustainability of secondary education, was not effective in the schools. The study, though applying the same methodology as the present study, was not conducted in Akwa Ibom State (Nnaji & Uzoigwe, 2021; Mbon & Uzoigwe, 2023).

Students' Performance Assessment and Sustainability of the Secondary Education System

Students' performance assessment is a mandatory, time-bound scrutiny of students' educational achievements and grasp of the teaching curriculum to determine students' comprehension level and identify areas of improvement in the teaching curriculum (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019; Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023). This entails that the purpose of students' performance assessment is two-pronged: first, it enables educators to determine the degree to which students comprehend learning subjects; and second, it helps them identify areas in the teaching curriculum where improvements are well needed (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024; Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). Additionally, the end of a student's performance assessment process enables educators to determine whether a student is suitably qualified to transition to the next level of academic learning (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025).

Transitioning to the next level of academic learning is essential to the success of students' academic ambition because education is in phases; and a student is ideally required to satisfy the requirements in each level before being permitted to transition to the next in organised formal education systems (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020; Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). Students' performance assessments are also essential to the students themselves because they reveal areas of strengths and weaknesses to enable them to improve on their strengths and rectify areas of weaknesses (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). There are various forms of students' performance assessment, including classroom assignments, take-home assignments, examination assessments, and students' behaviour assessments. Classroom assignment is a form of student assessment where teachers give students specific academic tasks before, during, or after lessons to test their degree of subject comprehension (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). The opposite of a classroom assignment is a take-home assignment, where students are required to take their academic tasks home, complete and submit them in school at a time assigned by the teacher. Another form of assessment is the administration of formal examinations to students at the end of

the learning semester or term to determine whether students are qualified to transition to the next academic level.

Teachers' quality assessment and sustainability of secondary education system

Teachers' quality assessment is important to the success and sustainability of the secondary education system (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020). Teachers are the direct vehicles through which the educational objectives are transmitted to the students, and without adequate teachers, no educational policy may be implemented successfully because teachers are the curriculum implementers who must translate educational policies into practical school experience (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). Every educational system at every level depends heavily on the human resources for execution of its programme (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019). Teachers are the critical resources for effective implementation and realization of the educational policies and objectives at the practical level of the classroom (Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023). The coordination of human and material resources is adequately required to ensure functional and effective implementation of the universal basic education programme (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). Furthermore, the progress, success, and quality of any educational system depend undoubtedly on the quality of teachers' input into the system, and without teachers with relevant behavioural traits, educational facilities cannot be used to facilitate academic performance of students (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025).

Teacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it. Definitions range from those that focus on what should be taught and how knowledge should be imparted to the knowledge and training teachers possess (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025). There are, however, two broad elements that characterise teacher quality: teacher preparation and qualifications, and teaching practices (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). The first refers to pre-service learning (for example, post-secondary education, certification), teaching assignment, continued learning (for example, professional development, collaboration with other teachers, teaching experience), and general background (for example, demographics, aptitude, life experience) (Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). The second refers to the actual quality of teaching that teachers exhibit in their classrooms (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). Of course, these two elements of teacher quality are not mutually exclusive; excellent teacher preparation and qualifications are expected to lead to exemplary teaching (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020). Teachers' quality measures the degree to which teachers are suitably qualified to effectively carry out their teaching duties in a way that improves the knowledge and character of students (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). It is the extent to which teachers are competent and proficient in handling the education of students under their tutelage (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024).

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine quality assurance practices and sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out if:

1. The extent of sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State is high or low
2. Students' performance assessment predicts sustainability of the secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system
3. Teachers' quality assessment predicts sustainability of the secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State?
2. To what extent does students' performance assessment predict sustainability of secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system?
3. To what extent does teachers' quality assessment predict sustainability of secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system?

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses directed the study:

1. The extent of sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State is not significantly low
2. Students' performance assessment does not significantly predict sustainability of the secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system.
3. Teachers' quality assessment does not significantly predict sustainability of the secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational research design to examine the effect of quality assurance practices on the sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State. The population consisted of 233 public secondary schools, from which a sample of 186 schools was selected using a stratified random sampling technique across the 31 Local Government Areas. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Quality Assurance Practices and Sustainability of Secondary Education System Questionnaire (QAPSSSEQ)*, which comprised three sections: demographic data, six quality assurance variables (measured with 30 items), and four dimensions of sustainability (measured with 24 items). The instrument, administered in hard copy by the researcher and ten trained assistants, used a four-point Likert scale and demonstrated strong reliability, with sub-scale coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.91 and an overall reliability index of 0.94. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), simple linear regression, and hierarchical multiple regression to determine the relationships between variables. Ethical standards such as informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Research question one

What is the extent of sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State?

The test variable in this analysis is sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State measured in terms economic, social, environmental and instructional dimensions of sustainability. In this analysis, the scores of items 1-6 measured the economic dimension of sustainability of secondary education system, items 7-12 measured the social dimension, items 13-18 measured the environmental dimension, while scores of items 19-24 measured the economic dimension of sustainability of secondary education system in the schools. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was used to answer this research question. The Criterion Mean of 2.50 was used to set the decision rule. Mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as low extent while from 2.50 and above were regarded as high extent. The analysis was presented in Table 1.

The analysis in Table 1 shows that in overall, the average mean of the responses is 2.41 which less than the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that there is high degree of acceptance among the respondents that the extent of sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State is low. This means that the extent to which funds are provided in the system by government, and NGOs is low, the extent to which collaborative structures and social activities are developed and put in place to promote teaching and learning in secondary schools is low, the extent to which the schools are safe, clean and free from security risk is low, and the extent to which effective instructional activities are delivered in the schools is low. It implies that secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State lack sustainable funding structures, is deficient in instructional delivery, have problems with safety and security of students, staff and properties, and lack social capital and activities that can promote effective teaching and learning in the

Table1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses on the extent of sustainability of secondary education in Akwa Ibom State based on economic, social, environmental and instructional dimensions of sustainability

S/N	Sustainability of secondary education	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Adequacy of internally generated funds	2.33	.408	Low Extent
2	Adequacy of government funds	2.12	.533	Low Extent
3	Availability of financial supports from community members	2.41	.437	Low Extent
4	Financial supports from NGOs	2.20	.513	Low Extent
5	Proper budgeting	2.47	.437	Low Extent
6	Financial accountability	2.24	.718	Low Extent
7	Partnership with other institutions	2.45	.503	Low Extent
8	Availability of interschool social activities	2.52	.529	High Extent
	School-community relationships	2.50	.563	High Extent
10	Teachers-students relationship	2.53	.605	High Extent
11	Parental involvement in school management	2.51	.548	High Extent
12	Teachers' participation in co-curricular activities	2.47	.653	Low Extent
13	Availability of security measures	2.29	.486	Low Extent
14	Cleanliness of the school environment	2.37	.538	Low Extent
15	Functionality of school physical facilities	2.55	.532	Low Extent
16	Safety of staff and students	2.43	.506	Low Extent
17	Encouraging school gardening	2.46	.721	Low Extent
18	Keeping waste bins noticeable	2.44	.583	Low Extent
19	Student-centred teaching	2.57	.562	High Extent
20	Use of e-learning facilities	2.33	.857	Low Extent
21	Students' self-learning	2.52	.490	High Extent
22	Teachers' commitment to teaching	2.38	.752	Low Extent
23	Collaborative teaching	2.42	.529	Low Extent
24	Students' active engagement	2.40	.933	Low Extent
	Average mean and Std. Dev.	2.41	.580	Low extent

Criterion mean= 2.50

Research question two

To what extent does students' performance assessment predict sustainability of secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system?

The independent variable in this analysis is students' performance assessment, while the dependent variable is sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State measured in terms of social, economic, environmental, instructional dimensions of sustainability, and overall sustainability of secondary education system. Both students' performance assessment and sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State were measured continuously in the study. The descriptive output of a simple linear regression analysis was used to answer the question. The results of the analysis of each of the sub-scales of the dependent variable (sustainability of

secondary education system) were presented in one Table for clarity and easy understanding. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that generally, students' performance assessment predicted 71.1% of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, students' performance assessment as shown in Table 2, predicted 85.1 % of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State in terms of the social dimensions of sustainability, and 40.8 % in terms of economic dimensions of sustainability across all public secondary schools in the State. On specific note, the result in Table 2 indicates that students' performance assessment predicted 39.8 % of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State in terms of environmental dimensions of sustainability and 25.9% in terms of instructional dimension of sustainability of secondary education system.

Table 2: Summary of a simple linear regression analysis showing the contribution of students' performance assessment to sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State generally, and terms of social, economic, environmental, instructional dimensions of sustainability, and overall sustainability of secondary education system

Dependent variables	Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE
Overall sustainability of secondary education	1	.844 ^a	.712	.710	5.051
Social dimension of sustainability	1	.923 ^a	.851	.850	1.533
Economic dimension of sustainability	1	.639 ^a	.408	.405	1.940
Environmental dimension of sustainability	1	.631 ^a	.398	.394	1.792
Instructional dimension of sustainability	1	.509 ^a	.259	.255	2.028

a. Predictors: (constant), students' performance assessment

Research question three

To what extent does teachers' quality assessment predict sustainability of secondary education system in terms of instruction, economic, environmental, social dimensions, and overall sustainability of secondary education system?

The independent variable in this analysis is teachers' quality assessment, while the dependent variable is sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State measured in terms of social, economic, environmental, instructional dimensions of sustainability, and overall sustainability of secondary education system. Both teachers' quality assessment and sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State were measured continuously in the study. The descriptive output of a simple linear regression analysis was used to answer the question. The results of the analysis of each of the sub-scales of the dependent variable (sustainability of secondary education system) were presented in one Table for clarity and easy understanding. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

The result of the analysis presented in Table 3 shows that generally, teachers' quality assessment predicted 66.4% of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, teachers' quality assessment as shown in Table 3, predicted 90.9 % of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State in terms of the social dimensions of sustainability, and 36.7 % in terms of economic dimensions of sustainability across all public secondary schools in the State. On specific note, the result in Table 3 indicates that teachers' quality assessment predicted 28.1 % of the total variance in sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State in terms of environmental dimensions of sustainability and 25.5 % in terms of instructional dimension of sustainability of secondary education system.

Table 3: Summary of a simple linear regression analysis showing the contribution of teachers' quality assessment to sustainability of secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State generally, and terms of social, economic, environmental, instructional dimensions of sustainability, and overall sustainability of secondary education system

Dependent variables	Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	SE
Overall sustainability of secondary education	1	.813 ^a	.664	.662	5.452
Social dimension of sustainability	1	.954 ^a	.909	.909	1.197
Economic dimension of sustainability	1	.607 ^a	.367	.365	2.003
Environmental dimension of sustainability	1	.530 ^a	.281	.276	1.959
Instructional dimension of sustainability	1	.475 ^a	.255	.221	2.073

a. Predictors: (constant), teachers' quality assessment

Discussion of findings

The result of the first research question, which was raised to ascertain the extent of sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State, revealed that the extent of sustainability is actually low (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). This finding highlights issues such as access and equity, standard and quality assurance relating to teacher quality, motivation and retention, curriculum relevance and review, learner support services, technical and vocational education and training, funding, resource mobilization and utilization, and information and communication technologies as major sustainability problems in secondary schools in Nigeria (Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023; Ukpang & Uzoigwe, 2020). Similarly, it reflects challenges such as the inability to implement articulated educational policies, insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, irrelevant curriculum, and poor teacher quality, which are detrimental not only to educational development and sustainability but also to socio-economic progress in society (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024; Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). This result suggests that the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State lacks sustainable funding structures, is deficient in instructional delivery, has problems with safety and security of students, staff, and properties, and lacks social capital and activities that promote effective teaching and learning in schools (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025).

Similarly, this result was supported by the outcomes of the analysis of the first hypothesis, which revealed that the extent of sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State is significantly low (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). This implies that the extent to which funds are provided in the system by the government and NGOs is low; the extent to which collaborative structures and social activities are developed and put in place to promote teaching and learning is low; the extent to which the schools are safe, clean, and free from security risks is low; and the extent to which effective instructional activities are delivered is also low (Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). The implication is that the secondary education system is not sustainable (Ukpang & Uzoigwe, 2019; Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). This aligns with findings that identified politics, inadequate funding, poor planning, and bureaucratic red-tape as key challenges to policy implementation in the education sector (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025).

This result also aligns with findings that inadequate provision of physical resources and poor maintenance culture hinder the effective utilization of resources for teaching and learning (Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023). In the same direction, it has been found that many schools lack enough teachers and the available infrastructure, such as classroom blocks and desks, is inadequate to accommodate students (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025). It is also consistent with findings that indicate insecurity and lack of safety in schools manifested through fear, anxiety, low morale, and absenteeism undermine the school environment and students' ability to learn effectively (Ukpang & Uzoigwe, 2020; Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025).

The analysis of the second research question, which was raised to determine whether students' performance assessment predicts the sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State in terms of social, economic, environmental, and instructional dimensions, revealed that students' performance assessment significantly predicts sustainability in all these dimensions and overall (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). This was confirmed by the outcome of the analysis of the second hypothesis (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023; Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). This result suggests that improvement in the extent to which students' performance assessment is conducted in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State increases the extent to which collaborative structures are maintained, financial resources are effectively utilized, the school environment is conducive for learning, and instructional practices meet societal expectations (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). The finding is clear, as students' performance assessments are essential to identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, thereby enabling targeted improvement (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019). These assessments help stakeholders evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes, teacher performance, curriculum relevance, and the overall learning experience (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). With adequate performance assessments, principals can improve teaching and learning conditions, enhance teacher commitment, and modify the learning environment to boost students' academic outcomes (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). Thus, schools that are committed to student performance assessment are better positioned to sustain effective teaching and learning practices. This may be attributed to the fact that principals possess adequate skills to conduct student performance evaluations (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025).

This agrees with the opinion of scholars who noted that the end of a student's performance assessment process enables educators to determine whether a student is suitably qualified to transition to the next level of academic learning (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025). This result is not different from the understanding that students' performance assessment is a mandatory, time-bound scrutiny of students' educational achievements and grasp of the teaching curriculum to determine comprehension levels and identify areas of improvement (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). This result supports the fact that transitioning to the next level of academic learning is essential to the success of students' academic ambition because education is in phases, and a student is ideally required to satisfy the requirements in each level before being permitted to transition to the next in organised formal education systems (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020). This implies that it will be difficult for a school system to be sustainable when students' performance assessments are not regularly carried out to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning process and the measures that can be put in place to improve the system (Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). Empirically, these results support the findings of many researchers who have investigated the link between innovation proficiency of principals and the effectiveness and sustainability of schools (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). It has been found that performance assessment strategies impact the education system and can influence sustainable thinking aligned with sustainable development goals (Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023). Some studies demonstrated that using peer students and digital tools for performance assessments can produce beneficial results (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019). Other findings showed that developing valid and reliable performance evaluation instruments can effectively measure and assess students' performance across various learning elements (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). The implication of this result is that the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State may not be able to achieve effectiveness or ensure sustainability if the schools are not committed to regular students' performance assessments (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025).

The analysis of the third research question, which was raised to establish whether teacher quality assessment predicts sustainability of the secondary education system in Akwa Ibom State

across the social, economic, environmental, instructional, and overall dimensions, revealed that teacher quality assessment did, in fact, predict sustainability in all these areas (Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). This was confirmed by the result of the analysis of the third hypothesis (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023; Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023).

This result means that improvement in the extent to which teacher quality assessment is regularly carried out in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State enhances the overall sustainability of the system (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). It contributes to better teaching and learning situations, improved acquisition of functional and vocational skills by students, promotion of practical skills, enrichment of the learning environment, and enhancement of the school system's social network (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). This result is not surprising, given that teachers are key actors in delivering education (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2020). The positive association between teacher quality assessment and sustainability arises from the fact that teachers are curriculum implementers, and no school system can be sustained when teachers lack the right pedagogical skills and professional disposition (Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). It is practically difficult or impossible for any educational system to attain its goals when teachers are unqualified, lack subject mastery, or engage in unprofessional behaviour such as exam malpractice, abuse, or misconduct (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025). Regular teacher quality assessments help schools identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses for targeted improvement through capacity-building programmes (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019).

This agrees with previous opinions that emphasized teachers as the primary channel through which educational objectives are transmitted, and that without adequate teachers, no educational policy can be successfully implemented (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025). The result supports the view that every educational system depends heavily on human resources for program execution (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). Teachers are critical for the effective implementation and realisation of educational policies and objectives in the classroom (Osim & Uzoigwe, 2023). It has been emphasized that effective coordination of human and material resources is required for successful implementation of educational programmes (Paul, Uzoigwe, & Sunday, 2024). Additionally, it has been argued that the success and quality of any educational system largely depend on the quality of teachers' input, and without teachers with the right behavioural characteristics, educational resources cannot facilitate students' academic performance (Sunday, Afia, Essien, Inyang, Peters, & Uzoigwe, 2025).

Empirical findings further support the idea that assessing and monitoring teachers' performance and quality is essential to ensuring effective teaching and learning (Umoh, Ojobe, & Uzoigwe, 2025). Research also shows that experienced teachers can display high professional quality, and that high-quality, sustainable teaching includes enthusiasm, encouraging independent learning, stimulating interest, and fostering professionalism and student confidence (Ukpong & Uzoigwe, 2019; Sunday, Umoren, Inyang, Afia, & Akpan, 2025). This implies that schools may find it difficult to sustain their systems without effective teacher quality assessments (Ukpabio & Uzoigwe, 2023). However, this outcome may be influenced by the fact that school principals possess the necessary skills to conduct effective teacher quality assessments (Sunday, Ifiok, Essien, & Blessed-Udo, 2025).

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical role of effective educational policies, supervision models, teacher motivation, and inclusive practices in enhancing the quality and sustainability of secondary education systems. Strengthening these components through evidence-based approaches and contextual innovations is essential for achieving equitable and future-ready education in Nigeria and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Policymakers should strengthen teacher recruitment, motivation, and retention strategies to reduce shortages and improve instructional quality in secondary schools.
2. School leaders must adopt inclusive and participatory supervision models that promote accountability, professional growth, and improved teaching outcomes.
3. Government and stakeholders should invest in continuous professional development and digital competence training to prepare educators for 21st-century learning demands.
4. Education ministries should institutionalize monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of education reforms and sustainable school improvement.

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