



Intervention Outcomes of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Public Primary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria

Okeke, Ego Kate¹, Prof. Udenta Jude Okezie² & Aduma, Aloysius Tochukwu PhD³

Department of Public Administration, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

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The study investigated the intervention outcomes of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Public Primary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. SDG 4 came into being in 2015 and seven years after (2022) the study wants to know if inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunity has been achieved. The specific objectives were to ascertain the effect of SDG 4 on achievement of free education in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria; and to ascertain the effect of SDG4 on achievement of gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study applied a survey research design. It adopted two major sources of data viz: primary and secondary sources of data. The population of the study was 6,212 for public primary school teachers and 205 for staff of Education Board. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 376 for teachers and 135 for Education Board staff. T-test analysis was applied in testing the hypotheses. The findings revealed that SDG 4 affected positively free education and gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study concluded that SDG 4 is vigorously being pursued to ensure holistic compulsory free education and gender equality. The study recommended among others that government should develop serious policy that will encourage more gender equality and expand also on free education derivatives to include free transportation to and from school.

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Intervention Outcomes; Sustainable Development Goal 4; SDG 4; Quality Education; Public Primary Schools

1. Introduction

Millennium development goals were initiated by world leaders under the UN Millennium Declaration in the year 2000. Under this declaration, nations of the world were committed to a global challenge aimed at reducing extreme poverty and other debilitating factors by the year 2015 (Olaribe and TaylorRobinson, 2016). The timeline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ended in 2015. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an offshoot of Millennium Developments Goals (MDGs). Given the deficiency of many countries in achieving the set goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community through the vehicle of United Nations and Heads of states of the 193 Member Nations which Nigeria is among, launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a new developmental strategy. This strategy which is otherwise known as Agenda 2030, is framed into 17 Goals, with 169 Targets and 230 Indicators (Oleribe and Taylor-Robinson, 2016). The resolution is expected to tackle the menace of poverty, unemployment, hunger, scourge of insecurity in the planet, and pave way for peoples' prosperity by the year 2030.

One major area where the MDG's failed was education, especially in most African countries. This deficit is even acknowledged by the UN in one of its reports. The United Nations lamented regarding the deficit of implementation of the goals set for educational development in the MDG's programme. According to the United Nations (2018), the world failed to meet the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. They postulate that 59 million children of primary school age were out of school.

MDG did not only fail to achieve the targeted goal in education in Nigeria but also in other sectors. To explain this fact further, MDG during its 15 years benchmark pointed out that an appreciable effort in ensuring development globally has been made mainly through array of issues such as halving poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, child mortality and improving maternal health. However, not all countries, especially Sub-Saharan African countries are on track with the realization of the goals in the key sectors like poverty, education, health care, environmental sustainability and international cooperation. Poverty, gender inequality, child mortality and combat of diseases still remain a daunting challenge in most developing countries like Nigeria (MDG Report, 2018). In a bid to address these daunting challenges associated with MDGs and to sustain the positive results achieved by the programme, the global community adopted a Post 2015 MDGs known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nigeria joined other member countries in the United Nations in adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global initiative aimed at making the nation a better place to live. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contains seventeen (17) goals that are targeted towards various sectors of the economy. Each goal is focused on a specific area of the nation's economy and is development-oriented. The fundamental philosophy underlying the sectors-inclined contributions towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underpins the necessity of priorities amongst various stakeholders (Obi, Hornby and Edet, 2015). Out of these 'new developmental goals', 'Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. Education is 'the key that will allow many other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved' (United Nations, 2019). Such that, when people are well-educated, they are not only freeing themselves from the shackle of poverty, but, are empowered to function effectively anywhere they find themselves, as well as, live a more healthy and sustainable lives. Besides, education goes a long way to foster tolerance among diverse people, and thereby, enhances more peaceful societies (United Nations, 2019).

However, seven years after the inception of Sustainable Development Goals, this paper seeks to evaluate the intervention outcomes of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Public Primary Schools education in Nigeria with particular emphasis on Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The scope of this study is to discover if inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunity has been achieved. Specifically, however, it wants to:

- i. Ascertain the effect of SDG 4 on achievement of free education in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of SDG 4 on achievement of gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

1. SDG 4 affected achievement of free education in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.
2. SDG 4 affected achievement of gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

Development

Development, as a concept has been associated with diverse meanings, interpretations and theories from various scholars. Todaro and Smith (2006) defined development as a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes, and institutions, as well as economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. Development may be seen as advancement in political, economic and socio-cultural lives of the people as a result of advancement in science and technology (Chukwuka, 2014). Ogbe (2015) sees it as increased capacity, greater effectiveness and efficiency, improved technology, knowledge, skill, initiative and disposition which people acquired overtime. At the heart of development is improvement in the standard of living of the people and building of their capacity to command best quality of life. Development in the area of education, according to Amaele and Okafor (2013) is seen as the total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his abilities and interests to meet up the needs of the society and for the individual to take his rightful place, contribute equally to the enhancement of the society.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development has become the buzzword in development discourse, having been associated with different definitions, meanings and interpretations. Sustainable Development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the current generations without compromising the needs of future generations” (United Nations, 2017).

Sustainable Development is an approach to development which uses resources in a way that allows them (the resources) to continue to exist for others (Mohieldin, [2017](#)). Okeke (2019) relates the concept to the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability upon which the economy and society depend. Considered from this angle, Sustainable Development aims at achieving social progress, education and economic growth (Gossling, [2018](#); Zhai and Chang, [2019](#)).

Sustainable Development Goal 4

In the year 2015, the city of Incheon, South Korea celebrated and promulgated the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (World Education Forum, 2020), which proposes a new vision for education for the next 15 years. This objective is broken down into seven expected outcomes and three means; the targets are: (4.1) quality of primary and secondary education; (4.2) quality of pre-primary education; (4.3) equal access to higher education; (4.4) employability skills; (4.5) gender disparity and vulnerable groups; (4.6) literacy and numeracy; (4.7) comprehensive education for sustainable development; (4.a) inclusive and safe educational facilities; (4.b) scholarships for higher education; and (4.c) teacher qualifications (Ministerio et.al., 2020).

Primary Education

Primary education is the first stage of compulsory education. It is preceded by pre-school or nursery education and is followed by secondary education. All over the world, primary education is regarded as the most important as well as the most patronized by people (Oni, 2008). This perhaps may be due to the fact that it is the foundation of the whole educational pursuit, which is expected to provide literacy and enlightenment to the citizens. According to him,

the success and failure of the entire education system are determined by primary education. What this means is that primary education which is defined as the education given in an institution for children aged 6-11 years is the bedrock upon which the entire education system is built.

The general goals of primary education according to Okeke (2019) are achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all pupils, as well as establishing foundations in science, mathematics, geography, history and other social sciences. Primary education serves as the foundation in the formal process of ensuring changes in the behaviour of the growing members of the society. The success of any subsequent level depends to a great extent on the effectiveness of the foundation.

The objectives of the primary education in Nigeria as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) are: The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively, The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking, Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society, Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes, Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity, Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment and Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality

Public Primary School

A Public primary school according to Aboritoli (2021) is a school directly administered and controlled by the Ministry. It includes a school, educational institution or class established and maintained by the government. The public school system is divided into Kindergarten, Primary education, Secondary education and Tertiary education.

Public Primary education is a system of elementary institutions and measures that ensures the education and upbringings of a pupil in accordance with interest and requirement of society and state. A Public Primary school in Nigeria is an elementary school supported by public funds and providing free education for children of a community or district. It is maintained at public expense for education of the children of such community or district. These schools are endowed to prepare students chiefly for secondary schools (Guga, 2014). Public primary schools are owned and funded by federal and state governments. They are characterized by: Tuition free, centrally run by boards, overseen by the Ministry of Education, adjusting managerial styles for improved service delivery, responding to change (innovations improved school provision) (Guga, 2014). Nigeria has 54,434 public primary schools (Egwu, 2012) while in Anambra state, there are 578 public primary schools (ASUBEB, 2021).

Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Free Education in Public Primary Schools

According to Abdullahi-Umar (2020), Free education means the removal of every constraint to sound and quality education. Free education means the establishment of various kinds of schools and expansion of school curriculum to help each child develop according to his or her ability, age, interest, and so on without levying the beneficiaries. It means that, the establishment and provision of library facilities, technical and vocational equipment, recruitment and retention of qualified and adequate manpower are made available without any cost. Also, tuition free; free feeding, free books, free accommodation, free transportation, free uniform, and other personal uses of the learner are made available with no charges or cost.

Therefore, free education simply means, the removal of every socio-cultural impediment to the child's education at no cost. The sum total of all these, makes education free. The partial implementation of the above can never qualify the system as free, because the absence of any one of the above constitutes constraint to the child's access to free education (Abdullahi-Umar, 2020). With the state providing free education, children from poor families get access to an education and this has the benefit of helping break cycles of poverty in a long term. Where education is so modified, free provision of education by the state helps break monopoly hold on education by the elite and quality education achieved (Tawanda et.al., 2019).

Sustainable Development Goal 4 and gender equality in primary education

Education in Nigeria according to (Agada, 2016), must be such that recipients or beneficiaries have full access to every opportunity that it offers. Beneficiaries of education or the chances that it offers should not be determined by one's sex, economic status or social background but by his/her capabilities, talents and hard work. The educational philosophy which is based on the "Provision of equal access to educational opportunity for all citizens of the country at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system", is seriously compromised (Abdulrasheed, 2015). In addition, the casual references to it have become mere soothing words on the lips of those charged with the responsibility of ensuring its implementation.

Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index (GNI, 2012). The inequality and discrimination the female gender suffers is a major infringement of the rights of women and girls and therefore a major challenge to the development process and achievement of quality education in particular (Amin and Akogwu, 2017). Statistically male enrolment was 11,043,844 as against 9,744,346 for female in 2014/2015 academic year in public primary schools in Nigeria, 2015/2016 was 11,804,167 and 10,548,159 male and female respectively, 2017/2018 enrolment was 13,765,124 for male and 11,721,318 for female while 2019/2020 was 21,546,523 and 19,295,423 for male and female respectively (National Population Commission, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical framework;

This paper anchors its theoretical framework on Human Capital Theory. The theory is of the view that education was found to have a relationship with human capital. That once people have access to education in a country and proper facilities, resources and materials provided for teaching and learning, the outcomes will be equitable quality education and the country will be blessed with strong human capital. Moreover, once human capital is achieved, it leads to the country's development and economic growth due to the huge numbers of educated and knowledgeable people in the country as well as helping poverty alleviation. The theory was propounded by Gray Becker in 1964. In the light of this theory, Sustainable Development Goal 4 which is about inclusive and equitable quality education can only be achieved through human capital development.

2.3 Empirical Review

Related empirical studies were reviewed based on our two objectives

SDG4 and Free Education in Public Primary Schools in Nigeria

Uduakobong and Eno (2016) studied Influence of free and compulsory education on the quality and basic education. They employed T-test analysis and found out that UBE policy of free and compulsory education has led to increase in education enrollment. They recommended that Federal government should adopt a systematic approach in improving the quality of basic education, provide adequate fund, human resources as well as material resources and conducive learning environment.

Mohammed and Dahiru (2017) examined Revitalizing primary education as a foundation for Quality higher education using T-test analysis. They found out that teachers are ineffective and unskilled. It recommended for monitoring of education policy to ensure adherence and uniformity, provision of modern infrastructure and supply of all relevant teaching materials.

Ellen (2019) studied Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on "quality education" from micro, meso and macro perspective using T-test analyses, the research discovered that Structure and agency theory form an important starting point of this article, allowing the ten targets within SDG 4 to be separated and viewed from micro-, meso- and macro-level perspectives. It also found out that reaching the SDG 4 targets is a responsibility shared among individuals, education and training institutions, and regulating governments. The author recommended that availability of high-quality primary and secondary schools, adequate government funding, compulsory schooling

laws, availability of affordable and quality technical, vocational and cultural shift towards perceiving education as making a positive contribution to society.

SDG 4 and Achievement of Gender Equality in Public Primary Schools in Nigeria

Amin and Akogwu (2017) studied Gender equality, education and sustainable development in Nigeria in the 21st Century: An appraisal using ANOVA analysis. They found out that there has been gender inequality in the area of girls, poor quality of education and inadequate sizeable classrooms. The researchers recommended development of serious policy that will encourage gender equality and follow such policies vigorously and location of the socio-cultural imperatives.

Okeke (2019) examined early childcare education in Awka Urban Town, Anambra State, using Chi-square analysis. Research found out that female teachers are important educators of their young children, they help in teaching of basic attitudes, provide affection and security, character training and development, culture and other social expectations and impact on healthcare of the children and recommended that female teachers should be acknowledged both at home and school, female teachers should be advised to carry out their duties of childcare diligently, Male parents and male teacher should cooperate with female teachers and mothers. Early childcare education should be given priority attention because it constitutes the bedrock of education.

Goodhope and Amadi (2021) studied Managing Education for attainment of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: Issues and Options using T-test analysis. They found out that there are problems of educational dichotomy, imbalance on the basis of gender, poverty, inequality and poor educational management. It recommended: adequate management and coordination of education, institutional education development, people based educational model, reduction of high illiteracy rate, build capacity for home grown education development, balance educational inequality, broader inclusive and non-aid based educational project, strengthen educational supervision, build new educational collaboration and prioritize the role of education manager.

3. Methodology

The research was carried out in public primary schools in Anambra State and the office of Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB). The population of the study comprised of 6,212 primary school teachers and head teachers in 574 public schools in all the 21 local government areas of the state, and 205 staff of ASUBEB. Using Taro Yamane formula however, the sample size or participants in the study were determined thus:

$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ where n= is sample size, N= the finite population, 1= constant and e=margin of error. In this research, 0.05 is used as margin of error.

$$\text{Sample size} = n = \frac{6,212}{1 + 6,212(0.05)^2} = \frac{6,212}{1 + 6,212(0.0025)} = \frac{6,212}{16.53} = 375.80 \cong 376. \text{ (For teachers)}$$

$$\text{For Schools} = n = \frac{574}{1 + 574(0.05)^2} = \frac{574}{1 + 574(0.0025)} = \frac{574}{2.435} = 235.7 \cong 236.$$

$$\text{ASUBEB staff} = n = \frac{205}{1 + 205(0.05)^2} = \frac{205}{1 + 205(0.0025)} = \frac{205}{1.513} = 135.49 \cong 135$$

4. Results

This study made use of descriptive research design. Empirical evidence for the study was obtained through the use of structured questionnaire developed using a 5 Point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics involved computation of mean scores from the responses of the respondents to the questionnaire items. The decision rule was to accept any item that has a mean score of 2.50 and above, the hypotheses were tested using independent T-test tool.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Mean scores of Teachers and ASUBEB staff on effect of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on compulsory free education in public primary schools in Anambra state

Items		TEACHERS		ASUBEB STAFF	
		Mean X	Decision	Mean X	Decision
1.	SDG4 has influenced free education in Public Primary Schools.	2.18	Disagree	2.59	Disagree
2.	SDG4 has influenced free transportation for Pupils in Public Primary Schools	1.96	Disagree	1.84	Disagree
3.	SDG4 has influenced free food for Lunch in Public Primary Schools	4.37	Agree	4.76	Agree
4.	SDG4 has influenced free books in Public Primary Schools	2.07	Disagree	4.61	Agree
5.	SDG4 has influenced free School fees in Public Primary Schools	3.80	Agree	4.40	Agree
6.	SDG4 has influenced free School uniform in Public Primary Schools	1.85	Disagree	1.89	Disagree
7.	SDG4 has influenced increase in enrollment rate in Public Primary Schools	4.41	Agree	4.57	Agree

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Table 2: Mean scores of Teachers and ASUBEB staff on effect of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra state

Items		TEACHERS		ASUBEB STAFF	
		Mean X	Decision	Mean X	Decision
1.	SDG4 has influenced gender equality in Public Primary Schools	1.31	Disagree	2.25	Disagree
2.	SDG4 has influenced quality education for girls in the area of skills training in Public Primary Schools.	1.91	Disagree	2.18	Disagree
3.	SDG4 has influenced improvement of social-cultural among girls in Public Primary Schools.	4.37	Agree	4.76	Agree
4.	SDG4 has influenced balanced enrollment among genders in Public Primary Schools.	4.37	Agree	4.76	Agree

Source: Field Survey data, 2021

The data in table 1 indicated that Teachers and ASUBEB staff reported mean values which were greater than 3.0 in items 3, 5 and 7 agreeing that SDG4 has influenced free food for Lunch, free School fees and increase in enrollment rate in Public Primary Schools respectively. Furthermore, Teachers and ASUBEB staff reported mean value less than 3.0 in items 1, 2 and 6 in disagreement that SDG4 has influenced free education, free transportation and free School uniform for Pupils in Public Primary Schools respectively while ASUBEB staff reported a mean value more than 3.0 (Agree) in item 4 and Teachers reported a mean value less than 3.0 (Disagree).

Results shown in table 2 indicated that Teachers and ASUBEB staff reported a mean value of more than 3.0 in items 3 and 4 which indicated that Sustainable Development Goal 4 influences improvement of social-cultural among girls and improves literacy/ numeracy level respectively while in serial numbers 1 and 2, a mean value of less than 3.0 was reported which indicated that SDG 4 has not influenced gender equality and quality education for girls in the area of skills training in Public Primary Schools respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using independent T-test

The Independent Samples *t* Test compares the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different. The Independent Samples *t* Test is a parametric test.

Test of Hypothesis 1: Sustainable Development Goal 4 affected achievement of free education in Public Primary Schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teachers	Equal variances assumed	9.588	.003	-1.284	56	.204	-.14583	.11358	-.37337	.08170
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.833	47.0	.007	-.14583	.05148	-.24940	-.04227
ASUBE BE Staff										

Source: Author's Compilation, T-test Result Output.

From table 3, the independent sample t-test gave an f value of 9.588 and t value of -1.284 and this is significant at .003. Since .003 is less than 0.05, this means that at .05 level of significance, the p value of .003 is significant. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, we can conclude that Sustainable Development Goal 4 affected achievement of free education in Public Primary Schools in Anambra State.

Test of Hypothesis 2: Sustainable Development Goal 4 affected achievement of gender equality in Public Primary Schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teacher	Equal variances assumed	208.552	.000	3.095	27	.005	.36364	.11751	.12253	.60474
	Equal variances not assumed			2.390	10.0	.038	.36364	.15212	.02469	.70258
ASUBE B Staff										

Source: Author's Compilation, T-test Result Output.

From the table 4, the independent sample t-test gave an f value of 208.552 and t value of 3.095 and this is significant at .000. Since .000 is less than 0.05, this means that at 0.05 level of significance, the p value of .000 is significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that Sustainable Development Goal 4 affected achievement of gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

Sustainable Development Goal 4 has affected achievement of free education in public primary schools in Anambra State. According to Abdullahi-Umar (2020) and Tawanda, Boeren and Chukwuka (2019), states should provide free education to ensure that children from poor families get access to an education and this has the benefit of helping break cycles of poverty in a long term. Where education is so modified, free provision of education by the state helps break monopoly hold on education by the elite and quality education achieved.

Furthermore, our findings show that Sustainable Development Goal 4 affected achievement of gender equality in public primary schools in Anambra State. The findings agree with Agada (2016) and Okeke (2019) who opine that education must be such that recipients or beneficiaries should have full access to every opportunity that it offers irrespective of gender. In that regard, beneficiaries of education or the chances that it offers should not be determined by one's sex, economic status or social background but by their capabilities, talents and hard work. That is the educational philosophy based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunity for all citizens of the country at all levels.

5. Conclusion

The need to pursue vigorously Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure more free education, gender equality and fight against factors militating against the achievement of SDG 4 is imperative. This paper has attempted to discuss the influence of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Public Primary Schools. It has discussed that to ensure free education, there should be free tuition fee; free feeding, free books, free accommodation, free transportation, free uniform, and other personal uses of the learner are made available with no charges or cost. It added that in Nigeria and with SDG 4, education has been made free and compulsory but its implementation is yet to be fully done especially in the area of free uniform, free accommodation and free transportation. The need to ensure gender equality especially in educational sector cannot be over emphasized. The educational philosophy which is based on the Provision of equal access to educational opportunity for all citizens of the country at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system is seriously compromised and should be maintained. It concludes that government and individuals should radically pursue SDG 4 targets for achievements of the general goal by 2030.

Recommendations

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

- i. Free education already in practice in Anambra state should be inclusive of free transportation, free books, free uniform in public primary schools.
- ii. Government should develop serious policy that will encourage more gender equality and follow such policies vigorously and location of the socio-cultural imperatives.
- iii. Strict adherence to noble policies of transformation Agenda and Vision 20-2020/vision 2050 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and that the budgeting and implementation capacities of State and Federal government should be improved.

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