

Review Article



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Policy Implementation and Human Capacity Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: ARISE Agenda Perspective (2025–2026)

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Abstract: This study is to assess policy implementation and human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria, underscoring the integration of the ARISE Agenda programme for implementing public policies. Human capacity development in conjunction with ARISE Agenda policies is one of the major strategies for socio-economic transformation, poverty reduction, and sustainable governance in Akwa Ibom State. Nevertheless, the implementation challenges continue to undermine the realization of policy goals. Over the time, Nigeria formulated several economic developmental policies to enhance the livelihood of their citizens, but unfortunately, the economic benefits appear significantly low. (Elensi, E. A. et al. 2024). The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design using secondary data obtained from journals, government publications, conference papers, policy documents, and internet sources and it is anchored on system theory as propounded by David Easton (1965). Findings reveal that the ARISE Agenda has significantly contributed to human capital investment through healthcare reforms, educational development, agricultural development, and rural infrastructural projects. et.c. While corruption, weak institutional frameworks, inadequate funding, political interference, and poor monitoring mechanisms continue to drastically affect policy implementation. The study concludes that sustainable human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State depends largely on effective implementation strategies, institutional continuity, accountability, and investment in education and skills development. The study recommends amongst others that Government should strengthen institutional frameworks for policy implementation, and should enhance Anti-corruption measures and fiscal transparency.

Keywords: *Policy Implementation, Human Capacity Development, ARISE Agenda, Governance, Akwa Ibom State.*

1. Introduction

Policy implementation and human capacity development remain fundamental instruments for achieving sustainable socio-economic development in modern societies. Governments formulate public policies to address social problems, stimulate economic growth, improve public welfare, and strengthen institutional governance. All over

the world, governments, in quest to justify their existence, formulated some policies to exercise their obligations towards the people. (Elensi, et.al, 2024). However, the effectiveness of such policies depends largely on implementation mechanisms and the quality of human resources available to execute them.. According to

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), policy implementation is the interaction between policy objectives and the administrative structures established to achieve them. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, policy implementation has become a major challenge due to corruption, weak institutions, poor monitoring systems, political instability, and inadequate manpower.

Human capacity development involves improving the skills, knowledge, productivity, competencies, and capabilities of individuals for effective participation in economic and social development. Its investment in education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, vocational training, and leadership development contributes significantly to economic growth and social transformation. Human capacity development is necessary for economic growth and sustainable development through education, training, and health care (Tordor and Smith, 2015)

Since the creation of Akwa Ibom State by the Military Administration in 1987 till the democratic governance in 1999, successive administrations in the state have introduced developmental policies aimed at improving infrastructure, education, healthcare, agriculture, youth empowerment, and industrialization.

The Akwa Ibom State Government administration led by Governor Umo Eno introduced a policy implementation strategy the 'ARISE Agenda' as a comprehensive development focuses on Agricultural Revolution, Rural Development, Infrastructural Maintenance and Advancement, Security Management, Educational Advancement, Healthcare Management, Tourism Development, Women and Youth Empowerment, and Economic/Industrial Advancement. This programme (ARISE Agenda) also emphasizes human capacity development through strategic investments in education, healthcare, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, and workforce productivity

Nevertheless, policy implementation in Akwa Ibom State continues to face serious challenges such as corruption, policy inconsistency, weak institutional coordination, poor budget execution, political interference, and inadequate monitoring systems. These issues have undermined the full realization of developmental objectives.

Therefore, this study is to assess policy implementation and human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State with particular emphasis on the contributions of the ARISE Agenda and development outcome in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the numerous developmental programmes introduced in Akwa Ibom State, the expected level of socio-economic transformation has not been fully realized. Government policies in line with education, healthcare, youth empowerment, and public administration are often met with implementation challenges.

Corruption, inadequate funding, manpower shortages, weak statistical systems, and lack of credible information weakened Policy implementation in Nigeria. (Effiong,

2023). Supporting the view, Elensi (2026) found that weak public institutions and corruption remains major challenges to sustainable development in Nigeria. Many public sector reforms in Nigeria could not produce expected results due to bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of administrative capacity, and resistance to change within public institutions. (Olaopa, 2018),

The ARISE Agenda has significantly introduced reforms in human capital development in respect of sustainability, continuity, institutionalization, and effective monitoring of projects. However, there is a need to critically determine the relationship between policy implementation and human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design based on documentary and secondary-data analysis. The approach was considered appropriate because the study examines policy implementation and human capacity development in Akwa Ibom State, with particular emphasis on the ARISE Agenda and its implications for socio-economic development. Rather than generating primary survey or experimental data, the study relied on information available in published academic literature, government publications, policy documents, conference papers, institutional reports, and other relevant documentary sources.

Sources of Data

The study utilized secondary information obtained from academic journal articles, books, government publications, policy documents, conference papers, institutional reports, and credible online sources relevant to policy implementation, human capacity development, governance, and the ARISE Agenda in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria. Particular attention was given to materials addressing education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, employment and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, governance, accountability, and sustainable development.

Selection of Relevant Materials

Materials were considered relevant where they provided information directly related to policy implementation, human capacity development, governance, socio-economic development, or the implementation of the ARISE Agenda in Akwa Ibom State. Materials that did not contribute directly to the objectives and themes of the study were not considered in the analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected documentary materials were examined qualitatively through thematic analysis. Information was organized around major themes emerging from the study, including policy implementation, human capacity development, education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, youth and women empowerment, entrepreneurship, governance, accountability, and implementation challenges. The evidence was subsequently interpreted in relation to the study objectives and the System Theory framework adopted by the study.

Analytical Framework

David Easton's System Theory was used as the principal theoretical framework for interpreting the relationship between policy inputs, implementation processes, outputs, and feedback. The ARISE Agenda was examined as a policy intervention whose implementation involves government institutions, public officials, citizens, and other stakeholders. The analysis therefore considered how available resources and institutional processes translate into policy outputs and potential human-capacity and socio-economic outcomes.

Limitations of the Method

The study is limited by its reliance on secondary and documentary sources. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as an assessment of available evidence rather than as a direct measurement of the causal impact of the ARISE Agenda on human capacity development. In addition, variations in the availability, quality, and independence of documentary sources may affect the comprehensiveness of the assessment.

4. Conceptual Review

Concept of Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is conceived as the execution of government programmes and policies through administrative and institutional processes. It is also seen as the process of translating policy decisions into action.

Supporting the view, Ezeani, (2012) argued that implementation involves converting policy decisions into operational activities capable of producing desired results. Policy implementation is described as the interaction between policy objectives and administrative actions. Its interaction involving policy goals and actions aimed at achieving them. (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973)

The major implementation problems in Nigeria include corruption, lack of reliable statistics, inadequate manpower, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient funding. (Effiong, 2023). In his view, Elensi, (2026) emphasizes that effective implementation requires competent public servants, accountability mechanisms, and effective monitoring systems.

Concept of Human Capacity Development

Human capacity development refers to investments in human skills, education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. It is also referred to improving the knowledge, skills health, and competencies of individuals to improve productivity and development outcomes. Schultz (1961) and Becker (1993) emphasized that investment in human capital improves productivity and economic growth.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2010) defines capacity development as the process through which individuals and institutions develop abilities to perform functions effectively and sustainably.

According to the World Bank (2020) human capital development improves labour productivity, innovation, and

national competitiveness. Recent studies on Akwa Ibom State reveal that investments in education, vocational training, healthcare, and entrepreneurship have improved socio-economic participation among youths and women.

In the related development, Elensi, E.A. (2026) argued that workforce training, employment, employment creation, and institutional reforms are critical tools for strengthening human capacity and promoting development.

In their views, Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) postulated that investment in education and training improves human productivity and national development.

Concept of ARISE Agenda Programme in Akwa Ibom State

The ARISE Agenda is the official development blue print and governance framework introduced in Akwa Ibom State by the administration of Umoh Bassey Eno Ph.D, the Governor Akwa Ibom State to promote sustainable socio-economic development, human capacity development, rural transformation, and economic diversification.

The programme was formally launched in 2023 as a strategic policy agenda aimed at improving the welfare of citizens and accelerating development across key sectors of the State economy.

According to the Akwa Ibom State government, ARISE Agenda is a comprehensive governance framework designed to utilize the state's human and material resources for inclusive growth and industrial development. The acronym ARISE represents the major policy focus by the Akwa Ibom State Government.

A- Agricultural Revolution focuses on food security, modern farming techniques, Agricultural industrialization, support for farmers and cooperatives, and Agro-processing and value-chain development. The government aims to reduce dependence on oil revenue by strengthening agricultural and rural productivity.

B- R-Rural Development: this component underscores Rural road construction, water supply, Electrification, Rural healthcare, and Community empowerment. Government aims to bridge the urban-rural development gap and improve living standards in local communities

I-Infrastructural Maintenance and Advancement: this aspect focuses on Road construction, Bridge development, Urban renewal, Public facilities Maintenance, and Expansion of transport infrastructure. The government considers infrastructure as a foundation for economic growth and investment attraction.

S-Security Management: this aims at Protection of lives and property, Community Policing support, Peace and conflict Management, and strengthening security agencies. The government view that sustainable development cannot occur without peace and security

E-Educational and Health Sector Advancement: government focuses on quality education, Skill acquisition, Human capital development, Healthcare services, and

Youth empowerments. This aligns with human capital theory which emphasizes education and health as tools for development.

Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) argued that investment in education, skill acquisition, and healthcares are critical drivers of economic growth and national development. Similarly, Todaro and Smith (2015) maintain that development depends largely on the quality of human resources and institutional capacity. This aligns with the educational and human capital advancement component of the Arise Agenda in Akwa Ibom State.

According to Umoren (2026), the ARISE Agenda represents a multidimensional development framework aimed at promoting social justice through agricultural revolution,, rural development, infrastructural expansion, security management, and educational advancement. In his study, he realized that the ARIS Agenda has significantly improved equitable access to resources, citizen inclusion, and socio-economic development in Akwa Ibom State

Similarly, Christopher Ekong (2025) described the ARISE Agenda as a governance model that has contributed to economic diversification, employment generation, and infrastructural growth in the state. He further stressed that the Agenda's agricultural programmes, empowerment schemes and rural development initiatives have enhanced productivity and improved citizen's welfare.

In his view Okon, E. (2025) argued that ARISE Agenda empowerment initiatives are structured to tackle youth unemployment, poverty, and economic exclusion through entrepreneurship support, and skills acquisition programmes. Supporting the view, Elens, E.A (2024) postulated that policy implementation succeeds when governance institutions are strengthened through workforce development, transparency, and institutional reforms,

Relationship between policy Implementation and Human Capacity Development

Policy implementation and human capacity development are interrelated given that effective policy execution depends on the competence of those responsible for implementation. Torado and Smith (2015) argued that countries that invest in human capital achieve better policy outcomes because skilled manpower enhances administrative efficiency.

In similar vein, Elensi (2026) argued that development policies can only succeed where there is adequate administrative capacity and skilled personnel. He maintains that policy failure in developing countries is often associated with weak governance structures and bureaucratic inefficiency.

According to Igbokwe- Ibeto (2019) policy inconsistency, poor funding, and administrative weakness often hinder development programmes in Nigeria

Policy Implementation and Governance in Nigeria

Policy implementation and governance are central to the political, economic, and social development of Nigeria.

While governments at federal, state, and local levels formulate numerous policies aimed at improving citizens' welfare, the effectiveness of these policies largely depends on governance quality, institutional capacity, leadership commitment, and public accountability.

Policy implementation is conceptualized as the process through which government decisions, laws, programmes, and policies are translated into practical actions to achieve specific objectives. It involves government ministries, agencies, public servants, and other stakeholders working together to execute approved policies. According to pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, policy implementation is the process of carrying out governmental decisions through series of administrative actions and interactions among various actors. They further argued that implementation fails due to complex administrative procedures,

poor coordination, and multiple decision points. A well-designed policy may fail if implementation mechanisms are weak or ineffective. In Nigeria, policy implementation includes Education, Healthcare, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Economic reforms, Security, Poverty reduction, and Youth empowerment.

Governance is viewed as the manner in which power and authority are exercised in managing a country's political, economic, and social resources. Governance is defined as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. (World Bank, 1992). It determines how public institutions function and how policies are executed for national development. Good governance underscores: Accountability, Transparency, and Rule of law, Participation, Effectiveness, Equity, and Responsiveness

According to Elensi, etal,(2026) good governance is indispensable for successful policy implementation. He strongly identifies institutions, accountability, transparency, ethical leadership, and administrative professionalism as critical pillars of governance. He further argued that weak governance in structures undermine development outcomes and reduce the effectiveness of public policies.

5. Theoretical Framework

System Theory

This study is anchored on system theory by David Easton (1965). The theory views the governance as a system interaction involving input, processes, outputs, and feedback.

Policies represent output while implementation assesses whether policy outputs translate into development outcomes.

The relevance of the theory to this study is based on the fact that the ARISE Agenda as the policy implementation programme in Akwa Ibom State involves interactions between government institutions, civil servants, and citizens facilities, and enterprise development are expected to stimulate non-oil sectors of the economy.

Implications of the ARISE Agenda on Akwa Ibom State Economy.

The ARISE Agenda is the development blueprint of the administration of Umo Eno designed to enhance inclusive growth, improve human capital, expand infrastructure, strengthen security, and diversify the state's economy beyond dependence on oil revenue. It (ARISE Agenda) represents major development pillars to include Agricultural Revolution, Rural Development, Infrastructural Maintenance and Advancement, Security Management, Educational and Health Sector Management, and Economic, Industrial, and Social Advancement.

Human Capital Development Perspective

The ARISE Agenda focus on education, healthcare, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and skills acquisition aligns with Human Capital Theory. Programmes that improve the knowledge and skills of citizens can increase workforce productivity, reduce unemployment, and stimulate economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

According to Theodore Schultz (1961), investing on education, training, health, and skills development improves the productive capacity of individuals and contributes directly to economic growth. He argued that human beings are forms of capital because investments in them generate future economic returns. In his view Gary Becker (1964) argued that education, healthcare, and skill acquisition should be viewed as investment rather than consumption because it increases labour productivity and national income.

The implementation of the ARISE Agenda has been associated with significant employment generation through agricultural projects, entrepreneurship schemes, infrastructure construction, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Reports indicate that tens of thousands of direct jobs have been created through various intervention programmes, thereby helping to reduce unemployment and poverty levels.

Economic Growth

ARISE agenda focus on investment in roads, agriculture, education, digital technology, and healthcare. This has enhanced productivity and contributed to sustained economic development in Akwa Ibom State. Capital accumulation drives economic development, technological advancement, and improvements

labour productivity. Long-term economic development depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on the quality of human resources. (Robert Solow, 1956)

The agenda places strong emphasis on education, healthcare, skills acquisition, and youth empowerment. Investments in human capital increase labour productivity and improve the quality of the workforce. A more educated and skilled population attracts investment and supports long-term economic growth.

Development Perspective

The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The emphasis on agricultural development, infrastructure maintenance, environmental sustainability, and economic diversification supports long-term development and resilience in Akwa Ibom State.

Agriculture is a central pillar of the agenda. Through the provision of farm inputs, mechanized farming support, processing equipment, and farmer empowerment programmes, the state aims to boost food production and strengthen food security. Increased agricultural output can stimulate rural economies, improve household incomes, and reduce dependence on imported food products

Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

Through grants, business support schemes, and empowerment programmes for traders, women, and youths, the ARISE Agenda seeks to stimulate entrepreneurship. SME growth contributes to employment generation, increased production, and broader economic participation. Reports suggest that billions of naira have been invested in grants and support programmes targeting SMEs and local businesses.

Joseph Schumpeter (1934) identified entrepreneurs as agents of economic transformation who introduce innovation, create employment, and stimulate economic growth. According to him, entrepreneurship drives development through "creative destruction," whereby new ideas replace inefficient economic practices. The state's support for SMEs, business grants, and youth entrepreneurship programmes reflects Schumpeter's view that entrepreneurship can stimulate industrialization, job creation, and wealth generation during fluctuations in oil prices.

See Table: 1

S/N	Projects	Year, 2025			Year, 2026		
		Amount released	No. of beneficiaries	Project completed	Amount released	No. of beneficiaries	Project completed
1	Education				₦1.968 bn, ₦1.368	20,000 students benefited from	Completed

					bn, #50 m	bursaries. Disable students' supported- #100M. Wassce, Nabteb, and Naco examination fees. 121 education projects rehabilitated	
2	Agriculture	# 2 bn for Agricultural grants	49,900 farmers obtained farm inputs, 2,323 received agric. Grants, 1,047 agric. Jobs	Agric. And inputs provided. Projects completed			
3	Employment/ Youth Empowerment	30,000 jobs created	800,000 benefited			3,000 workers approved for employment. 10, 000 youth were trained, and 2,000 health works were approved for recruitment.	On-going Completed On-going
4	Health care delivery					Operation of 31 model primary health centre in the State ,2,000 health personnel recruited, enrolment of 1,700 residents in the insurance scheme, provision of 350 international hospital beds, renovation of general hospital at Ikot Ekpene and Ukanafun L. G. A.	Projects completed
5	Road & Infrastructure					1200 kilometers road, and 32 bridges constructed, 83 roads located in Uyo metropolis repaired	Projects completed Projects completed
6	Small Medium Enterprises	# 2bn for agricultural grants. #800 m for Micro. And SMS equipment support.	Farmers	Projects completed			

Source: Akwa ibom times. March 2, 2026, Triumph Newspaper, July 16, 2026, and The Mirror, June 3, 2026, The Guardian Nigeria August 8, 2025, The Nation 8, 2025

6. Challenges

1 Weak Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

Monitoring and Evaluation are very important components of development programmes. It has been observed that

indicators used in assessing the ARISE Agenda have not always been disclosed. This has made independent evaluation difficult. Weak monitoring resulting to poor project tracking, resource wastage, delayed corrective actions, and inaccurate assessment of policy outcomes. Effective implementation requires measurable performance indicators and continuous feedback mechanisms. (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975)

Lack of Transparency and Accountability:

Transparency and accountability are very crucial for successful execution of policies. Lack of openness and access to documents may reduce confidence, reduce citizen participation, and hinder effective monitoring of ARISE Agenda projects. To buttress the point, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) argued that policy implementation succeeds when information flows freely among stake holders and accountability mechanism are strengthened.

Inadequate institutional and Administrative Capacity:

Weak administrative capacity hinders project implementation and reduce effectiveness of ARISE Agenda implementation. Sustainable development depends largely on the effectiveness of public institutions and the competence of public servants responsible of policy implementation. Elensi, et.al (2026). The further argued that many development programmes in Nigeria suffer from inadequate manpower, weak institutional structures, poor administrative coordination, and insufficient technical experts. In the related development, Effiong (2023) emphasized that weak governance institutions and shortages remain major obstacles to project implementation in Nigeria.

Insufficient Funding and Financial Sustainability:

Successful implementation of development programmes requires adequate funding. Insufficient fiscal transparency and limited access to credible financial information may affects investors trust and external funding opportunities for the ARISE Agenda. Funding obstacles may lead to abandoned projects, delay implementation, and reduced programme coverage. Sustainable development programmes depend on adequate resource mobilization and prudent financial management. (Todaro and Smith, 2025)

Corruption and Resource Mismanagement:

One of the major challenges facing policy implementation in Nigeria is corruption. This can result to distortion of project implementation; inflate project cost, and reduction service delivery efficiency. Corruption weakens public institutions, diverts resources from developmental projects, and undermines public confidence in government programmes. Elensi, E.A (2026). Supporting the view, Igbokwe-Ibeto (2019) opines that corruption contributes significantly to policy failure and poor development outcomes in Nigeria

Policy Discontinuity and Sustainability:

Another prominent challenge facing development programmes in Nigeria is policy discontinuity. Long-term

development benefits of the ARISE Agenda may not be achieved without continuing by the present administration. According Olaopa (2018) many governments could not succeed because previous administrations often abandon existing policies and projects.

7. Conclusion

Effective policy implementation has been a critical factor in realizing sustainable human capacity development. The success of developmental policies depends largely on institutional efficiency, transparency, accountability, and continuity. Sustainable development can only be achieved when policies are properly implemented and supported by competent human resources

The ARISE Agenda has been viewed as a strategic attempt to reposition Akwa Ibom State toward sustainable and inclusive economic development. Its emphasis on agriculture, infrastructure, human capital, enterprise development, and rural transformation has a significant implication for economic growth and social welfare. If properly implemented and sustained, it would strengthen the state's improve living standards, and accelerate economic transformation across Akwa Ibom State.

8. Recommendations

- (1) Government should strengthen institutional frameworks for policy implementation.
- (2) Government should improve policy Monitoring and evaluation systems for policy implementation in Akwa Ibom State
- (3) Greater investment should be made in education, healthcare, and digital skills development.
- (4) Government should enhance Anti-corruption measures and fiscal transparency.
- (5) Development programmes should be institutionalized beyond political administrations.
- (6) Government should strengthen entrepreneurship and vocational training programmes.

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