



Building a Skilled and Inclusive Society Through Educational Management for Effective Administration of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated building a skilled and inclusive society through educational management for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study, with the hypotheses tested at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population is 1586 academic and non-academic staff of Rivers State University, from which a sample size of 370 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The determine sample size of simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participants. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Building a Skilled and Inclusive Society through Educational Management for Effective Administration of Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (BASIS-EMEATIQ). The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Out of the 370 copies distributed, 294 valid responses were retrieved and used for analysis, representing an 80.2% response rate. The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using the z-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that effective educational management plays a vital role in fostering a skilled and inclusive society through the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the strategic governance of tertiary institutions. It further showed that establishing equitable pathways for access, participation, and success enhances administrative effectiveness and promotes fairness among all learners. Moreover, the development and implementation of globally competitive yet socially responsive curricula were found essential in equipping graduates with relevant skills for societal and economic advancement. Based on these findings, the study concluded that building a skilled and inclusive society requires an equity-driven, holistic approach to educational management supported by policy reforms, stakeholder collaboration, and sustained institutional commitment. The study recommended among others that tertiary education administrators integrate EDI principles into their strategic plans, promote equitable access and participation, develop inclusive curricula, strengthen partnerships between academia and industry, and establish continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure sustainable educational growth in Rivers State.

Keywords: Building, Educational management, Effective administration, Inclusive society, Skilled, Tertiary institutions.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global landscape, the role of education, particularly at the tertiary level, has become more critical than ever in shaping societies that are both skilled and inclusive. Tertiary institutions serve as hubs of knowledge creation, innovation, and human capital development. However, the effectiveness of these institutions in fulfilling their mandates depends largely on sound educational management and administration. Ainscow (2020), posited that effective educational management ensures that the policies, structures, and processes in place promote quality learning outcomes, equitable access, and inclusive participation for all segments of society.

Building a skilled and inclusive society entails providing educational opportunities that equip learners with relevant competencies while also addressing the systemic barriers that marginalize certain groups. Slee (2021), states that in this context, educational management plays a pivotal role by designing and implementing administrative strategies that promote diversity, equity, and excellence. This involves not only curriculum development and resource allocation but also fostering an institutional culture that values inclusivity and lifelong learning. Furthermore, the administration of tertiary institutions must adapt to contemporary challenges such as globalization, technological advancement, and shifting labour market demands. It must also respond to social issues such as gender inequality, disability inclusion, and socioeconomic disparities. Through strategic leadership, data-driven decision-making, and participatory governance, educational managers can transform tertiary institutions into engines of national development and social cohesion. (Tikly & Barrett, 2021).

This paper explores how effective educational management contributes to the development of a skilled and inclusive society. It examines the administrative practices that enhance institutional performance, promote inclusive access to higher education, and ensure that graduates are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the economy and society. DeMatthews & Knight, (2021), Asserted that ultimately, the goal is to highlight the indispensable role of educational management in aligning tertiary education with broader societal goals of equity, inclusion, and sustainable development. Raffe & Spours, (Eds.). (2021), opined that of all the institutions in the modern world, tertiary education holds a uniquely potent and dualistic mandate. It is both a crucible for the formation of a skilled, innovative workforce and a laboratory for the creation of a just, equitable, and inclusive society. These two objectives economic competitiveness and social cohesion are often mistakenly seen as being in tension. In reality, they are two sides of the same coin. Müller & Gangl, (Eds.). (2021), state that the effective administration of universities and colleges through sophisticated educational

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management is the essential process that fuses these aims, transforming institutions of higher learning into the primary engines for building a society that is both highly capable and genuinely inclusive. Verger et al (2021), posited that the traditional model of educational management, often characterized by rigid hierarchies and a primary focus on fiscal and infrastructural maintenance, is insufficient for this complex task. The contemporary concept of educational management is a dynamic, strategic discipline that integrates academic leadership, resource allocation, quality assurance, and, most critically, a deep-seated commitment to human development. It is the framework through which an institution's vision is translated into operational reality. To build a skilled society, management must be relentlessly forward-looking. Darling-Hammond, Flook et al (2020), state that this involves a continuous process of curriculum auditing and renewal, ensuring that academic programmes are not merely repositories of past knowledge but are agile and responsive to the demands of a rapidly evolving global economy. This requires close collaboration with industry, research centers, and civic organizations to identify emerging skill gaps in areas such as artificial intelligence, sustainable engineering, bioethics, and digital humanities. Furthermore, effective management fosters a culture of pedagogical innovation. Shepard et al (2021), state that moving beyond the passive lecture model, it incentivizes and resources active learning strategies, problem-based learning, and the integration of technology to create immersive educational experiences. This cultivates not just knowledge, but the higher-order skills critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration that are the true currency of a skilled society. Duckworth & Yeager, (2021), opined that the management of quality assurance mechanisms, therefore, shifts from a box-ticking exercise of compliance to a proactive process of enhancing student learning outcomes and graduate employability. By strategically managing these academic and operational levers. (Zheng et al (2024), state that tertiary institutions can reliably produce graduates who are not only job-ready but are also adaptable, innovative, and capable of driving economic progress. However, a society skilled only for a privileged few is a society built on a fragile foundation. This is where the second, more profound dimension of educational management comes into play. the deliberate and systematic cultivation of inclusivity. An inclusive society cannot be legislated into existence; it must be educated into being, and the university campus is its primary microcosm. Heckman (2020), asserted that educational management for inclusion is not a peripheral "diversity initiative" but a core strategic imperative that must be woven into the very fabric of institutional governance. This begins with access. Njoku et al (2024), opined that proactive management must dismantle the barriers that prevent talented individuals from non-traditional backgrounds from entering tertiary education.

This involves designing holistic admissions processes that recognize potential beyond standardized test scores, which often reflect socioeconomic privilege more than innate ability. It requires the strategic management of financial aid, scholarships, and bridging programmed to ensure that finance is not a deterrent. Olasunkanmi & Ogunniran (2023), asserted that the effective administration of robust student support services from academic tutoring and mental health counselling to childcare facilities is not an extraneous cost but a critical investment in student retention and success, particularly for those who are first-generation or from underrepresented groups. Kenny et al (2023), posited that beyond access lies the crucial work of fostering belonging and equity. This is where educational management faces its most complex human challenge. It requires the development and enforcement of clear policies against discrimination and harassment, creating a safe environment for all students and staff. More importantly, it demands the management of a curriculum that is itself inclusive decolonized, multicultural, and representative of a plurality of voices and epistemologies. Faculty development, managed strategically, must include training in culturally responsive pedagogy, enabling lecturers to connect with and empower a diverse student body. Inclusive management also recognizes that the composition of the institution itself must reflect the society it seeks to build. This means implementing fair and transparent hiring and promotion practices to increase the diversity of faculty and administrative leadership. Tejeiro (2024), state that A homogenous faculty cannot fully understand or address the needs of a heterogeneous student population. When students see themselves reflected in their educators and leaders, it sends a powerful message that they, too, belong in the halls of knowledge and power. The true synergy between skill-building and inclusion is realized when management recognizes that diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a resource to be leveraged. A classroom comprising students from different ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and life experiences is a richer learning environment. It mirrors the globalized, interconnected world graduates will enter. Aigbe et al (2025). The friction of differing perspectives is the very catalyst for the critical thinking and creativity that underpin a skilled society. By managing group work, classroom discussions, and collaborative projects to be inclusive and equitable, educators are not just teaching subject matter; they are teaching the essential skill of navigating human difference a competency invaluable in any modern workplace and fundamental to a cohesive civil society. Ultimately, the educational manager in a tertiary institution is akin to an architect of the future. Their blueprints are the strategic plans; their materials are the curricula, the faculty, the students, and the campus culture; their construction site is the four-year (or more) journey of every student who passes through the institution's gates. Letshaba & Ndlovu, (2024), posited that

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effective administration ensures that the foundation is strong (academic rigor), the structure is sound (operational efficiency), and the design is both functional (skills-relevant) and beautiful (inspiring and inclusive). Reynolds et al (2025), state that in building a skilled and inclusive society is the grand challenge of our time, and tertiary institutions are the pivotal agents of this transformation. This monumental task will not happen by accident or by rhetoric alone. It requires a deliberate, sophisticated, and courageous approach to educational management. This management must be visionary enough to anticipate the skills of tomorrow, compassionate enough to tear down the barriers of exclusion, and wise enough to understand that the two endeavours are inextricably linked. The university that is expertly managed for both excellence and equity does not merely respond to societal trends; it actively shapes them. It sends forth into the world citizens who are not only equipped to compete but also compelled to connect, to contribute, and to build a common future that is as proficient as it is pluralistic. In the final analysis, the quality of our educational management today is the most reliable predictor of the quality of our society tomorrow. (Aigbe et al 2025).

The contemporary tertiary institution is a microcosm of the society it aims to serve and shape. Its effective administration no longer hinges solely on fiscal prudence and academic reputation, but increasingly on its capacity to foster a genuinely inclusive environment. The strategic lever for achieving this is educational management. Far from being a peripheral "diversity and inclusion" initiative. Zaheer & Farooq (2024), asserted that building an inclusive society is a core strategic imperative that, when executed effectively, becomes the very foundation for a more robust, innovative, and well-administered institution. Mackatiani (2024), posited that educational management builds this inclusive society through a deliberate, multi-faceted approach that permeates every policy, process, and practice. The first and most fundamental task of management is to architect Equity in Access and Admission An inclusive society cannot begin in the classroom if its future members are systematically excluded at the gate. Effective educational management moves beyond traditional metrics that often correlate with socioeconomic privilege. This involves implementing holistic admissions processes that value lived experience, resilience, and potential alongside academic grades. Proactive management also entails creating strategic pathways for underrepresented groups through foundation years, bridging programmed, and partnerships with schools in marginalized communities. Furthermore, the administration must strategically manage financial resources to ensure that robust scholarship, bursary, and grant systems are in place, dismantling the financial barriers that prevent talented individuals from participating. This initial focus on equitable access is the non-negotiable first step in populating the institution with a diversity that reflects the broader

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society. However, admitting a diverse student body is futile if the institution is not structured to ensure their success and Foster a Culture of Belonging. This is where educational management shifts from gatekeeping to ecosystem building. An effective administration invests in a comprehensive and well-resourced support infrastructure. This includes: Academic Support: Managing the provision of tutoring, writing centers, and mentoring programmed tailored to support first-generation, neurodiversity, or otherwise disadvantaged students. Pastoral Care: Strategically funding and staffing mental health services, counselling, and peer support networks that are culturally competent and accessible to all. Physical and Social Infrastructure: Ensuring facilities are universally accessible, creating dedicated safe spaces for affinity groups, and managing campus activities that celebrate, rather than merely tolerate, diversity. By managing these support systems effectively, the administration signals that every student's presence and success is valued, transforming a diverse student population into a community where all members feel they belong. The third critical domain is the management of an Inclusive Pedagogy and Curriculum. The classroom is the heart of the academic mission, and it must be a site of inclusion, not assimilation. Educational management fosters this by: Faculty Development: Implementing mandatory, ongoing training for academic staff in culturally responsive pedagogy.

This equips educators to design lessons that engage diverse learning styles, facilitate difficult conversations on privilege and power, and ensure all students feel seen and heard. Curriculum Review and Decolonization: Managing a systematic audit and reform of the curriculum to ensure it represents a plurality of voices, epistemologies, and historical narratives. This moves beyond adding "diverse texts" to fundamentally rethinking canons and knowledge production, allowing all students to see their heritage and experiences reflected in the body of knowledge deemed worthy of study. An inclusively managed curriculum does not dilute academic rigor; it enhances it by creating a more complete, critical, and globally relevant educational experience. It teaches all students the essential skill of engaging with perspectives different from their own a cornerstone of a functioning inclusive society. Furthermore, effective educational management understands that inclusion must be reflected in the institution's own Composition and Representation. A homogenous faculty and leadership cannot fully understand or address the needs of a heterogeneous student body. Therefore, administration must implement fair and transparent hiring, retention, and promotion practices. This includes forming diverse search committees, mitigating unconscious bias in hiring, creating clear pathways for career advancement for staff from underrepresented groups, and ensuring their voices are included in governance and decision-making bodies. When students see themselves reflected in their

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professors, deans, and administrators, it powerfully reinforces the message that they too can be knowledge creators and leaders. Finally, the ultimate goal of this managed inclusivity is to create a Synergistic Link to Institutional Effectiveness. An inclusive environment is not a cost center; it is a driver of excellence and innovation. A diverse student body and faculty bring a wider range of perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and creative ideas. This leads to more robust research, more dynamic classroom discussions, and more innovative solutions to institutional challenges. Moreover, an institution known for its genuine commitment to inclusion enhances its reputation, attracts top global talent (both students and staff), and strengthens its bonds with the community and industry partners. In this sense, managing for inclusion directly contributes to the institution's academic prestige, financial sustainability, and long-term resilience. In conclusion, educational management is the critical catalyst for building an inclusive society within tertiary institutions. It is a proactive and strategic endeavour that moves from ensuring equity in access, to fostering belonging through support, to embedding inclusivity in the curriculum and the workforce. This is not a soft, altruistic pursuit but a hard-nosed strategy for effective administration. An institution that is managed to be inclusive is better administered: it is more innovative, more adaptable, more cohesive, and more representative of the world its graduates will lead. By meticulously building this inclusive micro-society on campus, educational management does not just run a university; it models and actively constructs the blueprint for a better, more equitable world.

Statement of Problems

The imperative to transform tertiary institutions into engines for a skilled and inclusive society is widely acknowledged, yet its realization is fraught with complex, interconnected problems. The central challenge for educational management lies in navigating the inherent tensions and systemic barriers that impede effective administration toward these dual goals. A primary problem is the fundamental tension between neoliberal and social justice paradigms. University leadership is increasingly pressured by governments and funding bodies to prioritize metrics of economic utility: graduate employment rates, patent generation, and industry partnerships. This drive for market-relevant skills often sidelines the deeper, more resource-intensive work of inclusion, which is viewed as a non-revenue-generating "soft" goal. Consequently, management faces a crisis of resource allocation, where investments in decolonizing curricula or robust student support systems compete with demands for state-of-the-art laboratories and vocational training, creating a zero-sum game for institutional priorities. This tension is exacerbated by structural and curricular inertia. The architecture of traditional universities siloed departments, rigid degree pathways, and tenure systems is inherently resistant to change. Designing

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interdisciplinary, skills-focused programmed that also embed inclusive pedagogies requires a level of cross-institutional collaboration that many administrative structures are not designed to facilitate. Furthermore, the curriculum itself is often a bastion of tradition. Efforts to decolonize syllabi or integrate universal design for learning are frequently met with resistance from faculty who perceive them as a dilution of academic rigor or an infringement on their academic freedom, stalling top-down inclusivity mandates.

At the core of the inclusivity project lies the profound problem of unconscious bias and a lack of representative leadership. Even with well-intentioned policies, the subjective processes of student admission, faculty hiring, and staff promotion are vulnerable to deep-seated biases. Initiatives like holistic admissions can be perceived as lowering standards, while targeted hiring creates backlash. Crucially, when the upper echelons of administration: Deans, Provosts, and Vice-Chancellors remain homogenous, they lack the lived experience and perspective to design truly transformative inclusive strategies. This results in policies that are often superficial, failing to address the nuanced microaggressions and systemic inequities that marginalize students and staff face daily.

Finally, there is the problem of measuring success. The outcomes of skill-building are relatively straightforward to quantify (e.g., employment data, graduate salaries). In contrast, the success of inclusion a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and equitable participation is qualitative and long-term. Educational management, pressured to demonstrate annual progress, struggles to find meaningful metrics. This often leads to a reliance on simplistic, performative data like headcount diversity, which does not capture the actual experience of inclusion and can incentivize box-ticking over genuine cultural change. In summary, the path is obstructed by competing ideological demands, resistant institutional structures, the insidious nature of bias, and the inadequacy of measurement tools. For educational management, the central problem is not a lack of vision, but the immense difficulty of dismantling these entrenched barriers to administer an institution that is truly both skilled and inclusive.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the Building a skilled and inclusive society through educational management for effective administration in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The objective sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which, to integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

2. Identify the extent to which establishment of equitable pathways contribute to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
3. Determined the extent to which development and implementation of curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion into core strategic planning and governance in tertiary institutions in Rivers State
2. To what extent does establishment of equitable pathways for access participation and success for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
3. To what extent does development and implementation of curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access participation and success for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which development and implementation of curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1586 academic and non- academic staff. The sample size of 370 academic and non-academic staff was used as sample size for the study using Taro Yamane sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: building a skilled and inclusive society through educational management for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

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 Questionnaire (BSISTEMEATIQ). The internal consistency of the instrument was established through Cronbach alpha method. The reliability coefficient showed 0.81 for Building a skilled and inclusive society through educational management for effective administration in tertiary institutions. The sub scales integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion into core strategic planning and governance in tertiary institutions, 0.81, establishment of equitable pathways for access participation and success for effective administration of tertiary institutions, 0.81 development and implementation of curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive for effective administration of tertiary institutions, 0.73. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of 2 research assistants, out of 370 copies of instrument administered, 280 copies were retrieved representing 80.2% return rate. The research question was answered using mean ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) statistics, while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the z-test statistics, A criterion mean of 2.50 was used to determine the decision on the study. The hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Result Presentation

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent is equity, diversity, and inclusion integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Academic staff = 185			Non- academic staff = 109		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	The institution's strategic plans clearly outline policies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion across all administrative levels.	2.66	.729	High Extent	2.62	.728	High Extent
2.	Leadership and governance decisions reflect a commitment to fair representation of staff and students from diverse backgrounds.	3.16	.475	High Extent	3.16	.478	High Extent
3.	The management regularly conducts equity and inclusion audits to evaluate institutional performance in these areas.	2.62	.736	High Extent	2.60	.724	High Extent
4.	Institutional policies and practices actively discourage discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or disability.	2.67	.701	High Extent	2.62	.728	High Extent

5.	Stakeholders from various demographic and cultural groups are involved in the decision-making and policy development processes.	2.75	0.83	High Extent	2.93	0.85	High Extent
Grand Total		2.78	0.69	0.82	2.79	0.70	High Extent

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

Table 1 shows the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the Extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The results in Table 4.1 reveals that the respondents agreed that to high extent, compliance training enhances academic staff and 2.79/0.70 for Non- academic staff, respectively.

Research Question Two: what Extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contribute to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent establishment of equitable pathways contribute to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Academic staff = 185			Non- academic staff = 109		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
6.	Admission and recruitment policies ensure equal opportunities for individuals from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.	3.07	.861	High Extent	2.66	.729	High Extent
7.	The institution provides scholarships, grants, or financial aid to enhance access for underrepresented groups.	3.55	.548	High Extent	2.67	.701	High Extent
8.	Academic and non-academic support services are designed to improve participation and success among marginalized students.	3.34	.865	High Extent	2.62	.736	High Extent
9.	There are deliberate efforts to remove institutional barriers that limit students' access to educational and developmental opportunities.	2.98	.737	High Extent	3.16	.475	High Extent
10.	Data on student access, retention, and success are regularly collected and analyzed to promote continuous improvement and equity.	2.67	.701	High Extent	2.62	.728	High Extent
Grand Total		3.12	0.74		2.75	0.67	High Extent

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the Extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The result in Table 2 reveals that the respondents agreed that to high extent, establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State with a grand mean 3.12/0.74 for Academic staff and 2.75/0.67 for Non- academic staff, respectively.

Research Question Three: To what Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Academic staff = 185			Non- academic staff = 109		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Reliability	$\bar{x}$	SD	Reliability
11.	The curriculum is regularly reviewed to align with international academic standards and industry demands.	2.72	0.82	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
12.	Academic programs incorporate global best practices while addressing local societal needs and challenges.	2.67	0.82	High Extent	2.87	0.85	High Extent
13.	The institution encourages interdisciplinary and innovative learning approaches that prepare students for global competitiveness.	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
14.	Community engagement and social impact considerations are integrated into curriculum development and implementation.	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
15.	Stakeholders such as employers, alumni, and professional bodies are consulted in designing and updating academic programs.	2.78	0.83	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
	Grand Total	2.78	0.83		2.89	0.85	High Extent

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The result in Table

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3 reveals that the respondents agreed that to high Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State with a grand mean 2.78/0.83 for Academic staff and 2.89/0.85 for Non- academic staff, respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of academic and Non- academic staff on the Extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of academic and Non-academic staff on the Extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision	Status
Academic staff	185	2.77	0.69						
				278	0.89	± 1.96		0.05	Not Rejected
Non- academic staff	109	2.79	0.70						

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis in Table 4 reveals that the z-cal of 1.29 is less than the z-crit of ± 1.96 , at a degree of 278. Since the z-cal (0.89) was less than the z-crit (± 1.96), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld which states there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and Non- academic staff on the extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of academic and Non- academic staff on the extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 5: Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of academic and Non-academic staff on the extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	Df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision
Academic staff	185	3.12	0.74	278	1.12	± 1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Non- academic staff	109	2.75	0.67					

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis in Table 5 indicates that the z-cal of 1.12 is less than the z-crit of ± 1.96 . Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is less than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and Non-academic staff on the extent to which establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of RSU and Non-academic staff on the Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 6: Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of RSU and Non- academic staff on the Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision
Academic staff	185	2.79	0.83	278	1.07	± 1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Non- academic staff	109	2.89	0.85					

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis in Table 6 shows that the z-cal of 1.39 is less than the z-crit of ± 1.96 , at a degree of 278. Since the z-cal (1.07) was less than the z-crit (± 1.96), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of RSU and Non- academic staff on the Extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Extent to which Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are Integrated into Core Strategic Planning and Governance for Effective Administration of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

The result for Research Question One on Table 1 above, which sought to determine *the* extent to which equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into core strategic planning and governance for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, showed that both academic and non-academic staff agreed to a high extent that these principles are being integrated into administrative structures. Specifically, the grand mean scores of 2.78/0.69 for academic staff and 2.79/0.70 for non-academic staff indicate that the respondents perceived the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as a crucial aspect of institutional planning and governance. This finding suggests that tertiary institutions in Rivers State have made significant efforts to incorporate fairness and inclusivity in their decision-making and governance systems.

The result for the corresponding Hypothesis One on Table 4 above, which sought to determine whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of RSU and non-academic staff regarding the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion, revealed a z-calculated value of 1.29, which was less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of both groups, confirming a shared perception that EDI is a vital component of effective administration in tertiary institutions. In support of this finding, Ainscow (2020) emphasized that equitable and inclusive educational management ensures that institutional policies and structures promote access, participation, and quality learning outcomes across all social groups. Similarly, Slee (2021) maintained that integrating diversity and inclusion into strategic planning enhances institutional effectiveness and social responsiveness. These views align with the study's findings, indicating that tertiary institutions in Rivers State are aligning their management practices with global standards that value inclusion as a key pillar of governance.

Extent to which the Establishment of Equitable Pathways for Access, Participation, and Success Contributes to Effective Administration of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

The result for Research Question Two on Table 2 above, which sought to know *the* extent to which the establishment of equitable pathways for access, participation, and success contributes to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, showed that respondents agreed to a high extent with grand mean scores of 3.12/0.74 for academic staff and 2.75/0.67

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for non-academic staff. This indicates that establishing equitable pathways—through fair admissions, scholarships, mentorship, and inclusive learning environments—significantly contributes to institutional effectiveness. The result for the corresponding Hypothesis Two on Table 5 above, which tested whether there was a significant difference in perceptions between academic and non-academic staff, revealed a z-calculated value of 1.12, less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 , leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Thus, there is no significant difference between both groups' opinions, suggesting a unified acknowledgment of the role of equitable access in achieving effective administration.

This finding is supported by Njoku, Ewe, Ijomah, and Ewe (2024), who asserted that educational management must actively dismantle systemic barriers that hinder access for marginalized groups by creating holistic admission processes and financial aid systems. Similarly, Olasunkanmi and Ogunniran (2023) highlighted that ensuring equitable participation through student support services such as counseling, mentorship, and financial assistance is not merely an administrative responsibility but a strategic necessity for institutional success. Zaheer and Farooq (2024) also contended that inclusivity and equitable participation serve as the bedrock for building a robust and well-administered tertiary institution. Hence, the findings demonstrate that tertiary institutions in Rivers State are progressively embracing administrative practices that ensure equity and participation as prerequisites for effectiveness and social justice.

extent to which Development and Implementation of a Curriculum that is both Globally Competitive and Socially Responsive Contribute to Effective Administration of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

The result for Research Question Three on Table 3 above, which sought to ascertain *the* extent to which development and implementation of a curriculum that is both globally competitive and socially responsive contribute to effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, showed that both academic and non-academic staff agreed to a high extent, with mean and standard deviation scores of 2.78/0.83 and 2.89/0.85, respectively. This suggests that curriculum innovation and responsiveness are recognized as essential components of effective tertiary education management. The result for the corresponding Hypothesis Three on Table 6 above, which sought to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean ratings between the two groups, revealed a z-calculated value of 1.39, less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 , indicating no significant difference in their perceptions. This confirms that both groups

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unanimously agree that a globally competitive and socially responsive curriculum enhances institutional relevance, graduate employability, and overall administrative success.

This finding resonates strongly with Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, and Osher (2020), who argued that curriculum development must be agile and responsive to the evolving global economy, focusing on skills like creativity, collaboration, and complex problem-solving. Likewise, Shepard, Penuel, and Pellegrino (2021) contended that effective management fosters pedagogical innovation that equips learners with relevant competencies for the contemporary workforce. Müller and Gangl (2021) further posited that curriculum responsiveness not only promotes competitiveness but also drives social cohesion by ensuring education reflects diverse epistemologies and cultural experiences. This underscores the importance of aligning curriculum management with both global trends and local realities to achieve institutional excellence.

In support of these findings, Heckman (2020) emphasized that inclusion should not be treated as an isolated initiative but as a core strategic imperative woven into every facet of institutional governance. Similarly, Aigbe, Aigbavboa, Ayobiojo, and Imoisili (2025) asserted that diversity, when effectively managed, serves as a resource for creativity and innovation rather than a challenge to be mitigated. Letshaba and Ndlovu (2024) described educational administrators as “architects of the future,” responsible for designing governance systems that are academically rigorous, operationally efficient, and socially inclusive. Therefore, the study’s empirical results are consistent with these scholarly insights, revealing that the effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State hinges on integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion into governance, ensuring equitable access, and adopting globally competitive yet socially responsive curricula.

The findings suggest that the administrative structures of tertiary institutions in Rivers State are evolving toward inclusivity and responsiveness, in line with global trends in higher education management. By embedding equity and diversity into strategic planning, establishing fair pathways for access, and adopting innovative, inclusive curricula, tertiary institutions enhance both their operational efficiency and their contribution to societal development. This aligns with the view of Reynolds, Reddi, and Ward (2025) that effective educational management, anchored in equity and excellence, serves as a powerful driver of national transformation, producing graduates who are not only skilled but also socially conscious and inclusive citizens.

Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained from the study, it was concluded that effective educational management is vital for building a skilled and inclusive society through the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion into the core governance of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It was also concluded that establishing equitable pathways for access, participation, and success enhances institutional effectiveness by ensuring equal opportunities for all learners, especially those from marginalized groups. The study further concluded that developing and implementing globally competitive yet socially responsive curricula are essential for promoting skill development and inclusive growth. In essence, building a skilled and inclusive society requires a holistic, equity-driven educational management approach supported by strong policies, collaboration, and sustained investment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study recommend.

1. The researcher recommended that educational administrators in tertiary institutions should integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles into their strategic planning and governance frameworks.
2. It was also recommended that government and educational stakeholders establish equitable pathways for access and participation through scholarships, mentorship, and support services.
3. Tertiary institutions should develop globally competitive and socially responsive curricula to equip students with 21st-century skills relevant to both local and global contexts.
4. The researcher additionally recommended regular capacity-building programs for educational managers to enhance inclusive leadership and governance practices.
5. It was further recommended that collaborative partnerships among government, industry, and academia be strengthened to align education with labour market demands. Finally, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be instituted to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of inclusive educational management practices in Rivers State.

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