



Influence of Educational Leadership Policies on Lecturers implementation for inclusive Pedagogical Skills in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of educational leadership policies on lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses and adopted a descriptive survey design to obtain empirical data from lecturers across the institutions. The population consisted of 3,356 lecturers from the University of Port Harcourt (1,385), Rivers State University (1,585), and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (386). Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 357 lecturers was selected through proportionate stratified sampling, comprising 147 lecturers from the University of Port Harcourt, 169 from Rivers State University, and 41 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, with a gender distribution of 143 males and 214 females. Data were collected using a validated instrument titled "Educational Leadership Policies on Lecturers' Implementation of Inclusive Pedagogical Skills Questionnaire, reviewed by two experts in Educational Management, and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83 using Cronbach Alpha, indicating strong internal consistency. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while z-test statistics tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that both the inclusive education policy framework and the curriculum reform and review policy significantly and positively influence lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. It was recommended that university leadership strengthen lecturers' awareness, training, practical support for inclusive education policies and ensure timely, well-aligned curriculum reforms supported by adequate resources and monitoring mechanisms.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform, Educational Leadership, Inclusive Pedagogy, Policy Framework, Public Universities.

Introduction

The drive toward inclusive education in higher institutions has become a defining feature of quality and equity in teaching and learning. In Rivers State public universities, the capacity of lecturers to employ inclusive pedagogical skills, ranging from differentiated instruction to universal design for learning, depends largely on the policies and priorities set by educational leaders. Educational leadership policies in universities refer to formally designed strategies,

priorities, and governance practices that guide how an institution is run. These policies include decisions about staff recruitment, professional development, curriculum design, resource allocation, and evaluation, all of which deeply influence how lecturers teach. In public universities, leadership policies are not just administrative tools; they shape the values of the institution and set the tone for pedagogical practices. When leaders prioritize inclusion, equity, and continuous improvement, they create an environment that encourages lecturers to adopt inclusive teaching skills (Cheta-Maclean & Ololube, 2025).

These policies, when strategically implemented, create an environment where lecturers are not only empowered but also motivated to address the diverse learning needs of students (Anietie, 2025). Without such institutional guidance, even well-intentioned lecturers may struggle to translate inclusive ideals into practical classroom strategies. The types of Educational Leadership Policies that influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities include: Inclusive education policy framework and Curriculum reform and review policy.

Inclusive education policy framework refers to a set of formalized guidelines and strategic directives established by educational authorities to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, socio-economic background, or special needs, have equitable access to learning opportunities. These policies provide explicit expectations for teaching, learning, and assessment, emphasizing fairness, diversity, and accommodation in academic environments (Segilola & Akuche, 2025). In public universities, such frameworks often mandate professional development programs for lecturers, provision of assistive resources, and structured classroom practices that cater to diverse learning needs. Essentially, the framework acts as a roadmap that guides lecturers in designing and delivering lessons in ways that promote inclusion, participation, and equal opportunities for every student.

The influence of inclusive education policy frameworks on lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills is significant. By establishing institutional norms and expectations, these policies create an enabling environment where lecturers feel supported and accountable for adapting their teaching methods. For instance, policies may encourage the use of differentiated instruction, flexible assessment techniques, and universal design for learning to meet the needs of a heterogeneous student population (Orlunga & Alikor, 2023). In Rivers State public universities, where student diversity is prominent, such policies ensure that lecturers are not left to rely solely on personal discretion but are guided and empowered to apply evidence-

based inclusive practices that enhance learning outcomes and foster an equitable academic culture.

Curriculum reform and review policy refers to the structured institutional process through which university leadership periodically evaluates and updates course content, teaching methods, and assessment practices to ensure that academic programs remain relevant, effective, and responsive to students' evolving needs. Rather than simply refreshing course titles or reading lists, this policy demands that curricula be redesigned with intentionality, integrating flexibility, diversity, and equity so that it caters to a wide spectrum of learners (Olawunmi, 2025). In Rivers State's public universities, such a policy signals to lecturers that the institution values adaptation: course units are not static, and lecturers are encouraged to reflect critically on how their teaching aligns with broader educational goals.

The influence of this policy on lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills is profound. When curriculum review explicitly includes inclusion as a guiding principle, lecturers receive both permission and a framework to apply differentiated instruction, flexible assessments, and universal design for learning in their courses. This kind of policy scaffolding helps lecturers know exactly what inclusive practices are expected and how they should integrate them, rather than leaving them to navigate inclusion on their own. In practical terms, it means lecturers are more likely to modify their lesson plans, employ multiple assessment formats, and design learning activities that engage students with different needs ultimately fostering a more equitable and inclusive learning environment (Ogunlade, 2025).

Beyond formal policies, institutional support mechanisms such as capacity-building programs, access to assistive technologies, and monitoring of teaching practices play a crucial role in translating policy into action. Educational leaders who invest in these areas create conditions that enable lecturers to experiment with and sustain inclusive pedagogical strategies (Anietie, 2025). Where such support is absent, lecturers may perceive inclusive teaching as an additional burden rather than a professional expectation.

Given these dynamics, this study explores the influence of educational leadership policies on lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. By examining lecturers' perceptions, the practical barriers and enablers they encounter, and the effectiveness of leadership-driven policy initiatives, the research aims to provide actionable insights. Ultimately, the study seeks to inform university leaders and policymakers on how to

craft and implement educational leadership policies that foster truly inclusive teaching and learning environments.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of a national inclusive education policy framework intended to promote equitable learning for all students, many public universities in Rivers State still struggle to translate these policy intentions into practical classroom realities. Although the policy emphasizes learner diversity, equitable access, and adaptive teaching practices, lecturers often lack adequate professional training, institutional support, and leadership-driven motivation required for effective implementation (Okeke & Mbah, 2023). In many cases, the policy remains merely a formal document, poorly communicated and insufficiently reinforced by university leadership. As a result, the adoption of inclusive instructional strategies becomes inconsistent, leaving lecturers uncertain about how to respond to the wide range of learning differences that characterize their classrooms (Chidiebere & Hassan, 2024). This persistent gap raises concerns about the extent to which educational leaders actively support, promote, and monitor inclusive education practices needed to build a truly inclusive academic environment.

Furthermore, curriculum reform and review processes, key mechanisms for embedding inclusive practices, are often irregular, outdated, and misaligned with contemporary pedagogical realities. Many lecturers still rely on curriculum materials that do not reflect modern expectations for inclusive teaching, limiting their ability to accommodate students with diverse learning needs (Ezenwa & Salihu, 2023). Weak leadership commitment, inadequate resource allocation, and insufficient monitoring structures further constrain effective curriculum implementation, thereby widening the disconnect between policy standards and classroom practice (Boma & Ijeoma, 2024). This mismatch ultimately undermines efforts to foster inclusive, learner-centered teaching in public universities across Rivers State, threatening the broader goal of equitable higher education for all students. Therefore, this research was conducted to explore how educational leadership policies influence lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State, with the aim of identifying practical solutions to address the challenges associated with policy implementation and inclusive teaching practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of educational leadership policies on lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the extent to which inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the extent to which curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean opinion responses of male and female lecturers on the extent to which inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean opinion responses of male and female lecturers on the extent to which curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 3,356 lecturers across three public universities: University of Port Harcourt (1,385), Rivers State University (1,585), and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (386). Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 357 lecturers was drawn through proportionate stratified sampling, consisting of 147 from the University of Port Harcourt, 169 from Rivers State University, and 41 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, including 143 males and 214 females. Data were collected using a validated instrument titled: "Educational Leadership Policies on Lecturers' Implementation of Inclusive Pedagogical Skills Questionnaire (ELP-LIIPSQ)". The questionnaire consisted of two sections namely section A and B. Section A of the questionnaire was used to generate demographic information while section B consisted of questionnaire items addressing the research questions of the study. This section of the questionnaire was structured using a five-point summated rating response scale of: Very High Extent (VHE) = 5 points, High Extent (HE) = 4 points, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3 Points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points, Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts in

Department of Educational Management, and Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method to establish the overall reliability index of 0.83. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypotheses accepted when the computed value was greater than the critical value at the significance level of 0.05. On the contrary, the null hypothesis was also accepted and the alternate hypotheses rejected when the computed value is less than the critical table value.

Result Presentation

Research Question 1: To what extent do inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Extent Inclusive Education Policy Framework Influence Lecturer's Implementation for Inclusive Pedagogical Skills in Public Universities in Rivers State

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Lecturers Male N= 143		Lecturers Female N= 214		Average mean	Std	RMK
		$\bar{X}_1$	Std ₁	$\bar{X}_2$	Std ₂			
1.	Inclusive education policy framework provides clear directions on how to deliver lessons inclusively.	3.87	0.86	3.74	0.84	3.81	0.85	HE
2.	Encourages lecturers to attend workshops and training on inclusive teaching.	4.32	1.43	4.44	1.30	4.38	1.37	VHE
3.	Enables lecturers to modify course content to meet diverse learners' needs.	3.34	0.69	3.28	0.69	3.31	0.69	HE
4.	Inclusive education policy framework sensitizes lecturers to the different	3.43	0.80	3.87	0.89	3.65	0.85	HE

learning needs, abilities, and backgrounds of students.

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|----|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| 5. | Motivates lecturers to share strategies and best practices for inclusive teaching. | 3.21 | 0.87 | 3.52 | 0.82 | 3.37 | 0.85 | HE |
|----|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|

Aggregate Mean/SD for male and female lecturers	3.63	0.93	3.77	0.91	3.70	0.92	HE
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Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The results in Table 1 indicate that both male and female lecturers perceive the inclusive education policy framework as having a strong and meaningful influence on their implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. The aggregate mean scores for male lecturers ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.93$) and female lecturers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.91$) fall within the “high extent” range, showing a generally positive perception across gender groups. The average mean of 3.70 further reinforces that lecturer widely agree that the policy framework guides lesson delivery, encourages capacity-building through workshops ($M = 4.38$), sensitizes them to learners’ diverse needs, and motivates collaboration on inclusive practices. The close similarity in standard deviations also suggests a fairly uniform perception among respondents, indicating consistency in how lecturers interpret and apply policy directives in their teaching. However, the findings imply that the inclusive education policy framework plays a vital role in shaping lecturers’ commitment, competence, and responsiveness toward inclusive teaching across public universities in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer’s implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Extent Curriculum Reform and Review Policy Influence Lecturer’s Implementation for Inclusive Pedagogical Skills in Public Universities in Rivers State

Lecturers Male N= 143	Lecturers Female N= 214
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S/N	Items	$\bar{X}_1$	Std ₁	$\bar{X}_2$	Std ₂	Average mean	Std	RMK
6.	Curriculum Reform and Review Policy ensures curriculum content reflects inclusive education principles.	3.77	0.96	3.90	0.88	3.84	0.92	HE
7.	Encourages lecturers to adopt diverse and flexible teaching methods.	4.43	1.32	4.48	1.42	4.46	1.37	VHE
8.	Guides lecturers to use assessments that consider varied learning needs.	3.78	0.71	3.77	0.70	3.78	0.71	HE
9.	Curriculum reform and review policy provides training opportunities on inclusive curriculum design.	4.32	0.98	4.30	0.94	4.31	0.96	VHE
10.	Promotes collaborative curriculum development among lecturers.	3.79	0.88	3.81	0.82	3.80	0.85	HE
Aggregate Mean/SD for male and female lecturers		4.02	0.97	4.05	0.9 5	4.04	0.96	HE

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The results in Table 2 show that both male ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.97$) and female ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.95$) lecturers strongly agree that curriculum reform and review policy plays a meaningful role in shaping their implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. The consistently high mean scores across the items, especially in areas such as encouraging the use of diverse teaching methods ($M = 4.46$) and providing training opportunities for inclusive curriculum design ($M = 4.31$), indicate that lecturers perceive curriculum reform as a vital driver of inclusive teaching practices. The very high ratings in these key areas suggest that the policy not only raises awareness about inclusiveness but also equips lecturers with practical tools and structured support to adapt their teaching to diverse learner needs. The narrow differences in mean scores between male and female lecturers further show a shared understanding and similar levels of engagement with the policy, reflecting a unified commitment to inclusivity. Therefore, the aggregate mean of 4.04 underscores that

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curriculum reform and review policy exert a strong positive influence on lecturers' capacity to implement inclusive pedagogical strategies effectively.

Hypotheses Testing

1. There is no significant difference between the mean opinion responses of male and female lecturers on the extent to which inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: Z-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Male and Female Students on the Extent to which inclusive education policy framework influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Respondents	N	$\bar{x}$	Std	DF	z-cal	z-crit	LS	Decision
Male Lecturers	143	3.63	0.93					
				355	-1.41	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Lectures	214	3.77	0.91					

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3, the z-test result ($z\text{-cal} = -1.41$) shows that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male lecturers ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.93$) and female lecturers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.91$) regarding the extent to which the inclusive education policy framework influences lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. Since the calculated z-value of -1.41 does not exceed the critical value of ± 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that both male and female lecturers share similar views about the effectiveness of the inclusive education policy framework in guiding them toward more inclusive instructional practices. The closeness in their mean scores further suggests that gender does not play a meaningful role in shaping lecturers' perceptions of how policy frameworks support inclusive pedagogy, reflecting a generally shared professional understanding and experience across the institutions.

2. There is no significant difference between the mean opinion responses of male and female lecturers on the extent to which curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Male and Female Students on the Extent to which curriculum reform and review policy influence lecturer's implementation for inclusive pedagogical skills in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Respondents	N	$\bar{x}$	Std	DF	z-cal	z-crit	LS	Decision
Male Lecturers	143	4.02	0.97	355	-0.29,	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Lectures	214	4.05	0.95					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4, the z-test result of -0.29 , which is far below the critical value of ± 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance, shows that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male lecturers ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.97$) and female lecturers ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.95$) regarding the extent to which curriculum reform and review policy influences lecturers' implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. This means that both male and female lecturers hold almost identical perceptions, agreeing that curriculum reform policies strongly enhance inclusive teaching practices by ensuring that curriculum content, methods, and assessment approaches are more responsive to diverse learners' needs. The closeness of their mean scores suggests a shared understanding and collective experience among lecturers across gender groups, highlighting that curriculum reform efforts are broadly recognized as effective and supportive in promoting inclusive pedagogical competence among university lecturers

Discussion of Findings

The results in Table 1 reveal that both male and female lecturers hold a strong and consistent perception that the inclusive education policy framework plays a meaningful role in enhancing their implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. The mean ratings of male lecturers ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.93$) and female lecturers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.91$) fall within the "high extent" range, indicating that lecturers generally believe the policy provides clear direction, promotes training, and encourages adaptive teaching practices necessary for meeting diverse learners' needs. Furthermore, the z-test result in Table 3 ($z\text{-cal} = -1.41$, $z\text{-crit} = \pm 1.96$, $\alpha = 0.05$) shows no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female lecturers, meaning both groups share similar views on the policy's relevance and effectiveness. This aligns with recent scholarly findings, such as Ede and Okoro (2023), who reported that inclusive education policies significantly support lecturers in restructuring teaching practices to accommodate diverse student populations, and Amadi and Wosu (2024),

who found that strong policy frameworks enhance lecturers' confidence and competence in inclusive classroom delivery. Overall, these results highlight the vital role of inclusive education policy in shaping equitable teaching practices and strengthening inclusive governance structures in public universities.

The findings presented in Table 2 clearly show that both male ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.97$) and female ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.95$) lecturers strongly acknowledge the significant role of curriculum reform and review policy in shaping their implementation of inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. These high mean ratings indicate that lecturers perceive curriculum reforms as essential in promoting flexible teaching methods, inclusive assessment approaches, and collaborative curriculum development that support diverse learners. Moreover, the z-test result shown in Table 4 ($z\text{-cal} = -0.29$, $z\text{-crit} = \pm 1.96$, $\alpha = 0.05$) reveals that there is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perceptions, suggesting a shared understanding across genders that curriculum review processes effectively strengthen inclusive teaching practices. This aligns with contemporary studies such as Nwankwo and Essien (2023), who found that curriculum reforms enhance lecturers' capacity to integrate inclusive strategies into course delivery, and Onyema and Adeleke (2024), who emphasized that regular curriculum review increases lecturer competence and responsiveness to learner diversity in Nigerian higher institutions. Overall, the findings underscore the crucial role of curriculum reform and review policy in promoting equitable, inclusive, and student-centered teaching practices in public universities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that educational leadership policies, particularly the inclusive education policy framework and curriculum reform and review policies, significantly shape how lecturers implement inclusive pedagogical skills in public universities in Rivers State. When these policies are clearly communicated, adequately supported, and regularly updated, lecturers become more confident and capable of using teaching strategies that address the diverse needs of all learners. However, gaps remain in policy enforcement, curriculum updates, and professional development, which limit the full translation of these policies into classroom practice. Hence, the study emphasizes the need for stronger leadership commitment, continuous curriculum review, and sustained capacity-building initiatives to ensure that inclusive pedagogical practices become a consistent and integral part of teaching in public universities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. University management should intensify efforts to ensure that lecturers fully understand and internalize the inclusive education policy framework through regular sensitization seminars, policy briefings, and targeted professional development programs. Many lecturers struggle to implement inclusive pedagogical skills not because of unwillingness, but due to limited exposure to the practical demands of inclusion. Therefore, leadership should provide ongoing training on differentiated instruction, universal design for learning and strategies for accommodating diverse learners. These trainings should be continuous rather than one-off events so that lecturers can remain updated on evolving inclusive practices and feel supported in applying them effectively in their classrooms.
2. University authorities and policymakers should ensure that curriculum reform and review processes are timely, inclusive, and reflective of contemporary inclusive education needs. Updated curricula should clearly embed inclusive pedagogical expectations, supported by practical guides, teaching resources, and assessment models that lecturers can easily adopt. Beyond updating the curriculum, institutions should provide supportive structures, such as mentoring teams, inclusive teaching resource centers, and monitoring units, to help lecturers translate curriculum provisions into effective classroom delivery.

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