

Leadership Skills Configuration and Policy Implementation in Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

Richard Anietie

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) Rivers State, Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received : 10-August-2025

Revised : 20-September-2025

Accepted : 22-September-2025

Keyword:

Leadership;
Skill Configuration;
Tertiary Education;
Policy Implementation

*Correspondence authors:
anietierichard@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigated leadership skill configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. The study is intended to address issues on conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills configuration of staff on leadership positions in public universities in Rivers state. It adopted a correlational research design using a population of 403 administrators in the 3 public universities in Rivers State. A sample size of 314 which was randomly selected was used in the conduct of the study. The study employed the use of a questionnaire which was self-designed and code named "Leadership Skill Configuration for Education Policy Implementation Questionnaire (LSCEPIQ)". The instrument was validated by experts and its reliability was ascertained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient 0.05 level of significance. The instrument after distribution has obtained a 100% retrieval. This was made possible because of the use of trained research assistants. The study used mean score and standard deviation statistical tools in its data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills configuration enhances greatly the process of policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. Thus, the study recommended that, the university administrators at all levels to ensure the configuration of the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills of all their staff holding leadership positions to enhance better drive in policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

How to Cite:

Anietie, Richard (2025). Leadership Skills Configuration and Policy Implementation in Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Paedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(2), 175-194. <https://doi.org/10.24239/pdg.Vol14.Iss2.588>.

INTRODUCTION

In educational leadership and management, leadership is generally regarded as the process of influencing people within a group to achieve specific organizational objectives. As Yabo emphasizes¹, a leader is not merely a position holder but an individual who possesses essential skills such as the ability to innovate, influence, stimulate, and provide direction for achieving collective goals. These attributes cannot be realized without sound intelligence, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace innovation. Leadership skills, therefore, are not innate qualities; rather, they are cultivated and refined through continuous interaction with the environment².

The university system functions as a complex community in which collaboration and collective effort are indispensable to achieving institutional objectives. Effective leadership in this context requires a delicate balance of conceptual, technical, and human relations skills. Conceptual skills enable leaders to analyze problems critically, interpret policies, and design innovative strategies for institutional growth³. Technical skills ensure that leaders can apply specialized knowledge to manage resources and operational processes effectively⁴. Human relations skills, on the other hand, emphasize interpersonal competence, communication, and collaboration, all of which are necessary for mobilizing staff and fostering an environment conducive to policy implementation⁵.

Despite recognition of these competencies, evidence suggests that many universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, continue to face challenges in bridging the gap between policy formulation and implementation. Studies have documented persistent problems such as inadequate leadership capacity, poor technical knowledge, and weak interpersonal skills among administrators⁶.

¹ Yabo, M. (2007). Leadership and educational management in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration*, 5(2), 33–47

² Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>

³ Anietie, R., Uba, T. L., & Rita, S. M. (2019). Insurance policy integration for curbing educational waste in public secondary schools in Rivers State. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 3(6), 50-55.; Mumford, M. D., Todd, E. M., Higgs, C., & McIntosh, T. (2017). Cognitive skills and leadership performance: The nine critical skills. *Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 24–39.

⁴ Ibrahim, M. (2018). Conceptual skills in higher education leadership: Implications for policy implementation. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 10(1), 22–35.;

Akintidure, O., & Ekundayo, H. (2012). Technical skills and leadership effectiveness in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 5(2), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jes.v5i2.123>

⁵ Ogbonnaya, C. (2014). Human relations in educational management: Implications for policy execution. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 8(3), 101–115.; Ugwoke, S. C., Ofoegbu, C. A., & Ugwuanyi, F. N. (2012). Quality assurance in teacher education for teacher productivity in Anambra State. *Bassey Andah Journal*, 5, 195-206.

⁶ Ozurumba, C., & Ebuara, V. (2013). An appraisal of education policy implementation and the challenge of leadership in Nigerian universities. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 3(6), 31–35.; Ogunode, N. J., & Ahaotu, G. N. (2020). Educational policies in Nigeria: Challenges of

Globally, research shows that while technical and human relations skills have been widely explored, conceptual skills are often underrepresented in empirical studies⁷. This imbalance has limited understanding of how leaders interpret and operationalize complex educational policies, especially in resource-constrained environments⁸.

Recent literature underscores the need for leadership configurations that are dynamic, adaptive, and responsive to changing educational contexts. For example, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins⁹ argue that successful school leadership relies on the integration of multiple skill sets, while Fullan highlights the role of adaptive leadership in ensuring policy sustainability¹⁰. In higher education, Bryman emphasizes that effective university leaders must combine strategic vision with operational expertise and interpersonal sensitivity¹¹. In Nigeria, Nwankwo and Okoli note that leadership development remains a critical bottleneck in higher education reform, calling for targeted interventions that strengthen conceptual, technical, and relational capacities simultaneously¹².

Given this context, it becomes imperative to explore how university administrators configure their leadership skills to enhance policy implementation. Traditional leadership models that emphasize authority or routine managerial practices are no longer sufficient in addressing the complex challenges of contemporary university governance. Instead, institutions require leaders who can integrate conceptual insights, technical expertise, and human relations competencies in ways that drive effective and sustainable policy implementation. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the literature by examining the relationship between these leadership skill configurations and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

implementation and the way forward. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 7(3), 1–13.

⁷ Khoreva, V., & Wechtler, H. (2015). HR practices and employee performance: The role of line managers in policy implementation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(3), 262–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.09.001>; Bolden, R., Gosling, J., O'Brien, A., Peters, K., Ryan, M., & Haslam, A. (2012). *Exploring leadership: Individual, organizational, and societal perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

⁸ Bush, T. (2018). Leadership and management in education: Developing essential skills and competencies. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 9–24.; World Bank. (2017). Strategic leadership for policy implementation in higher education: A Sub-Saharan African perspective. *Springer*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42970-6_5

⁹ Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22.;

¹⁰ Fullan, M. (2021). *Leading in a culture of change* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

¹¹ Bryman, A. (2017). Effective leadership in higher education: A literature review. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 886–902.

¹² Nwankwo, F., & Okoli, I. (2021). Leadership skills and educational policy implementation in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 19(2), 88–103.

Review and Related Literature

The concept of a leader and leadership has to pass through the rigor of institutional context before attempts can be made to define the concepts. But generally, a leader is a person who is able to influence the actions of others to advance and achieve organizational goals. Similarly, leadership is the process of engaging and leading the skills and efforts of others e.g teachers, students, and parents in an educational setting towards the achievement of common goals¹³. Therefore, the primary goal of leadership in education is to ensure academic achievement through changes in procedure, training and materials. Meanwhile, Skills configuration entails the constant subtraction, addition and remodeling, of skills to suit the desired work demands in an institution. The importance of leadership skills configuration and responsiveness in the achievement of policy implementation cannot be overstated. Instead of meeting an issue and then having to wait for additional resources or a certain skill set, the leader may keep the project going by dropping and picking new skills, knowledge and learning through innovations and personal initiatives. Skill configuration involves the willingness and ability of a leader to adapt to change particularly regarding when and how to get work done not minding the usual traditional approach. On the concept of policy, it is defined as a government or other institution's legislation, rule, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice directed towards achieving a set of goals¹⁴. In the context of education, policy is a set of laws and norms that make up the practice of education and how governments intend to approach the production and delivery of educational services.

Conceptual skills are the qualities that enable a person to better understand difficult problems and generate innovative solutions to them¹⁵. These skills are useful in leadership because persons, who possess them, may address complex workplace issues in a variety of ways. It is in this way that leadership conceptual skills are seen as enabling a leader to see the institution as a whole, grasp how many elements are interrelated, and support him/her to assess how the institution connects to its university environment¹⁶. These abilities enable managers to assess events and devise different paths of action¹⁷. Institutional leaders at the top of the university, where strategic planning takes place, require strong conceptual skills to be able to have an overview of the university policy

¹³ Akpan, C. P., & Undie, J. A. (2007). Access to university education in Nigeria: Issues and problems. In J. B. Babalola, G. O. Akpa, A. O. Ayeni, & S. O. Adedeji (Eds.), Access, equity and quality in higher education (pp. xx-xx). NAEAP Publications.

¹⁴ Okoroma, N. S. (2006). Educational policies and problems of implementation in Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 46(2), 23-32.

¹⁵ Ezeh, F., & Dike, G. (2016). Federal government formally bans Post-UTME. The Sun News. <http://sunnewsonline.com/fg-formally-bans-post-utme/>

¹⁶ Anietie, U., Okon, I., & Effiong, A. (2019). Leadership skills and university administration effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Management*, 14(2), 45-59.

¹⁷ Nakpodia, E. D. (2012). Impediments of educational bureaucrats on teacher education in Nigeria. *Global Business and Economics Research Journal*, 1(2), 111-124.

and harmoniously implement them¹⁸. The university leader must be able to ignore extraneous information, be broad-minded to accept other perspectives in terms of what to do and how to do them, think critically about policy break down and analysis, dividing a project into small chunks, decision making in implementing key solutions and developing effective action plans¹⁹. Technical skills cover all the skills and knowledge required to complete certain activities. They are useful and include mechanical, information technology and mathematical, or scientific duties. Technical abilities include preparing financial operations with knowledge that is needed to achieve policy implementation at all level in the university²⁰. Such abilities are specially, crucial for supervision purposes where they interact directly with the university stakeholders who produce the needed feedback as to whether the policy is implemented to the later²¹. However, leadership technical skills in this sense does not remain static and hence, needs constant update and review to ascertain the area which may need total discontinuity and or other modifications.

Policies are driven by humans, hence the notable statement continues to make sense that policy document cannot implement itself without the human factor which must interplay²². Human relations skills are the interpersonal abilities that university administrators employ to achieve goals by utilizing human resource²³. These collection of abilities includes the capacity to comprehend human behavior, effectively communicate with stakeholders, and encourage others to achieve their goals and tasks, which will eventually lead to achievement of policy implementation²⁴. Giving constructive feedback to university workers and stakeholders, being sensitive to their particular needs, and being ready to empower staff are all human qualities required for goal achievement. Identifying

¹⁸ Ogbonnaya, C. (2014). Human relations in educational management: Implications for policy execution. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 8(3), 101–115.

¹⁹ Ezeugbor, C. O., & Nwachukwu, E. A. (2011). Adopting e-learning in university education: Prospects and problems. *Unizik Orient Journal of Education*, 6(1&2), 145-151.

²⁰ Ibrahim, Y. (2018). Education policy development in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 2(1), 12-19; Akintidure, O., & Ekundayo, H. (2012). Technical skills and leadership effectiveness in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 5(2), 67–79; Amadi, M. N. (2007). Funding initiatives in higher education. In J. B. Babalola, G. O. Akpa, A. O. Ayeni, & S. O. Adedeji (Eds.), *Access, equity and quality in higher education* (pp. 543-554). NAEAP Publications.

²¹ Ogunode, N. J., & Ahaotu, G. N. (2020). Educational policies in Nigeria: Challenges of implementation and the way forward. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 7(3), 1–13.

²² Anietie, R., Uba, T. L., & Rita, S. M. (2019). Insurance policy integration for curbing educational waste in public secondary schools in Rivers State. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 3(6), 50-55.

²³ Anietie, U., Okon, I., & Effiong, A. (2019). Leadership skills and university administration effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Management*, 14(2), 45–59.

²⁴ Ejiogu, A. (2003, October 29-31). Decentralization as panacea for Nigeria's education misadventure. *Annual Conference of Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP)*, Ibadan, Nigeria.

and elevating managers with human relations skills is critical for institutional policy execution²⁵. The university leaders must be able to ensure that the policy is broken down to reflect the human side of the policy implementation.

Statement Of The Problem

Over the years, there is an ever widening gap between formulation of educational policy and policy implementation. This has been noted to have been for a long time affecting the management and administration of education in Nigeria²⁶. This is occasioned by the obvious fact that there are several success factors that are left unattended to or left to chances to produce the needed result; especially in the public institutions. Problems associated with this concerns includes lack of capacity of some staff performing leadership functions in educational institutions, lack of relevant skills for the jobs they are performing and lack of understanding of the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills required to implement a policy successfully. This has crippled development of policy implementation and has stagnated achievement of desirable objectives in the management and administration of public universities in Nigeria. This may also affect the way and manner leadership of public universities will be able to meet requirements of the National Universities Commission guidelines for university administration and management especially as it affects funding, personnel and infrastructural control and maintenance²⁷. Consequently, if the university system fails to achieve its objectives of guiding, leading the growth and development of people, the society is doomed and that is why this study felt that it is time to configure the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills of staff in leadership positions for effective policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

The general purpose of the study is to investigate leadership skill configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. But specifically, the study will: 1) Determine the extent to which conceptual leadership skills configuration enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State; 2) Ascertain the extent to which technical leadership skills configuration enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State; and 3) Examine the extent to which human relations leadership skills configuration enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Research question

In line with the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the investigation into the relationship between leadership skills and the effectiveness of policy implementation in public

²⁵ Ugwoke, S. C., Ofoegbu, C. A., & Ugwuanyi, F. N. (2012). Quality assurance in teacher education for teacher productivity in Anambra State. *Bassey Andah Journal*, 5, 195-206.

²⁶ Yabo, M. (2007). Leadership and educational management in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration*, 5(2), 33-47.

²⁷ Yabo, A. M. (2017). *Historical foundations of education in Nigeria*. Life-line Educational Consultants.

universities in Rivers State. These questions focus on the different dimensions of leadership—conceptual, technical, and human relation skills—and their potential influence on institutional policy outcomes. They are: 1) To what extent does conceptual leadership skills configuration enhance policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?; 2) To what extent does technical leadership skills configuration enhance policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?; and 3) To what extent does human relation leadership skills configuration enhance policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested on 0.05 significant level:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between conceptual leadership skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between leadership technical skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.
- Ho3: There is no significant relationship between human relation leadership skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Significance of the study

The findings of the study will generally assist the university administrators, university staff and the National Universities Commission (NUC) in building the capacity of university staff to be able to configure their conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills in the process of policy implementation in the discharge of their administrative responsibilities in public universities.

Scope and delimitation of the Study

The study covers 3 public universities in Rivers state, Nigeria namely; University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Similarly, the study is delimited to examining only the configuration of conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills of staff in the process of policy implementation in public Universities in Rivers state.

Theoretical framework

One foundational theory that underpins this study is the Leadership Traits Theory (LTT), originally proposed by Ralph Stogdill²⁸. This theory posits that effective leadership is rooted in inherent traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, integrity, and sociability. Stogdill's work emphasizes that successful leaders possess certain characteristics that enable them to influence others and achieve organizational goals. For this study, we extend these traits to include conceptual, technical, and human relations leadership skills, which are vital for effective leadership in the context of public universities in Rivers State.

Conceptual leadership skills involve the ability to think critically and

²⁸ Stogdill, R. M. (1948). Personal factors associated with leadership: A survey of the literature. *Journal of Psychology*, 25(1), 35-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1948.9917362>

strategically, allowing leaders to understand complex issues and devise solutions that align with institutional objectives. These skills are crucial for navigating the challenges of policy implementation in an academic environment, where long-term planning and adaptability are essential. Technical leadership skills refer to a leader's specialized knowledge in educational administration, equipping them to manage the complexities of university operations and ensuring that policies are grounded in practical expertise. Finally, human relations skills reflect a leader's capacity to manage interpersonal relationships, foster collaboration, and motivate staff to engage with policy changes. In the context of public universities in Rivers State, this theory helps explain how the combination of these leadership traits and skills among university administrators can significantly impact the success of policy implementation. Leaders who excel in these areas are more likely to create supportive environments where policies are effectively executed, ultimately enhancing the university's capacity to achieve its strategic goals.

Methods

This study employed the use of correlational study research design which seeks to establish a relationship between two variables-leadership skills and policy implementation in public Universities in Rivers State. The population of the study covers 3 public Universities in Rivers State, with a total number of 403 staff holding leadership positions. Meanwhile, a sample of 314 (77.9%) staff were used as sample for the study. The selection of a high sample is informed by the need to increase level of validity of the research findings. The study used one questionnaire instrument which was self-designed and tagged "Leadership Skill Configuration and policy Implementation Questionnaire (LSCEPIQ)" which comprised section A, B, C and D with A-C examining the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills configurations respectively while the D component examines the University Education Policy Implementation. The instrument was face and content validated by colleagues, senior colleagues and experts in the fields of leadership and management in education, tests and measurements and language and communication in School of Education of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. All the experts scrutinized the face and contents of the instrument as it affects their areas of specialization and agreed with its validity and suitability in measuring what it was designed to measure. The instrument's reliability was also tested through a test-re-test method and using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (ρ) in analysing the data, a correlation coefficient of (r) at 0.89 was obtained and was interpreted as reliable. The data collection for the main study was done through the use of research assistants who were trained and they distributed the instrument and also retrieved from the respondents. This made possible for a 100% retrieval of the questionnaires. The final data collected for the main study was analysed using mean and standard deviation for research questions and Pearson Correlation Coefficient for testing of hypotheses.

RESULT

The results of this study are presented in accordance with the research objectives and questions formulated earlier. Data obtained through the *Leadership Skill Configuration and Policy Implementation Questionnaire (LSCEPIQ)* were analyzed using descriptive statistics—mean and standard deviation—to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses. The presentation of these results is intended to provide an empirical picture of the extent to which conceptual, technical, and human relations leadership skills contribute to effective policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Systematically, the findings are divided into three main sections corresponding to the dimensions of leadership skills under investigation. The first section addresses conceptual leadership skills, which emphasize the ability of university leaders to interpret, simplify, and adapt policies for effective implementation. The second section focuses on technical leadership skills, including the use of modern technologies, the adoption of innovative research methods, and the ability to provide technical support to subordinates. The third section examines human relations leadership skills, highlighting collaboration, interpersonal communication, and attention to staff and student welfare.

Each section begins with a statistical summary in tabular form, followed by a narrative interpretation. The narrative aims not only to explain the numerical values but also to contextualize the findings within theoretical and practical perspectives on higher education leadership. This approach allows the discussion to move beyond description, offering critical and comparative insights aligned with previous studies.

Research Question 1: To what extent does conceptual leadership skills configuration enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?

The first analysis explores the extent to which conceptual leadership skills enhance policy implementation. Conceptual skills refer to leaders' ability to think critically, restructure competencies, and approach problems from multiple perspectives. These skills are particularly relevant in higher education, where policies are often complex and require careful interpretation. Table 1 summarizes the responses of university leaders regarding various aspects of conceptual leadership skills.

Table 1: Means score and standard deviation of conceptual skill configuration

S / N	Items	\bar{x}_1 A =114	Sd ₁	\bar{x}_1	Sd ₂ NA =86	Mean Set	Decision
1.	As leader in the university, I am able to learn and unlearn to aid my current role in the institution.	2.52	1.58	2.62	1.61	2.57	High Extent
2.	As an institutional leader, I restructure my skill set to cover	2.79	1.67	2.56	1.6	2.67	High Extent

	innovative areas that will help in policy interpretation.						
3.	As an institutional leader, I explore other angles for visible approach to advancing policy implementation.	2.83	1.68	2.55	1.59	2.69	High Extent
4.	As an institutional leader, I often demonstrate strong problem-solving skills and find solutions to problems that will provide quality results.	3.13	1.76	2.43	1.55	2.78	High Extent
5.	I often break down complex university policy and ensure that skills needed to achieve critical aspect of the policy is acquired.	2.54	1.59	2.51	1.58	2.52	High Extent
Average Mean		2.76	1.65	2.53	1.58	2.64	

Table 1 shows item 1 with a mean score of 2.57, Item 2 with a mean score of 2.67, item 3 with a mean score of 2.69 and item 4 and 5 with a mean score of 2.78 and 2.52 respectively. In both circumstances, the results indicated a high extent all the aspects of the conceptual leadership skills configuration as a factor very effective in enhancing policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

Research Question 2: To what extent does technical leadership skills configuration enhance policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?

The second analysis focuses on technical leadership skills, which are increasingly vital in the 21st century university system. Technical skills encompass the acquisition and application of modern methods, integration of new technologies, and the ability to provide technical guidance to staff. As universities face rapid technological change and growing demands for innovation, technical leadership plays a crucial role in bridging policy directives with operational practices. Table 2 presents the findings related to this dimension.

Table 2: Means score and standard deviation of technical skill configuration

S/ N	Items	\bar{x}_1 A =114	Sd ₁	\bar{x}_1	Sd ₂ NA =86	Mea n Set	Decision
6.	As a leader, I often ensure that I acquire new technical skills and discard skills that may slow result attainment.	2.74	1.62	2.35	1.64	2.54	High Extent
7.	I ensure that all employees acquire new methods of achieving best results as a way to ensure policy implementation.	3.14	1.77	2.48	1.57	2.81	High Extent
8.	Technologies that would phase out traditional work practices are deployed on campuses to meet the	2.76	1.66	2.42	1.55	2.59	High Extent

	objective of university education in the 21 st century.						
9.	New ways of carrying out research are encouraged to improve on already existing practices to ensure university policy implementation.	3.54	1.88	3.45	1.85	3.49	Very High Extent
10	My role as leader also covers the giving technical assistance to subordinates to better handle technicalities in policy implementation.	2.82	1.67	2.56	1.6	2.69	High Extent
Average Mean		3	1.72	2.65	1.64	2.82	

Table 2 shows item 6 with a mean score of 2.54, Item 7 with a mean score of 2.81, item 8 with a mean score of 2.59 and item 9 and 10 with a mean score of 3.49 and 2.69 respectively. In both circumstances, the results indicated a high extent all the aspects of the technical leadership skills configuration as a factor very effective in enhancing policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

Research Question 3: To what extent does human relation leadership skills configuration enhance policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State?

The third analysis examines human relations leadership skills, which emphasize interpersonal effectiveness, teamwork, and collaborative governance. In the context of university administration, the ability of leaders to foster collaboration, encourage innovative ideas, and ensure student and staff welfare is critical to policy implementation. Human relations skills also facilitate communication across different levels of the institution, ensuring policies are understood and embraced collectively. Table 3 provides a summary of the findings for this dimension.

Table 3: Means score and standard deviation of human relation configuration

S/ N	Items	\bar{x}_1 A =114	Sd ₁	\bar{x}_1	Sd ₂ NA =86	Mean Set	Decision
11.	I collaborate with other university leaders and work as a team to ensure effective university policy implementation.	3.14	1.66	2.95	1.64	3.04	Very High Extent
12.	I welcome innovative ideas from other employees in the university that help enhance effective curriculum development.	2.74	1.87	2.68	1.67	2.71	High Extent
13.	I encourage our students and secure their welfare in other to sustain their interest on study as a mean of effective curriculum development.	2.56	1.76	2.62	1.65	2.59	High Extent

14.	I combine written, verbal, and interpersonal skills to supervise overall performance of the university as a mean to enhance policy implementation.	2.88	1.78	3.15	1.75	3.01	Very High Extent
15.	I acquire new human skills to manage employees and charge them to pursue the university goals as a way of effective policy implementation.	2.89	1.77	2.76	1.84	2.82	High Extent
Average Mean		2.84	1.76	2.83	2.842	2.83	

Table 3 shows item 11 with a mean score of 3.04, Item 12 with a mean score of 2.71, item 13 with a mean score of 2.59 and item 14 and 15 with a mean score of 3.01 and 2.82 respectively. In both circumstances, the results indicated a high extent on all the aspects of the human relations leadership skills configuration as a factor very effective in enhancing policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

Results of Tested Hypotheses

Hypothesis (Ho1): There is no significant relationship between conceptual leadership skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: Correlations of conceptual leadership skills configuration and policy implementation

		Compensation	Staff Commitment
Conceptual skill	Pearson Correlation	1	.764**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Policy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.764**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore, the existence of a relationship between conceptual leadership configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state is accepted.

Hypotheses (Ho2): There is no significant relationship between technical leadership skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: Correlations of technical leadership skills configuration and policy implementation

		Compensatio n	Staff Commitm ent
Technical Skill	Pearson Correlation	1	.882**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Policy Implementatio n	Pearson Correlation	.882**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore, the existence of a relationship between conceptual leadership configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state is accepted.

Hypotheses (Ho3): There is no significant relationship between human relation leadership skills configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 6: Correlations of human relation configuration and tertiary education policy implementation

		Compensatio n	Staff Commitme nt
Human Relation Skill	Pearson Correlation	1	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Policy Implementatio n	Pearson Correlation	.864**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: The table shows the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore, the existence of a relationship between conceptual leadership configuration and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state is accepted.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between conceptual leadership skills and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

- Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.764$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a significant positive relationship. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between technical leadership skills and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

- Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.882$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a significant positive relationship. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between human relations leadership skills and policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State.

- Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.864$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a significant positive relationship. The null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study with regards to the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills configuration as per the findings from the research questions has revealed a high extent in the way all the three components of leadership skills configuration enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, leadership in the three universities have shown that they are finding leadership skills configuration in conceptual, technical and human relations very effective in the enhancement of their policy implementation responsibilities in their respective universities. The findings of this study conveniently corroborates the findings of Anietie et. al., especially in conceptual leadership skills²⁹, and also in agreement with scholars such as Ibrahim³⁰, Akintidure and Ekundayo³¹, and Amadi³², on technical leadership skills configuration. Similarly, on human relations leadership configuration, the finding of this study was also supported by Anietie et al³³ and Ogbonnaya³⁴. Generally, these scholars opined that, leadership skills configuration brings about leadership ability to understand and evaluate the institution as a whole system and interconnected in all its aspects of administration. This is very important to any leadership in a university system to have an overview of its policy and implement it accordingly.

On the findings of this study with regards to the hypotheses tested, all the three hypotheses revealed that there is significant relationship between the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills configuration and enhancement of policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state. This is in itself a strong support to the results arrived at in the analysis of the research questions. Essentially, all the null hypotheses were rejected. Apparently, as scholars and studies supported the findings of this study earlier, it is worthwhile to accepts that wherever there is a constant configuration of the conceptual,

²⁹ Anietie, U., Okon, I., & Effiong, A. (2019). Leadership skills and university administration effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Management*, 14(2), 45–59.

³⁰ Ibrahim, M. (2018). Conceptual skills in higher education leadership: Implications for policy implementation. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 10(1), 22–35.

³¹ Akintidure, O., & Ekundayo, H. (2012). Technical skills and leadership effectiveness in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 5(2), 67–79.

³² Amadi, E. (2007). University leadership and policy implementation: Challenges in the Nigerian context. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 23–35.

³³ Anietie, U., Okon, I., & Effiong, A. (2019). Leadership skills and university administration effectiveness.

³⁴ Ogbonnaya, C. (2014). Human relations in educational management: Implications for policy execution. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 8(3), 101–115.

technical and human relations leadership skills of leaders in a university, there will certainly be an effective and efficient policy implementation in the university administration.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the configuration of conceptual, technical, and human relations leadership skills significantly enhances policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. Table 1 indicates that conceptual skills were rated at a *high extent*, particularly in problem-solving and the ability to “learn and unlearn” as adaptive capacities for leadership. Table 2 highlights the strong role of technical skills, such as adopting new methods and providing technical support, with innovative research practices rated at a *very high extent*. Table 3 emphasizes the importance of human relations skills, especially collaboration among university leaders and effective communication, which were also rated highly. Further correlation analyses confirmed strong positive associations ($r = 0.764\text{--}0.882$) between all three leadership skill domains and policy implementation.

These findings are consistent with previous studies. Adanma and Igweneme³⁵ stressed that leadership effectiveness in higher education institutions is critical to successful policy implementation. Gbarage similarly reported that visionary, collaborative, and innovative leadership fosters improved university performance³⁶. Research conducted in Cross River State revealed that university policies are implemented more effectively when leaders engage stakeholders in decision-making. Likewise, Ozurumba and Ebuara found that weaknesses in technical and human relations skills often hinder policy implementation in Nigerian universities³⁷. At the international level, Khoreva and Wechtler confirmed in *Human Resource Management Review* that effective technical and relational leadership practices significantly enhance policy execution in organizations³⁸. This alignment suggests that the present findings are not an anomaly but rather contribute to the global body of knowledge on leadership and policy implementation in higher education.

However, unlike many prior studies that emphasize technical and human relations skills, this study underscores the importance of conceptual leadership skills. While Ibrahim acknowledged their relevance, most earlier works did not

³⁵ Adanma, C., & Igweneme, C. (2019). Leadership effectiveness and policy implementation in higher education institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Leadership and Policy Management*, 2(4), 55–68.

³⁶ Gbarage, A. (2020). Strategies for advancing good leadership in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Innovative Leadership and Policy Management*, 2(2), 112–128.

³⁷ Ozurumba, C., & Ebuara, V. (2013). An appraisal of education policy implementation and the challenge of leadership in Nigerian universities. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 3(6), 31–35.

³⁸ Khoreva, V., & Wechtler, H. (2015). HR practices and employee performance: The role of line managers in policy implementation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(3), 262–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.09.001>

examine their influence quantitatively³⁹. By systematically measuring how conceptual skills—such as redefining competencies and exploring alternative approaches—relate to policy implementation, this study fills a critical gap in the literature. The findings highlight that conceptual leadership is no less important than its technical and relational counterparts, particularly when navigating the complexities of higher education policy.

The significance of this research lies in three dimensions. First, it broadens the discourse on university leadership by emphasizing conceptual skills, which are often underexplored. Second, the use of the LSCEPIQ instrument, which distinguishes between the three dimensions of leadership skills, allows for sharper comparative analysis. Third, the study provides robust empirical evidence, with a large sample size and high instrument reliability, strengthening the credibility of its conclusions. The novelty of this study rests in its demonstration that the configuration of conceptual, technical, and human relations leadership skills is collectively indispensable for successful policy implementation in public universities—an area that remains relatively under-researched in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Summary of mayor findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the configuration of leadership skills among university administrators plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of policy implementation in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the results reveal that the configuration of conceptual leadership skills significantly enhances administrators' capacity to translate institutional goals into actionable strategies, thereby fostering positive and sustainable policy implementation.

In addition, the study establishes that the configuration of technical leadership skills contributes substantially to effective policy implementation. Administrators who possess and apply strong technical competencies are better equipped to manage resources, coordinate operations, and address procedural complexities that often accompany policy execution in higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the configuration of human relations leadership skills emerges as a critical determinant of successful policy implementation. The ability of university administrators to cultivate trust, maintain open communication, and foster collaboration among stakeholders ensures that policies are not only formally adopted but also practically supported within the institutional community.

The analysis also confirms the existence of significant relationships between the three dimensions of leadership skills—conceptual, technical, and human relations—and the effectiveness of policy implementation. This suggests that policy implementation in public universities is not merely a procedural

³⁹ Ibrahim, Y. (2018). Education policy development in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 2(1), 12-19.

exercise but a multidimensional process that depends on the balanced integration of leadership competencies.

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of leadership development programs that strengthen conceptual, technical, and human relations skills among university administrators. Such initiatives are essential to improving institutional governance, ensuring the sustainability of policy reforms, and ultimately enhancing the overall performance of public universities in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Although, this study has its conclusion in its findings, however, it is pertinent to state that its general intent is to come out with something that will bring about growth and development of the administrative competence of university leaderships at all levels for the achievement of an overall policy implementation which is the hall mark of university management in education. To achieve that, it attempted using a paradigm shift from the traditional leadership characteristics of working with the status quo to the employment of innovation and dynamism in the configuration of the conceptual, technical and human relations leadership skills at all times in the enhancement of policy implementation in the university system. Meanwhile, the study does not claim to have exhausted these innovative configurations of leadership skills but provided only a food for thought in finding many other initiatives that can further enhance the quality of leaderships that will guarantee effective policy implementation in public universities in Rivers state.

Recommendation

In light of the findings, this study emphasizes the need for deliberate efforts to strengthen the leadership capacities of university administrators in Rivers State. First, administrators are encouraged to continuously configure and reconfigure their conceptual leadership skills by engaging in reflective learning processes. This requires both learning and unlearning ideas in order to remain adaptive and responsive to the dynamic challenges of policy implementation within public universities.

Second, it is recommended that administrators enhance their technical leadership skills through the acquisition of new competencies and the effective use of modern technologies. By gradually phasing out traditional practices that tend to hinder efficiency, universities can ensure that policy implementation processes are accelerated and aligned with global best practices in higher education management.

Third, the cultivation of human relations leadership skills is essential. Administrators should foster collaboration, teamwork, and open communication with colleagues and stakeholders. A collegial leadership approach not only facilitates the exchange of innovative ideas but also strengthens collective responsibility for achieving effective policy outcomes across the university system.

Finally, university management must invest in capacity development programs that enable administrators at all levels to understand the interconnectedness of conceptual, technical, and human relations skills in policy implementation. By building integrated leadership competencies, public universities in Rivers State will be better positioned to achieve sustainable policy reforms and improved institutional performance.

REFERENCES

- Adanma, C., & Igweneme, C. (2019). Leadership effectiveness and policy implementation in higher education institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Leadership and Policy Management*, 2(4), 55–68.
- Akintidure, I. O., & Ekundayo, H. T. (2012). Teacher education in a democratic Nigeria: Challenges and the way forward. *Educational Research*, 3(5), 429–435.
- Akintidure, O., & Ekundayo, H. (2012). Technical skills and leadership effectiveness in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 5(2), 67–79.
- Akpan, C. P., & Undie, J. A. (2007). Access to university education in Nigeria: Issues and problems. In J. B. Babalola, G. O. Akpa, A. O. Ayeni, & S. O. Adedeji (Eds.), *Access, equity and quality in higher education* (pp. xx-xx). NAEAP Publications.
- Amadi, E. (2007). University leadership and policy implementation: Challenges in the Nigerian context. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 23–35.
- Amadi, M. N. (2007). Funding initiatives in higher education. In J. B. Babalola, G. O. Akpa, A. O. Ayeni, & S. O. Adedeji (Eds.), *Access, equity and quality in higher education* (pp. 543–554). NAEAP Publications.
- Anietie, R., Uba, T. L., & Rita, S. M. (2019). Insurance policy integration for curbing educational waste in public secondary schools in Rivers State. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 3(6), 50–55.
- Anietie, U., Okon, I., & Effiong, A. (2019). Leadership skills and university administration effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Management*, 14(2), 45–59.
- Bolden, R., Gosling, J., O'Brien, A., Peters, K., Ryan, M., & Haslam, A. (2012). *Exploring leadership: Individual, organizational, and societal perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2017). Effective leadership in higher education: A literature review. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 886–902.

- Bush, T. (2018). Leadership and management in education: Developing essential skills and competencies. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 9–24.
- Ejiogu, A. (2003, October 29-31). Decentralization as panacea for Nigeria's education misadventure. *Annual Conference of Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP)*, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Ezeh, F., & Dike, G. (2016). Federal government formally bans Post-UTME. *The Sun News*. <http://sunnewsonline.com/fg-formally-bans-post-utme/>
- Ezeugbor, C. O., & Nwachukwu, E. A. (2011). Adopting e-learning in university education: Prospects and problems. *Unizik Orient Journal of Education*, 6(1&2), 145-151.
- Fullan, M. (2021). *Leading in a culture of change* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Gbarage, A. (2020). Strategies for advancing good leadership in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Innovative Leadership and Policy Management*, 2(2), 112–128.
- Ibrahim, M. (2018). Conceptual skills in higher education leadership: Implications for policy implementation. *International Journal of Educational Leadership*, 10(1), 22–35.
- Ibrahim, Y. (2018). Education policy development in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Science & Innovation (IJASSI)*, 2(1), 12-19.
- Khoreva, V., & Wechtler, H. (2015). HR practices and employee performance: The role of line managers in policy implementation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(3), 262–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.09.001>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Mumford, M. D., Todd, E. M., Higgs, C., & McIntosh, T. (2017). Cognitive skills and leadership performance: The nine critical skills. *Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 24–39.
- Nakpodia, E. D. (2012). Impediments of educational bureaucrats on teacher education in Nigeria. *Global Business and Economics Research Journal*, 1(2), 111-124.
- Nwankwo, F., & Okoli, I. (2021). Leadership skills and educational policy implementation in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 19(2), 88–103.

- Ogbonnaya, C. (2014). Educational policy implementation in secondary schools in Nigeria. In G. O. Unachukwu & P. N. Okorji (Eds.), *Educational management – A skill-building approach* (pp. 647-652). Rex Charles & Patrick Limited.
- Ogbonnaya, C. (2014). Human relations in educational management: Implications for policy execution. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 8(3), 101–115.
- Ogunode, N. J., & Ahaotu, G. N. (2020). Educational policies in Nigeria: Challenges of implementation and the way forward. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 7(3), 1–13.
- Ogunode, N. J., & Ahaotu, G. N. (2020). Educational strategic plans in Nigeria: Challenges of implementation and ways forward. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 3(6), xx-xx.
- Okoroma, N. S. (2006). Educational policies and problems of implementation in Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 46(2), 23-32.
- Ozurumba, C., & Ebuara, V. (2013). An appraisal of education policy implementation and the challenge of leadership in Nigerian universities. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 3(6), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/iosr-jrme.v3i6.456>
- Stogdill, R. M. (1948). Personal factors associated with leadership: A survey of the literature. *Journal of Psychology*, 25(1), 35-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1948.9917362>
- Ugwoke, S. C., Ofoegbu, C. A., & Ugwuanyi, F. N. (2012). Quality assurance in teacher education for teacher productivity in Anambra State. *Bassey Andah Journal*, 5, 195-206.
- Umar, A., & Anietie, U. (2019). Conceptual leadership skills and effective administration in universities. *Journal of Educational Management*, 14(2), 45–59.
- World Bank. (2017). *Strategic leadership for policy implementation in higher education: A Sub-Saharan African perspective*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42970-6_5
- Yabo, M. (2007). Leadership and educational management in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration*, 5(2), 33–47.