



# POLITICS OF MANAGING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION WITH EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA: PERSPECTIVES OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyze academic staff perception of politics of managing university education with emerging technologies in the Covid-19 pandemic era in Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The population of the study was made up of all the 2867 academic staff cutting across the University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology, all in Cross River State, Nigeria. To collect data for the study, the sample of the study was 1432 academic staff randomly selected from the entire population of academic staff of the two universities. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Data collected were coded and analyzed using mean, standard deviation and frequency counts. It was found among others that; appointment, funding, employment, award of contract and payment of EAA are all areas with political interference in the university system; YouTube, Edmodo, Facebook WhatsApp, Blogging, Telegramm, Digital White Board, Wechat, EasyBib, Notability, Projector and Zoom are among the emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era. Among the recommendations was that university management and the government should ensure that emerging technologies are made available and optimally utilized by both academic staff and students for effective teaching, learning, assessment of students, research result dissemination and for the general management of the public universities.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic Staff, Covid-19 pandemic, Emerging technologies, Management and Politics,

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary society, technologies become prerequisites in every operation in educational institutions. University education which is the apex of teaching and learning is not an exception in the application of technologies in its day-to-day activities and programmes.

It is common knowledge that in addition to research, university is noted for the production and development of high level manpower to meet the needs of the society. Stressing on the role of university, Asuquo & Ekpoh (2021) highlighted generation of knowledge, ideas, skills and dissemination of same via teaching, learning, researches and community services.

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Technological revolution has brought tremendous changes in pedagogical processes in the university system. As such, Kamani (2019) opined that revolutionizing education sector is the consequence of technological innovations. The impact of technologies in educational organization is evidence in enhanced and transformed teaching, learning, research and general school management. For more than two decades, technological advancement/emergent is observed to have been globally pervasive.

From ordinary point of view “emergent” means facts, ideas, invention, values to mention a few that become known as well as those yet to come into existent. Progressive nature of the technologies is what informed “Emerging technologies (ETs)” as a concept. Neira, Salinas and Crosetti (2017) conceptualized ET as “resources, artifacts, tools, concepts and innovations associated with digital, that have a disruptive potential to transform or generate changes in the processes where they are used, regardless of whether these are new or old technologies.” The authors stressed that ETs are expected to transform or generate changes in different educational processes. Emerging technologies in terms of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data analytics, cloud computing, Augmented and Virtual Reality are already finding their footing in the learning industry (Kamani, 2019). In this context, ETs are the known and used digital tools as well as those that are yet to be in existence, known and introduced into educational institutions to enhance and sustain pedagogy and the general school administration. Leoste, Jōgi, Ōun, Pastor, López and Grauberg (2021) emphasized that ETs have a potential for future impact on the developments in higher education and teaching practices at the universities. Veletsianos (2008) stressed that ETs are “tools, concepts, innovations, and advancements utilized in diverse educational settings (including distance, face-to-face, and hybrid forms of education) to serve varied education-related purposes (e.g., instructional, social, and organizational goals).” These technologies no doubt, have affected, transformed and will keep improving all spheres of works and particularly the traditional/conventional university educational system in terms of teaching, learning, research and general management of the university in particular.

Management in the context of educational institution entails administrative approaches directed towards satisfying both the present and future educational needs of the students (Ekpoh

& Asuquo, 2017). The authors stressed that the unprecedented advancement in technologies around the globe and the need to complement the traditional management techniques to salvage educational institutions from entropy informs effective management techniques in the school system. Therefore, managing university education with emerging technologies in the Covid-19 pandemic era became a herculean task. The disruption caused by Covid-19 in educational sector was unprecedented because the system was affected by the global lockdown imposed by various governments of the world. In relation to university system, the covid-19 era is described as a period of rapid pedagogical shift from traditional to online class sessions, personal to virtual instruction, and seminars to webinars. The issue of blended learning (the combination of e-learning technology with the traditional face-to-face teaching) was suspended. Only e-learning was in vogue for those who could afford it.

During the covid-19 era, inequalities played out in educational system because only those who could afford the cost associated with online teaching and learning benefitted from educational services. This was a new normal and a deviation from the traditional/conventional system. To worsen the matter, the pandemic of COVID-19 resulted in school closures/ shutdown of educational institutions. In schools, colleges and universities, face-to-face education and school management were put on hold. Synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning strategies were on the increase. Irrespective of the stimulated growth of online educational activities in order to mitigate educational disruption occasioned by the pandemic in education system, covid-19 pandemic impacted negatively on educational activities and programmes (Zalat, Hamed, and Bolbol, 2021). The governments of various countries round the globe could not tolerate the threat of the covid-19 in educational system. Policies were put in place to ensure that university educational activities and programmes continue for the benefit of all. Such policies include but not limited to the following; social distancing, using of handsanitizer, regular washing of hands, using of nose mask to mention a few. All these among others, were the strategies to reverse the paradigm shift in educational system to sustain blended teaching and learning strategies and the general school management at the same time. The policies indicate interactions between politics and management of university education with

emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era.

To achieve educational predetermined goals, all educational activities and programmes are done under a given governance (Edet, Asuquo and Okon (2020). Governance are the values and rules through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive (Ogbodo, 2019). The author further stressed that politics is a precondition for governance and this makes politics necessary for the provision of public education. Ebegbulem (2010) viewed politics as the art of influencing, manipulating or confronting groups so as to advance the purpose of some against the opposition of others. From the point of view of Harold (2010), politics is a system of who gets what, when and how. Politics has permeated every aspect of human life, the home, religious institutions, public and private organizations as well as educational institutions (Ekpoh & Edet, 2017). Edet et al (2020) affirmed that politics exists in every group or organization whether formal or informal and also within a political party that controls the government policies at the Local, State and Federal levels.

The issue of politics of managing university education with emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era appeared unavoidable because university system is a subsidiary of the society where politics reside. Leadership at the political cycle determined the level of adopting emerging technologies in the school system. Whatever any university was doing during covid-19 pandemic era was designed by the political leaders. It is common knowledge that various times, each political class/government determines when to go to school, why going to school (aims and objectives), where to be educated, who is to be educated and by who, and what to teach (curriculum contents). Edet et al (2020) stressed that any form of government in power wants every sector and education sector in particular to function vis-à-vis the needs and interest of the incumbent government. Based on the foregoing background, the present study was conducted to assess academic staff perceptions of politics of managing university education with emerging technologies in the Covid-19 pandemic era in CRS, Nigeria.

Empirical evidence abound with respect to academic staff perceptions regarding how university education is being managed. For instance, the result of a study by Lodesso and Warito (2016) indicated that academic staff of the universities in Ethiopian perceived the internal

quality management practice as poor. The result of another study by Adetunji and Ogunleye (2015) on the effect of government policies on university administrators: A review of Nigeria, indicated that government policies and practices on the implementation of decisions influenced universities administrators' responses to the development of the university system. In a study on politics and university administration in Nigeria, it was found that politics had not impacted much on administration of universities in Nigeria (Afolabi, Ekundayo and Ogbiye ,2020). In 2016, Mamedu and Ahiakwo examined academic staff perception of quality of working-life and university goal attainment in the south – south geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study recorded a state of satisfactory quality of work - life for the staff as well as a state of unfavourable university goal attainment as amongst the findings. Mamedu and Ahiakwo's work is related to the present study because academic staff perception is a common variable in both studies. However, the two studies differ from each other because the former addressed staff perception of quality of working-life and university goal attainment while the current study focused on perspectives of academic staff of politics of managing university education with emerging technologies in Covid-19 pandemic era. In Pakistan, Ahmed, Baloch and Ghani (2015) conducted a study on the impact of organizational politics on the productivity of employees. Two hundred and eighty (280) respondents working in different organizations across Pakistan at different management levels were used for the study. The result of the study showed that there was no significant relationship between politicking in organization and productivity of employees in lower and higher management level.

The previous studies reviewed have similarities with the present study in such areas as focusing in the university system, internal quality management/organizational politics and using academic staff as respondents. However, the present study is different from the reviewed studies as it addressed academic staff perception of politics of managing university education with emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era. It is on the basis of the dissimilarities, that the present study was carried out to fill the gap identified in the literature.

#### **Statement of the problem**

There is no doubt that the university educational sector is not totally free from political control. The governments always interfere in the management

of university especially the public institutions. The issue of institutional autonomy becomes limited as a result of political influence on educational sector. It is expected that in an ideal situation, public university institution should conduct its own affairs and determine means of pursuing and achieving goals independent of external control or outside interference.

Unfortunately, within the public university system in Cross River State, Nigeria, observation indicates that the management of the system during covid-19 era is characterized by many challenges ranging from system shut-down occasioned by the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic and changes in policies to inadequate technological facilities. In the world of emerging technologies, lecturers could not easily reach out to their students via emerging technologies. Where it is applicable, ineffectiveness abound in terms of poor network, inadequate technological tools and inability of many academic staff members and students to have access to the emerging technologies. Consequent upon these problems, this study emerged to analyze academic staff perception of politics of managing University Education with emerging technologies in the Covid-19 Pandemic era in Cross River State, Nigeria.

#### **Purpose of the study**

In a general term, this study analyzed academic staff perception of politics of managing University Education with emerging technologies in the Covid-19 Pandemic era in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to analyze;

1. Areas with political interference in the management of university education.
2. Forms of emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era..

3. The advantages of using emerging technologies in teaching and learning.

4. The extent of utilization of the emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era.

#### **Research questions**

1. What are the areas with political interference in the management of university education?

2. What are the forms of emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era..

3. What are the advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era?

4. What is the extent of utilization of the emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. This design was considered as being suited for the study because it describes phenomena as they occur in the population. Asim, Idaka and Eni (2017) stressed that descriptive research design involves collection of data to provide an account and to describe individuals, groups or situation. The population of this study comprised all the public university lecturers of 2019/2020 academic session. Data available in Academic Planning of both University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) indicate 2410 and 457 academic staff respectively. This resulted in a total population of 2867 academic staff. The sample of the study was one thousand seven hundred and twenty (1720) academic staff randomly selected from the entire population of academic staff of the two universities.

Population and sample distribution of academic staff in the study area is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

S/N	Institution	Population	60% of the population	Sample
1.	University of Calabar	2410	1446	1446
2.	Cross River university of Technology	457	274	274
	Total	2867	1720	1720

The instrument for data collection was the researchers' designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in sections A, B, C, D and E. Section A obtained demographic information of the respondents. While section B, C, D and E collected data with respect to areas with political interference in the management of university education, forms of emerging

technologies available in the university for teaching and learning, the advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era and the extent of utilization of the available emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era respectively. Section B, C, D and E contained 7, 14, 15 and 18 items respectively. Except section E which takes

such respond items as High Extent of Utilization (HEU) and Low Extent of Utilization (LEU), items in sections B, C and D were measured using a four-point Likert-scale of Strongly Agree (AS), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity from experts (three from Educational Management and three from Measurement and Evaluation all from the University of Calabar, Calabar). Cronbach Alpha was used in establishing the reliability of the instrument with indices of 0.81- 0.86 which made the instrument suitable for data collection. In order to collect the necessary data, the

researchers with the help of some assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Out of 1720 copies of the copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents for data collection, 1708 copies were retrieved while 12 copies were not return. This indicates 99.3% rate of return and attrition rate of .7%. The data collected and coded were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and frequency counts.

## RESULTS

Research question 1: What are the areas with political interference in the management of university education?

**Table 2:** Perception of academic staff of the areas with political interference in the management of university education

S/N	Areas with political interference in the management of University Education	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	Appointment	3.02	1.357	Agree
2.	Admission	2.76	1.345	Agree
3.	Funding	3.10	1.124	Agree
4.	Employment	2.83	1.033	Agree
5.	Award of contracts	2.61	1.131	Agree
6.	Monitoring of minimum academic standard	2.43	0.524	Disagree
7.	Payment of Academic Allowance (EAA)	3.37	1.242	Agree

The result of the analysis as indicated in Table 1 shows that, except monitoring of minimum academic standard, academic staff perceived that management of university education in terms appointment, admission, funding, employment, award of contract and payment of EAA are all

areas with political interference in the university system.

Research question 3: What are the forms of emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era?

**Table 2:** Perception of academic staff of the emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era?

S/N	Emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	Google classroom	2.12	1.957	Agree
2.	You Tube	2.86	1.245	Agree
3.	Edmodo	3.00	1.294	Agree
4.	Facebook	2.53	1.033	Agree
5.	WhatsApp	2.51	1.141	Agree
6.	Blogging	2.83	1.124	Agree
7.	Telegramm	3.67	1.142	Agree
8.	Digital White Board	3.88	1.267	Agree
9.	Wechat	2.88	1.126	Agree
10.	Google Drive	3.00	1.224	Agree
11.	EasyBib	2.65	1.026	Agree
12.	Notability	3.00	1.125	Agree
13.	Projector	3.28	1.255	Agree
14.	Zoom	3.12	1.145	Agree

The result of the analysis in Table 2 shows that, YouTube, Edmodo, Facebook WhatsApp, Blogging, Telegramm, Digital White Board, Wechat, EasyBib, Notability, Projector and Zoom are among the emerging technologies in the

university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era?

**Research question 4:** What are the advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era?

**Table 3:** Perception of academic staff of the advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era.

S/N	Advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era?	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	Effective teaching and learning	3.12	1.357	Agree
2.	Instant connection with others	2.86	1.345	Agree
3.	Immediate access to information	3.00	1.124	Agree
4.	Information retrieval enhancement	2.53	1.357	Agree
5.	Ease data analysis	2.51	1.131	Agree
6.	Promotion of students centered learning	2.83	1.124	Agree
7.	Reinforcing of referencing rules	3.67	1.242	Agree
8.	Information storage	3.88	1.467	Agree
9.	Editing of information	2.89	1.057	Agree
10.	Facilitating online teaching and learning	3.01	1.257	Agree
11.	Online payments	2.56	1.357	Agree
12.	Enhancement of research skills	3.14	1.367	Agree
13.	Freedom to upload lectures at one's comfort	2.64	1.34	Agree
14.	Increased access to research materials	3.02	1.257	Agree
15.	Promotion of Webinar among faculties	2.66	1.057	Agree

The analysis of research question 3 in Table 3 indicates the agreement of the academic staff that all the 15 items are the advantages of using emerging technologies in the university in the covid-19 pandemic era. These advantages are; effective teaching and learning, instant connection with others, immediate access to information, information retrieval enhancement, ease data analysis, promotion of students centered in learning, reinforcing of referencing rules, information storage, editing of information, facilitating online teaching and learning, online

payments, enhancement of research skills, freedom to upload lectures at one's comfort, increased access to research materials, promotion of Webinar among faculties

Research question 5: What is the extent of utilization of the available emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era?

**Table 5:** Perception of academic staff of the extent of utilization of the emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era

S/N	Extent of utilization of the available emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era in the universities	N	HEU	LEU
1.	Google classroom	1708	-	1708
2.	Edmodo	1708	-	1708
3.	Facebook	1708	1708	-
4.	WhatsApp	1708	1708	-
5.	Blogging	1708	120	1588
6.	Telegramm	1708	1700	08
7.	Digital White Board	1708	-	1708
8.	WeChat	1708	90	1618
9.	Google Drive	1708	91	1617
10.	EasyBib	1708	-	1708
11.	Notability	1708	-	1708
12.	Projector	1708	1708	-
13.	Zoom video	1708	1600	108
14.	ResearchGate	1708	1708	-
15.	Google Scholar	1708	1708	-
16.	Academia.edu	1708	1599	109
17.	E-mail	1708	1708	-
18.	YouTube videos	1708	1500	208

The analysis in Table 5 indicates that academic staff perceived facebook, whatsapp, telegram, projector, zoom video, researchgate, google scholar, e-mail youtube video as the utilized emerging technologies in the covid-19 pandemic era. This result is upheld because the frequency counts of the "HEU" opinions are greater than "LEU" opinions. However, the result also showed that notability, easybib, google drive, wechat, digital white board, blogging, edmodo and google classroom were perceived as emerging technologies considered by academic staff under LEU in public universities in Cross River State.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of research question one indicated a mixed results. It showed that apart from monitoring of minimum academic standard, academic staff perceived that management of university education in terms appointment, admission, funding, employment, award of contract and payment of EAA are all areas with political interference in the university system. The outcome of this study is not surprising because politics is pervasive and cannot be avoided in the management of university education. This result is in line with Edet et al (2020) who found among others that administrative processes in terms of allocation of courses to the lecturers, methods of offer of appointment in recent time, appointment of principal, officers within the university, appointment of membership into various committees within university, appointment of academic advisers, office of the HODs, Deanship

position, award of research grants, award of Honorary Degrees by Universities to political office holders and academic staff promotion criteria are highly politicized within the universities.

The possible justification for the result of this finding appearing the way it did is attributed to the fact that educational sector has since been become increasingly politicized in recent times. There is no doubt that government is a function of political activities and such politics affects the affairs, activities, programmes and decision making of the public university system. For instance, appointment or election of Principals Officers within public universities is not devoid of external political influence. Again, to maintain certain level of political motives, university system adopted some admission policies/criteria such as catchment areas, quota system, Vice Chancellors' (VCs') lists to mention a few.

With regards to funding, evidence abound to show that public universities have been grossly affected over the years by inadequate budgetary allocation to educational sector. For instance, "Between 2009 to 2018 the federal government budgetary allocation to education were as follows: 7.25% in 2009; 4.83% in 2010; 6.16% in 2011; 8.20% in 2012; 8.55 in 2013; 9.94 in 2014; 7.74 in 2015; 6.10% in 2016; 7.38% in 2017 and 7.03% in 2018" (Ekpoh & Asuquo, p. 34). In 2019, the same government allocated 7.02% to education sector (Amoo ,2018 and Iyoha ,2019). In 2020, 6.7% was allocated (Amoo (2019). Olufemi (2020) stated 5.6% as budgetary



allocation to educational sector. It is clear that none of these annual budgetary allocations to education sector is up to half of 26% let alone 26% recommended minimum benchmark by United Nations. Besides, it may be difficult to say that employment, award of contracts and payment of academic allowance are devoid of political influence.

The respondents responses to research question two provide insight to the emerging technologies in the university for teaching and learning in the covid-19 pandemic era. These technologies include; You Tube, Edmodo, Facebook WhatsApp, Blogging, Telegramm, Digital White Board, Wechat, EasyBib, Notability, Projector and Zoom. The result is in line with Veletsianos (2008) who stressed that ETs are "tools, concepts, innovations, and advancements utilized in diverse educational settings (including distance, face-to-face, and hybrid forms of education) to serve varied education-related purposes (e.g., instructional, social, and organizational goals). The result is an indication that emerging technologies in the university system is a paradigm. These technologies have in no small measure extent brought a huge advancement and motivation into teaching, learning, research result dissemination and the general management of the university system.

The finding of this study also indicated that advantages of emerging technologies to include; effective teaching and learning, instant connection with others, immediate access to information, information retrieval enhancement, ease data analysis, promotion of students centered in learning, reinforcing of referencing rules, information storage, editing of information, facilitating online teaching and learning, online payments, enhancement of research skills, freedom to upload lectures at one's comfort, increased access to research materials, promotion of Webinar among faculties. This collaborates with Leote et al (2021) who stressed that emerging technologies have a potential future impact on the developments in higher education and teaching practices at the universities. The result depicts that academic staff considered emerging technologies as what make teaching and learning flexible at any time because of facilitating access to online educational materials, online teaching and learning at one's convenience and access to global best practices. The result also show that emerging technologies have impacted positively in the management of university system in all aspects such as teaching, learning, assessment

of students, research findings dissemination general management of the university system.

The findings of research question 4 indicated that facebook, whatsapp, telegram, projector, zoom video, researchgate, google scholar, e-mail and youtube video as the emerging technologies with high extent of utilization. However, the result also showed that notability, easybib, google drive, wechat, digital white board, blogging, edmodo and google classroom were perceived as emerging with low extent of utilization in public universities in Cross River State. This may be attributed to the fact that academic staff in the area of study may have perceived that notability, easybib, google drive, wechat, digital white board, blogging, edmodo and google classroom were not common in the public universities. Implying that utilization of emerging technologies in the university system is a function internal management and external influence arising from the government of the day.

## CONCLUSION

Politics in educational management is inevitable. It influences almost every programme and activity as well as the extent of adoption of emerging technologies in the university system. The institutional autonomy of the university is not absolute because of the influence of the government of the day in the system.

### Recommendation

1. University management and the government should ensure that emerging technologies are made available and optimally utilized by both academic staff and students for effective teaching, learning, assessment of students, research result dissemination and for the general management of the public universities.

2. Academic staff members and students with little or no knowledge with respect to utilization of emerging technologies for the purpose of pedagogy and research result dissemination, should make themselves available for capacity building programme.

3. Efforts of the university stakeholders should be directed towards ensuring availability, functionality and effective utilization of emerging technologies in the to sustain educational programmes in the event of any pandemic.

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