# THE PLACE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS IN PROMOTING E- LEARNING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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**Abstract**

*The study explored the place of educational administrators in promoting e- learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness. The study was guided by three specific purposes and three corresponding research questions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The populations comprised all Faculty Deans, Head of Departments, Head different Units and lecturers of the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. A simple random sampling technique was used while the sample size was two hundred respondents; comprising of seven Faculty Deans, twenty H.O.Ds, thirteen Unit Heads and one hundred and sixty lecturers drawn from different Faculties of the institution. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher with the title, "Roles of University Managers in promoting E-learning Questionnaire (RUMEQ)". The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity, while a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was gotten using a Cronbach Alpha Reliability Estimate. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher while the data collected was analyzed in relation with the research questions; using mean and standard deviation. The benchmark for the acceptance value for each item was 2.50 and above. This indicates that any item with a mean score of 2.49 or below was not accepted and items with mean values of 2.50 and above were accepted. The study revealed that educational administrators of every university are major key players in the management of funds, provision of necessary facilities and staff training towards optimizing e-learning in Nigerian universities. It was recommended among others that Federal and State governments in Nigeria should show more commitments in funding university education in the country; while administrators of universities should be more proactive in evolving viable option for financial sustainability in order to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities.*

**Key Words:** *Educational administrator, university, e-learning and global competitiveness*

## Introduction

The roles of educational administrators in school management, especially universities are very significant to the success or otherwise of the educational system in every society today. The impacts span across the management of staff, students, school facilities, time, health and safety practices, instructional procedures, quality control to mention just a few. Okigbo and Ndolo (2011) state that proper management of university resources would improve the school standard and accelerates the achievement of educational goals and objectives. ; just as their maladministration is catastrophic and would spell doom to every aspect of the society. Educational administrators in the university system include the university council, vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, provosts, deans, head of departments and directors of institute and other stakeholders who participate actively in the management of educational resources (human and materials) in the system (Ezeachurukwe and Johnson, 2011).

Meanwhile, the Management of every University has the overall responsibility for instructional improvement within the University and setting clear leadership roadmaps that promote high degree of teaching and learning awareness among staff and students in the university (Nwajioha, 2016). This

millstone is obviously unattainable in the present day university system without taking good advantages of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote e-learning. Undoubtedly, e-learning is becoming increasingly prominent especially in tertiary education. Rationales for its growth are wide-ranging, complex and sometimes contested, including but not limited to widening access, promoting on-campus pedagogic innovation, enhancement of distance learning opportunities, organizational changes, knowledge-sharing and revenue generation.

However, the concept of e-learning in this paper refers to the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance and/or support learning especially in University education. This implies that e-learning refers to both wholly online provision and campus-based or other distance-based provision supplemented with ICT in some way. The supplementary model would encompass activities ranging from the most basic use of ICT such as personal computers (PCs) for word processing of assignments through to more advanced adoption of specialist disciplinary software, handheld devices, learning management systems, adaptive hypermedia, artificial intelligence devices, simulations, etc., with a presiding interest in more advanced applications (Eze, 2007).

While e-learning is not new according to Oye, Salleh and Iahad (2011), only in recent years has it received substantial interest from Nigerian educators and the government. Internet-based platform has empowered Nigerians to support and facilitate many historically interactive processes like shopping, dating and banking. Attaining a university education might be the next frontier for web-based pragmatism and there are a lot of reasons why this is envisaged. These scholars argue that governments all over in the world play key roles in developing, funding and regulating ICT infrastructure as well as promoting internet connectivity. It can simply be deduced that ICTs are highly essential for contemporary educational development of any nation.

Eze (2007) stated that Nigeria, as a nation recognizes the pivotal roles of ICTs in the revitalization and development of the country's education system. This recognition according to him brought about the development of the Nigeria IT policy so that the country's education system could partner the potentials of ICTs. The Nigerian government has an IT policy that was approved in March 2001 and has one of its general objectives to help foster pedagogical innovation in the field of e-learning which adhere to the call of governments to formulate clear policy objectives. It is important to state also that another objective of the Nigerian IT policy is the preparation of global competiveness and IT integration into education and training. Theses lofty objectives would be efforts in futility without recognizing the place of educational administrators (University Managers) in attaining the ever-desired objectives of e-leaning (Nwokike, 2010).

It is worthy of note that e-learning during the dot-com boom, was perceived to embody many promises geared towards enhancing quality of teaching/learning, increasing and widening access for students, reducing costs of education for students and governments, as well as providing new business and organizational models for tertiary education institutions. The possibilities of cross-border delivery through e-learning were also seen as opportunities (and challenges) that would reshape national tertiary education systems and offer emerging economies and developing countries a quick way to build their human resources capacity. Many observers and institutions speculated on the emergence of a huge market for e-learning and created (or merely announced the future creation) of new dedicated ventures. Fully online learning and the shift from physical to virtual campuses was even sometimes seen as a probable future for tertiary education on the long run (Alu, 2011). Thus,

e-learning has come to stay as it is presently gaining much attention among world class universities and other tertiary institutions in the world and Nigeria in particular.

The Internet is central to e-learning, although it is not by in any means the only technology for it. Okigbo and Ndolo (2011) explain essentially that e-learning is another way of teaching and learning which includes instruction delivered via all electronic media including the internet, intranets, extranets, satellite broad costs, audio/video tape, interactive TV and CD Rom". Obtaining and delivering knowledge anytime and anywhere, asynchronously or synchronously is the hallmark of e-learning. Asynchronous according to him is pre-recorded and available to students anytime and anywhere. Asynchronous e-learning activities use technologies such as blogs, wikis, e-mails and discussion boards to exchange ideas and information (Nwagwu, 2011). A major advantage of asynchronous e-learning is that it allows for self-paced learning or individualized learning and flexible learning. Synchronous or live e-learning requires that learners be with their computers at the same time or learners are available at a place at the same time for electronic mediated teaching. Both formats present countless opportunities for effective education service delivery, especially in under-serviced countries such as Nigeria (Okigbo and Ndolo, 2011). Synchronous activities use on-line technologies such as chat, instant messenger/massaging, video conferencing and other kinds of virtual meetings for real time live interactions (Nwokike, 2010).

Education in the 21st century global knowledge economy requires a paradigm shift in the delivery system to match the emergent new knowledge, attitudes, skills and technologies. Since curriculum is a vehicle for attainment of educational goals and methods of delivery are a component of the curriculum, there is need for employment of effective delivery systems which will produce functional citizens locally relevant and globally competent. E-learning which means electronic learning, is an ICT driven new face of education service delivery superior to the traditional brick wall classroom learning. But there are challenges and gaps for their effective usage for e-learning especially in Nigerian universities.

In this age and season of globalization which has reduced the wide world to a global village, best practices and global benchmarks in all fields of human endeavour including higher education are accessible on the internet and could also be effectively done in Nigeria. The University managers should possess the abilities and desires to make the university globally competitive by embracing e-learning. A quality of education which is of crucial importance in this paper is the fact that education is dynamic, constantly changing and adapting itself to new demands, new circumstances and new exigencies, within local and global contexts. E-learning is the new face of global education which the National Universities Commission should adapt to and optimize in the universities for sustainable development.

The concept of e-learning is value-laden and marking out its boundaries is very much akin to its conceptualization (Edemoh and Ogedegbe, 2014). Also, the Nigerian universities are a particularly interesting setting for e-learning research, largely due to the incessant strikes of public universities lecturers and closure of classrooms for learning. The present era of corona virus pandemic has also called for a paradigm shift from the statuesque by deemphasizing the conventional classroom setting. It could be simply stated that e-learning is presently compulsory in the life of every university in Nigeria and perhaps, the world over. The present reality is therefore a wakeup call to all stakeholders in educational industry, especially the administrators of universities who undoubtedly need to be

properly repositioned to embrace e-learning as the new order.  Hence, this study is timely as it was intended to identify the place of educational administrators in promoting e- learning in Nigerian universities towards enhancing global competitiveness.

## Statement of the Problem

E-learning is a technology whose time has come in the contemporary knowledge driven economy and globalization empowered by ICTs. However**,** it is worrisome to observe that majority of Nigerians who desire university education are sometimes denied of the opportunity because of limited offer, low computer literacy, high cost of running brick wall institutions, mass unawareness and poor management of resources which invariably constitute critical factors affecting the optimization of e-learning in Nigerian universities. The deprivations that are mostly faced by individuals with physical disabilities, who find it difficult to move about and access university educational, also constitute worries to the researcher in this paper.

Sadly, the researcher has observed that poor internet connectivity, limited expertise, infrastructural decay, energy related problems which culminate to frequent interruption of power supply and many more are perennial problem that constitute major setback for technological advancement of e-learning in Nigerian universities at present. These ugly scenarios may have resulted to the poor output of students and employment unworthiness of most Nigerian graduates which have continued unabated.

Based on the above premise, this study is designed to identify the place of university administrators in promoting e-learning for maximum efficiency that would enhance the marketability of university graduates for global competitiveness.

## Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to explore the place of university administrators in promoting e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness. Specifically, the study sought:
1. Identify the roles of university administrators in the management of funds to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities
2. Ascertain the roles of university administrators in providing the necessary facilities for optimizing e-learning in Nigerian universities.
3. Find out the roles of university administrators in staff development for optimizing e-learning in Nigerian universities

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:
1. What are the roles of university administrators in the management funds to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities?
2. What are the roles of university administrators in providing the necessary facilities to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities?
3. What are the roles of university administrators in staff development for optimizing e-learning in Nigerian universities?

## Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature is anchored on the schematized diagram which links the relationship between all the variables in the study. The schema links the variables on the Ways of managing state

tertiary institutions for sustainable living and global competitiveness. It was reviewed based on the following subheadings: Meaning of management, partnership or outreach programmes, research development programmes, knowledge transfer activities, sustainable development and global competitiveness.
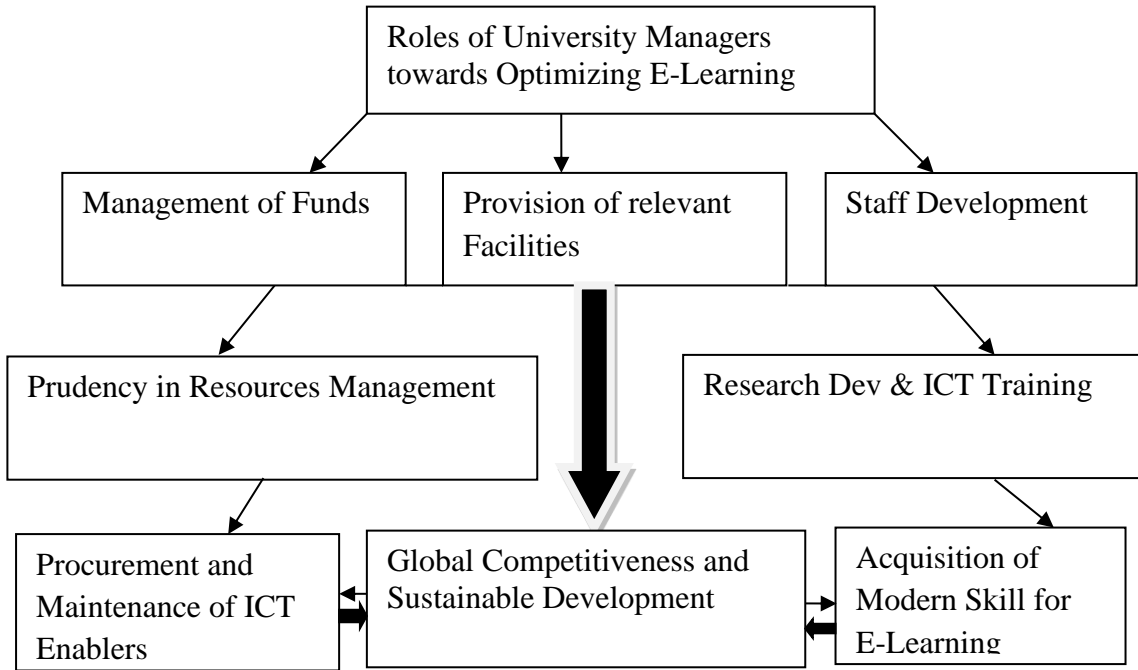


**Figure 1:** Schema on the ways of exploring university administrators in promoting e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness (**Source:** Nwajioha, 2020).

The schematized diagram above serves as the conceptual framework that highlights the place of university administrators in promoting e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness. The schema shows that administration principally involves the mobilization of resources and effective coordination towards attaining organizational goal and objectives. In the context of this study, university administration involves the generation and utilization of both human and material resources of the university to enhance e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness. The variables of interest as illustrated in the schema reflect the specific purposes of this study which portray the linkages between effective management of funds, provision of needed facilities, staff development and enhancing e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness and sustainable development Nigerian society.

**Method**

This study adopted descriptive survey design. This design according to Nworgu (2006) is one in which data is collected from a sample of a given population for describing the pattern or trend of distribution of the elements in a population. He stated that a descriptive survey design deals with the representative sample of the population consisting of individuals of different ages. This design is considered appropriate for eliciting information from the university managers on the roles that they are expected to play to promote e-learning in the university for sustainable development and global competitiveness of university graduates. The study was done in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

The population of this study comprised of all the administrators and lecturers from the institution. The populations comprised all Dean of Faculties, Head of Departments, Head different Units and lecturers of the institutions.

A simple random sampling technique was used while the sample size was two hundred respondents; comprising of seven Faculty Deans, twenty H.O.Ds, thirteen Unit Heads and one hundred and sixty lecturers drawn from different Faculties of the institution. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher with the title, "Roles of University Managers in promoting E-learning Questionnaire (RUMEQ)". The instrument was made up of eighteen items, with six items in each of the three research questions. In order to ensure the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the instrument, the questionnaire developed for the study was subjected to face and content validity, while the reliability coefficient of 0.78 was gotten using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Estimate.

The researcher administered the instrument personally while the data collected was analyzed in relation with the research questions using mean and standard deviation. The benchmark for acceptance value for each item was 2.50 and above. This indicates that any items with a mean score of 2.49 and below were not accepted and items with mean value of 2.50 and above were accepted.

### Results

The results of the study were presented in tables based on the three research question that guided the study.

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of university administrators in the management of funds to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities?

**Table 1:** Mean rating of respondents on the roles of university administrators in the management of funds to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities

| S/N | | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | University managers should always prioritize e-leaning in the preparation of the financial estimate of the institution. | 2.68 | 0.68 | A |
| 2 | Government subvention to the university should be properly managed to always guide against misappropriation of funds. | 2.72 | 0.71 | A |
| 3 | Records of all financial transactions should be kept and properly audited from time to time to avoid financial recklessness | 2.77 | 0.90 | A |
| 4 | Students should be made to pay their fees when necessary to boast the internal generated revenue. | 2.90 | 0.93 | A |
| 5 | University managers should explore various alternative sources of funds to make the institution economically viable | 3.01 | 0.68 | SA |
| 6 | Philanthropists and Alumni Associations could be encouraged to donate towards optimize e-learning in the universities | 2.76 | 0.74 | A |

**Grand Mean = 2.81**

**A = Agreed; SA = Strongly Agreed**

Data in table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed to all the six item statements in the table. This implies that the mean score for each of the items of serial numbers 1-6, is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 as established in this study. Hence, the average mean score of 2.81 as obtained is also greater than 2.50 benchmark value of acceptance. Therefore, the item statements in the table constitute the roles of university administrators in the management of funds to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness.

**Research Question 2:** What are the roles of university administrators in providing the necessary facilities to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities?

**Table 2:** Mean rating of respondents the roles of university administrators in providing the necessary facilities to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities

| S/N | Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-----|-------|------|----|----------|
| 7 | Modern classrooms should be constructed to suit the 21$^{st}$ century teaching and learning | 2.67 | 0.52 | A |
| 8 | E-libraries should not only be provided but made functional and accessible to staff and students. | 2.73 | 0.81 | A |
| 9 | Functional laptops and other ICT enablers should be provided to all staff especially lecturers to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities | 2.61 | 0.71 | A |
| 10 | Internet connectivity should be considered a priority to enable staff and students to leverage on the promises and opportunities e-learning. | 2.76 | 0.86 | A |
| 11 | Problems posed by the erratic power supply in many universities should be tackled to optimize e-learning | 2.82 | 0.63 | A |
| 12 | Adequate security should be put in place to safeguard ICT facilities from theft and vandals, | 3.01 | 0.74 | SA |

**Grand Mean = 2.77**

**A = Agreed; SA = Strongly Agreed**

The results of the analysis in table 2 showed that each of the six item statements in the table has mean score that is greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 as established in this study. The results imply that the respondents agreed to all the item statements therein. Hence, the average mean score of 2.77 as obtained from the table is also greater than 2.50 benchmark value of acceptance. Therefore, the item statements in the table constitute the roles of university administrators in providing the necessary facilities to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness.

**Research Question 3:** What are the roles of university administrators in staff development for optimizing e-learning in Nigerian universities?

**Table 2:** Mean rating of respondents on the roles of university administrators in staff development for optimizing optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities

| S/N | Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-----|-------|------|----|----------|
| 13 | All staff, especially academics should be made to compulsorily undergo a capacity building programme on ICT | 2.71 | 0.72 | A |
| 14 | University administrators should encourage research development programmes to help produce expertise through global knowledge worldwide. | 2.73 | 0.81 | A |
| 15 | Knowledge of computer use should be incorporated as amongst the basic requirements for academic staff appraisal and promotion. | 2.63 | 0.74 | A |
| 16 | Academic regulation should be designed to promote technology enhanced teaching and learning as critical in the mix of diverse strategies | 3.06 | 0.66 | SA |
| 17 | Employment of staff especially academics should among other things consider computer literacy of the applicant | 2.72 | 0.96 | A |

| 18 | Staff who demonstrate high commitment to enhanced teaching and learning should motivated | 2.66 | 0.86 | A |

**Grand Mean = 2.75**          **A = Agreed; SA = Strongly Agreed**

The analysis in table 3 above revealed that the respondents agreed to all the six item statements as contained therein. This implies that the mean score for each of the items of serial numbers 13-18, is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 as established in this study. Hence, the average mean score of 2.75 as obtained is also greater than 2.50 benchmark value of acceptance. These imply that the item statements in the table constitute the roles of university administrators in staff development to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness.

**Discussion**

The results of the study on table 1 showed that each of the six item statements has a mean score which is greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 as set for the study. The average mean score of 2.81 as obtained is also greater than 2.50 benchmark value of acceptance. These specifically implied that prioritizing e-leaning in the preparation of the financial estimate, avoiding misappropriation of funds, proper keeping of records of financial transactions, effective management of students' school fees, exploring various alternative sources of funds and encouraging Philanthropists and Alumni Associations to donate to the university constitute the possible roles of university administrators in the management of funds towards optimize e-learning in the universities. This finding agrees with Ilechukwu and Njoku (2014) who state that e-learning, administratively offers lots of opportunity to enhance the attainment of university goals. They emphasize that the university administrators should take advantages of e-learning to always reach their students and other prospective audience even at cheaper cost and more convenient approach. Egwu and Nwajioha (2016) emphasize that higher education in Nigeria is in travail since the system is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude. To them, a number of multi-faceted problems, with particular reference to inadequate funding and corrupt practices have inhibited goal attainment and are raising questions, doubts and fears, all of which combine to suggest that the system is at a crossroad. University managers can do better by abridging the financial loophole and reckless spending; to provide for a robust implementation of e-learning in Nigerian Universities.

Special internal or external funding remains a prominent feature of e-learning development in tertiary education. This stems from a perception of e-learning as a novel activity that merits experimentation and research. Many institutions are now clearly attempting to move to normal funding, typically through a combination of mainstream internal funds and student fees, especially as external funding raises the problem of sustainability (Ilechukwu and Njoku, 2014). However, governments and institutions need to have a clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of e-learning to determine the need for a robust investment to optimize e-learning. Thus, e-learning, pivoted and facilitated by ICTs, with its obvious advantages and benefits to education in general and the Nigerian university system in particular, should be rightly explored by university administrators as an integral part of the education reform toward attaining efficient, relevant and functional education system for economic growth, human development and environment conservation, which are the tripod of sustainable development and global competitiveness.

The findings of the study as seen on table two indicated that each of the six item statements in the table has  mean score that is greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50 as established in this study. Therefore, the item statements in the table constitute the roles of university administrators in

providing the necessary facilities to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness. These findings agree with Alu (2011) who posited that the gains of e-learning are hardly achievable in the light of obvious infrastructural decay in Nigerian Universities. He argued that the benefits of e-learning permeate the entire university system, in both academic and non-academic dimensions; stating that e-learning profoundly enhances the local and global competitiveness of a university, its staff and students by impacting critical knowledge, values and skills, best practices and global benchmarks for optimal relevance and productivity in the economy, society and ecology.

In line with the above findings, Edemoh and Ogedegbe (2014) argued that university administrators and other concerned stakeholders should step up measures to tackle the challenges facing library and information professionals (LIPs) in optimizing e-learning opportunities for effective education service delivery in Nigeria such as transition challenge, technological challenge, web skill challenge, digital divide challenge and acquisition challenge. Other challenges include erratic and epileptic power supply, poor funding; weak and inadequate infrastructure, high cost of bandwidth and other hardwares and softwares.

The analysis on table 3 above revealed that the respondents agreed to all the six item statements as contained therein. It shows that the mean score for each of the items of serial numbers 13-18, is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 as established in this study. These imply that the item statements in the table constitute the roles of university administrators in staff development to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities for global competitiveness.

Similarly, the findings is in line with the study of Eze, Chinedu-Eze and Bello (2018) who observed that challenges of e-learning include low level of technology and literacy in the country. He argued that low computer literacy and skills among staff and students and management, low level of professionals and corruption. Accordingly, they stated that building a community of e-learning adopters within and across institutions and, more generally, knowledge management processes related to e-learning, are clearly crucial for further e-learning developments. The development of faculty-led initiatives appeared to be an important ingredient for success at many sample institutions. However, the scaling up of successful experiments and the sharing and mainstreaming of good practices remain the real challenges. Just as there is no one best model or trajectory for e-learning development for institutions, there is obviously nothing like a one-size-fits-all staff development model for mainstreaming e-learning. Partnerships are certainly a key characteristic of contemporary e-learning that could help institutions to share knowledge, good practices, and achieve benefits such as advanced technology and quality curricula and pedagogy, in addition to enhanced market presence and lower costs (Panddey and Tiwari, 2014).

**Conclusion**

The global trend in e-learning is still grossly under explored in Nigerian universities. It is however established that exploring optimally the gains of e-learning opportunities in Nigerian university system would provide possibilities for Nigeria's sustainable development. By closing the knowledge, literacy, attitude and skills gap between Nigeria and the more advanced and developed countries and enhancing educational effectiveness through proper university management, e-learning will help to address the brain drain syndrome and set Nigeria on the path of global competitiveness and

sustainable development. Thus, university managers can do better by abridging the financial loophole and reckless spending; to provide for a robust implementation of e-learning in Nigerian Universities.

**Recommendations**

1. Federal and State governments in Nigeria should show more commitments in funding university education in the country; while administrators of universities should be more proactive in evolving viable option for financial sustainability to optimize e-learning in Nigerian universities.

2. Private individuals and corporate organization should be encourage to partner with government in the provision of basic facilities in the universities; while administrators of universities should effectively utilize to opportunities offered by Tertiary Education Trust Fund and other similar institutions to tackle the infrastructural decay in public universities in Nigeria towards optimizing e-learning.

3. Staff development should at all times be given due attention by school managers. Needless to emphasize that research development is an integral part of university life. Every staff, especially academics should be encouraged to acquire the basic for proficiency in e-learning.

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