



## THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION



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### Abstract

*In recent times, educational institutions are globally advancing technologically in order for their products to align with labour market demands. This study explores the future of educational management in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria, focusing on technological integration, entrepreneurial development, and strategic resource planning. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from university administrators, academic staff, and students across the five universities in Rivers State which are Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru university, University of Port Harcourt Choba, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic and Ken Sarowiwa polytechnic Bori, Rivers State. The findings revealed that a strong consensus on the need for digital transformation, institutional innovation, and improved infrastructure are paramount in the management of universities. Implications for policy and practices are also discussed, the study concluded that empirical evidence from this study suggests among others that the future of educational management in Rivers State lies in: accelerated digital transformation, investment in infrastructure and so on. The study therefore recommended among others the establishment of ICT development grants at state and institutional levels.*

**Keywords:** Future, Educational management, empirical, investigation, innovation, infrastructure

### Introduction

Educational institutions globally are currently undergoing transformative changes geared and influenced by digital technologies, labour market changes, and pedagogical reforms. In Rivers State, where universities play a pivotal role in regional development, the anticipation and preparation for future trends in educational management is paramount.

Educational institutions are globally advancing technologically in other for their products to align with labour market demands. As we advance in future it becomes important to consider the future opportunities and the challenges that comes with them in education by so doing we harness the envisioned potential treats and challenges ahead and take advantage of the opportunity to innovate and grow our educational system and then create a future where education can be accessible by all, equal to all and empower our graduates to face every world challenges ahead. This study investigates the future of educational management and proposes empirically grounded strategies for way forward.

### Current State of Educational Management

The current state of educational management in Rivers State's public universities, focusing on Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) cannot be overemphasized. This analysis encompasses key developments, challenges, and strategic initiatives shaping the educational landscape in these institutions. Rivers State's public universities are actively



working towards modernizing their educational management systems through technology integration, leadership development, and infrastructural improvements. While significant progress has been made, addressing challenges such as technological limitations and political interference remains essential. Continued investment in infrastructure, staff training, and research will be pivotal in achieving sustainable educational excellence in the region. Some of the efforts made includes but are not limited to:

1. **Integration of Technology in Administration:** Both RSU and IAUE have been proactive in adopting technological tools to enhance administrative efficiency. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics:** Research indicates that the implementation of AI tools has improved administrative tasks, decision-making processes, and knowledge management within these universities. These technologies have streamlined operations and enhanced the global recognition of the institutions. **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** Platforms like Canvas and Moodle have been instrumental in facilitating instructional delivery. These systems support online assessments, real-time feedback, and adaptive learning, contributing to improved educational outcomes. **E-Learning via Zoom:** Post-COVID-19, RSU's Business Education program effectively utilized Zoom for remote learning. Despite challenges like cost and unequal access, the platform proved beneficial for sustainable education delivery.

2. **Infrastructure and Digital Transformation:** RSU has made significant strides in digitizing its administrative processes: **ICT Centre:** The university boasts a world-class Information and Communications Technology Centre capable of supporting over 1000 students simultaneously. This facility manages student registrations, course scheduling, result processing, and payroll systems, enhancing overall efficiency. **Electronic Records Management:** Despite advancements, studies reveal that electronic record systems are minimally utilized in some tertiary institutions in Rivers State. There's a recommendation for equipping these institutions with e-facilities and training staff for effective administration.

3. **Leadership and Strategic Planning:** Leadership plays a pivotal role in educational management: **Vice-Chancellor Appointment:** In March 2025, Professor Isaac Zeb-Obipi was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of RSU. His background in Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management positions him to drive strategic initiatives within the university. **Self-Leadership Strategies:** Research emphasizes the importance of self-leadership among university administrators. Developing structured leadership programs focusing on responsibility, resilience, and strategic planning is crucial for enhancing institutional effectiveness.

4. **Challenges in Educational Management:** Despite progress, several challenges persist: **Technological Limitations:** Issues such as inadequate technology infrastructure, shortage of qualified instructors, and insufficient funding hinder the effective implementation of technology in education. **Political Interference:** Studies highlight that political considerations often influence university management decisions, affecting appointments and governance structures. This interference can compromise academic standards and institutional autonomy.

5. **Innovative Research and Development:** There's a recognized need to foster innovative research to drive educational management transformation: **Research and Technology Integration:** Encouraging research that integrates cutting-edge technology can enhance staff proficiency and stimulate creative thinking, leading to improved educational outcomes.

The perceived future needs in educational management reflect the evolving demands of modern education systems and the necessity to adapt to global trends, technological advances, and societal expectations. Here's a detailed breakdown of these future needs:

1. **Technological Integration and Digital Transformation Smart Education Systems:** Incorporation of AI, machine learning, data analytics, and the Internet of Things (IOT) for personalized learning and efficient school management. **Robust Learning Management Systems (LMS):** Needed to manage hybrid



and remote learning efficiently. Cyber security: As more systems go digital, protecting student data and institutional information becomes crucial.

2. Capacity Building and Professional Development Training in Digital Pedagogy: Teachers and administrators will need continuous professional development in using digital tools and e-learning strategies. Leadership Development: New leadership models focused on innovation, change management, and strategic thinking will be critical. Recruitment of Skilled Managers: Future educational management requires professionals adept in policy, technology, finance, and curriculum design. Okoro, 2020 opined that leadership training can equip university managers with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of the future, making informed decisions and driving growth and innovation. By embracing these factors, Rivers State Universities can position themselves for success in the future, providing high-quality education and contributing to the development of the state and beyond. (Agu and Nwankwo,2019).

3. Data-Driven Decision-Making Real-Time Analytics: Using data to monitor student performance, resource utilization, and institutional effectiveness. Evidence-Based Policy Formulation: Management strategies need to be informed by data and research for better outcomes.

4. Infrastructure Development Smart and Green Campuses: Eco-friendly, tech-enabled learning environments will become standard. Connectivity: Reliable internet and digital infrastructure are essential for equal access, especially in rural or underserved areas. Upgraded Administrative Systems: Digital tools for admissions, records, assessments, and feedback loops.

5. Inclusivity and Equity Access for All: Policies and programs that ensure education is inclusive of gender, disability, socioeconomic background, and geographical location. Differentiated Instruction: Tailored programs for students with diverse learning needs.

6. Strategic Partnerships and Funding Models Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Collaborations for funding, technology support, and resource sharing. Alternative Financing: Crowd funding, international grants, and alumni contributions to supplement traditional funding

7. Curriculum and Program Innovation Future-Focused Curriculum: Emphasis on skills like critical thinking, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. Interdisciplinary Learning: Blending of fields (e.g., STEM with the arts) to prepare students for complex, real-world problems.

8. Regulatory and Policy Reforms Agile Policy Frameworks: Need for flexible regulations that can adapt to rapid technological and societal changes. Autonomy and Accountability: Balancing institutional independence with mechanisms to ensure transparency and results.

9. Mental Health and Student Support Service Wellness Programs: Increasing need for systems that support student mental health and well-being. Counseling and Life Skills Services: Institutions must offer services that help students navigate academic and life challenges.

10. Sustainability and Global Competence Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Integrating environmental, economic, and social sustainability into curricula. Global Citizenship Education: Preparing students to engage and succeed in a globalized world.

### **Challenges of Futuristic Educational Management Strategies**

Ezeugo, 2019 stated that looking at the changing world, the future of educational management strategies will face several complex challenges driven by evolving technological advancement, societal changes, and global uncertainties. These are some of the perceived challenges:



1. Integration of Technology: Balancing innovation with accessibility and equity can be problematic. Managing digital transformation while ensuring all students and staff have equal access to technology and internet connectivity a significant and constant hurdle.
2. Data-Driven Decision Making: Ethical use and analysis of student data. Educational leaders must leverage data responsibly to personalize learning and improve outcomes without compromising privacy.
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Creating inclusive policies and practices for diverse populations. Managers must address cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences while combating systemic biases.
4. Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Attracting and keeping qualified educators. Future strategies must address burnout, compensation, and professional development to maintain a skilled workforce.
5. Student Mental Health and Well-being: Providing comprehensive support services. There's an increasing demand for mental health resources, requiring strategic partnerships and resource allocation.
6. Lifelong Learning and Skills Development: Aligning curricula with future job market demands. Institutions need flexible, competency-based education models that adapt to lifelong learning needs.
7. Governance and Policy Adaptation: Navigating shifting political, economic, and regulatory landscapes. Educational leaders must be agile and proactive in policy interpretation and implementation.
8. Globalization and Cultural Sensitivity: Managing cross-cultural expectations and global partnerships. Strategies must support global competencies and virtual collaboration.

### **Impact of the future of educational management Accelerated Digital Transformation**

1. Enhanced learning experiences: Digital transformation can provide students with more engaging and personalized learning experiences through online
2. Increased accessibility: Digital platforms can increase access to education for students with disabilities, remote or rural students, and those with busy schedules.
3. Improved efficiency: Digital transformation can automate administrative tasks, freeing up staff to focus on more strategic initiatives and improving overall efficiency.

### **Investment in Infrastructure**

Adetayo, (2020), In the future of educational management, investment and infrastructure will play increasingly pivotal roles in transforming how educational systems are structured, transmitted, and maintained, Investment in Educational Management, Investment in educational management refers to the strategic allocation of financial, human, and technological resources to improve the planning, delivery, and oversight of education. Key Areas of Investment: some key areas of investment include: Digital Learning Technologies: Tools like AI-driven platforms, Learning Management Systems (LMS), and virtual reality (VR) require substantial investment but can personalize and enhance learning, Teacher Training and Professional Development: Investing in educators ensures effective curriculum delivery and adaptive teaching methods. Data Systems: Advanced analytics for tracking student performance, school effectiveness, and resource utilization are essential for informed decision-making. Policy and Leadership Development: Investment in leadership training ensures school administrators and policymakers are equipped to handle complex, future-oriented challenges. Increased public-private partnerships in educational innovation.

In terms of infrastructure in education we have some infrastructure in Educational Management which includes the physical and digital systems that support educational delivery and administration such as: Digital Infrastructure: High-speed internet, cloud-based platforms, and cyber security frameworks that support remote and hybrid learning environments. Physical Infrastructure: Modern, sustainable school buildings equipped with smart classrooms, laboratories, and safe learning environments. Administrative Infrastructure: Efficient systems for enrollment, performance tracking,



payroll, budgeting, and communication among stakeholders. Future Needs and Innovations: Smart schools powered by IOT and AI for automated resource management. Decentralized infrastructure to support localized decision-making (especially in rural or underserved areas). Green infrastructure to align with sustainability goals (e.g., solar-powered schools). Interconnection: Investment Infrastructure Innovation, The future of educational management hinges on the interplay between investment and infrastructure. Without investment, infrastructure cannot be built or maintained. Without infrastructure, investment cannot translate into meaningful improvements. Together, they create an ecosystem of innovation, supporting scalable, resilient, and inclusive education systems.

Investment in infrastructure can provide students with modern, well-equipped facilities that support effective learning and research.

2. Improved safety and security: Up-to-date infrastructure can ensure a safe and secure learning environment, reducing risks and liabilities.

3. Enhanced reputation: Well-maintained facilities can enhance the reputation of the university, attracting top talent and increasing competitiveness.

Policy Support for Entrepreneurial Curriculum Development: Policy support for entrepreneurial curriculum development are the strategies, frameworks, and resources that governments, educational institutions, and stakeholders implement to foster entrepreneurship through formal education.(Okebukola, 2020) It can be understood in several dimensions:

National Education Policies and Frameworks, Curriculum Design and Content Development, Teacher Training and Capacity Building, Funding and Resource Allocation, Partnerships with Industry and Private Sector. Etc Governments can integrate entrepreneurship education into national curricula at various educational levels (primary, secondary, tertiary). This includes:

Mandating entrepreneurship as a core subject or cross-curricular theme, aligning entrepreneurship education with national economic development goals, encouraging competency-based learning models that include innovation, problem-solving, and risk-taking. Policies can provide guidelines and resources for the creation of relevant, localized, and practical curriculum content, including: Case studies of successful local and global entrepreneurs, modules on business planning, financial literacy, marketing, and digital tools and focus on 21st-century skills like creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.(Nwankwo,2018)

Professional development programs for educators to deliver entrepreneurial content effectively. Inclusion of entrepreneurship pedagogy in teacher training colleges. Incentives for teachers to integrate experiential learning methods, such as project-based learning, simulations, and mentorship.

Governments and partners can allocate budgets to: Develop curriculum materials. Support schools and institutions with infrastructure, such as innovation labs or incubators. Facilitate student participation in entrepreneurship competitions and initiatives. Policies can promote collaboration between educational institutions and the business community to: Co-develop curriculum that reflects real-world entrepreneurial challenges, offer internships, mentorships, and business incubation programs for students, encourage corporate social responsibility (CSR) investments in entrepreneurship education. Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks Strong policy support for entrepreneurial curriculum development is critical for cultivating a generation of innovators and job creators. It bridges the gap between education and economic development by embedding entrepreneurship into the fabric of learning systems, empowering students to think creatively and act economically.

1. Innovative curriculum: Policy support can lead to the development of innovative, entrepreneurship-focused curricula that prepare students for the modern workforce.

2. Increased employability: Entrepreneurial skills can increase students' employability and potential for self-employment, contributing to economic growth and development.

3. Collaboration with industry: Entrepreneurial curriculum development can foster collaboration with industry partners, providing students with practical experience and real-world applications. Leadership Training for University Managers

1. Effective leadership: Leadership training can equip university managers with the skills and knowledge needed to lead effectively in a rapidly changing environment.



2. Strategic decision-making: Trained leaders can make informed, strategic decisions that support the university's goals and objectives, driving growth and innovation.
3. Improved staff morale: Effective leadership can boost staff morale, motivation, and productivity, leading to improved job satisfaction and reduced turnover.

### Objectives of the Study

The study specifically investigates the stakeholders' perspectives on the future of educational management in Rivers State. The following objectives guided the study:

To examine the current state of educational management in universities in Rivers State.

To explore the perceived future needs in educational management.

To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing futuristic educational management indices.

### Methods

Research Design: A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Population and Sample: The population comprised of staff and students from five major universities in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ken Sarowiwa Polytechnic, Ignatius Ajuru University and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Port Harcourt). Stratified random sampling was used to select 250 respondents (150 students, 60 academic staff, and 40 administrators). Fifty (50) from each university

Instruments for Data Collection:

Structured questionnaire (Likert-scale) assessing future-readiness, technological adoption, and strategic planning. Semi-structured interviews with 10 senior educational managers.

### Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics and inferential results (ANOVA, regression).

Qualitative responses were thematically analyzed.

Data Presentation and Analysis

### Respondents' Demographic Profile

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Students	150	60.0
Academic Staff	60	24.0
Administrators	40	16.0
Total	250	100.0

### Technological Integration in Management

Strong agreement on the role of technology in future educational management (82% agreed or strongly agreed). The use of technology by the youths is on increase, to really catch them in their interest, technology must be included or integrated in to the management of education but this must be done with precautions.

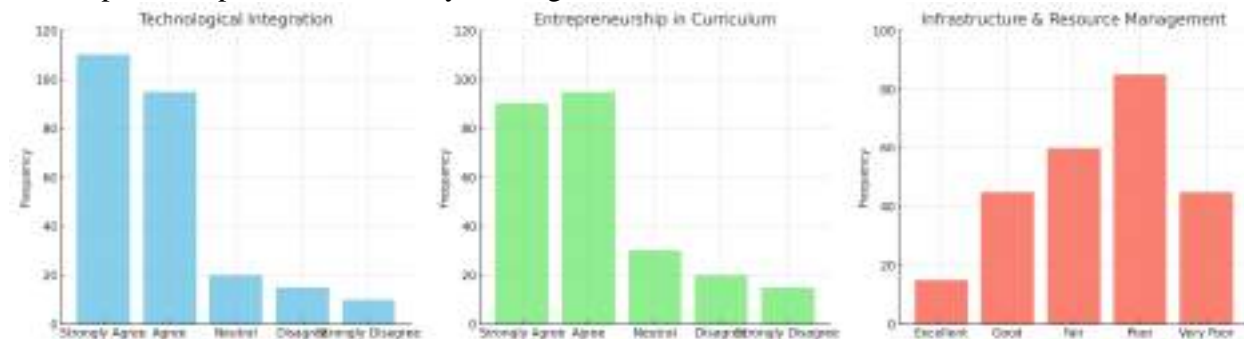
Entrepreneurship as a Core Strategy A combined 74% of participants support integrating entrepreneurship into academic programs.

Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Over 50% of respondents rated their institution's infrastructure as poor or very poor.

### Strategic Leadership and Change Management

- 80% noted lack of leadership training.
- 60% cited bureaucratic challenges.
- 100% supported the need for future strategic planning.

### 4.6 Graphical Representation of Key Findings



### Discussion

The findings confirm that Rivers State universities are aware of the pressing need to modernize educational management. While the vision for a tech-driven, entrepreneurial academic environment is widely accepted, operational realities such as poor infrastructure and limited training hinder progress. These findings align with national trends in educational reforms.

### Conclusion:

Empirical evidence from this study suggests that the future of educational management in Rivers State lies in:

- Accelerated digital transformation:
- Investment in infrastructure:
- Policy support for entrepreneurial curriculum development:
- Leadership training for university managers:

### Recommendations:

1. Establish ICT development grants at state and institutional levels.
2. Embed leadership and change management programs into staff development.
3. Conduct periodic futures studies to align policies with emerging trends.

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