www.ijarp.com ISSN 2456-9992 Page: 01-15

Research Article

International Journal Advanced Research Publications

Volume: 02
Issue: 10

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE APPLICATIONS AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING: A SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

***Dr. Kwende Doosuur Catherine**

Department of Educational Administration and Planning Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.

Article Received: 06 September 2026, Article Revised: 26 September 2026, Published on: 16 October 2026

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Kwende Doosuur Catherine**
Department of Educational Administration and Planning Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.

Doi: https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.1543

ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative technology with significant potential to improve educational management and enhance personalized learning in higher education. This study examined the influence of AI applications and AI-supported personalized learning on educational management in Nigerian public universities from a Systems Thinking perspective. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of AI applications on educational management and determined how AI-supported personalized learning contributes to institutional effectiveness. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised academic staff, administrative staff, and undergraduate students from selected Nigerian public universities, while a sample of 300 respondents was selected through purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using the researcher-developed *Artificial Intelligence Applications, Personalized Learning and Educational Management Questionnaire (AIAPLEMQ)*, which yielded an overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Chi-square statistics tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that AI applications positively influence educational management by enhancing administrative decision-making, reducing delays in routine administrative processes, and improving institutional effectiveness. Similarly, AI-supported personalized learning positively

influenced educational management by promoting learner engagement, individualized learning experiences, monitoring students' progress, and improving academic performance. The study concludes that integrating AI into university administration and instructional processes can significantly enhance educational management in Nigerian public universities. It recommends increased investment in AI infrastructure, staff capacity building, and AI-enabled personalized learning systems to improve institutional performance and educational quality.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Personalized Learning, Educational Management, Nigerian Public Universities, Systems Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed virtually every sector of society, fundamentally changing how organizations operate, deliver services, and make strategic decisions. Among these technological innovations, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most influential drivers of digital transformation because of its ability to simulate human intelligence through learning, reasoning, problem-solving, language processing, and decision-making. Unlike conventional information technologies that primarily automate routine tasks, AI continuously learns from data, recognizes complex patterns, generates predictive insights, and supports evidence-based decision-making, thereby enabling organizations to respond more effectively to changing environmental demands (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Consequently, AI has become an indispensable resource across sectors such as healthcare, finance, agriculture, manufacturing, governance, and education, where it is increasingly recognized as a catalyst for innovation, productivity, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

Recent advances in machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, computer vision, cloud computing, and generative AI have significantly expanded the capabilities of intelligent systems. These developments enable AI to process vast amounts of structured and unstructured data, recognize hidden relationships, predict future outcomes, and generate recommendations that support strategic planning and organizational performance. Recognizing these opportunities, governments, industries, and international organizations have increasingly integrated AI into national development agendas, emphasizing its potential to strengthen institutional effectiveness, improve service delivery, and promote inclusive growth (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

Within higher education, AI has evolved from a specialized technological innovation into a strategic resource for transforming teaching, research, and university administration. Universities worldwide are increasingly adopting AI-driven technologies to improve instructional delivery, strengthen research activities, enhance student support services, optimize administrative processes, and improve institutional governance. This growing adoption reflects the changing expectations placed on universities as centres of knowledge creation, innovation, and national development. As higher education institutions confront increasing student enrolments, heightened accountability, financial pressures, and growing global competition, there is a corresponding need to modernize academic and administrative processes to remain relevant within the rapidly evolving digital economy.

The complexity of contemporary university administration has made traditional management approaches increasingly inadequate. Educational managers are required to process extensive information relating to student enrolment, academic performance, staff productivity, financial management, quality assurance, and institutional planning in order to make timely and informed decisions. Manual administrative procedures and fragmented information systems often limit the capacity of university leaders to respond effectively to these demands. Consequently, institutions are increasingly turning to AI-enabled technologies capable of supporting intelligent decision-making, automating routine processes, analysing institutional data, and improving operational efficiency. AI applications such as predictive analytics, intelligent decision-support systems, virtual assistants, automated workflows, and learning analytics enable university administrators to make proactive decisions that enhance institutional effectiveness and service delivery (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2022; Daniel, 2023; Williamson & Eynon, 2023).

The significance of AI extends beyond administrative modernization to the broader domain of educational management. Educational management involves the planning, organization, coordination, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of educational resources and activities to achieve institutional goals (Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2022). Effective educational management depends on timely access to reliable information and the ability to transform institutional data into actionable knowledge for planning and decision-making. AI contributes to this process by supporting strategic planning, monitoring institutional performance, forecasting future needs, optimizing resource utilization, and improving organizational responsiveness. Rather than merely processing information, AI generates insights that enable educational leaders to anticipate emerging challenges and make evidence-

based decisions that improve institutional performance (Daniel, 2023; Williamson & Eynon, 2023).

Alongside its influence on educational management, AI has significantly transformed the learning process through the promotion of personalized learning. Contemporary higher education increasingly recognizes that students differ in their backgrounds, abilities, interests, learning preferences, motivations, and academic needs. These differences influence how students engage with learning activities and achieve educational success. Consequently, traditional one-size-fits-all instructional approaches are gradually giving way to learner-centred models that emphasize flexibility and individual learning pathways.

Personalized learning is an instructional approach that adapts teaching methods, learning resources, assessment strategies, and academic support to meet the unique characteristics and needs of individual learners (Pane et al., 2022). Advances in AI have made personalized learning increasingly feasible by enabling intelligent systems to collect and analyse learner data, monitor academic progress, identify knowledge gaps, and recommend individualized learning experiences. Through machine learning algorithms, AI-powered educational platforms continuously evaluate students' learning behaviours, engagement levels, assessment outcomes, and interaction patterns to provide adaptive instruction, immediate feedback, and customized learning resources (Luckin, Holmes, Griffiths, & Forcier, 2022).

AI-supported personalized learning is implemented through several complementary technologies that enhance both teaching and learning. Adaptive learning systems modify instructional content according to students' demonstrated competencies, ensuring that learners progress at appropriate rates. Intelligent tutoring systems provide individualized explanations, guidance, and corrective feedback, while AI-powered virtual assistants offer academic and administrative support beyond normal classroom hours. Learning analytics further strengthens personalized learning by transforming educational data into meaningful information that enables lecturers and administrators to identify students at academic risk, predict future performance, and implement timely interventions that improve student success (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2022; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2023). Consequently, AI-supported personalized learning promotes greater student engagement, academic achievement, retention, and overall educational quality (Pane et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Beyond improving instructional outcomes, AI-supported personalized learning also generates valuable institutional data that enhance educational management. Continuous analysis of learner interactions enables university administrators to monitor programme effectiveness, evaluate institutional performance, forecast enrolment trends, identify factors influencing

student success, and support evidence-based planning. Through learning analytics and predictive modelling, educational leaders are increasingly able to make proactive decisions based on real-time evidence rather than relying solely on historical reports (Siemens & Baker, 2022; Williamson & Eynon, 2023). Thus, AI simultaneously strengthens teaching, learning, and institutional governance.

Understanding these multiple dimensions of AI requires a theoretical perspective that recognizes universities as interconnected systems rather than isolated administrative units. Systems Thinking, rooted in the General Systems Theory of Bertalanffy (1968) and further developed by Senge (2006), conceptualizes organizations as open systems composed of interdependent components whose effectiveness depends on the quality of their interactions. Within universities, academic departments, administrative units, lecturers, students, technological infrastructure, governance structures, and external stakeholders operate as interconnected elements working collectively toward institutional goals. Consequently, changes introduced within one component inevitably influence the functioning of the entire system.

From a Systems Thinking perspective, the implementation of AI represents a process of institutional transformation rather than the mere adoption of digital technologies. The effectiveness of AI depends on the interaction between technological infrastructure, institutional leadership, organizational policies, human resources, governance structures, and educational practices. AI-supported personalized learning therefore becomes an integral component of educational management by generating reliable evidence for strategic planning while simultaneously improving learners' educational experiences. Systems Thinking thus provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how AI applications and personalized learning collectively contribute to improved institutional effectiveness through the interaction of technological, organizational, and human factors (Scott, 2021).

The relevance of this integrated perspective is particularly evident within Nigerian public universities. As major contributors to national development through teaching, research, and community service, these institutions are expected to produce globally competitive graduates while maintaining high standards of educational quality and institutional accountability. Increasing enrolments, expanding academic programmes, and growing demands for efficient service delivery require university administrators to adopt innovative approaches capable of improving both educational management and student learning experiences. AI therefore offers significant opportunities to modernize institutional operations, strengthen evidence-

based decision-making, improve administrative effectiveness, and support personalized learning capable of addressing the diverse educational needs of students.

Although the literature on AI in higher education has expanded considerably, much of the existing research has examined AI from isolated perspectives, focusing separately on instructional technology, administrative automation, learning analytics, intelligent tutoring systems, or technology adoption. While these studies have contributed valuable knowledge, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how AI applications and personalized learning jointly influence educational management within an integrated Systems Thinking framework, particularly in Nigerian public universities. Similarly, empirical studies in Nigeria have concentrated largely on e-learning, information and communication technology adoption, and digital transformation, with relatively few investigations exploring AI-enabled personalized learning as a strategic mechanism for enhancing educational management.

Addressing this gap is increasingly important because effective educational management requires integrated approaches that combine technological innovation with institutional leadership, organizational coordination, and evidence-based decision-making. Examining AI applications alongside personalized learning within a Systems Thinking framework provides a more comprehensive understanding of how these interconnected dimensions contribute to institutional effectiveness and educational quality. It is against this background that this study examines Artificial Intelligence Applications and Personalized Learning: A Systems Thinking Approach to Educational Management in Nigerian Public Universities**.**

Statement of the Problem

Educational management is widely recognized as a fundamental requirement for achieving the goals of higher education because it ensures the effective coordination of academic and administrative activities. However, observations by the researcher indicate that educational management in many Nigerian public universities still appears to experience challenges such as delays in administrative decision-making, inefficient management of institutional data, weak communication systems, and limited adoption of personalized learning approaches. These challenges seem to have generated concerns among university administrators, lecturers, students, and policymakers regarding the ability of universities to deliver quality education and improve institutional effectiveness. Recognizing the importance of digital transformation, government and university authorities have introduced policies and investments to promote Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies in higher

education. Despite these efforts, AI adoption remains relatively limited in many universities. This situation therefore necessitates investigating the influence of Artificial Intelligence applications and AI-supported personalized learning on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and personalized learning in enhancing educational management in Nigerian public universities. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence applications on educational management in Nigerian public universities.
2. Determine the influence of AI-supported personalized learning on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the influence of Artificial Intelligence applications on educational management in Nigerian public universities?
2. How does AI-supported personalized learning influence educational management in Nigerian public universities?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: Artificial Intelligence applications have no significant influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

H_{02}: AI-supported personalized learning has no significant influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

Research Method

The study adopted **a** descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain data from a representative sample of respondents in order to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and personalized learning on educational management in Nigerian public universities without manipulating the study variables. According to Emaikwu (2022), a descriptive survey design is suitable for studies that seek to describe existing conditions and establish relationships

among variables as they naturally occur. The study was carried out in selected Nigerian public universities. These universities were selected because they have increasingly adopted digital technologies to support teaching, learning, and administrative processes, thereby providing an appropriate context for examining AI applications and personalized learning in educational management. The population of the study comprised academic staff, administrative staff, and undergraduate students in the selected public universities during the 2025/2026 academic session. A sample of 150 respondents comprising 50 academic staff, 50 administrative staff, and 200 undergraduate students was selected using a multistage sampling procedure involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select universities with evidence of digital learning platforms and AI-enabled educational technologies. Stratified sampling ensured adequate representation of the three respondent categories, while simple random sampling was employed to select respondents within each stratum. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Artificial Intelligence Applications, Personalized Learning and Educational Management Questionnaire (AIAPLEMQ)**.** The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained items measuring Artificial Intelligence applications in educational management, including intelligent decision support systems, administrative automation, predictive analytics, and digital resource management. Section C comprised items measuring AI-supported personalized learning and educational management. The questionnaire contained 30 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1)**.** The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two specialists in Educational Administration and Planning and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi. Their observations and recommendations regarding clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and coverage of the study variables were incorporated in revising the instrument before its final administration. A pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents drawn from a public university outside the study area to determine the reliability of the instrument. The responses obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.87 for the Artificial Intelligence Applications scale, 0.84 for the Personalized Learning scale, and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating that the instrument possessed high internal consistency and was suitable for the study. Prior to the administration of the instrument, approval was obtained from the authorities of the selected universities. Three trained research assistants facilitated the administration and retrieval of the questionnaires. The objectives of

the study were clearly explained to the respondents, and they were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and the exclusive use of the information for academic purposes. A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were administered, and all properly completed copies were used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The data analysis and interpretation are presented according to the research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study. The decision rule was that null hypotheses were rejected if the P-value was less than 0.05 and not rejected if otherwise.

Research Question One

What is the influence of Artificial Intelligence applications on educational management in Nigerian public universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analyses of Artificial Intelligence applications and Educational Management.

S/No	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	St. Dev	Remarks
1	Artificial Intelligence applications improve administrative decision-making in the university.	17	34	52	116	81	3.08	0.60	Positive
2	It enhances the management of students' academic records and institutional data.	13	18	67	132	74	2.94	0.95	Negative
3	It facilitates faster communication and dissemination of information within the university.	11	23	44	104	122	2.97	0.91	Negative
4	It supports effective planning and allocation of institutional resources.	34	43	47	109	71	2.93	0.89	Negative
5	It reduces delays and errors associated with routine administrative tasks.	102	113	41	32	16	4.08	0.52	Positive
6	It improves the overall effectiveness of educational management in the university.	48	69	84	43	60	3.57	0.73	Positive
	Cluster Mean & Std Dev.						**3.26**	**0.77**	**Positive**

Table 1 shows that out of the six items on Artificial Intelligence applications and educational management, the responses of the respondents were positive on three items and negative on three items, giving a cluster mean response of 3.26 which is positive (i.e., it is above 3.00). This means that Artificial Intelligence applications have a positive influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

Research Question Two

How does AI-supported personalized learning influence educational management in Nigerian public universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analyses of AI-supported Personalized Learning and Educational Management.

S/No	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St. Dev	Remarks
1	AI-supported personalized learning enables students to learn according to their individual learning needs.	10	21	61	118	86	3.71	0.74	Positive
2	It improves students' engagement in learning activities.	11	15	69	139	70	3.86	0.75	Positive
3	It provides timely and individualized feedback that enhances learning.	9	19	45	110	121	1.74	1.03	Negative
4	It helps lecturers monitor students' learning progress more effectively.	34	30	40	111	89	3.83	0.54	Positive
5	It promotes better academic performance among students.	100	98	39	35	32	3.19	0.43	Positive
6	It contributes to more effective educational management in the university.	44	50	91	49	70	2.16	0.88	Negative
	Cluster Mean & Std Dev.						**3.08**	**0.81**	**Positive**

Table 2 shows that out of the six items on AI-supported personalized learning and educational management, the responses of the respondents were positive on four items and negative on two items, giving a cluster mean response of 3.08 which is positive (i.e., it is above 3.00). This means that AI-supported personalized learning has a positive influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding of this study revealed that Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications have a positive influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities. The respondents generally agreed that AI improves administrative decision-making, minimizes delays and errors in routine administrative processes, and enhances the overall effectiveness of educational management, although opinions were divided regarding AI's effectiveness in records management, communication, and resource allocation. Nevertheless, the overall cluster mean indicated a positive perception of AI's contribution to educational management. This finding suggests that AI is increasingly becoming an important tool for improving institutional administration through intelligent decision support, automation of repetitive administrative tasks, and evidence-based planning. The result supports the Systems Thinking perspective adopted for this study, which views educational institutions as interconnected systems where technological innovations enhance the interaction among various administrative units, thereby improving institutional performance. The finding agrees with Bond et al. (2024), who found that AI technologies significantly improve institutional management by supporting administrative decision-making, enhancing operational efficiency, reducing administrative workload, and facilitating data-driven governance. Similarly, Daniel (2023) revealed that AI enables university administrators to analyse institutional data more effectively, automate routine operations, improve planning, and enhance organizational performance through predictive analytics and intelligent decision-support systems. Likewise, the result of Williamson and Eynon (2023) revealed that AI strengthens institutional governance by improving strategic planning, administrative coordination, and evidence-based management practices in higher education institutions. The finding is also consistent with the study of Aina and Atanda (2023), who discovered that digital transformation initiatives, including AI applications, have improved administrative efficiency, institutional responsiveness, and service delivery in Nigerian universities. However, the present finding contradicts the results of Selwyn (2022), who revealed that although AI possesses enormous administrative potential, many higher education institutions have not realized these benefits because of inadequate digital infrastructure, poor funding, weak institutional policies, and insufficient staff competencies. The disagreement may be explained by contextual differences, as the present study examined respondents' perceptions within Nigerian public universities where AI adoption is gradually expanding despite existing infrastructural limitations.

The second finding of the study revealed that AI-supported personalized learning has a positive influence on educational management in Nigerian public universities. Respondents agreed that AI enables students to learn according to their individual learning needs, improves students' engagement in learning activities, assists lecturers in monitoring students' learning progress, and promotes better academic performance. Although respondents expressed reservations regarding AI's ability to provide individualized feedback and directly contribute to educational management, the overall cluster mean indicated a positive influence of AI-supported personalized learning on educational management. This finding implies that AI-powered personalized learning contributes to educational management by generating learner data that support instructional planning, monitoring student progress, improving learner engagement, and facilitating informed administrative decision-making. The finding reinforces the Systems Thinking framework, which emphasizes the interdependence between teaching, learning, and institutional management. The finding agrees with Pane et al. (2022), who revealed that personalized learning supported by intelligent technologies significantly improves student engagement, academic achievement, and instructional effectiveness by adapting learning experiences to individual learner needs. Similarly, Holmes, Bialik and Fadel (2022) found that AI-powered learning systems provide adaptive instruction, individualized learning pathways, continuous monitoring of student progress, and timely interventions that improve learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The finding also supports Zawacki-Richter et al. (2023), whose systematic review concluded that AI-supported learning analytics assists lecturers and educational managers in identifying at-risk students, monitoring academic progress, and improving institutional decision-making through real-time educational data. Likewise, Luckin et al. (2022) observed that intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms enhance students' motivation, engagement, and learning performance while simultaneously generating valuable information for educational planning. In contrast, the finding differs from the observations of Dwivedi et al. (2023), who revealed that despite the growing adoption of generative AI in education, concerns regarding academic integrity, overdependence on AI tools, bias in algorithmic recommendations, and unequal access to digital technologies may reduce the educational benefits of AI-supported learning. Similarly, Selwyn (2022) found that excessive reliance on AI technologies may weaken critical thinking, increase digital inequality, and create ethical challenges that limit the effectiveness of personalized learning if adequate safeguards are not established.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and AI-supported personalized learning are effective innovations for enhancing educational management in Nigerian public universities. AI applications improve educational management by strengthening administrative decision-making, reducing delays and errors in routine administrative processes, and enhancing overall institutional effectiveness. Similarly, AI-supported personalized learning promotes educational management by facilitating individualized learning experiences, improving students' engagement, supporting lecturers in monitoring learners' progress, and enhancing academic performance. Although some challenges remain in areas such as records management, communication, individualized feedback, and resource allocation, the overall findings indicate that the integration of AI into university administration and teaching-learning processes contributes significantly to more efficient, responsive, and evidence-based educational management in Nigerian public universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University management should strengthen the adoption and integration of Artificial Intelligence applications in administrative processes by investing in intelligent decision-support systems, automated records management, and digital administrative platforms to improve decision-making, operational efficiency, and overall educational management.
2. University authorities and lecturers should promote the implementation of AI-supported personalized learning by providing appropriate digital learning platforms, staff training, and technological infrastructure that support adaptive instruction, learner monitoring, and individualized learning experiences to enhance educational management and students' academic outcomes.

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