

ISSN 0189 - 7012



# Journal of

## **EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY**

# **JEMT**

**JOURNAL OF NIGERIA ASSOCIATION  
FOR EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY**

JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY  
(JEMT)

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*Volume 10, number 1, 2002*

ISSN 0139-7012

## Editorial

This issue of JEMT Volume seven, Number one is the reviewed and edited manuscripts from our 2001 AND 2002 annual conventions held at the Enugu State University of Technology and at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The theme of the convention was education, information and technology for sustainable National Development. The manuscripts of this publication have been selected to reflect the thinking of diverged positions on the theme. Many areas that contribute to the sustainable national development in terms of information technology, population and environmental education, basic, teacher, adult and special education were addressed.

Several manuscripts have been selected out of a large of reviewed papers for this volume and it is our hope that the second volume of the same year will address more issues of education and development.

On behalf of the Editorial Board of the Association let me express our apology to our contributors for the delay in producing this volume. However, we shall endeavour that future editions of the journal will be produced on time.

Thank you.

**Editor.**

## NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

1. The Editors Board of the journal is prepared to consider for publications:
  - (i) reports of empirical/field studies concerned with expanding knowledge of the teaching and learning process in Educational Technology;
  - (ii) technical, methodological reports involving Educational Technology field of studies;
  - (iii) definition, theoretical and philosophical papers in Educational Technology;
  - (iv) reviews of technical, scientific, simulation and interactive research.
2. Manuscripts should not be more than 15 pages of A4 size paper, double-spaced typing. Each manuscript should be preceded by an abstract of not more than 100 - 200 words.
3. Author's name, address and a short biographical note should accompany each manuscript on a separate page.
4. Footnotes are not acceptable. References appearing in the text should be cited using the author/date system.
5. All tables, diagrams, illustrations etc. should be in separate sheet, clearly labelled, materials that contain members should be referred to *TABLES*; materials containing diagrams or most words should be referred to as *FIGURES*. Each table and figure should have an explanatory legend, which should be typed at the top and bottom of the page respectively.
6. All illustrated tables, figures, charts, graphs, diagrams, and photographs must be of high quality to permit immediate reproduction.
7. We adopt the style of the latest edition of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (*APA*); consult it for a guide.
8. Manuscripts can also be submitted in diskettes following the guidelines:
  - (a) use 3½ diskettes in *IBM/MS-DOS* Windows or Microsoft word.
  - (b) electronic illustrations (if desired) on a separate diskette from the text.
  - (c) label diskette with your name, the file name, and word processing programme used.
9. Manuscripts are accepted for review with the understanding the same work has not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere.
10. Manuscripts which are *NOT* prepared in line with these notes will immediately be returned to the author(s) for necessary compliance. Finally, manuscripts must be in English and three (3) copies should be submitted to:  
The Editor,  
Journal of Educational and Media Technology,  
(*JEMT*) c/o The General Secretary (*NAEMT*),  
Department of Educational Technology,  
Obafemi Awolowo University,  
Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

*Please Note:* The above notes are subjected to change, intending contributors are therefore advised to consult most recent edition of the journal.

**NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY (JEMT)  
Vol. 10 No 1, 2002**

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Enhancing Technical Skills Through Improvised Technology Education: A Case Study Of The Technical College In Minna Metropolis. <b>Gbodi E.B. &amp; Oladimeji T.K.</b>	1
Effect of Instruction in Computer Animation on students' Performance in 3- Dimensional Animation. <b>Onasanya S. A.</b>	9
Academic Freedom in the Nigerian Educational System <b>Oyelade A. F.</b>	22
Difficult concepts in NECO Further Mathematics curriculum as Perceived by secondary school mathematics teachers in Enugu Education zone of Enugu state. <b>Alio B.C.</b>	29
Emerging trends of Educational Technology in Teacher Education in Nigeria. <b>Tolorunleke R. T.</b>	35
Instructional Media, Technology and Services for Special Learners <b>Fakomogbon M. A.</b>	44
Situated Constructivism-A Paradigm for Culturally Relevant Technology Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools <b>Omoniyi Omotayo</b>	51
Population Education: Objectives, Implications and Strategies. <b>Ogunlade Amos</b>	57
Teaching and Learning in UBE Scheme via Information and Communication Technology. <b>Okafor Elizabeth N.</b>	63
Impact of Globalization on Culture <b>Balogun G. K. (Mrs.)</b>	74
Using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the training and Productivity of the Graphic Artist <b>Adeyanju 'Lade J.</b>	83
The Status of Application of information Technology in Primary Schools in Akwa Ibom State <b>Thelma U. Ekúkinam</b>	90

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE NIGERIAN  
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

BY

OYELADE A. F. (DR)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

**Abstract**

*This paper attempts to examine the conception of academic freedom in the Nigerian educational system. In the process, it analyses the concept of academic freedom, and the manifestation of academic freedom in advanced nations and in developing nations with particular reference to Nigeria. Data were collected through the use of library materials and observation, these were subjected to philosophical analysis. It was found that academic freedom involves freedom for scholars in institutes of higher learning to teach, conduct research, publish their findings as they see fit and initiate others into the work of professional scholarship without fear of interference from the public (Crittenden 1973, Oakeshott 1967, Magsino 1978). It was also found that nations that grant a lot of academic freedom to their scholars have a lot of development; whereas nations that grant little academic freedom to their scholars have little development. It was also found that developing nations like Nigeria do not grant a lot of academic freedom to their scholars. It is therefore recommended that developing nations and Nigeria in particular should grant more academic freedom to their scholars so that the nations could develop greatly.*

**Introduction**

**The concept of Academic Freedom**

Academic freedom is a concept that warrants attention in the academic milieu. It is a concept that also warrants attention in the society at large. It warrants attention because it involves freedom for scholars in institutes of higher learning to teach, conduct research, publish their findings as they fit, and initiate others into the work of professional scholarship *without fear of interference from the public* (Crittenden, 1973, pp.63, 64). It involves.

freedom to be academic, the freedom of a University to pursue its explorations of the enterprises of human understanding and to initiate successive generations of students into this intellectual inheritance (Oakeshott, 1967, p. 142).

It is a freedom that *ensures public support* of the professional enterprise of scholars in teaching, conduct of research, publishing of their findings as they see fit, and initiating others into the work of professional scholarship, *without public interference in the conduct of the enterprise*. This is because the enterprise helps in the *discovery of truth and extension of human knowledge* both of which help in the *development of the society (the public)*. So if the public really needs consistent investigation into what is true, and the extension of human knowledge and consequently societal development, the society (the public) should be interested in supporting academic freedom. That is, the society should be ready to promote professional academic enterprise without interference. This support would be financial and moral. It would also involve recognition of the following details of areas of academic freedom. The details include giving scholars freedom to: -

1. Determine the conduct of teaching, learning and research;
2. Specify the academic qualifications of those who engage in the teaching-learning and research processes;
3. Fix the criteria for the award of prizes, degrees, grades, etc;
4. Determine the minimum academic standards to be met for continuation of people's (teachers and standards) participation in the institution;
5. Prescribe the institution's calendar and course offerings;
6. Determine *procedures for accomplishing* the above-listed activities and the *sanctions* for violating the procedures.

(Magsino, 1978, p. 50)

Thus institutes of higher learning should have academic freedom in matters of content of teaching and research, publication of findings, appointment, dismissal and promotion of staff as might be determined by the community of scholars and not by the general public (Crittenden 1973, p. 64). In the same connection institutes of higher learning should also have academic freedom in admission of students that would be initiated into the work of professional scholarship, and in conditions for continuation of such students in participation in the institutions (Magsino, 1978, p. 50). Thus the public should be interested in sponsoring this enterprise of professional scholarship in institutions of higher learning without interference for the sake of acquisition of more truth, extension of knowledge and consequent development of the society.

The absence of interference from the public is further necessary because it is granted that the community of scholars (not the general public) are the best judge of what constitute academic competence in the various areas that warrant academic freedom (as stated above) (Crittenden, 1973, p. 64; Brubacher, 1969 p. 283). In effect scholars professional colleagues should be left alone to judge the professional conduct of their fellows in the whole enterprise of professional scholarship (Crittenden 1973, p. 64), the public should stay clear of such judgement as it is deemed to constitute interference in the conduct of professional scholarship.

It can be seen therefore that academic freedom is freedom meant solely for scholars in institutes of higher learning not for the general public. Moreover academic freedom is not a freedom in the general run of human freedom. That is, it is not one of such freedoms that we know as human right – for instance, it is not the same as freedom of speech, freedom of

association, freedom of worship, freedom of thought. It is (academic freedom) not one of the general human rights but rather a special right granted only to scholars in university and institutes of higher learning (Crittenden, 1973, pp. 63-64, Oakeshott 1967, p. 142).

It follows that the conduct of scholars under the provisions of the *special right* of academic freedom can not be subjected to the conditions that guide behaviour under general human rights. For issuance, a scholar in Mathematics has the right under academic freedom to *challenge the most obvious propositions* in Mathematics using totally new procedures and expect to gain acceptance if his procedures and conclusions are seen to be sound. The same can be said for a scholar in Political Science if his procedures and conclusions are sound. Whereas under general human rights a citizen may not expect to gain acceptance in the society if in exercising his political freedom he challenges most obvious political propositions in the society. He may even end up facing prosecution. On the contrary the scholar of Mathematics, or Political Science, etc., can exercise his academic freedom in his field to challenge most obvious propositions using sound procedures without any fear of prosecution; rather he can expect to have acceptance and commendation for engaging in scholarly procedure, if it leads to extension in the frontiers of knowledge, and societal development. The only caution that the scholar needs to take is that he does not engage in the use of libel, sedition, inciting people into violence, slander, obscenity, palpable moral turpitude, etc., as he goes about his enterprise of professional scholarship. Engaging in the use of libel, sedition, inciting people to violence, etc., may lead to prosecution, imprisonment, loss of position, etc. (Brubacher 1969 p. 291, Peters 1974, p. 199).

Academic freedom further warrants non-interference from the public because it is taken that not all truths have been discovered, therefore the most obvious propositions can still be challenged by those whose enterprise is professional scholarship. If the propositions are true the challenges will only serve to further strengthen their truth (otherwise obvious propositions no matter how orthodox would give way in the face of *true* ones) (Peters 1974 pp. 198-199)

#### **Granting Academic Freedom by Societies / Nations:**

It follows that it is wrong for a society that aspires for progress to refuse to grant academic freedom to its scholars in university and institutes of higher learning. It is also wrong for a society that aspires for development to harass and oppress its scholars as they make efforts to engage in the enterprise of professional scholarship in connection with academic freedom. No wonder societies and nations like, United States of America, Britain, Canada, France, Switzerland and other advanced nations of the world grant enormous academic freedom to their scholars. (Joughin, 1967, Peters, 1974, Crittenden 1973, Magsino 1978). Nigeria is also interested in granting academic freedom to its scholars in universities and institutes of higher learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998).

The more the academic freedom granted to scholars in any nation, the better for the nation in terms of reaping the fruits of acquisition of greater truth, extension of knowledge and consequently development of the society. No wonder, nations like the United States of America, Britain, Canada, France and Japan have more societal development than developing nations that pay less attention to the issue of academic freedom.

The advanced nations sponsor academic freedom in universities and institutes of higher learning greatly, without interference in the conduct of the enterprise of professional scholarship from the public - such that these nations progressively record new discoveries in many areas of human endeavour: education, information technology, engineering, medicine, telecommunication, space science, military operations, economics, agriculture, politics, etc.

The developing nations sponsor academic freedom in universities and institutes of higher learning to a lesser extent (that is when compared to advanced nations) and also interfere in the conduct of the enterprise of professional scholarship in the academic institutions. These make progress difficult and slow in developing nations, in terms of: education, information technology, engineering, medicine, telecommunication, space science, etc. In fact the truth is that developing nations largely depend on advanced nations for progress in all these areas.

Nigeria for instance, grants academic freedom in its National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998, p. 32). But the areas of academic freedom are such that are regularly interfered with by the public.

#### **Academic Freedom in Nigeria**

The traditional areas of academic freedom for the institutions are to:

- i. select their students, except where the law prescribes otherwise;
- ii appoint their staff;
- iii teach, select areas of research, and
- iv determine the content of courses.

*Government* shall continue to respect this freedom as long as these areas are in consonance with national goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998, p. 32).

It can be seen that *somehow* the academic freedom granted in Nigeria allows universities and institutes of higher learning to:

1. Determine the conduct of teaching, learning and research;
2. Specify the academic qualifications of those who engage in the teaching-learning and research processes;
3. Fix the criteria for the award of prizes, degrees, grades, etc;
4. Determine the minimum academic standards to be met for continuation of people's (teachers and students) participation in the institution;
5. Prescribe the institution's calendar and course offerings;

6. Determine procedures for accomplishing the above-listed activities and the sanctions for violating the procedures. (Magsino, 1978, p. 50)

That is, the academic freedom granted in Nigeria to universities and institutes of higher learning *somehow agrees* with the concept of academic freedom in Magsino (1978). However the academic freedom granted in Nigeria does not in reality agree with the concept of academic freedom *particularly in the areas of financial sponsorship and non-interference from the public*. For instance the universities and institutes of higher learning in Nigeria complain of gross underfunding – in terms of provision of physical infrastructures and library items, laboratory materials and adequate employment of academics for programmes in the government universities and institutes of higher learning (The Comet, November 14, 2002, p. 19). The accreditation team from National Universities Commission (NUC) also constantly find inadequacies in the number and caliber of staff employed in the universities vis-à-vis the programmes run in the government universities.

The students are also given final admission approval into universities by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB); a central organ of government for the conduct of admission examinations into universities rather than by the individual universities of first and second choices of the prospective students. In effect the individual universities do not have final right of admission of their students.

Finally the government and the public sometimes interfere with the *continuation* of staff and students in the universities and institutes of higher learning. For instance, during the military era some universities were closed down for long periods because some academics decided to air their views about the maladministration of government and gross mismanagement of funds.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **A Critique of Academic Freedom in Nigeria**

It can be seen that academic freedom involves a special freedom granted universities and institutes of higher learning to teach, conduct research, publish their findings as they see fit and initiate others into the enterprise of professional scholarship, without interference from the public (Crittenden, 1973, pp. 63, 64). Granting such freedom helps in the acquisition of truth, extension of knowledge and development of the society. Thus it is necessary to grant academic freedom to universities and institutes of higher learning. It has also been seen that the more the academic freedom granted the scholars, the better for the society in terms of development; the less the academic freedom granted, the worse for the society in terms of development.

Advanced nations greatly grant the freedom and consequently reap the fruit of constant development. So, it is necessary for developing nations like Nigeria to grant academic freedom more to our universities and institutes of higher learning.

In this connection it is commendable that Nigeria grants some amount academic freedom to universities and institutes of higher learning in the following areas:

- i. selecting their students, ...
- ii. in appointing their staff;
- iii. teaching, and selection of areas of research, and
- iv. in determining the content of courses. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998, p. 32). It is however very necessary that the nation gives more academic freedom to its universities and institutes of higher learning in the area of financial sponsorship *without interference from the public* in the conduct of the enterprise of professional scholarship. By so doing the universities and institutes of higher learning would have more facilities at their disposal for teaching and research. The scholars would also be able to publish their findings *in various areas* without fear of harassment from the government and the people. Adequate number and calibre of staff would also be expected to be appointed for the various programmes in the various areas of study; so that we can expect more thorough teaching and research and consequently better research outcomes and greater development of the society

Final selection of students into the various universities should also be by the individual universities; not by Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), an organ of government for the conduct of admission examinations into universities and institutes of higher learning. The universities should be granted the academic freedom to have the final selection of the prospective students that they want admitted into the institutions of first and second choices of the candidates. JAMB should only conduct admission examinations as co-ordinating and harmonising examination body into the universities and institutes of higher learning; It should not have the final right of admission of students into the various individual universities and institutes of higher learning in the country. The various individual universities and institutes of higher learning in the country should have the final right of admission of the candidates; and JAMB should strictly be a co-ordinating and harmonising examination body for admission into universities and institutes of higher learning, like the Universities Central Council for Admission (UCCA) in Britain, and the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) in the U. S. A.

Finally the academics and the universities and institutes of higher learning in Nigeria should also launch out in researches that do not have to follow hitherto known conventional traditions. By so doing the scholars would realistically be engaging in initiatives that can also lead to breakthroughs; rather than continually follow the tips and suggestions of the advanced nations as if these are the only paths to breakthroughs that lead to development.

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