

FACTORS HINDERING ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: IMPLICATION FOR ADMISSION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

University education being the basic instrument of economic growth and technological advancement in any country, demand for it has increased due to the recent policy of universal, free and compulsory education at the basic levels and also as a result of an increase in the college-age population, as well as an awareness of the role of university education in the development of the individual and the nation in general. This paper, therefore, examines issues and challenges of securing admission to Universities in Nigeria. To do this, efforts were made to examine the operation of university education in Nigeria, the concept of access in education, the federal government policies on admission, major factors that influence and impede access to university among others were discussed in the paper. In conclusion the paper revealed that despite the increase in the number of universities, the rate of admission is low compared to the number of applicants. This is as a result of impediments to access and management of admission in the universities. Based on that, the paper recommends for the establishment of more universities to meet the needs of those yearning for University education. More academic staff should be employed, and to make admission twice in a year as it has been done in many countries.

Keywords: Access, Education, University, Policy.

Introduction

The role of education as the bedrock of all human sectors and development cannot be over emphasized; it is an instrument of change, innovation and invention which makes man to develop faster than other creatures. Globally it is accepted that education is a process which facilitates development of human being physically, intellectually, morally, politically, socially and technologically so as to equip him/her to function in any environment he/she finds himself/herself (Ikediugwu 2015).

This is why in the National Policy on Education; the federal government reiterates “that education is an instrument excellence through which sustainable national development can be achieved (FNI 2004). However, for education to inculcate in the learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that would empower them to solve the problems of their country they need to have access to education.

Education is an indispensable tool for enhancing socioeconomic, political, and cultural development of any nation; and as such, its role cannot be undermined (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008).the role that higher education plays in facilitating the growth and development of a country’s economy is significant (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008). The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) highlighted the goals of university education:

1. To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
2. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society.
3. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
4. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills, this will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
5. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
6. To forge and cement national unity.
7. To promote national and international understanding and interactions (NPE, 2004, p.2).

The increasing importance of higher education as a means of strengthening the economy and civilizing the individual has intensified the demand for university education in Nigeria over the last twenty years. Thus, there is an urgent need for a rapid and effective improvement of the country’s system of university education. Making university education accessible to every Nigerian should therefore be a top priority (Chukwurah, 2011). The policy of admission into Nigerian universities is becoming controversial, as applicants go through painstaking examinations and unnecessary spending in the processing of an admission that may never be gained (Chukwurah, 2011).

Akpotu (2005) and Imhanlahimi and Maduewesi (2006) stated that in Nigeria, some unfavorable factors and government policies such as the quota system, catchment areas, Post University/Tertiary Matriculations Examination (PUTME) screening, and other factors such as lack of facilities, shortage of manpower, and limited number of universities stand against the more than 70% of qualified students who apply for admission into universities and other institutions of higher learning. Despite the importance of university education every year, hundreds of thousands of applicants sat for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination, and on average less than 20% are granted admission into universities (Moti, 2010). Ten percent out of these large numbers are granted admission into other tertiary institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of education, and monotechnics. Those who could not secure admission in the year either wait for the following year and write the examination again or pick up casual jobs; still yet, others remain a burden and liability to their parents, guardians and the society (Moti, 2008; Imhanlahimi, 2006).

List of Universities in Nigeria

| S/N | FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA | YEAR |
|-----|--|------|
| 1. | Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi | 1988 |
| 2. | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria | 1962 |
| 3. | Bayero University, Kano | 1975 |
| 4. | Federal University Gashua, Yobe | 2013 |
| 5. | Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun | 2007 |
| 6. | Federal University of Technology, Akure | 1981 |
| 7. | Federal University of Technology, Minna | 1982 |
| 8. | Federal University of Technology, Owerri | 1980 |
| 9. | Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State | 2011 |
| 10. | Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina | 2011 |
| 11. | Federal University, Kashere, Gombe State | 2011 |
| 12. | Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State | 2011 |
| 13. | Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State | 2011 |
| 14. | Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State | 2011 |
| 15. | Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa | 2011 |
| 16. | Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State | 2011 |
| 17. | Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State | 2011 |
| 18. | Federal University, Birnin Kebbi | 2013 |
| 19. | Federal University, Gusau Zamfara | 2013 |
| 20. | Michael Okpara University of Agricultural Umudike | 1992 |
| 21. | Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola | 1981 |
| 22. | National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos | 2002 |

| | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 23. | Nigeria Police Academy Wudil | 2013 |
| 24. | Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna | 1985 |
| 25. | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka | 1992 |
| 26. | Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife | 1962 |
| 27. | University of Abuja, Gwagwalada | 1988 |
| 28. | Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta | 1988 |
| 29. | University of Agriculture, Makurdi | 1988 |
| 30. | University of Benin | 1970 |
| 31. | University of Calabar | 1975 |
| 32. | University of Ibadan | 1948 |
| 33. | University of Ilorin | 1975 |
| 34. | University of Jos | 1975 |
| 35. | University of Lagos | 1962 |
| 36. | University of Maiduguri | 1975 |
| 37. | University of Nigeria, Nsukka | 1960 |
| 38. | University of Port-Harcourt | 1975 |
| 39. | University of Uyo | 1991 |
| 40. | Usumanu Danfodiyo University | 1975 |
| 41. | Nigerian Maritime University Okerenkoko, Delta State | 2018 |
| 42. | Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna | 2018 |
| 43. | Nigerian Army University Bui | 2018 |

Source: National Universities Commission (n.d): List of Nigerian Universities. Retrieved July 9, 2019 from <http://www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp>

| S/N | STATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA | YEAR |
|-----|---|------|
| 1. | Abia State University, Uturu | 1981 |
| 2. | Adamawa State University Mubi | 2002 |
| 3. | Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba | 1999 |
| 4. | Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden | 2010 |
| 5. | Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma | 1980 |
| 6. | Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli | 2000 |
| 7. | Bauchi State University, Gadau | 2011 |
| 8. | Benue State University, Makurdi | 1992 |
| 9. | Yobe State University, Damaturu | 2006 |
| 10. | Cross River State University of Technology, Calabar | 2004 |
| 11. | Delta State University Abraka | 1992 |
| 12. | Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki | 2000 |
| 13. | Ekiti State University | 1982 |
| 14. | Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu | 1982 |
| 15. | Gombe State Univeristy, Gombe | 2004 |
| 16. | Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai | 2005 |
| 17. | Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni | 2010 |

| | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 18. | Imo State University, Owerri | 1992 |
| 19. | Sule Lamido University, Kafin Hausa, Jigawa | 2013 |
| 20. | Kaduna State University, Kaduna | 2004 |
| 21. | Kano University of Science & Technology, Wudil | 2000 |
| 22. | Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero | 2006 |
| 23. | Kogi State University Anyigba | 1999 |
| 24. | Kwara State University, Ilorin | 2009 |
| 25. | Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso | 1990 |
| 26. | Ondo State University of Science and Technology Okitipupa | 2008 |
| 27. | River State University | 1979 |
| 28. | Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye | 1982 |
| 29. | Lagos State University, Ojo | 1983 |
| 30. | Niger Delta University Yenagoa | 2000 |
| 31. | Nasarawa State University Keffi | 2002 |
| 32. | Plateau State University Bokkos | 2005 |
| 33. | Tai Solarin University of Education Ijebu Ode | 2005 |
| 34. | Umar Musa Yar' Adua University Katsina | 2006 |
| 35. | Osun State University Osogbo | 2006 |
| 36. | Taraba State University, Jalingo | 2008 |
| 37. | Sokoto State University | 2009 |
| 38. | Yusuf Maitama Sule University Kano | 2012 |
| 39. | Oyo State Technical University Ibadan | 2012 |
| 40. | Ondo State University of Medical Sciences | 2015 |
| 41. | Edo University Iyamo | 2016 |
| 42. | Eastern Palm University Ogboko, Imo State | 2016 |
| 43. | University of Africa Toru Orua, Bayelsa | 2016 |
| 44. | Bornu State University, Maiduguri | 2016 |
| 45. | Moshood Abiola University of Science and Technology Abeokuta | 2017 |
| 46. | Gombe State University of Science and Technology | 2017 |
| 47. | Zamfara State University | 2018 |
| 48. | Bayelsa Medical University | 2019 |

Source: National Universities Commission (n.d): List of Nigerian Universities. Retrieved July 9, 2019 from <http://www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp>

| S/N | PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA | YEAR |
|------------|---|-------------|
| 1. | Achievers University, Owo | 2007 |
| 2. | Adeleke University, Ede | 2011 |
| 3. | Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti – Ekiti State | 2009 |
| 4. | African University of Science & Technology, Abuja | 2007 |
| 5. | Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan | 2005 |
| 6. | Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin | 2005 |
| 7. | Al-Qalam University, Katsina | 2005 |
| 8. | American University of Nigeria, Yola | 2003 |
| 9. | Augustine University | 2015 |
| 10. | Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo | 1999 |
| 11. | Baze University | 2011 |
| 12. | Bells University of Technology, Otta | 2005 |
| 13. | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City | 2002 |
| 14. | Bingham University, New Karu | 2005 |
| 15. | Bowen University, Iwo | 2001 |
| 16. | Caleb University, Lagos | 2007 |
| 17. | Caritas University, Enugu | 2005 |
| 18. | Chris land University | 2015 |
| 19. | Covenant University Ota | 2002 |
| 20. | Crawford University Igbesa | 2005 |
| 21. | Crescent University | 2005 |
| 22. | Edwin Clark University, Kaigbodo | 2015 |
| 23. | Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin | 2012 |
| 24. | Evangel University, Akaeze | 2012 |
| 25. | Fountain Unveristy, Oshogbo | 2007 |
| 26. | Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike– Enugu State | 2009 |
| 27. | Gregory University, Uturu | 2012 |
| 28. | Hallmark University, Ijebi Itele, Ogun | 2015 |
| 29. | Hezekiah University, Umudi | 2015 |
| 30. | Igbinedion University Okada | 1999 |
| 31. | Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji | 2006 |
| 32. | Kings University, Ode Omu | 2015 |
| 33. | Kwararafa University, Wukari | 2005 |
| 34. | Landmark University, Omu-Aran | 2011 |
| 35. | Lead City University, Ibadan | 2005 |
| 36. | Madonna University, Okija | 1999 |
| 37. | Mcpherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo | 2012 |
| 38. | Micheal & Cecilia Ibru University | 2015 |
| 39. | Mountain Top University Prof Elijah Ayolabi | 2015 |
| 40. | Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja | 2009 |
| 41. | Novena University, Ogume | 2005 |

| | | |
|-----|---|------|
| 42. | Obong University, Obong Ntak | 2007 |
| 43. | Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu – Osun State | 2009 |
| 44. | Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos | 2002 |
| 45. | Paul University, Awka – Anambra State | 2009 |
| 46. | Redeemer’s University, Ede | 2005 |
| 47. | Renaissance University, Enugu | 2005 |
| 48. | Rhema University, Obeama-Asa – Rivers State | 2009 |
| 49. | Ritman University, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom | 2015 |
| 50. | Salem University, Lokoja | 2007 |
| 51. | Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa. | 2011 |
| 52. | Southwestern University, Oku Owa | 2012 |
| 53. | Summit University | 2015 |
| 54. | Tansian University, Umunya | 2007 |
| 55. | University of Mkar, Mkar | 2005 |
| 56. | Veritas University, Abuja | 2007 |
| 57. | Wellspring University, Evbuobanosa – Edo State | 2009 |
| 58. | Wesley University. of Science & Technology, Ondo | 2007 |
| 59. | Western Delta University, Oghara Delta State | 2007 |
| 60. | Christopher University Mowe | 2015 |
| 61. | Kola Daisi University Ibadan, Oyo State | 2016 |
| 62. | Anchor University Ayobo Lagos State | 2016 |
| 63. | Dominican University Ibadan Oyo State | 2016 |
| 64. | Legacy University, Okija Anambra State | 2016 |
| 65. | Arthur Jarvis University Akpoyubo Cross river State | 2016 |
| 66. | Crown Hill University Eiyenkorin, Kwara State | 2016 |
| 67. | Coal City University Enugu State | 2016 |
| 68. | Clifford University Owerrinta Abia State | 2016 |
| 69. | Admiralty University, Ibusa Delta State | 2017 |
| 70. | Spiritan University, Nneochi Abia State | 2017 |
| 71. | Precious Cornerstone University, Oyo | 2017 |
| 72. | PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Portharcourt | 2017 |
| 73. | Atiba University Oyo | 2017 |
| 74. | Eko University of Medical and Health Sciences Ijanikin, Lagos | 2017 |
| 75. | Skyline University, Kano | 2018 |
| 76. | Greenfield University, Kaduna | 2019 |
| 77. | Dominion University Ibadan, Oyo State | 2019 |
| 78. | Trinity University Ogun State | 2019 |
| 79. | Westland University Iwo, Osun State | 2019 |

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Statement of the problem

Student's enrollment at any level of education is very crucial to the achievement of Nation overall goals through education. This lead to the growing concerns about the teaming populations of youths, who wants to gain higher education but were either unable or not offered admission in the universities and faculties of their choices. Akpotu (2005) and Imhanlahimi and Maduwesi (2006) stated that in Nigeria, some unfavorable factors and government policies such as the quota system, catchment areas, Post University/Tertiary Matriculations Examination (PUTME) screening, and other factors such as lack of facilities, shortage of manpower, and limited number of universities stand against the more than 70% of qualified students who apply for admission into universities and other institutions of higher learning. Despite the importance of university education every year, hundreds of thousands of applicants sat for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination, and on average less than 20% are granted admission into universities (Moti, 2010). Ten percent out of these large numbers are granted admission into other tertiary institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of education, and monotchnics. Those who could not secure admission in the year either wait for the following year and write the examination again or pick up casual jobs; still yet, others remain a burden and liability to their parents, guardians and the soociety (Moti, 2008; Imhanlahimi, 2006).

This paper therefore, aims at finding out the challenges, factors influencing and impeding access to university education as well as what programmes and strategies could be introduced to promote access to university education in Nigeria.

Access to Education

Access to education in general is the ability of all people to have equal opportunity in education, regardless of their social class gender ethnicity background, physical and mental disabilities. The concept reflects the universal declaration of human right, which assets that everyone has a right to education. Thus, access to education provide a guarantee for ever, the entitled to education to receive it. It implies the right, opportunity or means of making education available within the reach of every citizen of a nation Enachwo (2009).

Access to education in its full and broad sense means free and unlimited/unhindered/unfettered opportunities at each level of education to obtain knowledge, skills, and abilities available at that level needed to optimally participate and contribute to development in the society (Okeke, 2009). Okeke (2009) further maintained that this definition of access to education covers the threshold of access/enrolling, attending and completing and possibly transiting to the appropriate level of education. Thus, lack of access to education means any of the following: failing to enroll in an educational institution; lack of opportunities to attend school

regularly; does not complete the prescribed programme of study; does not have opportunities required to attain the deserved goals; and lacks opportunities to transit to the next level of education.

In the context of this paper, access to education would mean the extent to which people have access/unhindered opportunities to acquire university education in Nigeria. This can be best estimated from statistics of gross and net enrollment ratio. Higher Education Gap Analysis: Nigeria versus Top 15 Economies.

According to Okebukola (2008), enrolment rates are the measures of educational access, which have two main indicators: the first is the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which shows the total number of pupils enrolled at a given level of education system, irrespective of age, divided by the population of age group, which corresponds officially to that level. The other indicator is the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER).

Offorma (2010) describes access to education to mean the opportunities in institutions of learning created for the citizens to gain knowledge, skills attitudes and values that will empower them to live a sustainable life. It simply means the right to education. Access to education furthermore; means the extent to which people have unhindered opportunities to acquire higher education.

United Nation and Universal declaration of human rights put forward the idea of the education attainment that reflects and emphasize on the human right to gain education (Birke 2013). According to Mayer & Bradley (2013) freedom of education attainment and its full access refers to the unbiased and robust educational opportunities at every stage, publishing of knowledge, skills and abilities to participate in the improvement of the society. Therefore, lack of access to the university may be due various reasons such as failure of enrollment, no opportunities to attend school, incompleteness of programme of study, lack of opportunities of attaining desired objectives and to the transitioning to the next level of education (Ebisine, 2014).

Factors Hindering Access to University Education in Nigeria

Many scholars have elaborated a lot on factors hindering Access to University Education in Nigeria amongst them Okebukola (2008), Federal Ministry of Education (2009), Okeke (2009), Ajayi & Adeniji (2009), Oraihi & Ebhohimen (2011) among others identified the following as major factors that hinders access to university education in Nigeria.

Inadequate Number and Absorption Capacity of Universities in Nigeria

The inadequate number of universities and insufficient carrying capacity of the universities in Nigeria to cope with the high demand for university education has put much pressure on university admissions (Chukwurah, 2011). The observed insufficiency in the number of universities in Nigeria, coupled with the great demand

for university education, has created the problem of admission into the available universities and its impact on education standards (Okoroma, 2008). The entire absorption capacity of the university system in Nigeria can only comfortably accommodate about 15% of those seeking admission (Moti, 2010).

Saanu (2010) argue that the number of available universities in Nigeria is inadequate in comparison with the number of qualified candidates seeking admission, thus creating a major admission problem. According to Okoroma (2008), the issue of admission into Nigerian universities has become a difficult issue over the years because of the ever-increasing demands for university education and the availability of only a few state and federal universities.

Lack of Adequate Facilities

The Nigerian government has made concerted efforts to ensure that equal education opportunity is given to citizens as outlined in the National Policy on Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004):

In order to realize fully the potential of contribution of education to achieve national goals, education and training facilities shall continue to be expanded in response to societal needs and made progressively accessible to afford the individual a far more diversified and flexible choice (FRN, 2004, p. 9).

The facilities needed for the teaching and learning process in institutions of higher learning are classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices, libraries, hostels, staff quarters, student and staff recreation centers, sports and games facilities, roads, electricity, and water supply (Amadi et al., 2010).

Lack of Adequate Financial Support for University Education

The major factors responsible for the problem of inadequate facilities in Nigerian universities are inadequate financial support, inadequate provision of facilities, and inadequate maintenance culture (Babatope, 2010, p. 42). The federal universities are mainly funded by the federal government, and the national assembly is responsible for the appropriation and disbursement of funds on the approval of the executive branch. The Federal Executive Council empowers the National Universities Commission to disburse funds to each university. However, the capacity to fund these universities has eroded. The state universities are largely funded from federal allocations, with an average of 20% of the education budget; and the state universities usually supplement this with internally generated revenue (*Funding the Reinvented Universities*, 2010). Universities in Nigeria have faced severe under-funding for many years owing to the increase in population and the high demand for university education. Chukwurah (2011) supports this view when he states that poor funding is one of the major factors that militate against access to university education in Nigeria.

Lack of Adequate Facilities Provided by Universities

According to Edegbo (2010), university education is in high demand, but the capacity of the universities to admit students is constrained by inadequate infrastructure.

Moti (2010) noted that there are not sufficient funds to develop infrastructures in the universities, and the government is expected to increase the budgetary allocation to meet the needs of the universities. Inadequate infrastructure forced the NUC admission criterion of carrying capacity in order to ensure quality control. However, this criterion has become a restricting factor to access university education in Nigeria (Moti, 2010).

Lack of Proper Maintenance of Available Facilities

Oladipo (2001) observed that Nigerians have not developed the culture of maintaining public facilities. One of the bottlenecks of higher education in Nigeria is the deterioration of facilities due to lack of maintenance, resulting in falling standards and an unpleasant teaching and learning environment (Amadi et al., 2010). The existing buildings are dilapidated due to poor maintenance, which can impact negatively on the quality of education offered and reduce admission numbers because of insufficient facilities to accommodate students. Such conditions have led to teaching and administrative personnel leaving the education system to other sectors of the economy or out of the country (Amadi et al., 2010).

Shortage of Adequate Manpower

Adequate human and material resources are fundamental in the running of the university system and absorbing new intakes (Adeyemi, 1998; Baikie, 2002; Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010). The inadequate financing of the university system has been identified as a major impediment to managing the enrollment growth and increasing access.

Consequently, student enrollment in Nigerian universities is yet to meet the present demand (Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010). According to Akinsanya (2007), Nigeria is going through a critical manpower development challenge. The number of prospective students seeking admission into tertiary institutions has been predicted to be over 1.9 million (NUC, 2017). However, only about 20% of this number actually secures admission to such institutions, private or public.

Furthermore, Okecha (2008) comments on the lecturer-student ratios. Lecturers in Nigerian universities carry heavier workloads than their counterparts in other parts of the world.

The ratios of some countries are as follows: Kenya, 1:8; Zimbabwe, 1:7; Mexico, 1:8; Brazil, 1:10; United Kingdom, 1:9, Nigeria, 1:19, while the UNESCO norm is 1:10. In order to increase the admission rate, universities need to employ more academic professionals; staff strength should be seriously considered in order to increase

admission capacity for qualified and competent applicants (Imhanlahimi & Maduewesi, 2006).

Federal Government Policy on Admission

The federal government, through the National Universities Commission, regulates and monitors admissions into tertiary institutions through various admission policies. The majority of students tend to prefer public university education to polytechnics or private colleges of education for obvious reasons, including quality of education and low tuition and fees (Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010).

Another policy that hampers access is the policy of the 60:40 ratio of admission to the science and liberal arts disciplines, respectively, in the universities and the 70:30 ratio in polytechnics (Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010). The rationale behind this policy is that the country needs more scientists in all sectors of the country, especially in the oil industries and for economic development and transformation. The implication of this ratio system is that many qualified liberal arts students are denied admission because the slots reserved for the arts are not enough to admit the majority of applicants.

Catchment Areas and the Quota System

Catchment areas are geographical areas from which a higher educational institution is allowed or obliged to pick candidates (Moti, 2008). It also means the preferences given to the indigenous place where the university is located in considering candidates for admission. All the states in the country are grouped into catchment areas of each federal university in order to give equal opportunities to all applicants. Consideration is therefore given to students who fall within the catchment area of the university. Most of the federal universities like Abuja have all the states of the federation as their catchment areas, while state-owned universities have all the local areas of their state as their catchment area (Moti, 2008).

Review of Admission Policies in Nigerian Universities

Successive governments in Nigeria have made concerted effort in ensuring that equal education opportunity is accorded her citizens as was evident in the National Policy on Education, FRN (2014) which stated that:

The benefits of education are however yet to be realized fully as many willing and able Nigerians have no access to education particularly at the tertiary level. This could be attributed to the level of resources in most institutions of learning, thus admissions into university was regulated by various admission policies. In addition, the discrimination between types of higher institutions and certificate awarded has further constrained access. Most students preferred university education to that of polytechnics or college of education, (Aghenta 2006). Furthermore, the policy adopted in the past by the government in establishment of universities and other

tertiary institutions was based on region, population and national needs, today; this oftentimes makes admission political and lower access (Okebukola, 2006). The access to university has further been restricted by the policy of 60:40 ratio of admission to science and liberal arts discipline respectively in the university.

According to the National University Commission (2012), university admission is the legitimate gateway through which qualified citizens get enrolled for university education in Nigeria. Therefore, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) as a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Education are saddled with the responsibility of selecting candidates for university education via their prescribed examination as a basic requirement. Information further shows that the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board places candidates to their respective universities of choice using the unified cut-off marks as prescribed. As a parastatal that anchors the admission exercise in the country, its objectives are geared toward selecting candidates that can be enrolled into the universities which are centres of excellence to set the pace for the larger society in their efficiency and effectiveness.

The quota system of university admission was introduced in an attempt to provide admission for candidates into the university using the federal character policy of the federal government. The quota represents the number of candidates that should be admitted into the university in one academic year from each state. The quota system comprises important elements such as academic merit which is determined by the candidates university matriculation examination scores and is allotted 45%. The second element is educationally advantage states with 20%, the catchment areas with 25% and 10% to the discretion of the individual vice-chancellor (NUC, 1999). The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is therefore guided by these provisions in the admission process each year.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussions, the following recommendations are made:

1. The existing conventional universities should be well funded so that there will be expansion. The old buildings should be repaired and new ones built, so as to accommodate more students. It is because of the limited space that the NUC came about the policy of carrying capacity. When the existing universities are expanded more candidates would have more access.
2. More academic staff should be employed.
3. Private universities can still be encouraged but profit-making should be minimized. University education can be seen as service oriented. They can still charge their fees but must not be exploitative.
4. Educationally backward states should develop remedial programmes for their indigenes to prepare them for competitive University admissions.

5. All policies especially those that affect admissions that reduce the quality of University education should be reviewed without delay.
6. More Universities should be established to meet the needs of those yearning for University education. Only this measure will reduce the pressure on university admissions and assure good quality.
7. Other tertiary institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of education, should be expanded and upgraded institutions with up-to-date facilities to Bachelor degree awarding to diffuse the congestion of intakes in the universities and make room for more new intakes.
8. Universities should make admission twice in a year as it has been done in many other countries.

Conclusion

The paper examines admission policies and access to university education in Nigeria, and the study indicated that despite the increase in the number of universities, the rate of admission is low compared to the number of applicants. This is as a result of impediments to access and management of admission in the universities. Hence, access has been made difficult as determined by certain factors and admission policies such as carrying capacity, catchment area, and quota system, coupled with the inadequate finance, infrastructural facilities among others in the University system.

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