
COROLLARY OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON UNIVERSITY ADMISSION: A Review of Nigerian Universities

Adetunji, A. T. and Ogunleye, K. A.

Department of Business Administration

Bowen University Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Prior to Nigerian independence, university education was established by the colonial masters mainly with the aim of training and supplying highly skilled manpower to take over the running of the government ministries and establishments and to promote development within the state. Since after independence, these policies, aims of establishing and running of universities have to a large extent remain the same with no major overhauling, especially in public universities. This paper examines how government policies on university education have impact on university admission in Nigeria. In order to achieve this objective the study identifies Government policies on university education and admissions and reviews them in line with the modern day realities, especially as relating to admissions in universities. The relevant literatures/documents studied and used for this paper cover major policies on university admissions, an approach which has received less attention in past studies on university education in Nigeria. This paper will therefore fill the gap in knowledge by studying government policies on Nigerian university admissions with the aim of understanding how the universities have been operating in terms of students' admission. The recent out cry that accompanied Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) attempt to introduce some new policies on admission to universities in Nigeria also makes this study not only relevant but also timely. A qualitative approach was adopted with the use of interviews as the sole research instrument. The findings reveal that admission processes that could add value to the quality of the graduates produced have not been considered effective due to different government policies affecting the smooth running of the system.

Keywords - admission, government policy, implementation, university

Introduction

Nigeria with a population of about 164 million people has more 330 institutions of higher learning with the following break down: federal universities 46; state universities 40 and private universities 61 thus making a total of 147 universities. There are also 95 polytechnics and 82 colleges of education. The universities provide the highest level of education. As indicated above the Nigerian university system operates in three tiers format: federal, state and private. Admissions into the various institutions of higher learning was initially being handled by each institution. But with the establishment of JAMB in 1977 admissions into universities began to be handled by it through what was then known as University Matriculation Examination (UME) that later metamorphosed to Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) when all entrance examinations to higher institutions of learning being conducted by JAMB was unified in 2010. Salim (2003) highlighted the fact that the Nigerian university admissions process has experienced a number of changes over the years, among which are changes in government administration and the introduction of different selection policies such as catchment areas and quota systems. The result of these changes suggests a negative impact on the quality of graduates produced by the universities. Okebukola (2002) pointed out that, having experienced a number of changes in policy and office holder, institutions were operating under different administrative policies. Okebukola noted that, among these policies, the catchment area is used for the selection of students in the universities.

Given that the Nigerian government had made policy for the provision of higher education for all citizens wanting to pursue education at the higher level, the selection process for such candidates took on a very important role. Access to university education is limited with research by Salim (2003) revealing that in 2000 there were approximately 1.5 million applicants seeking admission into the universities while the universities only had less than 550,000 places approximately per year, leaving some 900,000 applicants or more awaiting admission. Over the years the number of applicants seeking admission, especially into universities has increased, thus creating problems for the JAMB, the applicants, their parents and the country at large.

Ajayi and Ekundayo (2005) also added that the demand for university education places in the country has increased over the years due to the great emphasis placed on university education by the Federal government of Nigeria, as a means of developing the country. The government policy on employment and placement on salary also favours university degree holders than graduates of other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Ajayi and Ekundayo claim that this government involvement in terms of motivation has increased the demand for university education. As a result applicants and their parents are willing to go to any extent to have university education rather than that of other higher education institution. As a result, most of the parents become directly involved in seeking admission for their children. Parental involvement and deep concern in university education for their wards often leads to sharp practices and favouritism. The belief is that anyone with a university degree will have more chances to get a better job and better salary than those who attend other higher institutions.

Similarly, the increasing importance of university education as a means of improving the individual and strengthening the economy has intensified the demand for university education in Nigeria over the last two decades. However, Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008) have pointed out that Nigerian university education has not been able to meet the demands to broaden university admission. Chukwurah (2011) is of the opinion that it is expedient to develop quality and effective human resources for Nigeria as a developing nation, in order to gain sustainable growth, especially economic growth. From a similar point of view Jibowu (2007), cited in Lokbut (2007), affirmed that a nation's Gross National Product (GNP) per capita depends on the level of development of its human resources to a great extent. In view of human resource needs, there is an urgent need for the country's university system to rapidly and effectively improve. Chukwurah (2011) suggested that, in order to improve Nigeria's GNP, making university education accessible to every Nigerian should be a top priority. However, policies on admission into Nigerian universities have become controversial, and applicants have recently had to endure unnecessary expense and risk to life travelling from one university to another to take examinations for a university admission they may never achieve (Chukwurah, 2011).

Agboola and Ofoegbu (2010) commented that what creates more worries in the admission process is that many qualified applicants fresh from secondary schools/colleges cannot gain admission into the Nigerian university of their choice due to admission policies such as the Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME) screening, examination being conducted by individual institutions after candidates have taken and passes UTME, catchment areas, quota systems and other factors such as shortage of manpower, the limited number of universities, low carrying capacity of many Nigerian universities, and the lack of facilities. Finance has also been listed among the factors that have hindered universities from admitting more students (Akintayo, 2004). However, Akpotu (2005) claimed

that the costs of tuition fees and materials for learning are not the main barriers to gaining admission into university in Nigeria. Akpotu suggested that the absorption capacity for learning is limited, while catchment areas, quota systems, admissions policies, and poor and inadequate facilities are all barriers to implementing policy system in Nigerian universities. Likewise, Imhanlahimi and Maduewesi (2006) suggested that in Nigerian universities today there are government policies and other unfavourable factors that militate against more than 70% of qualified applicants who are seeking admission into universities and other institutions. Moti (2010) also claimed that on average less than 20% are granted admission into universities out of hundreds of thousands of applicants who sit for the JAMB examination yearly. Moti also ascertained that only about 10% of the total numbers of applicants are granted admission into other tertiary institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. Applicants who cannot secure admission in one year either picks up casual jobs, travel abroad for education or wait till the following year and take the JAMB examination again and again, while others remain a liability and a burden to their guardians and parents (Imhanlahimi and Maduewesi, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of government policies on university admission in Nigeria as posed by admission policies and structural factors. These admission policies include quotas for educationally disadvantaged states, catchment areas and carrying capacity while structural factors include the inadequate numbers and absorption capacity of universities in the country, the lack of manpower and the inadequate facilities impacting on qualified applicants for admission. A study of the natural consequence of government policy on university education in Nigeria is not only needed but will also prove timely as a guide to improve admission processes. The output, which will in turn result in the effective transformation of students into citizens of a sound mind and good character, will help in the development of the nation's economy. However, it is of great importance first to study past literature to understand how government policies on university admissions have come about.

Literature

Nigerian government policy on university admission

Okoroma (2008) established that the policy on university admissions adopted by Nigerian universities is based on the Ashby Commission report of 1959. The report stated that all regions should equalise admission into the university to meet the needs of the entire nation. Following the Ashby Commission report, in 1962 the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) established a body called the National Universities Commission (NUC) as an advisory agency in the cabinet office of the executive arm of the government. Nigeria as a country operates a federalist system of government in which the legislature makes the law and the judiciary implements the law while the executive arm manages and runs the affairs of the nation. In 1974 the NUC became the statutory body given responsibility to regulate and monitor the activities of universities by the Federal Government of Nigeria. In 1977 the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) was formulated as a body for conducting entrance examinations for tertiary institutions across the country. Federal Military Government Act No. 2 of 1978 promulgated the legal instrument that established the body (JAMB). By August 1982 the Federal Military Government Act became Federal Executive Decree No. 2 of 1978 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution (FRN, 1974). The mandate in the decree was the legal right given to JAMB to regulate and monitor admissions into tertiary institutions through various admission policies (FRN, 1974). However, research by Okoroma (2008) shows that the majority of students tend to prefer public university education to polytechnics or

private colleges of education for obvious reasons, including the quality of education and low tuition fees.

Agboola and Ofoegbu (2010) are also of the opinion that the policy for conducting meaningful selection procedures has regrettably been replaced by one based on political interests and affiliations since the introduction of the quota system which favours some regions or states over others. Okebukola (2006) further added that students are denied admission on the basis of the implementation of the policies which consider carrying capacity, state of origin, the quota system and the catchment areas in favour of educationally less disadvantaged areas. In another study Ojogwu and Alutu (2009) established that another policy hampering access to university education is the 60:40 ratio on admissions, that is 60% of admissions are allocated to the sciences and 40% to the liberal arts. Likewise for non-universities the ratio was 70:30, that is 70% of admissions allocated to the sciences and 30% to the liberal arts (Ojogwu & Alutu, 2009; Agboola and Ofoegbu, 2010). Okebukola (2006) explained that the rationale behind the policy is that more scientists are needed in all sectors of the country, especially in the oil industries and to promote economic development and transformation. Meanwhile Utulu (2001) claimed that the negative implication of this ratio system is that many qualified liberal arts students are denied admission because the slots reserved for the liberal arts are insufficient to cater for the number of applicants.

A worrying report was put forward by the NUC (2006) about the state of university education in the country. The report highlighted the fact that, due to the increasing numbers of applicants seeking university education every year, the carrying capacity could only cater for 17-20% of those applicants. Taking a contrary view Moti (2010) argued that in an attempt to create equal representation the Federal Government of Nigeria had set guidelines for admission into universities based on 45% merit, 35% catchment area/locality and 20% from educationally less developed states. The result of this policy is that it has led to the rejection of many brilliant candidates and the admission of weak ones because of their place of origin and the connections they have with people of influence (Salim, 2003).

In another study, Adeyemi (2001) expressed the view that the government should establish a policy for the educationally less developed (ELDs) areas in an effort to promote equal opportunities and create access to university education by the citizens of the country. Adeyemi also claimed that certain states may be considered educationally less developed or disadvantaged. These include Adamawa, Benue, Borno, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Rivers, Yobe and Zamfara. Adeyemi added that candidates from these states are given special concessions for admission, such as lower cut-off marks. This means that a candidate from a state considered to be educationally advantaged area who scores 300 out of 400 may not gain admission to university while his or her counterpart in an ELD state who scores less would be offered admission. While it is good that the educationally disadvantaged areas are being encouraged, it should not be to the detriment of others. A situation where a candidate is denied admission just because of his or her place of birth will at the end of the day be to the disadvantage of the country as the country may end up producing mediocres as university graduates whereas there are qualified candidates who were not offered admission. Thus using the quota system to regulate and guide access to university education has an inequitable effect (Akpan and Undie, 2007).

Government policies on admission

A catchment area, as described by Moti (2010), is the geographical area in which an institute of higher education is located and from which it is allowed or obliged to pick candidates. This means that preference is given to the indigenous population of the place where the university is located when considering candidates for admission. States in the country were also grouped into catchment areas for each federal university in order to give equal opportunities to all applicants. This method of selection is also called the locality, which in most cases is the socio-cultural and/or geographical area connected to the institution to which candidates apply. At the start of the policy, catchment area policy was only centred on federal universities.

In most cases consideration is given to students who fall within the catchment area of the university over other applicants. In contrast, Imhanlahimi and Maduwesi (2006) were of the opinion that the state-owned universities have all the local areas in their state as their catchment area while Abuja, as the federal capital, has all the states of the federation as its catchment areas. Based on the admission guidelines Adeyemi (2001) and Moti (2010) posit that 30% of available spaces are reserved for applicants based on state/locality. Likewise, Saint et al. (2003) made clear that only 40% of applicants were considered for admission on the basis of merit or their academic performance. The JAMB reserved 30% of a university's admissions for residents of its immediate geographical or 'catchment' area and a further 20% for educationally disadvantaged students. The final 10% of university admissions were made at the vice chancellor's discretion (Saint et al., 2003: 12).

Government policy***Quota system***

The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the quota system in order to provide equal access to university for everyone. However, access has now become a problem with the system being grossly abused and applicants denied access to university education. Educationally less developed areas come under the catchment area. This element of the catchment area allows the university to lower the entry requirements for states considered educationally less developed, an approach supported by the Federal Character Commission (FRN, 1974), and an exclusive 20% are granted admission to the detriment of candidates with higher scores in the matriculation examination. In any event, the Federal Government of Nigeria claimed it introduced the policy to cater for the less privileged within the 29 states in the country, 23 of those states in fact being classified as less privileged.

Carrying capacity

The National University Commission suggested that, due to continued population growth and the demand for university education, university expansion should follow according to the demand, instead of expanding to meet the demand. This policy was formulated following the NUC inspection of some universities, in which officials observed that many facilities were overstressed and institutions overpopulated. As a result they came up with the policy known as carrying capacity. The carrying capacity means that students are admitted based on the facilities available. These facilities include adequate lecture rooms, well-stocked libraries, good staff/student ratios, good accommodation, etc. Such a policy is expected to enhance quality. However, the policy has become an impediment to access to university education, as universities are careful not to exceed this capacity by a great deal in order not to incur sanctions from the NUC.

Funding

Closely connected with the issue of the expansion of universities according to the demand is the issue of better funding (Akintayo, 2004). Akintayo argued that expansion should be accompanied by increased funding. The policy relating to funding is a challenging issue with Akpan and Undie (2007) observing that the budgetary allocation to education has been on the decline. Akpan and Undie found that in 1999, 11.12% of the annual budget was allocated to education in Nigeria. Surprisingly this was drastically reduced to 5.9% in 2002 and 1.83% in 2003 respectively (Akpan and Undie 2007), while the minimum standard set for developing countries is 26% and UNESCO recommends 25% of the annual budget be allocated to the education sector. Instead of moving towards this minimum standard, what has occurred is a decrease. Nigeria is far from implementing the recommended allocation of resources to education, thus making expansion difficult if not impossible. This lack of proper allocation of funds to the education sector in the country has built up over a decade and denied many university courses from being accredited by the NUC thereby reducing access to many who could have been admitted. It is, however, obvious that the universities in Nigeria need to be better funded. However, one cannot ignore the immense contribution made by the Education Tax Fund (ETF) now called TETFUND. The involvement of the ETF is a welcome development as the body has been able to develop many infrastructural facilities for many universities with their funds, in their support for better education. For its own part, the government should increase the budgetary allocation to meet the recommendation for funding of education in developing countries rather than use an element of deregulation to solve the education-funding problem. It is also being advocated here that TETFUND should also be allowed to make its fund accessible to the private universities since the fund is majorly generated from the private sector.

Methodology

The theoretical sample in this paper covers 124 universities, that is all the licensed universities established up to 2010. This sample was arrived at in the belief that other universities that do not fall into this category would not have graduate students at this point of the fieldwork. This also serves as the first criterion to eliminate universities not suitable for the study. The paper used a purposive sampling method with three major criteria (age, disciplinary balance and size) to select three universities in each of the federal, state and private owner tiers, that is agriculture, technology and science universities. Five participants were selected from each university, based on their position, involvement and experience. Though only 38 principal officers participated in the study (the participants included vice chancellors, registrars, bursars, deans of faculties, directors of academic planning and university librarians), their contributions provide a rich and meaningful result. The results were discussed under three major headings as they arose in the study. Thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the themes that emerged from the empirical findings as it is useful to analyse causal mismatches between reality and methodology, the blame for which is attributed to a lack of implementation or complication of an admission on government policies rather than philosophical inappropriateness.

The universities selected were assigned numbers from 1 to 9 based on category and alphabetical order (see Table 1) where: A = vice chancellor; B = registrar; C = bursar; D = director of academic planning; E = university librarian. Universities 1 to 6 are public universities with 1 to 3 = federal universities and 4 to 6 = state-owned universities. Three were privately owned universities classified under the same group and categories = 7 to 9. Thus A1 to A6 = vice chancellor from public universities; B1 to B6 = registrar from public universities . . . E1 to E6 = university librarian from public universities. Likewise A7 to A9 = vice chancellor from private universities; B7 to B9 = registrar from private universities; E7 to E9 = university librarian from private universities.

Table 1

Universities				Informants				
Group	Categories	Type	S/N	Vice chancellor (A)	Registrar (B)	Bursar (C)	Director of academic planning (D)	University librarian (E)
Public	Federal	Agriculture	1	*	*	*	*	*
		Science	2	*	*	*	*	-
		Technology	3	*	*	*	-	*
	State	Agriculture	4	*	*	*	*	*
		Science	5	*	*	*	*	-
		Technology	6	*	*	-	*	*
Private	Denomination	7	*	*	*	*	-	
	Enterprise	8	-	*	*	*	*	
	Investment	9	*	*	*	-	*	

Findings

When principal officers were asked to explain how government policies have been included in Nigerian universities in terms of intake, all the respondents mentioned the NUC and JAMB as the bodies established by the Nigerian government to screen all candidates entering into university. However, a vice chancellor from a public university explained that many Nigerian universities today have observed that many of their candidates who perform well in the JAMB do not perform well in their first year (A3). One vice chancellor pointed that it is good to know that admission varies from university to university. He explained:

'I can admit 15,000 students another university many not have the capacity to admit more than 5,000 students.' (A1)

One director of academic planning from a public university explained that in order to address intake issues, the university has put in place a lot of facilities and introduced a post-UTM(B2). Four participants from public universities mentioned that, even with a post-UTME, their universities cannot fully determine who they will admit because they use a quota system (A1, B4, B6 and C5). Two registrars (B1, B3) supported the vice chancellor (A1), and went on to say that admission varies with different universities. For example, the NUC would assess each university first and give them a quota that they can admit for each programme. It is not just one figure per programme: for example, for chemistry, they would assess the programme (B1). For example, there is a student intake quota of 3,500 every year; originally it was 2,800, but after building some lecture theatres, the NUC team then increased it to 3,500 (B3). Another director of academic planning from a private university also emphasised once more that when the NUC gives an admission quota on particular courses, it should not be exceeded, otherwise the university licence may be withdrawn (D8).

A vice chancellor from a private university supported this view and revealed that some universities have a quota system which is influenced by catchment areas (A7). She stressed further that it is believed widely in Nigeria that the Northern people are lacking in education. Therefore government policies on admission procedures are slightly more relaxed than those found in the Southern or Western part of the country. Another vice chancellor from a private university supports the procedure in the Northern region; students' applications for admission are given preference, unlike in the Southern and Western parts of the country where regular procedures are employed. Likewise, another vice chancellor explained:

'I think government policies in terms of intake may be difficult to regulate when it comes to catchment areas and non-catchment areas, indigenous and non-indigenous. Again, in some cases, the government wants to give preference to people in science and technology courses and then arts and social sciences.' (A4)

One of the bursars revealed that in terms of admission, universities give privileges to their indigenous candidates first before considering even the best candidates in the post-UTME (C2). Though many respondents supported the bursar's view, a vice chancellor from a private university pointed out that universities always consider candidates of merit on their first list. She also talked about a second list for indigenous candidates, a supplementary list for other candidates and in most cases a final list of those getting in 'through the back door' (A7). In addition, three informants who supported the vice chancellor's assertion pointed out that, for instance, when a university is given the opportunity to admit five hundred indigenous candidates for the academic session, if they have not reached that limit, on many occasions the political office holders demand the university consider their children for admission, whether they have followed a due admission process or not (A2, B5, B7).

Five respondents from private universities gave economic development as the reason for these policies but it is regrettable that those who should be taking responsibility for economic development are cutting corners, as students are not ready to learn while parents are keen to get their children out of the house (B8, B9, C7, E8, E9). Another respondent who supported this view explained that universities have also made matter worse by losing their integrity. He claimed that the purpose of establishing university education is to develop and encourage students to learn (D5). A director of academic planning explained that the admission process itself does not encourage students to learn as many of the exercises are not done independently by the student (D7). Two respondents were of the view that the admission issue is now linked with everything that is happening in society, mentioning among other troubles corruption, nepotism, favouritism, etc. which he claimed had an effect on the process of admission (A5, D1). Another respondent claimed that the admission process in universities today is conducted by all the major stakeholders, that is everyone is involved (students, parents, the JAMB, even community leaders). He claimed that the involvement of these stakeholders (parents) should have a positive outcome if fair play is allowed, but on many occasions it is not. He maintained:

'Sometimes I just ignore some parents' call because they don't want to hear the truth, they want you to give their children admission whether they qualified or not.' (A6)

Three respondents from public universities expressed a similar view that the origin of the quota system and the intentions of government with the quota system had been successful at the beginning (B4, C1, D4). One of the respondents stressed that the government's intention was to make sure every Nigerian benefited from the university education system (B4). A respondent from a private university also made a similar contribution, saying that when universities were becoming established in Nigeria, it was a good thing that the government introduced the quota system policy to assist less developed areas (C8). Another director of academic planning stated that assisting less developed areas was good for students in those areas who are able to gain admission into a neighbouring university closer to their community, because places at the federal university were very limited (D6). A registrar and a director of academic planning also spoke out that it was good that the government was concerned about the population getting equal access to university education but the government policies that were established then do not state that they should be carried out to the detriment of quality and standards (B9, D2). A vice chancellor pointed out:

'I think you getting the whole thing wrong, you might have not hear this from any of your respondents that at the point when all these policies was introduced to the country's universities university education was free and the government was in control, therefore they could legislate on how they want the university to be run.' (A9)

A university librarian stated:

'I think it is the fault of the educators/elites who runs the affairs of the university in the past.' (E1)

Two bursars also argued that the elites who run the universities had failed to advise the government rightly that educating young people should not be a platform for politics (C1, C4). Five of the respondents share a similar view, saying that a quota system is a political strategy to involve those in the state who do not want to be engaged in western education (A7, B4, C3, D4, E3). A vice chancellor claimed that not engaging learners in their admission process will have a negative effect on the quality of graduates produced by universities for a long period of time (A7).

Two respondent were of the view that the quota system and catchment areas are sometimes used together especially in the educationally less developed states (C9, E4). One registrar stated:

'I am very surprised and I do not know what the Nigerian government were thinking of at the point they established this policy especially quota system and catchment area.' (B7)

Another registrar shared a common view with this registrar's assertion on the quota system, claiming that at the time when the policy was made Nigeria had only 29 states, of which 23 states were classified as educationally less developed (B9). Another of the registrars who shared a similar view with the first two also questioned the sense of the quota system policy. He went on to describe this policy as '... confusing, don't you think so?' (B1). A vice chancellor adding to this opinion stated that:

'I think Nigeria government should have based the university education policies on what will fit the classified educational less developed states since they are majorities.' (A5)

Another vice chancellor expressed the opinion that the standards introduced by or inherited from the University of London in the early years of university establishment in the country were of a high level and not followed by all the universities in assessing students. He lamented that:

' I think university was supposed to be an institution of higher learning not a compensation ground.' (A2)

A university librarian was of the opinion that the Nigerian government had made a mistake, as the assumed university education should be available for all (E4). Another university librarian shared E4's view. The respondent stated that 'I put it to you where in today's context civilisation is well spread yet not everyone can be educated to talk of having a university education' (E1). Another respondent - a director of academic planning from a private university - stated:

'I must be honest with you, the more reason why our universities were over populated today is not only because applicants want to study or develop themselves but rather they need a certificate to get them into the white collar job/labour market.' (D8)

A vice chancellor was of the opinion that it is not easy to ignore the amount of effort put into the selection of students to enter university each year by the JAMB and the post-UTME conducted by the universities themselves. He claimed that the JAMB had also been involved in developing best practices that will reflect the true knowledge of the candidates who have successfully passed their O' or A'level examinations (A9). A director of academic planning also supported the view that the JAMB's efforts to select quality candidates that will be fit for purpose at the university level have been jeopardised by what he called environmental factors (D3). Another respondent explained this idea further:

'I think we all need to keep at the back of our mind that all these candidates are from the community, the and at a point in time the whole community tend to get involved in their relative's university entry process, these happen in form of examination malpractices, impersonation during examination, lecturers, supervisors getting money from candidates to allow malpractices. Even some examination centres are known as miracle centres.' (B4)

Another registrar asserted that the family and friends of applicants sometimes get involved in the examination and screening exercises, forming a syndrome of corrupt practices lurking around the community where everybody wants to get the best result but is not ready to work for it (B7).

A director of academic planning mentioned that in an attempt to rectify problems of examination malpractice, different universities felt that the JAMB had failed to deliver quality candidates. He claimed that this was the major reason for establishing post-UTME and screenings to be conducted in different schools in addition to the JAMB scores (D7).

A contradictory view was raised by a director of academic planning from a public university. He explained that even with post-UTME, students who perform better still face a number of challenges as picking students they know or want is then at the discretion of the admission officers, irrespective of the grade achieved (D2). Another registrar from a public university claimed that in private universities older

candidates were not considered for admission, the explanation being that most of the private universities claimed that older candidates are likely to cause trouble during their period of study (B6). Another registrar from a private university also mentioned that candidates' parents, politicians and other dignitaries who are influential in the community on many occasions write letters requesting the university to admit their children or relative who might have performed poorly in the UTME, post-JAMB or screening exercise, or who have not even taken part in any of these exercises. All these contemporary problems have an effect on how the university admission processes are run (B8).

Conclusions

The study reveals that the sudden increase in demand for university education is not necessarily associated with the need to develop the economy but rather with the applicants' quest to secure a better future and financial security for themselves. With this self-centred aim, it is impossible for students or their parents to observe carefully the procedure for applicants' intake, but rather they buy their way in or use power and influence to secure admission.

From this study it was evident that the JAMB has admitted less than 20% of applicants into universities every year since 1978. This is as a result of impediments to access and the management of admission in the universities. Hence, the issue of access to university education has not been fully addressed. Access has been made difficult because of a number of government policies such as catchment areas, educationally less developed states and NUC carrying capacity coupled with inadequate financial and infrastructural facilities, among other matters, in the university system. This study concludes that access to university education has been made more complex because of government policies such as catchment areas, educationally less developed states and carrying capacity, as well as the inadequate infrastructural facilities in the university system. From the analysis it can be concluded that the rate of admission to universities is low compared to the number of applicants because of certain factors and admission policies which do not encourage entry in some regions and among some candidates. Likewise it is true that although Nigerian youth aspire to higher education, qualified candidates have been denied access. From this study, it can be concluded that in order to enhance access to universities, the issues of the quota system and catchment areas should be reviewed to lessen the hardship and difficulties parents and young people face when seeking admission to university.

Further study

The focus of this paper was centred only on the university as a higher institution of learning while other non-university opinions were not represented. This was not to underestimate the great work these institutions are doing nor to assume they are not experiencing similar issues. However, the researcher's intention to focus on university education was to be precise about the findings. The research suggested that further work should be carried out in other areas of higher education such as polytechnics and colleges of education and in basic education in secondary and primary schools. Likewise further work should be undertaken to look into external involvement in admission issues, a gap unearthed by the research.

References

- Adeyemi, Kola (2001) 'Equality of access and catchment area factor in university admissions in Nigeria', *Higher Education*, 42: 307-32.
- Agboola, B. M., & Ofoegbu, F. I. (2010). *Access to university education in Nigeria: A review*. Benin City, Nigeria: University of Benin. Department of Educational Studies and Management, Faculty of Education.
- Ajayi, I. A., & Ekundayo H. T., 2008, 'the Deregulation of University Education in Nigeria: Implications for Quality Assurance,' *Nebula*, 5(4), 212 - 224.
- Akintayo, M.O. (2004) Public Finance and The Problems of Access to University Education. International Journal of Literacy Education (UNESCO Chair). 2(1), 1-23.
- Akpan, C. P. and Undie, J. A. (2007) 'Access to university in Nigeria: issues and problems', in G. O. Akpa, S. U. Udoh and E. O. Fagbamiye (eds), *Deregulating the Provision and Management of Education in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), pp. 75-83.
- Akpotu, N. E. (2005) 'Deregulating the Nigerian university system: implications for equity and access', in G. O. Akpan, S. U. Udoh and E. O. Fagbamiye (eds), *Deregulating the Provision and Management of Education in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), pp. 57-62.
- Chukwurah, C. C. (2011) 'Access to higher education in Nigeria: the University of Calabar at a glance', *Canadian Social Science*, 7 (3): 108-13.
- Dada, J. A. (2004) 'Access to education in democratic Nigeria: issues and problems', in O. E. Uya, D. Denga, J. Emeh and J. Okoro (eds), *Education for Sustainable Democracy: The Nigeria Experience*. Calabar, Nigeria: University of Calabar Press.
- Federal Military Government. (1974). Decree No. 1 Establishing National Universities. Commission Supplement of Official Gazette, p. 461.
- Imhanlahimi, E. O. and Maduewesi, B. U. (2006) 'Implementing panacea for admission crisis into Nigerian universities: an innovation diffusion plan', *College Student Journal*, 40 (3): 12-21.
- Lokbut, Z. (2007) 'Access to higher education in Nigeria: the University of Jos at a glance', *Access, Equity and Quality in Higher Education*. Lagos: Nigerian Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP).
- Moti, U. G. (2010) 'The challenges of access to university education in Nigeria', *DSM Business Review*, 2 (2): 27-56.
- National Universities Commission (2002) *Academic Staffing Profiles, Student Enrollment, Dropout and Graduation Rates at Nigerian Universities during 1995/96 to 1999/2000 Academic Years*. Abuja, Nigeria: National Universities Commission, Department of Academic Planning.
- Ojogwu, C. N. and Alutu, A. N. G. (2009) 'Analysis of the learning environment of university students in Nigeria: a case study of the University of Benin', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 19 (1): 69-73.
- Okebukola, P. (2006) *State of University Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann.

Okebukola, P. 2002. The State of University Education in Nigeria. Abuja. National Universities Commission (NUC). *Issues" in Refocusing Education in Nigeria: A Book of Readings*. Oriaifo, S.O. et al (eds) Benin City, Da-Sylva Influence.

Okoroma, N. S. (2008) 'Admission policies and the quality of university education in Nigeria', *Educational Research Quarterly*, 31(3), 12-24.

Oyedeki, B. (2011) 'Admission as a factor in the Nigerian universities' management problems', *Continental Journal of Education Research*, 4 (3): 70-80.

Saint, W., Hartnett, T. A. and Strassner, E. (2003) 'Higher education in Nigeria: a status report', *Higher Education Policy*, 16: 259-81.

Salim, B. A. (2003) *Problems of Assessment and Selection into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the 21st Annual Conference of AEAA, Cape Town, South Africa.

Utulu, C. C. (2001) 'Quality of university education in Nigeria: problems and solutions', *Journal of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management*, 29 (1): 11-17.