



Nigerian University Quota Admission System and Quality of Education in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the influence of quota the admission system on the quality of education in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised and four research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. An ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was utilized with a sample of 116 academic heads of departments in universities in Cross River State. The instrument used for data collection was a structural questionnaire titled “Quota Admission System Questionnaire (QASQ)” for the quality of education in universities was designed and administered to 116 academic heads of departments. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The result showed that there is a significant positive influence of the merit system of admission on quality of education in Universities while there was no significant influence of the categorization of educationally disadvantaged states, catchment area and discretion systems of quota admission on the quality of education. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended among others, that university admission should be purely on merit. The quota system of admission, which has its roots in the federal character policy, negates the principle of equality and should be abolished.

Keyword: Nigerian University, Quota Admission System and Quality of Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, education is regarded as the bedrock of human total development. At the university level, education serves as the basis on which the needed high level manpower for a nations development could be nurtured. As such, Universities prepare future teachers and develop the high level manpower capacities that underpin the economic, social and political growth and development of any given nation (Odekule, 2001). However, the extent to which universities achieve these lofty objectives depends to a very large extent on the quality of education available in universities which could be determined by the quality of candidates offered admission by the National University Commission (NUC).

According to Adegba (2006) Nigerian youths in particular, and the adult population in general attach much premium on university education. Most people in Nigeria who have the potential for university education show desperation in their efforts to gain admissions into the highly limited available spaces. This obsession and preference for university education as against other forms of higher education such as colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Monotechnics which also offer degree programmes has placed enormous pressure on the placement and management of universities in Nigeria. Thus, standards of university education have been often negatively affected.

Ajayi (2008) noted that no law in Nigeria makes university education compulsory. According to him, the National Policy on Education (2004, p. 36) lists the goals of tertiary education:

- To contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the industry and society;
- To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-valiant and useful members of the society;
- To promote and encourage scholarship and community services;
- To forge and cement national unity; and
- To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

He therefore concluded that the national policy on education further stated that the above goals will be pursued by the universities through:

- Teaching
- Research
- The dissemination of existing and new information;
- The pursuit of services to the community; and
- Be a storehouse of knowledge.

Okujagu (2009) in his opinion places university education above other tertiary institutions. According to him, a university is a storehouse of retrieved knowledge and has functions which include authorship and publication of standard texts, self-sustenance, creation of a model community in efficiency, probity and tolerance, honest and enlightened commentary on public affairs in order to impartially educate and to inform. Thus, the university yearns for truth and

subjects existing body of knowledge to critical examination and analysis to see if it needs revision.

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 is 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. Unfortunately, this has been greatly abused. 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 disadvantage 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. The quota admission system portrays that a candidate from the Southern state with university matriculation examination scores of 300 out of 400 may not get admission into the university but his/her counterpart from the North with a lower score may be admitted. Similarly, a candidate with 280 score out of 400 from educationally advanced states may not get admission but his/her counterpart from educationally disadvantaged state with lower score may be admitted. Thus, quota system has created inequality in the provision of university education and equity has been sacrificed on the alter of quota system of admission. Some candidates with better scores are denied admission on grounds of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy. A candidate for admission should not be made to suffer greater burden than the other simply because of his place of birth and locality (Dada, 2004).

Concern has been raised about the decline in the quality of education universities offer in Nigeria. This is evident from by the quality of graduates produced in recent years. Prior to this period, graduates were substantially produced by government-owned universities until recently when a number of private universities were licensed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which is the umbrella under which Nigerian universities operate. It is thought that the quality of education offered by Nigerian universities is not in line with the expectations, and that the problem may be from the area of the initial admission process involving the quota admission system. The nation must withdraw from attention to ethnicity and political consideration and focus on merit as a premium option for admitting candidates into Nigerian universities so as to install academic standards optimally and enforce reduction of inequality within the nation.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of education in universities is enhanced by the level of its faculty capabilities as viewed in teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, pursuit of service to

the community and as a storehouse of knowledge to transform individuals to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training. The faculty must have the capacity to develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society among others.

Unfortunately, reports from different authors and scholars in recent times indicate deterioration in terms of faculty development in the system. Observations have also indicated that many students in our universities are no longer trainable and unable to carry out independent research. This shows that the desired quality of education has not been achieved. Given this state of affairs, how does the quota system of admission influence the quality of education in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Four hypotheses guided this study:

- Merit quota system of admission does not significantly influence the quality of education in universities.
- Educationally disadvantaged state quota system of admission does not significantly influence the quality of education universities.
- Catchment area quota system of admission does not significantly influence the quality of education in universities.
- Discretion quota system of admission does not significantly influences the quality of education in universities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design with a total population of 116 academic heads of departments in the two universities in Cross River State namely; University of Calabar and Cross River State University of Technology. The study used the entire population (census) of 116 academic heads of departments in the two universities as the sample size via purposive sampling approach. A structured questionnaire titled “Quota System of Admission Questionnaire (QSAQ) was used. The questionnaire was to elicit information on the quota system of admission and about the quality of university education accordingly. The questionnaire was structured on the four point modified likert type scale of all the times (ATT), most of the times (MTI), some of the times (STT), and not at all (NTT).

The instrument was subjected for free validity to two experts in research, measurement and evaluation to establish its validity. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a trial test of the instruments was done using 10 academic heads of departments in the university of Calabar, Calabar via split half reliability method. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers and retrieved back after completion. A coding key was designed to code all the responses in the two sets of instruments used in the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the four hypotheses in the study all at ≤ 0.05 level of significance.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Table 1: Model summary of the influence of quota system of admission on the quality of education in universities in Cross River State (N=116)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.74	0.68	0.61	2.853		
Model	Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	438.15	4	109.54		.000 ^a
	Residual	1022.04	111	9.21	11.90	
	Total	1460.19	115			
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	54.34	6.78		8.014	.000
	Merit	1.56	0.64	0.025	2.437	.032
	Educationally . Disadvantage states quota	-.048	.038	.414	-1.27	.193
	Catchment area quota	-.732	.709	.052	-1.03	.211
	Discretion quota	-.233	.204	.104	-1.14	.203

a. Dependent Variable: Quality of Education

Information in Table 1 shows that most of the correlations were significant and positive with an $R^2=0.68$. This means that 68 % of the variability of quality of education in Cross River State is jointly accounted for by the variables of merit quota, educational disadvantaged quota, catchment quota and discretionary quota. This implies that the remaining 32 per cent changes in quality of education in universities in Cross River State, could be caused by other variables not shown in the equation represented by the error term. The F-statistics of 11.9 which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.14 needed for significance at 0.05 level of significance, implies that quota system of admission (merit quota, educational disadvantage quota, catchment quota and discretionary quota) are joint significant predictors of quality of education in Universities in Cross River State.

The estimated coefficient for merit quota is positive. This implies that increase in merit quota of admission will certainly lead to an increase in the quality of education in universities in Cross River State. This result is in order with education theories and significant at ≤ 0.05 level of significance since the calculated t-value of 2.47 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 needed for significance at 114 degrees of freedom.

The estimated coefficients for educationally disadvantaged state, catchment area and discretion are all negative. This implies that an increase in these variables will lead to a corresponding decrease in the quality of education in universities in Cross River State. These results are also in line with other literature and are not significant at 0.05 level since the calculated t-values for these variables of -1.27, -1.03, -1.14 for educationally disadvantaged state, catchment area and discretion respectively were all found to be less than the critical t-value of 1.96, needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level of significance with 114 degrees of freedom.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results for hypotheses one revealed that merit system of admission significantly influences the quality of university education in the study area. This is an indication that if the merit system of admission is considered paramount it will lead to an increase in the quality of education in universities. The findings of the study are in consonance with the views of Dada (2004) who opined that access to university education should be based on merit. He further emphasized that the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and the National universities commission (NUC) should guide and regulate access to university education such that merit shall not be sacrificed on the alter of mediocrity. The findings are also in line with the views of Dozein (2003) who noted that merit should be considered optimally as the only avenue through which candidates get enrolled into Nigerian universities. He concluded that merit determines the actual academic future of every nation; therefore, it must be enforced by the government.

The result for hypothesis two revealed that educationally disadvantaged state quota system of admission does not significantly influence the quality of university education in the study area. This implies that when an educationally disadvantaged state is considered as a criterion, in the quota system of admission, the quality of education decreases in the universities. This finding is in support of the views of Ajaji (2003) who noted that the application of a political policy of educationally disadvantaged state in the admission process has negatively impacted on the quality of universities since emphasis is based on ethnicity and geographical area of candidates.

The result of hypothesis three also revealed that catchment area of quota system of admission does not significantly influence quality of university education in the study area. This implies that when catchment area system of quota admission is given high premium, the quality of education in universities deteriorate significantly. This finding is also in line with the views of Mohammed (2008) who observed that when equality of educational opportunities is considered as a critical factor to access university education, national development will be tampered with due to the decrease in the quality of university education. He noted that the dichotomy of locality indigene and non-indigene are all political tools, which negate quality in university education generally.

The result for hypothesis four also revealed that discretion system of quota admission procedure does significantly influence the quality of university education in the study area. This implies that the higher the procedure of admission by discretion, the higher the decrease in the quality of university education in Nigeria. This shows that discretion is based on a personality approach and not merit and as a matter of fact does not influence academic quality in any way. This finding is in agreement with the views of Ochuba (2001) who observed that the discretion procedure of university admission is totally based on personal grounds. According to him, access to university education by this procedure has negatively impacted on the quality of education since merit is relegated to the background and personal discretion upheld in the admission procedure. He concluded that the discretion procedure of admission system does not significantly impact on the quality of education in Nigerian universities and should be discourage.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, we conclude that the quota system of admission has a significant influence on the quality of education in universities in Cross River State through merit admission, but does not significantly influence the quality of education when educationally disadvantaged state, catchment area and discretion systems of admission are considered. Therefore, all efforts should be on deck by all citizens and stakeholders in education to balance the imbalance that has existed over time in the university education system which has impacted negatively on the quality of education. Let us jointly encourage the good academically, prepared students' access to the university based on merit. Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

- Admission should be based purely on merit. The quota system of admission which has its root in the federal character policy, negates the principle of equity and should be abolished;
- Government should take steps to eradicate indigene and non-indigene politics in admission into universities as this has greatly hindered access to and equity in university education.

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