#### CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

# UNIVERSITY ADMISSION PRACTICES IN NIGERIA: SOME UNTOWARD CONSEQUENCES

V.E ONYENE, Ph.D

## Introduction

The University, according to the National policy on Education (NPE) 1977 (Rev. 81, p. 22), is among the post secondary section of the national education system which aims at:

- (a) the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation;
- (b) the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals;
- (c) the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills:... and
- (d) the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

The University is the highest centre of learning all over the world and is, saddled with multifarious roles to be accomplished through teachers, research, information discovery and dissemination, community services and strong of knowledge. This is why it is very important significant to have reliable methods or strategies for the selection of candidates to be taught in these institutions.

Since the inception of higher, education in Nigeria with the Yaba Higher College in 1932 and later the University College Ibadan (1948), attendance at such higher education centres institutions have more or less remained a privilege restricted to a small percentage of the population of those qualify for the academic programme.

At the same time, education beyond the post-primary is still more of the rule than the exception especially in view of the long established relationship that existed between level of educational attainment and earning power. While a greater percentage go to Universities for this reason especially to study those sellable courses, the noveu rich try as much as possible to see their children admitted as a matter of proper rearing rather

than for job preparation. Thus the demand for higher education increases yearly as a result of such factors as societal fitness, values job and professional growth, besides the reason of meal ticket assurance.

# **Status for University Admission**

There are total of thirty-seven Federal Universities, seventeen Federal Polytechnics and twenty Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria with nine State-owned Universities and numerous colleges of education today.

The 1975-80 Development Plan of Nigeria set up a high powered committee under the newly formed National Universities commission (NUC) to look into University admission problems, with a view to removing all bottle neck limiting entry into the institutions, and also to ensure increased opportunities for university education in all part of the country. This committee was also to call for liberalization of admission into the universities so as to meet quality in the graduate out-put by means of appropriate course system, and to make recommendations on appropriate alternatives such as a Joint Matriculation Board. This gave birth to Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB in 1977).

Prior to the foundation of JAMB, the six first generation universities in Nigeria were autonomous in terms of admissions, general administration and so on. This was later changed by creating an umbrella commission by the Federal Government (i.e. NUC), that had ever remained a major monitoring and controlling agency for the universities till date. It is thus that Nigeria dropped the meritocratic system of autonomous universities (in terms of admission) for a quest for egalitarianism the National policy on Education (1981, p, 24), therefore states that

For Universities to serve as cementing National Unity, ... admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other institutions of higher learning should be on broad national base.

In Sub-section 43 (1) (p. 26), it states **that** for **better** mobility of students and easy access to higher education, the Universities will need to establish a Joint Matriculation Board for the selection of students for course.

With the initiation of an increased student population from 23,000 in 1973 to 53,000 by 1980, in the 3rd National Development Plan, the six Universities were federalized in September 1975 and subsequent commissioning of JAMB on 13th February by Act (No. 2 of 1978) of the Federal Military Government, a new organisational structure came into the limelight in the history of university education.

# The Place of JAMB in University Administration

In 1'990, the structure of the board was changed by Government with additional responsibilities assigned to it under 1979 Decree No. 33 which replaced the 1978 Act. Statutory roles of the board include:

- (a) the general control of the conduct of matriculation examinations for admission into all Universities, Polytechnics (by whatever name called) and Colleges of Education (by whatever name called) in Nigeria.
- (b) The appointment of examiners, moderators, invigilators and members of subject panel and committees and other persons with respect to matriculation examination and any other matter incidental thereto or connected therewith
- (c) the placement of suitably qualified candidates in the tertiary institutions after having taken into account
  - (i) the vacancies in each tertiary institutions;
  - (ii) the guidelines approved for tertiary institutions by its proprietor or other competent authority;
  - (iii) the preferences expressed or otherwise indicated by candidates for certain tertiary institutions and courses;
  - (iv) the collection and dissemination of information on all matters relating to admission into tertiary institution or to any other matter relevant to the

- discharge of the functions of the board under this Decree; and
- (v) the carrying out of such other activities as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it under or pursuant to this Decree.

It is worthy to note that this same Decree made it clear that matters relating to post-graduate courses or the likes offered by the Universities are outside JAMB Jurisdiction, and that the board has to monitor closely who are actually registered for degree programmes in all Nigerian Universities.

## Stages in Jamb Admission Process

## 1. Exploration Stage

In carrying out its statutory responsibilities of placing the suitably qualified applicants in the available spaces in the Universities the board consults the Universities. The Universities define the type of students they wish to attach by the Institutional goals they pursue, i.e. clear idea of what the University stands for is reflected in the nature, size and quality of students they want. The institutions respond from a prospective student, the course combination acceptable as entry requirement, as well as the course to be passed in the University Matriculation Examination (U.M.E). This is what JAMB compiles as its Brochure

On the other hand, the candidate who aspires for places in any of the Universities explore the environment and form impressions based on vicarious experience of their parents, peers, the mass media (e.g. nationally televised events, feedback from students already in the system and the JAMB Brochure. They have to choose between state and Federal Universities which may depend on parental sentiment finance and courses offered.

# 2. Recruitment

Candidates are recruited from all over the federation and the basic criteria include:

(i) Age: which should be seventeen and above (17+);

(ii) One must have sat for and made the required number of credits at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) or GCE

## **State Universities**

Total	100%
Locality	55%
Merit	45%

The locality of a federal university consists of the geographical or socio-cultural area contiguous to the University. Foreign applicants share from the ELDS quota. On the other hand, the obligation of the each State University is first to the indigenes of the State orastates funding iit. cOftenadimies; other come across State Universities that charge different fees from no-indigenes in order to discourage such "outsiders" from applying and to raise more money from external source

The JAMB Registrar is the Chief Admissions Officer for all Nigerian Universities.

There is also a University Admissions Committee headed by a Professor, responsible to the University Senate through the Vice-Chancellor.

## **Functions of the Committee**

It directs the affairs of the admission office with regard to its admission process. It ensures strict compliance tot he Federal admission guidelines. For example, the 60:40 Science/Humanities ration and quota distribution. Based on the quota allocated, the University decides on the cut-off points for every course at departmental levels.

Every faculty has an Admissions Officer who is a member of the University Admission Committee and also the head of the faculty's Admission Sub-committee. Every Faculty prepares its list of candidates to be admitted and submits same to the main which in turn sends the list of recommendation to the Vice Chancellor for approval.

The list of recommendations is finally sent to a JAMB, who on the basis of

8

## **Appraisal of the Situation**

From the forgoing one would understand that the place of JAMB seemed in the hierarchy than that of Individual University? For instance, while JAMB is directly responsible to the Minister, the Universities are under the NUC. In other words, JAMB and NUC are extra-ministerial bodies or parastatals but Universities are curiously placed under those parastatals.

The whole issue of admission processes boils down to the fact that the Federal Government remotely controls University in-takes while the University Senate has no hand in determining who should come into the system, but only to accept whoever is sent to them. Thus the professionals are marginalized from decisions that affect their daily functions.

The use of quota (popularly called Quota System) reduces the chances of highly qualified candidates from admitted. People are discouraged and frustrated out of the system where their best talents could have been adequately harnessed. This, no doubt, affects the quality of educational opportunity available to the citizenry as well as encourages stiffing qualitative development in education. The very poor performers are eligible by virtue of their geo-political background.

The question of a State being labelled educationally less developed lacks credibility because there is no publicly stated yardstick through which all the States have been tested and found to be at variance with each other if not through census data. And considering the fact that the only widely accepted census figure was that of 1963 before the 1992 exercise, we could be using an out-dated information which nay have seen a lot of changes.

Allocation of spaces by the federal government reduces the autonomy of University that conducts the teaching /learning programme. The method does not consider the availability of funds, materials and teaching staff.

Since some highly placed officials now use their working hours to run coaching centers for a fat fee, the tendency is that there is continuos leakages and malpractices in JAMB examinations and admission.

The use of U.M.E. scores to predict future performance is no longer reliable because many people are admitted not on the basis of academic excellence but on glorified nepotism called the quota system.

It creates double standard because some are admitted using the upper while others are given ethnic and/or geopolitical whil

## References

Reavs, W.C.: Critical Issues in Education Administration. The University of Chicago Press, Illinois.

Fafuwa, A.B.: Education in Africa. Heinemann Press Ltd.

Encyclopaedia of Educational Research; 5th Edition (pp. 59 - 67) Collier Mac Mililan Publishers, London, 1982.

Joint Admissions & Matriculations Board Guidelines for Admission to First Degree Courses in Nigerian Universities, 1992/93 Edition.

National Policy on Education (Revised 1981) NERDC Press, Yaba - Lagos.