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SOME POLICY ISSUES IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA*

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Abstract:

The paper examines three issues relating to university education in Nigeria. The first is the provision of the National Policy on Education, enacted in 1977, which specifies 60:40 science/arts ratio in student admission and enrolment. The second is the student/teacher ratios recommended for the existing universities by the National Universities Commission. The last is the issue of access to university education which has always attracted global attention. The paper assesses the extent to which the universities have achieved the science/arts ratio in student admission and enrolment. It compares the actual and the recommended student/teacher ratios and points out that there is divergence between the two. The paper also argues that the demand for university education out-striped its supply and that geographical imbalance exists in the demand for university places. The paper then highlights the policy measures taken by government to address the issues raised, makes some recommendations and concludes that the problems confronting university education must be addressed.

Key words: Access, Policy Issues, Student admission & Enrolment, Student/Teacher Ratio, University Education.

Introduction:

The National Policy on Education, NPE [4], which was first published in 1977, is a document that gives direction to all aspects of education in Nigeria. It is obligatory for the three tiers of government – local, state and federal - to comply with the provisions of the NPE in the running of publicly-owned educational institutions within their jurisdiction. In giving approval to educational institutions proposed by private individuals and organizations, state and federal governments that have the responsibility for doing so, must be guided by the NPE. Even when such institutions have been granted licences to operate, they have to carry out their activities in accordance with public policy dictated by the NPE. One of the aspects of education touched by the NPE is tertiary education, that is, post –secondary education which is available in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and monotechnics.

In order to ensure smooth management of education in Nigeria, state and federal governments have ministries of education and agencies which superintend educational institutions. Two of such educational agencies at the federal level are the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The NUC, which performs similar functions like the Higher Education Funding Council of England and University Grants Commission of India, was established in 1962 as an administrative body in the Cabinet Office. It became a statutory body via Decree No. 1 of 1974 and has the key function of coordinating university education in Nigeria. By virtue of Decree No. 1 of 1974, the functions were expanded to cover the provision of advisory services to the federal government on the establishment of new

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universities, preparation of periodic master plans for university development, among others. The NUC has also drawn up some guidelines which universities must comply with in the running of their internal affairs. For instance, the NUC stipulates the student/teacher ratios for the academic programmes run by the universities in order to guarantee adequate number of academic staff. JAMB was established through Decree No. 2 of 1978 to coordinate student admissions into the universities. With the promulgation of Decree No. 33 of 1989, JAMB assumed responsibility for supervising student admissions to all tertiary educational institutions in the country. JAMB is expected to implement the policy prescription of 60:40 science/arts admission ratio in the universities.

This paper examines one of the provisions of the NPE on university education regarding the science/arts admission and enrolment ratios, and the issue of access to university education for all citizens as stated under the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria in the NPE. It also looks at the student/teacher ratios set for the various fields of study by the NUC with a view to evaluating the extent to which they have been complied with by the universities. The issues discussed in this paper are student admission and enrolment, student/teacher ratio, and access to university education.

Student Admission and Enrolment

Available statistics indicate that the preference shown by prospective candidates seeking admission into Nigerian universities varies from one faculty to the other. Table 1 shows the number of candidates seeking admission into Nigerian universities by faculty.

Table - 1

Number of Applications into Nigerian Universities by Faculty

Faculties	Academic Year 1998/99 No. of Applicants	%	1999/2000 No. of Applicants	%	2000/01 No. of Applicants	%	2003/04 No. of Applicants	%	2005/06 No. of Applicants	%
Administration	88613	27.57	113286	27.04	116906	25.01	282253	27.00	168376	18.42
Agriculture	2891	0.90	3542	0.85	3200	0.68	7079	0.68	7246	0.79
Arts	13309	4.14	18640	4.45	18841	4.03	51786	4.95	45870	5.02
Education	2547	0.79	3020	0.72	3236	0.69	16404	1.57	23596	2.58
Engineering/Envir.	55907	17.40	72518	17.31	83065	17.77	163945	15.69	142394	15.58
Law	34180	10.64	44274	10.57	48385	10.35	88409	8.46	69751	7.63
Medical	54879	17.08	67938	16.22	80840	17.27	164706	15.76	161292	17.65
Science	16686	5.19	22185	5.30	24743	5.29	59558	5.70	68673	7.51
Social Sciences	52356	16.29	73525	17.55	88274	18.88	211079	20.19	226664	24.80
Total	**321368**	**100**	**418928**	**100**	**467490**	**100**	**1048229**	**100**	**913862**	**100**

Sources: (i) Education Sector Analysis (2003). Pre-diagnostic bibliography collation on studies proposed for the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis (ESA), Abuja: Author.

(ii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (2004). Appendix III.

(ii) The Punch Newspaper Friday October 14, 2005, p. 3.

The table indicates that courses in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Administration were the most preferred, followed by Medical Sciences. The least favoured were courses in the Faculties of Agriculture and Education. With the growing employment opportunities in the service sector, it is not surprising that courses in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Administration were the most desired. From experience, those courses fetch university graduates attractive remuneration. The least preference given to Agriculture does not come as a surprise. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria [1], Petroleum Products account for 25% of the Gross Domestic Product, 90% of the foreign exchange earnings and 70% of government's revenue in Nigeria and Agricultural products have paled into insignificance. The fact that not much incentive is given to graduates of Agriculture to go into large-scale farming, the dearth of job opportunities for those people in the formal sector of the economy, and the preference for white-collar jobs among university graduates, might account for the lowest percentage of candidates seeking admission into the universities to read Agriculture. There is therefore the need to give more impetus to Agriculture in order to attract candidates into the Faculties of Agriculture. Courses in Education come after those in Agriculture in terms of unpopularity. Most candidates detest Education because of the poor recognition given to teachers in Nigeria. The conditions of service for teachers also dissuade a good percentage of candidates from opting for Education. Yet, the NPE observes that 'no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers'. Because of the critical importance of teachers in the education system, more candidates have to be attracted to the Faculties of Education in Nigeria.

The National Policy on Education [4] stipulates that at least 60% of the vacancies in the universities should be allocated to science and science-related courses in the conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology. Table 2 shows the science - and arts-based enrolment ratios in Nigerian universities in 2005.

Table-2

Science-Based and Arts-Based Ratios in Nigerian Universities (2005)

Federal Universities		Student enrolment			
		Science-based		Arts-based	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	University of Ibadan	9700	51.2	9257	48.8
2.	University of Lagos	12419	45.1	15113	54.9
3.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	15693	56.3	12174	43.7
4.	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	11359	37.1	19293	62.9
5.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	13445	50.9	12990	49.1
6.	University of Benin	17011	61.7	10566	38.3
7.	University of Jos	7828	49.1	8118	50.9
8.	University of Calabar	8273	41	11920	59
9.	Bayero University, Kano	14063	47.1	15762	52.9
10.	University of Maiduguri	9120	36.6	15805	63.4
11.	Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	7286	52.3	663	47.7
12.	University of Ilorin	9148	48.7	9638	51.3
13.	University of Port-Harcourt	7039	43	9518	57
14.	University of Uyo	8753	53.5	7616	46.5
15.	Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka	12259	50.0	12247	50.0
16.	University of Abuja	1660	15.4	9127	84.6
17.	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	5792	100	0	0
18.	University of Agriculture, Makurdi	3377	100	0	0
19.	Michael Opara University of Agric. Umudike	1550	95.8	68	4.2
20.	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	22725	89.4	2703	10.6
21.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	8028	100	0	0
22.	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	7097	88	964	12
23.	Federal University of Technology, Minna	15228	100	0	0
24.	Federal University of Technology, Yola	8042	72.2	3094	27.8
25.	Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna	497	51	478	49
26.	National Open University	1876	29	4591	71
Total (Federal Universities)		**239268**	**54.7**	**197674**	**45.3**

From Table 2, the science / arts enrolment ratios were 54.7:45.3; 37.3: 62.7 and 36.7: 63.3 in federal, state and private universities respectively. Only Universities of Agriculture (Serial numbers 17, 18 and 19 in Table 2) and Universities of Technology (Serial numbers 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 30 and 34 in Table 2) attained the suggested science/arts enrolment ratio. All other universities including three state universities of technology (Serial numbers 27, 51 and 52 in Table 2) could not achieve the recommended ratio. The overall science / arts enrolment ratio for all the universities was 49:51. This is still a far cry from the recommended ratio of 60:40 in favour of science- oriented courses.

The prominence given to science-related courses in the NPE is based on the need to promote the study of science and technological courses for the country to achieve technological development. This goal is also enunciated in the National Policy on Science and Technology which underscores the importance of science in Nigerian schools. In the same vein, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) for tackling poverty, promoting wealth and employment creation, recommends that educational institutions should stress science, technical and vocational education in their programmes [5]. However, the overall national science/arts enrolment ratio of 49:51 attained about 30 years after the enactment of the NPE shows that state and federal governments have to re-double their efforts to promote science and technological education. This suggestion becomes imperative because of the global recognition given to science and technology. For instance, the World Conference on Science held in Budapest, Hungary from 26 June to 1 July 1999, on the platform of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council for Science (ICSU), proclaimed that science and technology are essential for development. In line with this observation, the Conference recommended that all tiers of government and the private sector should give improved support for building up a sufficient and equally distributed scientific and technological capacity through suitable education and research programmes.

Student/Teacher Ratio:

The NUC has regulation on student-teacher ratios for the faculties available in the universities. Oyebade [6] identifies the student/ teacher ratios currently operating in the universities as follows:

Law	20:1
Education	24:1
Arts	20:1
Social Sciences	20:1
Administration	20:1
Pharmacy	10:1
Agriculture	9:1
Environmental Sciences	10:1
Engineering/Technology	9:1
Sciences	10:1
Human Medicine	6:1
Veterinary Medicine	6:1

Table 3 shows student enrolment by discipline, while Table 4 presents the number of academic staff by discipline for some academic sessions. Table 5 (computed from Tables 3 and 4) shows the student/teacher ratios in the faculties from 1995/96 to 1999/2000 academic years because of lack of recent data on academic staff by discipline.

Table 3

Total Enrolment in Nigerian Universities By Discipline (1995 / 2005)

Discipline	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
ADMIN.	15,525	15,339	16,305	18,744	19,512	20,958	29,407	72,456	NA	98,293
AGRIC.	18,265	15,862	16,630	18,764	20,874	24,653	18,557	59,902	NA	34,632
ARTS	21,976	24,459	22,477	23,662	23,771	28,463	31,182	23,414	NA	61,128
EDUCATION	29,633	31,305	29,940	32,595	33,458	34,802	33,782	63,634	NA	76,389
ENG/TECH.	28,781	29,370	31,108	34,549	39,229	45,682	47,278	55,348	NA	81,624
EVN. SCI.	9,548	9,663	9,506	10,417	10,866	12,032	10,864	34,555	NA	24,845
LAW	11,524	11,317	11,169	13,935	13,656	15,640	14,395	69,431	NA	26,972
MEDICINE	19,962	20,842	22,067	20,627	20,725	24,087	26,360	22,088	NA	39,290
PHARMACY	5,786	4,663	4,964	4,929	4,879	5,140	5,727	31,834	NA	5,724
SCIENCES	48,872	49,221	52,938	50,814	59,333	62,374	59,361	62,255	NA	140,082
SOCIAL SCI.	28,077	29,754	34,101	46,992	51,797	50,406	45320	102,499	NA	84,075
VET. MED.	2,742	2,313	2,159	2,173	2,318	2,743	3,743	3,168	NA	3,690
TOTAL	**240,691**	**244,108**	**253,364**	**278,201**	**300,618**	**327,980**	**325,707**	**599,584**		**676,744**

Key: NA= Not Available
Source: National Universities Commission, Abuja.

Table 4

Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities by Discipline

Discipline/Year	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	19998/99	1999/00	2000/01
Administration	417	476	516	470	414	284
Agriculture	1209	1242	1177	1109	1875	418
Arts	1402	3591	1610	1365	1435	654
Dentistry	421	171	156	169	190	157
Education	1270	1209	1256	1152	2302	594
Engineering/Tech.	1209	1007	1102	1073	1238	544
Env. Sciences	491	540	471	514	476	235
Law	400	346	368	325	1385	184
Medicine	995	1275	1133	979	1920	483
Pharmacy	255	210	150	362	254	103
Science	2513	2500	2455	2335	4166	943
Soc. Science	1007	1611	1098	1526	5943	1068
Vet. Medicine	236	258	240	279	211	142
Total	**11825**	**14436**	**11832**	**11649**	**21809**	**5799**

Source: National Universities Commission, Abuja.

Table 5
Student-Teacher Ratios in Nigerian Universities by Discipline

Discipline/Year	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	19998/99	1999/2000
Administration	37:1	32:1	32:1	40:1	47:1
Agriculture	15:1	13:1	14:1	20:1	11:1
Arts	16:1	7:1	14:1	17:1	17:1
Education	23:1	26:1	24:1	28:1	15:1
Engineering/Tech.	24:1	29:1	28:1	32:1	32:1
Env. Sciences	20:1	18:1	20:1	20:1	23:1
Law	29:1	33:1	30:1	43:1	10:1
Medicine	20:1	16:1	20:1	21:1	11:1
Pharmacy	23:1	22:1	33:1	14:1	19:1
Science	20:1	20:1	22:1	22:1	14:1
Soc. Science	28:1	19:1	31:1	31:1	9:1
Vet. Medicine	12:1	9:1	9:1	8:1	11:1

Note:
Data on student enrolment for the Faculty of Dentistry were not available, so the student/teacher ratios could not be calculated.

However, it is most likely that the ratios have increased beyond the 1999/2000 figures, especially in science-related courses, because more than 30 additional universities have been established since year 2000. Also recently, the Academic Staff Union of Universities claimed that about 45,000 additional lecturers are needed to effectively run the universities in Nigeria. A comparison of the student/teacher ratios in Table 7 with ratios currently operating in the universities shows divergence between the two generally. The actual student/teacher ratios were higher than the recommended ratios in most cases, and the science-based courses were the worse hit than the arts-related ones. With the approval of 32 private universities and the intention of the federal government to grant licences to more of such universities, the dearth of academic staff will be further heightened considering the fact that Nigerian universities recruit majority of their staff locally. For sustenance, the university system must be assured of steady flow of academic staff.

Access to University Education

It is worthy to note that the number of universities increased from 6 in 1972 to 89 in May 2007. All universities have full-time programmes to cater for those who demand for such courses. A substantial number of the public universities run part-time programmes to meet the educational aspirations of working people who cannot attend full-time programmes. The federal government also revived the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in 2001. NOUN was closed down by the Federal Military Government in 1984. In spite of the efforts that have been made to promote access to university education, a considerably high number of candidates still could not secure admission into the existing universities as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Extent of Unsatisfied Demand for University Education in Nigeria by Academic Session

Academic Year	Number of Applicants	Number Admitted	Percentage Admitted	Unsatisfied Demand
1995/96	512,797	37,498	7.31	92.69
1996/97	376,827	56,055	14.88	85.12
1997/98	398,804	77,245	19.37	80.63
1998/99	321,368	78,560	24.45	75.55
1999/2000	418,928	78,550	18.75	81.25
2000/2001	467,490	50,277	10.75	89.25
2001/2002	842,072	95,199	11.00	89.00
2003/2004	1,048,229	105,157	10.03	89.97

Sources:

(i) Oyelade, S. A. (2001). The gap between the demand and supply of university education in Nigeria: Some crucial issues and suggestions. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Benin, Benin, Nigeria, p.10.

(ii) Education Sector Analysis (2003). Pre-diagnostic bibliography collation studies proposed for the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis (ESA), Abuja: Author, Appendix 4.

(iii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (1997-1999), Appendix 6.

(iii) Joint Admission and Matriculation Board's Annual Report 2001, Appendix 6.

(iv) Joint Admission and Matriculation Board's Annual Report 2004 Appendix III.

On the average, more than 80% of the candidates that sought admission into the universities could not be admitted. This seems to confirm the observation made by UNESCO [8] that the gap in Gross Enrolment Ratios between Africa and the developed countries has continued to increase, showing constrained access to higher education. UNESCO also pointed out that sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest Gross Enrolment Ratio at the higher education level in the world. This is in spite of the efforts made at enhancing student enrolment in the last decade in sub-Saharan Africa.

Statistics also indicate that there is geographical imbalance in the demand for university education in Nigeria. Table 7 shows the number of applications (for admission) into Nigerian universities by state of origin. From table 7, it is obvious that a significant number of candidates seeking admission into Nigerian universities were from the Southern States (Serial Numbers 1,3,4,6,9,10,11,12,13,14, 16, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 32 in Table 7). All the Northern States (Serial Numbers 2, 5, 7, 8, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 33, 34, 35 and 36 in Table 7) are classified as educationally less advantaged.

Table 7

Number of Applications into Nigerian Universities by State of Origin

State		Academic Year 1997/98 No. of Applicants	%	1998/99 No. of Applicants	%	2000/01 No. of Applicants	%	2003/04 No. of Applicants	%	2005/06 No. of Applicants	%
1.	Abia	24779	6.21	17548	5.46	23952	5.12	51465	4.91	47790	5.23
2.	Adamawa	2373	0.59	1343	0.42	2168	0.46	9338	0.89	5862	0.64
3.	Akwa Ibom	14534	3.64	12149	3.78	17802	3.81	51776	4.94	46614	5.10
4.	Anambra	30701	7.69	26232	8.16	39982	8.53	79375	7.57	65656	7.18
5.	Bauchi	2754	0.69	490	0.15	1040	0.22	3078	0.29	3502	0.38
6.	Bayelsa	-	-	4790	1.49	7177	1.54	18094	1.73	17700	1.94
7.	Benue	6175	1.54	4094	1.27	7027	1.50	23873	2.28	23843	2.61
8.	Borno	2780	0.69	1076	0.33	1907	0.41	5760	0.55	4975	0.54
9.	Cross River	8865	2.22	4106	1.28	6365	1.36	23685	2.26	19421	2.13
10.	Delta	33641	8.43	30478	9.48	39861	8.53	88987	8.50	70481	7.71
11.	Ebonyi	-	-	2749	0.86	5505	1.18	17705	1.69	17439	1.91
12.	Edo	33887	8.49	2403	7.48	31981	6.84	69261	6.61	54356	5.95
13.	Ekiti	-	-	10347	3.22	14733	3.15	29264	2.79	27398	3.00
14.	Enugu	16503	4.13	11862	3.69	19335	4.14	48779	4.65	44460	4.87
15.	Gombe	-	-	544	0.17	1020	0.22	3399	0.32	3544	0.39
16.	Imo	39420	9.88	33531	10.43	51381	10.99	111570	10.64	99512	10.89
17.	Jigawa	730	0.18	518	0.16	645	0.14	1658	0.16	1666	0.18
18.	Kaduna	3380	0.85	3163	0.98	3947	0.37	11894	1.14	10945	1.20
19.	Kano	3715	0.93	1596	0.50	3582	0.77	10800	1.03	10661	1.17
20.	Katsina	1138	0.28	852	0.27	1280	0.27	3339	0.32	3430	0.38
21.	Kebbi	714	0.17	516	0.16	927	0.20	3163	0.30	3062	0.34
22.	Kogi	11857	2.97	9088	2.83	13324	2.85	34954	3.34	34755	3.80
23.	Kwara	11333	2.84	9273	2.89	13775	2.95	33200	3.17	25604	2.80

Table 7 (Continued)

	State	Academic Year 1997/98 No. of Applicants	%	1998/99 No. of Applicants	%	2000/01 No. of Applicants	%	2003/04 No. of Applicants	%	2005/06 No. of Applicants	%
24.	Lagos	15925	3.99	16621	5.17	25454	5.44	40038	3.82	32004	3.50
25.	Nasarawa	-	-	717	0.22	1655	0.35	5248	0.50	6068	0.66
26.	Niger	1968	0.49	1313	0.41	2136	0.46	5557	0.53	4232	0.46
27.	Ogun	29733	7.45	25709	7.80	34182	7.31	59704	5.70	50802	5.56
28.	Ondo	29395	7.37	15676	4.88	21765	4.66	49322	4.71	40529	4.43
29.	Osun	21451	5.37	17494	5.44	24205	5.18	49775	4.75	40088	4.39
30.	Oyo	19483	4.88	14443	4.50	19961	4.27	39733	3.79	35714	3.91
31.	Plateau	4564	1.44	1420	0.44	2511	0.54	6824	0.65	5133	0.56
32.	Rivers	22476	5.63	15284	4.76	21477	4.59	45293	4.32	43037	4.71
33.	Sokoto	1334	0.33	584	0.18	1022	0.22	1924	0.18	3175	0.35
34.	Taraba	1123	0.28	570	0.18	1140	0.24	2989	0.29	3382	0.37
35.	Yobe	966	0.24	366	0.11	567	0.12	2223	0.21	2543	0.28
36.	Zamfara	-	-	324	0.10	1074	0.23	2055	0.20	2499	0.27
37.	Others	1107	0.27	472	0.15	715	0.15	973	0.09	--	--
TOTAL		**398804**	**100**	**321368**	**100**	**467490**	**100**	**1048229**	**100**	**911882**	**100**

Sources:

(i) Education Sector Analysis (2003). Pre-diagnostic bibliography collation on studies proposed for the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis (ESA), Abuja: Author.

(ii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (1997-1999) Appendix 6.

(iii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (2004). Appendix III.

(iv) The Punch Newspaper Friday October 14, 2005, p. 3.

Table 8

Number of Admissions into Nigerian Universities by State of Origin

State		Academic Year 1997/98 No. of Admissions	%	1998/99 No. of Admissions	%	2000/01 No. of Admissions	%	2003/04 No. of Admissions	%
1.	Abia	4581	5.93	4484	5.71	3720	7.4	6664	6.34
2.	Adamawa	1929	2.49	330	0.42	471	0.94	624	0.59
3.	Akwa Ibom	1247	1.61	2279	2.90	1687	3.36	4128	3.93
4.	Anambra	1504	1.95	6094	7.76	5968	11.87	10525	10.01
5.	Bauchi	547	0.71	146	0.19	309	0.61	394	0.38
6.	Bayelsa	-	-	1229	1.56	878	1.75	3972	3.77
7.	Benue	1753	2.27	961	1.22	1434	2.85	2604	2.48
8.	Borno	2225	2.88	255	0.32	546	1.09	888	0.85
9.	Cross River	3762	4.88	1712	2.18	894	1.78	1952	1.86
10.	Delta	5549	7.18	6185	7.87	3613	7.19	6717	6.38
11.	Ebonyi	-	-	580	0.74	911	1.81	3377	3.21
12.	Edo	5350	6.93	4954	6.31	2010	4.00	6665	6.34
13.	Ekiti	-	-	2582	3.29	897	1.78	1662	1.58
14.	Enugu	2104	2.72	2926	3.73	2817	5.60	7997	7.61
15.	Gombe	-	-	170	0.22	293	0.58	261	0.25
16.	Imo	8860	11.47	9319	11.86	6404	12.74	14764	14.04
17.	Jigawa	112	0.15	125	0.16	107	0.21	44	0.04
18.	Kaduna	825	1.07	972	1.24	698	1.39	298	0.28
19.	Kano	427	0.55	345	0.44	491	0.98	139	0.13
20.	Katsina	221	0.29	311	0.40	215	0.43	117	0.11
21.	Kebbi	290	0.38	233	0.30	249	0.50	306	0.29
22.	Kogi	2028	2.63	1986	2.53	1878	3.74	3318	3.16
23.	Kwara	3706	4.79	1922	2.45	1033	2.05	1776	1.69

Table 8 (Continued

State		Academic Year 1997/98 No. of Admissions	%	1998/99 No. of Admissions	%	2000/01 No. of Admissions	%	2003/04 No. of Admissions	%
24.	Lagos	3092	4.00	5580	7.10	1822	3.62	2640	2.51
25.	Nasarawa	-	-	211	0.27	316	0.63	387	0.37
26.	Niger	524	0.68	474	0.60	466	0.93	173	0.17
27.	Ogun	5227	6.77	6708	8.54	2010	4.00	4704	4.46
28.	Ondo	4901	6.34	3906	4.97	1779	3.54	4169	3.98
29.	Osun	3213	6.34	3906	4.97	1201	2.39	3197	3.04
30.	Oyo	6216	8.05	3082	3.92	1054	2.10	2301	2.19
31.	Plateau	1216	1.57	302	0.38	470	0.93	449	0.43
32.	Rivers	4721	6.11	3591	4.57	2652	6.21	7032	6.68
33.	Sokoto	388	0.50	267	0.34	347	0.69	291	0.28
34.	Taraba	380	0.49	196	0.25	213	0.42	198	0.19
35.	Yobe	250	0.32	115	0.15	147	0.29	221	0.21
36.	Zamfara	-	-	128	0.16	234	0.47	190	0.18
37.	Others	97	0.13	25	0.03	43	0.09	13	0.01
TOTAL		**77245**	**100**	**78550**	**100**	**50277**	**100**	**105,157**	**100**

Sources:

(i) Education Sector Analysis (2003). Pre-diagnostic bibliography collation on studies proposed for the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis (ESA), Abuja: Author.

(ii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (1997-1999) Appendix 6.

(iii) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board's Annual Report (2004). Appendix III.

Akwa Ibom, Baylesa, Ebonyi, Cross Rivers and River States which are in the southern part of the country also belong to the group of educationally less advantaged states. Yet, Akwa-Ibom and Rivers States compared favourably well with most southern states in terms of the demand for university admission. Bayelsa, Ebonyi, and Cross-River States also had better share of candidates seeking admission than most states in the north. It is evident from Table 7 that the northern states did not have appreciable number of candidates demanding for university places. Available statistics from the Federal Ministry of Education and some educational agencies show that the states have lower student enrolments at the primary and secondary school levels than the southern states. This is due to the attitude of the Islamic north to western education which was introduced by the Christian Missionary groups. In the past, the Muslims believed that western education was intended to change their children to Christianity. Even now, it is an uphill task to convince a sizeable number of illiterate parents in the North to send their children to school. Rather, they prefer Arabic school to the formal school system. Also, an aspect of the culture of the Islamic north which favours early marriage among girls continues to retard educational development in the area. Since candidates for the universities are sourced from post-primary institutions, efforts at increasing the number of candidates seeking university admission in the northern states will have to focus on boosting enrolments in primary and secondary schools in those states. More opportunities will also have to be created for candidates from the southern states in the universities. Table 8 shows the number of admissions into Nigerian universities by state of origin. A comparison of Tables 7 and 8 indicates that many candidates could not gain admission but the case of applicants from the southern states was worse than that of their counterparts from the north.

Policy Initiatives, Recommendations and Conclusion:

It was remarked earlier that more candidates would have to be attracted to the Faculties of Agriculture and Education because of the least preference shown for them by candidates seeking admission into the universities. At present, the federal government is promoting agricultural products and solid minerals to diversify the economy. Soft loans are given to people under the small-scale enterprise promotion scheme and those interested in agriculture are encouraged to participate in the scheme. However, most of such people go into small-scale poultry farming and fishery. They rarely engage in large-scale crop production and animal husbandry due to the small capital base since they lack adequate collateral to secure big loans. In spite of these lapses, the measures being taken to promote agriculture may encourage more university-bound candidates to enroll for Agriculture.

For more candidates to opt for the Faculty of Education, the conditions of service for teachers will have to be improved significantly. In addition, the society has to give adequate recognition to teachers. According to Ejiogu [2], the society so derides the economic and social conditions of teachers to the extent that ladies do not want to marry teachers. House owners are reluctant to have teachers as tenants on the suspicion that they might be unable to meet their rent obligations.

The federal government has realised the need to improve the welfare of teachers. For instance, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in his address at the World Teachers' Day Celebration in Abuja on October 5, 2006, announced that the Federal Government was preparing a Teachers' Salary Scale which would improve the salaries of teachers. He also said that Government will, in the future, institute national awards to give recognition to deserving teachers. The Teachers' Registration Council has also been set-up through Decree No. 31 of 1993 to regulate the teaching profession. The Council has

commenced registration of teachers. The intention is to weed out the unqualified teachers from the education system if they cannot upgrade their qualifications. It is hoped that these measures will act as incentives for candidates to opt for courses in Education to become professional teachers.

Statistics have shown that more students were enrolled in arts-based disciplines than science-related programmes. This calls for more intensive efforts to promote science and technological education. In September 2005, the federal government initiated actions to develop science and technology education. These are in two directions: science and technology education for primary and secondary schools and colleges of education; and for post-basic education. The thinking is that positive attitude must be created at the primary and secondary school levels first, to produce candidates for science and technology courses in the universities and a component of that project is teacher training. The first phase of the project focused on: (1) distribution of micro-science and mathematics kits to pilot primary schools and science kits to secondary schools; (2) training of teachers in the ground-breaking ways of teaching science; and (3) empowering the State and Federal Inspectorates to effectively monitor and evaluate science teaching. The project on science and technology education at the post-basic level seeks to back the federal government in enhancing the quality and relevance of science and technology programmes in post-basic federal institutions and boosting access for the deprived target groups such as rural and female students. The second aim is to establish helpful Public-Private Partnerships for programmes in science and technology between the post-basic federal institutions and Businesses for such programmes to suit the demands of the labour market. There is much hope for the success of the project because the federal government is partnering with UNESCO.

The divergence between the recommended and actual student/teacher ratios for the faculties in the universities points toward inadequacy of academic staff. To redress the situation, the first generation universities – Universities of Ibadan, Lagos, and Benin; Ahmadu Bello University and Obafemi Awolowo University – are being encouraged to admit more postgraduate students than undergraduates to step up the production of future academic staff. These universities have more senior academics than the relatively younger ones. In addition, factors that promote brain drain must be squarely addressed in order to guarantee stability of academic staff. As the Presidential Committee on Brain Drain [3] recommended, there is the need for improved conditions of service for staff, increased funding of academic departments, etc. Although funding support for the public universities and conditions of service for academic staff have been enhanced by the current civilian Administration, the situation has not changed drastically to stem depletion of the ranks of teaching staff. So, more efforts are still needed to make academic staff remain in the universities and perform satisfactorily.

To address the problem of disequilibrium between the demand for and supply of university education, the federal government has continued to expand the universities to swell their capacity to admit more candidates. The NUC has promised to license more private universities once their prospective owners satisfy laid down regulations. More state governments have also established universities and the latest was the Osun State Government, bringing the number of universities to 89 in May 2007.

There is the need to reduce the geographical imbalance between the northern and southern parts of the country with regard to the demand for university education. However, efforts at raising enrolments in the northern states must start at the primary and secondary school levels. It is in line with this observation that the federal government introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme in September 1999 to promote universal access to primary and junior secondary education. The scheme is also intended to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA) programme. The

scheme guarantees continuous schooling for nine years from Primary 1. The Universal Basic Education Act 2004 enacted by the federal government, states in Part 1, section 2(2) that every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes primary and junior secondary education by endeavouring to send the child to primary and junior secondary school. Section 2(4) stipulates that any parent who contravenes section 2(2) commits an offence and is liable to: (a) be reprimanded, upon first conviction; (b) a fine of two thousand naira (equivalent of US $15.74) or imprisonment for a term of 1 month or to both, upon second conviction; and (c) a fine of five thousand naira (equivalent of US $39.37) or imprisonment for a term of 2 months or to both, on subsequent conviction. Though the sanctions are mild, parents may be encouraged to send their children to school if the law is strictly enforced. If the enrolments in primary and secondary schools increase, appreciable number of candidates will be available for university admission in all states of the country in the future. Participants at the World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris in October 1998 supported boosting of enrolments in primary and secondary schools as a strategy for increasing the number of candidates seeking university admission [7]. In essence, there are resolute efforts being made by state and federal governments to broaden access to university education. The future is therefore bright for candidates seeking admission to the universities and for the country, in her efforts at achieving national development through tertiary education in particular.

In conclusion, education policy analysts need to constantly examine the implementation of public policies to point out lapses and suggest the way forward. The university is at the apex of the education system. Its roles in national development are very vital. That is why all stakeholders must proffer suggestions that will lead to effective and efficient running of the system for it to serve its purpose creditably.

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