

A REVIEW OF THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO QUOTA SYSTEM ADMISSION POLICY FOR EDUCATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY IN SOUTH EAST FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper highlights a review of the Challenges of Quota System Admission Policy for Educational Sustainability in South East federal Universities. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consist 447 entrance offers and administrative staff from the south east federal universities. The total number of 447 of the respondents was adopted as sampling since the size of the population is manageable. A 12-item questionnaire was designed by researchers to collect data. The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Administration and Planning and one from measurement and evaluation, from university of Nigeria, Nsukka. The major findings showed among others that, admission policy on education should be reviewed for educational sustainability because it with hunched the economic development of human resources, also discourages efforts, merits and encourage social discrimination, quota system admission policy is an act of injustice against some university applicants. The quota system admission policy is an indirect way of swaying violent revolution in the future. However, University admission based on quota system policy increases the quality of education. The study recommends among others that, quota system admission policy be scrap out of university education system if education is an essential for progress and true peace based on national consciousness, solidarity and cohesion and dignity of man for sustainability.

Keywords: Challenges in quota system, admission, policy, sustainability.

Introduction

In the past decades much research has focused on by praising the excellence of Nigerian universities on featuring and ranking high on the world university. Then the students from Europe and America had Nigerian universities as their basement for their academic lives, mostly with scholarships. However, the introduction of quota system admission policy recently into Nigerian universities gave sway to these past glories. In the content of UNESCO (2023), the universities have established principle, assumption, and norms that govern education decision-making and practices called policy. Sinclair (1992) defines this policy as set principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals, and those are typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible. Ikeanyibe (2013) observes that public policy is a tool of governance. It an instrument through which society is ordered steered and directed towards desired end. At the end, Ikeanyibe highlighted an important feature of public policy as: policy meant to resolve societal problems requiring collective action such as in the economy, education, health, defense, foreign affairs, social welfare, transportation and housing. So, quota system admission policy in Nigeria not accepted. Obielumani (2008) defines Quota system as any selection method (for employment, school admission, among others) whereby a certain set of percentage of those selected must be of a given ethnic or racial background and/or of a particular sex in Nigeria. The admission policy in Nigeria requires that a ratio of 60:40 in favor of sciences to arts be maintained. In line with this, the entry qualification is pegged at five credits in not more than two sittings. The federal government guidelines for admissions into its institution of higher learning are based on source elements such as academic merit determined by the

Ume score and 45% of students' admissions are allotted to it. Educationally disadvantaged areas are given 20%, catchment areas have 35% (NUC, 1999). This reflected in Segun et al (2014),

that the university admission quota system breakdown in Nigeria is as follow: Merit 45%, Locality 35%, educational less developed 20%. The implication of this breakdown is that, 45% of the admission will be based on merit, while the remaining 55% will be influenced by other factors other than merit. The federal government among others welcome quota system admission policy for effectively and efficiently prioritization of the achievement of national objectives. This is in a country than in 1988 divided the federating states into two: “educationally advantaged” and “educationally disadvantaged”. In this article, Nigerian university quota system admission policy defines as a corrupt system of admission, unmerited students are admitted instead merit and efforts are discouraged, desterilized and educational sustainability destroyed.

In the past decades to the present days much research has focused on quota system admission policy and came out with some agitating findings, claiming contrarily against federal government aims and objectives on the quota system admission. Quota system admission policy was challenged in court as being discriminatory. It presents one of the biggest legal challenges to affirmative action (Hartocollis, 2019). Yemi Osinbajo (2016) reports that the nation has placed quota system before merit which we know does not work. Onwubiko (2014) in collaboration opines that the quota system admission policy was not welcomed with open arms by most Nigerians. It was rather regarded as an obnoxious policy (Ogoke, 2021). He further said that most Nigerians considered the quota system of admission policy as an act of injustice against some university applicants. However, the quota system admission policy was not welcomed with open arms by most Nigerians. It is an indirect way of sowing violent revolution in the future (Onwubiko, 2014). In this write up, quota system of admission policy is a corrupt system by Nigerian politicians in educational field, nepotism, and religious sentiment to the society. It with hunched the economic development of human resources and entire nation at large. The system discourages efforts and merits and encourages social discriminations and denies meritorious candidates of their right or rightful opportunities in fact are roots of indiscipline of all sorts. Onwubiko (2014) sees it as gross injustice for the federal government to use the collective resources to run the educational institutions only to deny the brilliant and serious-minded candidates of admission into higher institutions to actualize their dreams. He sees it as an indirect way of sowing violent revolution in the future as there is a limit of tolerance by youths denied opportunity to acquire higher education which can translate to better standard of living in the future. It is even sadder to discover that much of the resources in running the country come from the south who suffer most from the application of quota system. In fact, we are in trouble in this country. I never knew there was a “National Board for Arabic and Islamic Education,” headed by Professor, and populated by over 5000 employees, spending N8 Billion annually, to conduct examinations for 1000 students (2016). Besides, the system does not give room for competition. Enemu (2004) in other hand argues that the policy of quota system of admission promotes injustice...he submits that, application of the quota system to students’ admissions, denies meritorious candidates of their right or rightful opportunity for admissions into the university. It means that quota system of admission in the Nigeria’s university system appears to be unconstitutional and opposing to federal government’s bid to achieving its national goals of building a free, fair and democratic society, just and egalitarian society full of bright opportunities for all citizens as stipulated in her national policy on education (FRN, 2014). Why should brilliant students from the south be denied admission in order to give room for candidates from educationally disadvantaged states, when these slots are not filled as they always are not, they become wasted in that academic year when in actual facts thousands of qualified candidates were denied admission for the fact that they were from educationally advantaged state (Alao, 2010). The quota system and federal character principle are great barriers to learning in the sense that there is nothing like equality of states which the aforementioned mechanisms seem to address greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequal. Moti (2008) has points out the evil in the quota system by say that by the quota system, a candidate in southern states considered to be educationally advantaged, who scores 300 out of 400, may not gain admission into the university, while his or her counterpart in the north who scores less may get admission. He stated further that although it is good to encouraged the educationally disadvantaged, it should not be at the detriment of others. Kanyip (2013) submits that inability of a candidate to gain admission to college or university based on his or her state of origin is unjustifiable.

Using the quota system as an instrument to regulate access to university education is fraught with inequitable implication of reducing the opportunities of admission for highly qualified applicants. Some researchers carried out empirical work to justify these problems created by quota system admission policy. For instance, Olatunde (2008) found that quota system of university admission has negative implications on equal rights among university applicants because; it infringes on the rights of some applicants on the basis of sex, origin among others; affords other applicants more opportunity

through concessions, reduces admission chances of some qualified university applicants from certain areas of the country. Ani (2010) showed that quota system of admission had negative influence on the rights of university applicants from educationally advantaged areas. Again, Okoro and Ede (2010) opined that quota system emphasis on gender, state and local government of origin for university admissions; admitting some university applicants with lower scores. Idika (2010) revealed among other things that the quota system and federal character admission criteria in Nigerian universities are fraught with various problems of right infringements, unfair admission considerations, inequitably distribution of admission opportunities, less regard for merit, infringements of applicants' rights. Omeje, Egwu and Adikwa (2016) showed that quota system and catchment area policies impact negatively on students' admissions. This is because admissions are inequitable and inaccessible; admission processes are messed up, leading to the production of low-quality graduates, unethical practices during admission, and overpopulation of universities' campuses. Similarly, Odigwe and Swam (2016) revealed that university admission based on quota system significantly decreases the quality of education because; it gives concessions to applicants from educationally disadvantaged states, catchment areas for university admission; while university education based on merit significantly increases the quality of university education. Both studies are related in the sense that both of them centered on quota system of admission in universities. Furthermore, Adeyemi (2001) showed that admission ratio into federal universities among states in Nigeria was not proportional to the size of enrollment at the terminal grade of secondary school level which justified affirmative policies such as catchment to redress the imbalance

The above problem believed to be associated with the challenges of quota system admission policy, therefore calls for urgent review for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities. The sustainability of higher institutions in Nigeria refers to the capability of it being continued to a certain level or time without depleting. This is interlinked with the developmental strides of nations which education has an enduring role to play. The concept of development can only be appreciated only if a clearer picture of it is brought into fore. The term, development has an interdisciplinary or multi-faceted disciplinary approaches that it cannot be singly defined as an entity without an elucidation of what it encompasses. The major concern here is, to define development in a holistic approach as it concerns the present discourse. According to Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), development can be defined in some situations where the conditions of human existence are improved in all ramifications over time. Eze (2018) observes that, apart from economic growth, development encompasses the equitable distribution of wealth, improved health care, reduction in unemployment rate, among others. Pear Foundation (2018) explains development as, a process that creates growth, profess, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. Therefore, the active participation of diverse people in the scholarly enterprise is the best way to combat historic and systematic inequities (ACLS, 2023). Thus, the existence of development in any society or country is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population and the creation or expansions of local income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resumes of the environment. Pears foundation further states that, development is visible and essential, not necessarily immediately, but, it includes and aspect of quality change in the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change. What is inferred in the above definitions is that, development centers on the improvement of the material wellbeing of the peoples, without any compromise, thus educational sustainability. It is against this background therefore, that the researchers' interest was aroused to highlight a review of the challenges of quota system admission policy for the educationally sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the federal government's commitment to providing equal and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens through university education, numerous applicants face persistent denial of their rights and opportunities. The implementation of the quota system of admission has introduced an era of inequitable distribution of university education opportunities among applicants based on their origin and gender. The admission guidelines in federal universities heavily emphasize the

applicants' state of origin and gender, leading to unequal consideration for university admission based on entry benchmarks. As a result, applicants from different states and genders are not assessed on the same criteria, with lower entry score requirements set for those from "educationally disadvantaged" states to accommodate more candidates. This unequal treatment seems unjust, as it denies some applicants equal rights and opportunities for university admission, while favoring others. Qualified applicants with higher entry scores may lose out on admission solely because of their state of origin, depriving them of the opportunity for a better future through university education. This situation appears to contradict the national goal of building a free and democratic society, promoting justice and egalitarianism, and providing bright opportunities for all citizens. Instead, the quota system of admission creates problems of inequity in the distribution of opportunities for university education, particularly by favoring applicants from specific regions. This pressing problem calls for a thorough review of the challenges associated with the quota system of admission policy for educational sustainability. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure fair and equitable access to university education for all qualified applicants, aligning with the national vision of providing equal opportunities for a prosperous and inclusive society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to highlight a review of the challenges of quota system admission policy for educational sustainability on south-east federal universities, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Find out the challenges of quota system of admission policy that militate against educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigerian.
2. Ascertain the possible solution to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges of quota system admission policy that militate against educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria?
2. What are the possible solutions to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised all 307 administrative staff and 140 entrance committee members. The justification for using university administrative and entrance board staff for the study was informed by the fact that they are in charge of day to day management of JAMB admission in the various higher institutions of federal universities. The study population of 447 was considered manageable and was therefore adopted as the study sample. In view of this a sampling technique was therefore not necessary. The main instrument used for data collection for the study was researchers' made questionnaire titled "A Review of the Challenges of Quota System Admission Policy for educationally Sustainability Questionnaire (ARCPSQSAPESQ)". The instrument consisted two sections namely A and B. Section A contained detail information on challenges of quota system admission policy. Section B contained 8 items eliciting information on policy review for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria. The instrument was designed in 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4points), Agree (A-3points), Disagree (D-2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1point). The instrument was validated by experts two from educational administration and planning unit while one from measurement and evaluation unit, all from faculty of education, university of Nigeria, Nsukka. A pilot study on 20 administrative and entrance board staff was selected from Enugu State University which was outside the study area was conducted. Cronback alpha method was used to test for the internal consistency of the instrument and is reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained which was considered reliable. The researchers administered the instrument to the respondents with the help of three research assistants that were briefed on how to administer and retrieve copies of the questionnaire on the spot. To ensure maximum retrieval of the copies of the questionnaire administered, the completed copies of the questionnaire were collected immediately after completion which helped to minimized wastage and achieved a 100% return rate. Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation statistic. The decision rule was based on 2.50. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above was regarded as agree while any item below 2.50 was regarded as disagree.

Research Question: 1: Find out the challenges of quota system of admission policy that militate against educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigerian.

Table 1: Mean Responses of administrative staff and entrance board committee on the challenges of quota system admission policy for educational sustainability of south-east federal universities

S N	Item statement	Entrance Board			Senior Staff		
		(X)	SD	Dec	(X)	SD	Dec
1	Quota system admission policy is an act injustice against some university applicants.	3.43	0.54	A	3.25	0.81	A
2	Quota system is an obnoxious policy	3.22	0.41	A	2.98	0.91	A
3	It discourages efforts, merits and encourages social discrimination	2.79	0.88	A	3.32	0.56	A
4	The quota system of admission favors students from the disadvantaged states	3.39	0.74	A	3.14	0.84	A
5	It with hunched the economic development of human resources	3:34	0.89	A	3:39	0:95	A
6	The quota system is an indirect way of sowing violent revolution in the future.	3.10	0.72	A	3.04	0.78	A
	Cluster Mean	3.21	0.70	A	3.19	0.81	A

Table 1, showed that mean ratings and standard deviation of Administrative staff and Entrance Board Committee on the challenges of quota system admission policy for educational sustainability of south-east federal universities. The cluster means of 3.21 and 3.19 respectively revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that all the quota system admission policy were needed to refute quota system of admission policy on the educational sustainability on south-east federal universities. The table revealed that the items had their standard deviation ranged from 0.70 to 0.81 which indicated that the respondents were close to the mean and one another in their responses. The cluster standard deviation of 0.70 and 0.81 shows that the degree of variance from the mean is not much.

Research Question 2: Ascertain the possible solution to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Administrative Staff and Entrance Board Committee on the possible solution to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Administrative Staff			Entrance committee		Board
		(X)	SD	Dec	(X)	SD	
1	Quota system admission policy encourages peace, harmony, fairness and unity.	3.32	0.94	A	3.01	0.57	A
2	it is enthronement of justice in education sector	3.33	0.38	A	2.99	0.66	A
3	Leads to the production of quality graduates.	3.40	0.37	A	3.04	0.44	A
4	It encourages efforts, merits, needs of individual and a rapid emerging nation.	3.51	0.99	A	3.22	0.66	A
5	University admission based on quota system policy increases the quality of education.	3.16	0.77	A	3.34	0.72	A
6	Encourages ethnicity and nepotism in admission of students.	3.31	0.63	A	3.01	0.52	A
7	It gives room for admission of competent and qualified persons into different institutions of higher learning, leading to higher the educational standards.	3.32	0.93	A	3.24	0.33	A
8	high academic growth and development of the students.	3.20	0.41	A	3.22	0.55	A
9	The quota system offers scholarship to high scores of students	3.70	0.77	A	3.04	0.82	A
	Cluster Mean	3.73	0.69	A	3.12	0.59	A

Table 2, showed that mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on the possible solution for quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities. The cluster means of 3.73 and 3.12 revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that all the items are possible solution to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability for south-east federal universities. The table revealed that the items had their standard deviation ranged from 0.41 to 0.99

which indicated that the respondents were close to the mean and one another in their responses. The cluster standard deviation of 0.69 and 0.59 shows that the degree of variance from the mean is not much.

Discussions

The research question one sought to ascertain the challenges of quota system admission policy on educational sustainability in south-east federal universities. The results revealed that the respondents perceived that the quota system admission policy is an act of injustice against some university applicants, is an obnoxious policy also quota system discourages efforts, merits and encourages social discrimination. Other challenges are that quota system of admission favors students from the disadvantaged states, it with hunched the economic development of human resources and the quota system is an indirect way of sowing violent revolution in the future. The finding of study is in line with Enemuo (2000) who stated that the quota system of admission is the practice of favoring some candidates at the expense of others, in university admissions, on the basis of state of origin, tribe, nepotism or choice of course of study. Such practices, he maintains, marred the objective implantation of the 1978 Education policy. Enemuo continues: the application of quota system denies admission, employment, appointment and promotion of the merited candidates. Based on this view, Kosemani in Ogbonnaya (2009) regards such exercise (quota system of admission policy) as the enthronement of injustice in the education sector.

The research question two sought the possible solution to quota system admission policy for educational sustainability in south-east federal universities, Nigeria. The results revealed that the respondents perceived that the quota system admission policy encourages peace, harmony, fairness and unity, it is enthronement of justice in education sector, lead to the production of quality graduates, it encourages efforts, merits, needs of individual and a rapid emerging nation., University admission based on quota system policy increases the quality of education., discourages ethnicity and nepotism in admission of students, it gives room for admission of competent and qualified persons into different institutions of higher learning, leading to higher the educational standards. high academic growth and development of the students. The findings of this study is in line with Ugbor, et al (2021) who stated that the policy should be pursued in terms of diversity of university programmes, and free access to higher educational institutions designed to meet the needs of individual students and the needs of a rapidly emerging nation like Nigeria. According to him, the cardinal principle on which the national policy for higher education must focus attention is that the foundation of higher education is essentially the pursuit of excellence and merit because if excellence and merit are disregarded the entire educational structure may collapse. Therefore, the sustainability of higher institutions in Nigeria refers to the capability of it being continued to a certain level or time without depleting.

Conclusion

After an in-depth review of the challenges and potential solutions related to the quota system of admission policy for educational sustainability in South East Federal Universities, Nigeria, it is evident that several factors pose significant obstacles to its effectiveness. The lack of global support and successful implementation of such a quota system of admission policy further raises concerns about its viability. Based on the findings, researchers have reached the consensus that the most viable path forward is to reconsider the existing quota system and instead, revert to a more conventional and equitable system of admission policy, similar to the practices in Egypt. Furthermore, embracing globally recognized best admission practices is essential if the nation's development and educational sustainability are to be priorityed. By revisiting and improving the current admission policy, South East Federal Universities can foster an inclusive and merit-based educational environment that benefits students and supports the overall development of the nation. It is crucial to embrace progressive and proven approaches to admissions that align with global standards to ensure a brighter and more sustainable future for education in Nigeria.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes significantly to education and policy-making knowledge by identifying challenges with the quota system of admission policy and advocating for systemic change. It emphasizes the importance of considering international best practices and data analysis to shape educational policies. Focusing on educational sustainability, the research calls for a more equitable approach to admissions. Specifically examining South East Federal Universities in Nigeria, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers and educators to enhance educational policies in the region.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation were made:

1. Uphold equal access to education for all Nigerians in university admissions, as stated in the constitution.
2. Encourage universities to address the homogeneity in the teaching profession through policy changes.
3. Deemphasize catchment area policy and focus on community development without compromising education quality.
4. Develop remedial programs in educationally backward states to prepare students for competitive university education.
5. Discontinue discretionary admission policies prone to abuse and lack progressiveness.

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