

# QUESTIONING THE CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION INTO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Tertiary institutions which guarantees proper education is a place of higher learning provides elaborate learning by offering courses of study leading to award of degrees and other certified diplomas. The mode of administration into tertiary institution depends in the type of tertiary institutions as well as the course one intends to study. Over the years, there seems to be many criteria for this one and all important administration that opens doors of all probability for the intending candidate. Using the method of critical analysis, the researcher finds out the criteria is not only cumbersome but not effective in all important administration into out tertiary institutions. The researcher however, recommends a more precise criterion for administration of our tertiary institutions.

**Keywords:** Criteria, Tertiary Institutions, Admission

## **Introduction**

Admission into the tertiary institution is the hallmark and a prerequisite platform for determining one's study in the higher institutions but it seems easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for secondary school leavers to gain admission into Nigerian's higher institutions. Nigerian admission system has posed a lot of difficulties for Nigerian students aspiring to gain admission into higher institutions. This gave room for the researcher to critically analyse the issue of criteria of admission which is one of the major factors militating against the problems of admission.

According to Adesina S. (1988). Tertiary institution can be defined as third-level, third-stage or post-secondary education institution providing is the education. Tertiary institutions include Universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education, institute of technology that award academic degrees or professional certification. Tertiary Institution is the apex institution in which a student has undergone primary and secondary education. Tertiary institutions provide intense and advanced learning in different fields of specializations; It provides post- secondary education and also an optional final stage of formal learning that one attends after completion of secondary Education.

The appetite for higher Education in the world's most populous black nation, Nigeria is huge. Existing standards, policies and criteria are the obstacles hindering the admission of thousands of eligible youths into the tertiary institutions. Admission policies and criteria are obstacles hindering the admission of thousands of eligible youths into different tertiary

institutions. Admission policies and criteria of Nigerian tertiary institutions have been dissatisfactory to the Nigerian public as many applicants go through rigorous standards and encounter difficulties into seeking admission for higher Education. These standards set by the National University commission (NUC) are joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and University Matriculation Examination (UTME). These are usually based on catchment areas, Merit and quota for educationally disadvantaged states. It has been argued that rather than these policies enhancing access to higher education. Each year, thousands of applicants sit for the JAMB and UTME but less than twenty percent (20%) on the average gain admission.

Several researches revealed that these are selfish means of extorting money from these students. This also questions the fact that a fully trained and educated student who has passed through primary and secondary schools, with standardized certificates like WAEC is not literally eligible for tertiary education until he undergoes these criteria. Therefore, there is need for further study of these standards to know if they are promoting or decreasing the chances of admission.

### **Levels of Nigerian Education System**

The Nigeria educational system has undergone major structure changes over last 30 years. Before and after the 1960 Nigerian independence, the educational system at the primary and secondary levels mirrored the British system i.e. 6 years of primary education and 5 years secondary and 2 years of higher level/A levels.

In 1973, the educational system was updated to the 6-3-3-4 formula (6 years) primary, 3 years Junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary and 4 years tertiary education similar the American system.

In 1982, the first National policy on education was developed and adopted. Since this period, the educational system has witnessed a lot of changes and modifications at various levels. Nigerian education system encompasses three different sectors; Basic education i.e. primary education, secondary education (junior secondary and senior secondary) and tertiary education.

### **Primary Education System**

The concept primary education system is commonly observed to be the system that comprises of children from Kindergarten to their late childhood level. This view may justify why the Ashton P. (1990).. in her National policy on Educational system defined primary education system as the education system given in an institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus.

Primary education system is typically the first stage of formal education coming after preschool and before secondary school. Primary education takes place in primary school, the elementary school or first and middle school depending on the location. The international standard classification of Education considers primary education as a single- phase where programmes are typically designed to provide fundamental skills in reading and writing to establish a solid foundation for learning. The ISCED definition in 1997 posited that primary

education normally started between the ages of 5-8. Students spend six years in primary and graduate with a school leaving certificate and common entrance examination to qualify for admission into the federal and state government secondary schools as well as private ones.

### **Secondary Education System**

Students spend six years in secondary school that is 3 years of JSS (Junior Secondary School) and 3 years of SSS (Senior Secondary School). During the 3 years of Junior Secondary School education, students take different varieties of subjects, likewise in senior secondary which is based on 4 core subjects completed by 5 or 4 elective subjects depending whether a student is in the branch of Arts or Sciences.

According to Kpolovie Ololube N.P. and Ekwebelem ABI (2011) Secondary Education is very important because this is where the students are properly drilled in different subjects that will help them in their tertiary education. This is also the level where the students choose either branch of Arts or Sciences which will help them in determining their choice of career.

Basically at the final class, the students are professionally trained in preparation for series of examination to under see their eligibility as a student and also for admission into tertiary education system. These examinations comprises of west African examination council (WAEC), National examination council (NECO), General certificate Examinations (GCE) etc.

### **Tertiary Education System**

Nwankwo C.A. (1992) states that “the fundamental educational challenge of our times is to get more people better educated and get most of them through postsecondary education” The government has majority control of University education. Tertiary education in Nigeria consists of Universities (public and private), polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education. The country has a total number of 153 Universities registered by NUC among which federal and state government own 40 and 45 respectively while 68 Universities are privately owned. Tertiary education system is also categorized by dates into first generation, second and third generations of tertiary institutions.

First year entry requirements into most higher institutions in Nigeria include : minimum of SSCE/GCE ordinary levels of credits at maximum cut-off marks score in joint Admission and matriculation Board (JAMB) entrance examination of 180 and above out of maximum of 400 marks are required. Candidates with minimum of merit pass in National Diploma (ND) and other Advanced level certificates minimum qualifications with minimum of 5 O/L credits are given direct entry admission into the appropriate under graduate degree programs’

### **Types of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria**

Majorly tertiary institutions in Nigeria are categorized into 3: Universities, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education which can be Federal state or private, award B.Sc degrees, NCE or ND, HND certificates to students after a minimum of 4 years course or more. Tertiary institutions are institutions of learning where students come after completion of secondary school

### **Colleges of Education**

Colleges of Education are academic institutions is the unit of tertiary institutions saddled with the responsibility of training teachers to obtain non-degree but qualitative professional certificate in Education. The origin of Colleges of Education in Nigeria offers degrees and technical courses. It is the least cadre in levels of Education in Nigerian education system. This is the institution where teachers are professionally trained and drilled to be effective in teaching. They offer courses that issue (NCE) National certificate in Education and recently, upgraded in issuing Degree Certificate.

### **Polytechnics**

This is the second cadre in Nigerian Educational institutions where students are imbued with technical skills. The aim of polytechnics in Nigeria is to train technologists, technicians and management skills in courses leading to the awards of certificates in ND, HND and Advanced professional Diploma which are relevant to the needs, aspirations and the development of the nation's diverse economy and industries. The act of establishing the polytechnic is aimed at training and retraining the necessary manpower to manage and maintain the expected growing resources and technologies in industries and factories. They provide the students with advanced technical skills with the use of machineries. A monotechnics is differentiated from polytechnics due to the fact that polytechnics offer diverse varieties of technical courses than monotechnics.

### **University**

A University is the apex in the levels of Nigerian educational institutions which provide advanced and a broader learning and a community of scholars or person. According to Okwori, A. (2005) It is also defined as an advanced institution of learning that brings men and women to a high level of intellectual development in Arts, Sciences, Humanities and Educational disciplines.

As the name implies, University means universal i.e. a wide and a broader level of Education in which one studies different varieties of courses. This institution has different faculties of learning and departments. It has broader lists of courses which encompasses both polytechnics and colleges of education. This is the highest cadre in the institutions of learning. They offer Degree certificates in Arts, Sciences, Humanities and Education. These are the types of tertiary institutions in Nigeria in its cadres i.e. from colleges of education to polytechnics to universities. University is regarded as the highest and most recognized in Nigeria (Chukwurah, C. C. 2011)..

## **Mode of Admission**

There are basically two modes of entry into the Nigerian higher institutions i.e. Universities Matriculation Examination (UTME) and Direct Entry (DE). In Nigeria, there are various modes of admission into bachelor degree programmes. These include admission through the UTME/PUTME, Direct Entry and various non- Degree programmes which have been referred to as preliminary studies programmes in this study. The focus of this study is on admission into higher institutions through UTME/PUTME that covers 70%. The UTME is developed, organized and administered by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established to regularize the intake of students into universities to solve the problem of multiple admission given to some candidates at the expense of others. A candidate must have met the O'level requirements as well as the JAMB and University Department cut-off points to gain admission into University through this mode. It is customary for JAMB to fix its cut-off points to gain admission into university through this mode. It is customary for JAMB to fix its cut off point which is still subject to upward review by University departments. In the UTME-JAMB each candidate is required to write examination in three UTME subjects relevant to the candidate's area of specialization in addition to a fourth subject that is compulsory for all candidates to be examined on, the use of English language. After this, the successful candidates are subjected to the Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (PUTME) which is developed and administered by each University. The PUTME examination is presumed to be a set of standardized aptitude tests that should predict on individual's ability to study in a particular vocation. Therefore, prospective students usually pass through rigorous preparations to beat the cut-off mark due to the high level of competition amongst candidates.

## **Evaluation**

Education is the backbone of every development in the society. Education should be the bedrock for socio-political and economic advancement of Nigerian society but the reverse is the case due to the defects of the structures of Education and different criteria in place in different levels of Education.

Firstly, a student who is properly trained in primary school level, drilled in basis of primary education is assumed to be eligible for his secondary education. This is my first basis for criticism. Then, coming to the secondary Education system which is second level of Education, the students are examined in WAEC, NECO, GCE etc. And the same time subjected to JAMB and UTME before they will be admitted into higher institutions of learning. Admission in Nigeria is getting harder by the year and this even has great consequences for those who are still looking for admission sine they are greeted with the ever increasing figures of both new and old competitors every year. Now, to the question: is there any easy way to gain admission in Nigeria? Well, there are no easy ways to get admitted in Nigeria there must be a way out. Yes! As frustrating that may sound, we cannot hide from the

obvious truth. Thousands of students are lead to frustration and desperation and end up wasting in the labour sector. That is what this article is all about, to provide a better criterion to ease the process to admission success.

In previous years, in 2012/2013 admission process, 1,503,889 candidates registered for JAMB and according to NUC only 500,000 of these 1.5 million candidates were tipped to gain admission into the various Nigerian tertiary institutions. Now tell me, what will happen to the remaining 1,003,889 candidates with many of them qualified for admission? Sit for JAMB again and probably suffer the same fate year in year out? Is it to get involved in examination mal practice to save them some shame, time and money or bribe their way through or give up in frustration and end up killing their dreams, aspirations, talents, skills and potentials of our Nigerian youths who are the future leaders? Then what will be fate of our tomorrow?

At times, they end up choosing something else far from their dreams of their profession. Then how will they perform well in that field? Secondly, there is disparity in educational certificates i.e. those with degree certificates are considered more than those with NCE and ND. This is the pains and frustrations a JAMB candidate faces. There are many students who gained admission through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) who do not have high academic standard in their subject areas. Many students today who are admitted into the higher institutions of learning are asked to withdraw from their studies simply because they fail to cope with vigorous academic work loads in their courses while majority barely get the required cumulative grade point average (CGPA) to continue to the next level until graduation. Not only that, the admission criteria of catchment areas, educational disadvantaged areas and quota system are the issues that have bedevilled our education system and if care is not taken, can assist in the collapse of educational standards in Nigeria especially at the tertiary level. (Olakulehin, F. K. 2008)

## **Recommendation and Conclusion**

According to Okecha, S. A. (2008) , Promoting the Educational system and readjusting of the criteria for admission into Nigerian institutions of learning is a necessity if Education in Nigeria would be standardized. Therefore there is need for elimination of these criteria which poses a challenge to the admission of students. Firstly, in the primary education level, common entrance examination and first school leaving certificate serves almost the same purpose. Therefore, one should be chosen for eliminating the other. In the secondary education level, since the students undergo series of screening like WAEC and NECO, I recommend that JAMB should be scrapped in Nigeria and a higher school certificate programme organised by the institution themselves to encourage each institution to run the school of basic or pre-degree studies.

A country's educational objectives are usually spelt out in its national policy on education which reflects those aspects of the national objectives that are deemed realizable through formal schooling. The educational institutions in the country have failed in the performance

of their statutory roles. This discouraging state of affairs gave rise to the phrase “failing standard of education in Nigeria”

The post- JAMB or UTME can be retained to ensure that only good candidates are offered University admission since there are doubts on the scores of candidates at JAMB examination. The UTME should be organized within the institutions concerned. This will help to curb wastage of the time and resources. Secondly, practical and skill testing examinations should be in place as well in technical schools, colleges of education and universities to ensure universities to ensure that only eligible students are admitted,

In conclusion, there should be abolition of JAMB but UTME should be re-enforced and restructured in a way to accommodate much students who have the desire to study.

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