

**OPINION OF JOINT ADMISSION MATRICULATION BOARD JAMB
CANDIDATES ABOUT QUOTA SYSTEM AND ADMISSION INTO UNIVERSITIES
IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Over the years jamb candidates have expressed dissatisfaction over the method of admission into universities in Nigeria which seems to favour people from a particular region against others from another region through quota system regime. This paper tried to find out the opinion of Joint admission matriculation board JAMB candidates from the southern and eastern parts of Nigeria as regards quota admission into Universities. Using the survey design, a population of all candidates from where a sample size of 4000 was derived. A 10-item structured questionnaire titled “Jamb Candidates and Quota System Questionnaire” (JOSQ) designed on a 4-likert scale was used to elicit information from the JAMB candidates . Two research questions and two hypotheses were proposed. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the two research questions while t-test was used to answer the two hypotheses formulated for the study .Findings include that Quota system is discriminatory, quota system is intended to marginalize and quota system breeds underdevelopment and that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of JAMB candidates and admission into the universities on quota system in universities. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations proffered.

Key words: Admission, Jamb candidates, opinion, Quota system, Universities

Introduction

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with over 250 ethnic groups living together as one entity but highly diverse in culture and religion etc. Before Nigeria’s independence in 1960, the British colonial master had provided rules, policies and laws intended to keep Nigeria united as a country no matter what future agitations may be. This desire to make Nigeria united considered a number of reasons and needs that mainly emphasised on education as a way of reducing or breaking the barriers of poverty, disease, ignorance, social and economy growth, hence creating equality in the major spheres of life. This plan of integrating the ethnic groups and regions brought about the policy of the quota system which relied on three criteria for admission into educational institutions, recruitment, promotion and appointment. This policy was later enshrined into the Nigeria’s 1999 constitution which was made to ensure equitable distribution of bureaucratic and political roles in the federal, state and local governments’ public service. This was to be achieved through education of its citizens. The quota system therefore, was one of the ways introduced to favour educationally disadvantaged ethnic groups and regions targeting majorly secondary and tertiary education.

Cite this article as

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Universities are strong education fortress which is overwhelmingly cherished by secondary school leavers. The young see university education seemingly as the only avenue to prosperity not considering other levels of tertiary education, like the college of education and polytechnics hence, it is to them as the only means of social mobility, self-determination and self actualization. Admission into the universities in Nigeria is conducted through entrance examination conducted by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Jamb has the sole mandate of conducting examination for candidates wishing to enter into tertiary institutions in Nigeria and based on this, candidates who score a minimum agreed point in the examination are posted to the institution of their choice. It is these institutions that the quota system regime is applied for the admission processes which may favour or disfavour a candidate even if he/she scored 300 over 400. The candidate is at the discretion of quota system.

Concept of Quota System and Federal Character

The Federal Character policy was an affirmative of the initial principle of equality of the colonial master before Nigeria's Independence. The Constitution Drafting Committee initiated by the then Head of State of Nigeria – General Murtala Mohamed, but for his sudden death was constituted by General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1975 who proposed the policy hence stated that:

“The composition of the Federal Government or any of it's agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be called out in such manner as to recognised the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote National Unity and to command national loyalty. Accordingly, the predominance in that government or its agencies of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional shall be avoided.”

This led to the creation of the Federal Character Commission in Nigeria, with its aim to actualise the constitutional biddings. Okeke (2019) stated that the Federal Character principle is one of the means devised by Nigerian nationalists to prevent the (pre)dominance of persons from few states or ethnic groups in the political governance of Nigeria. “This principle which is one of the autochthonous features of Nigerian federation became formally institutionalized in 1979 constitution when the framers of the defunct 1979 constitution introduce it into the Nigerian Corpus Juris.” This warranted the formation of the Federal Character Commission as one of the executive bodies established in section 153 (1) of the 1999 constitution, which was an Important statement to uproot social inequality (Agu, 2018). This principle hence became a collaborative one to the quota system which was aimed at addressing the issue of ethnic representation in the public sector of government. Therefore, the general implication of this was to monitor equality in admission, recruitment, promotion and appointment (Ilemobola, 2019).

The quota system has been described as a tool or instrument to ensure equity and fairness in the allocation of resources, school admission and employment among others. Egwu (2017) had stated that quota system is any selection method for employment, school admission and promotion etc adopted to favour certain groups of people either according to ethnic, social or racial in other not to place anyone on a disadvantaged position. The Federal Character Commission (FRN, 1996) in Egwu (2017) stipulated that the policy involves lowering entry qualification of states considered disadvantaged. It also comprises of elements such as academic merit determined by Unified Matriculation Examination (UME) score and 45% of the students' admission is allocated by merit.

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Educational less developed or disadvantaged states are given 20%, and catchment areas 35%. Therefore, the concept quota system is based on Federalism and Federal character.

Theoretical Framework

The principles of Federal Character and Quota System are institutionalized to remove and avoid political and social involvement, governance and education. It is a regime that is intended to safeguard and integrate less privileged members of the community or state. Therefore, the integration theory was adopted as an explanatory tool to better understanding of the principles of Federal Character and Quota System. Integration theory was developed by Treisman and Gelade (1980) which precisely involves combination of social control and social learning theories which elaborates social integration, a process that incorporates minorities into the social structure. This theory suits the Federal Character and the Quota System principle since the aim is principally to incorporate all citizens of the state not minding the educational, social or ethnic backgrounds.

Quota System and Admission in Educational Institutions

The quota system was intended to solve a perennial problem of marginalisation, disharmony and socio-economic development, though the question still lingers. Who is marginalized, or underdeveloped? Nigeria is open to everyone and anyone who wishes to excel in any sphere of life according to the much efforts one puts in. After over fifty years of its implementation has the principle yielded the desired result? If yes, is it not time to suspend the regime? And if otherwise, to what extent has the programme gone? The quota system ought to be readjusted in such a way as to make it achieve national cohesion, unity and fair-play which it earlier envisaged. Obielumani (2008) decried that even though as a result of the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria and the desire for all to have quality in order to break the chains of poverty, disease and ignorance, the introduction of quota system is a fraud as opponents to the federal government quota system policy was designed to stagnate the educational movement of educationally “advantaged” states.

Nigeria, because quota system in admission has classified the country into educational developed (advantaged) and educational less developed (disadvantaged) state. The educational developed states are: lagos, Abia, Imo, Edo, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Enugu, Anambra, Delta while the educationally less developed are: Kaduna, Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Bornu, Cross River, Ebonyi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara. Looking carefully at the demarcations, it could be seen that all the states in the northern part of Nigeria are classified as educationally less developed state including only three states in the southern part of Nigeria. Joshua, Laramake and Olanrewaju (2014) went down memory lane, when the colonial master identified educational imbalance between the north and south Nigeria which favoured the latter, therefore, they decided in 1958 to allocate 50% quota to the north, 25% to the west and the east. Since then till now, the gap seem to be widening more and more to the point that the northern leaders are drastically enforcing the quota system to the detriment of southern part of the country. Based on this, (Aliyu, 2017), advised that merit should not be completely sacrificed on the altar of quota system hence admission into tertiary institutions should be based on merit. Therefore, he emphasised that quota system allows ethnic-regional patrons and their cohorts to exploit and misappropriate state resources without any meaningful development. Which was made evident in the admission processes into unity schools in Nigeria.

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This situation may have informed the clear disparity in cut-off points in the National Entrance Examination in the states when students (candidates) from Lagos, Imo and Abia states who may scored 135 over 200 are not offered admission into Federal Government Secondary Schools but students from Zamfara or Taraba, with as low as 4 or 2 over 200 are offered admission. For entrance into the Universities, students from the educationally developed states may score even 300 over 400 but may not gain admission while 120 over 400 could easily gain admission into the Universities in Nigeria. This is a negation of merit, equity and fairness. Opara (2017), reported the Vice President of Nigeria – Professor, Yemi Osinbajo who instigated that merit should be allowed to play instead of the quota system which tries to bury merit, hard work and intellect under the mud, therefore, students should not be deprived admission into the Universities on grounds of quota system. Opara (2017) referred to Olumide Ojo from Lagos state who has being denied admission over three times because of quota system. So many persons from the southern part of Nigeria have suffered this fate. Therefore, Agu (2018) indicated that Federal Character as well as quota has become a euphemism for recruiting and admitting unqualified people into the public service and schools. What will they produce? He asked.

Reporting from Malawi, Kapito (2016) stated passionately that this so-called method of selecting students into various universities in Malawi known as quota system is increasing inequalities as it disadvantages the less privileged who cannot afford public school education as their opportunities are bottled up since they have to compete for their quota with others. He concluded that quota system should be a temporary measure to ensure equitable access to education in Malawi. Hence, Odigwe and Swen (2016) indicated that concerns should be made about decline in the quality of education in Nigeria since the quality offered by the Universities is below expectation. Therefore, they emphasised that the Nigeria nation must withdraw attention from ethnicity and political consideration and move toward merit as the perfect option for admitting students (candidates) into Nigeria Universities.

Arguing on the relevance of quota system at the present time, Ogbemudia (2014), traced the memory lane when entrance examination into the newly established Midwest Institute of Technology (MIT) was conducted, it was discovered that the first 200 students were from Enugu centre which meant that those of Midwest had minimal chance for admission. According to him, the examination was cancelled thereby reverting to quota system in other to favour all ethnic groups from the region. Orakpo et al., (2013) argued that despite some seeming drawbacks of the quota system that when students of different academic backgrounds are put in the same class like dropping someone who cannot swim in the deep side of the ocean, he probably will struggle to learn to swim. That is to say those students may pick up in the light of competition. Smarttalk (2013) elucidated that quota system is breeding dunces instead of experts. Smarttalk cited Richard Branson, CEO Virgin Atlantic who is among those who encourages citizens to be the best they can, and declared that Nigerian leaders are dream killers as they allow intellects to swallow the bitter pills of quota system. However, Opara (2017) reinstated that since quota system boosts admission of inferior candidates into positions against more qualified candidate because governments' wants to create balance then, excellence is thrown out of the window and is ludicrous. Therefore, quota system requires a re-visit.

Statement of the Problem

Every year University education seeking candidates complain about their inability to secure admission into the Universities even when they have met the cut-off point set by the Ministry of

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Education, Stakeholders of tertiary institutions and allied bodies. Most times, they discover that their counterparts from other states who did not score up to their points gain admission into the Universities of their choice and to the courses they choose while they are made to fill forms for change of institutions and courses they never desired, yet often times these admissions do not still come their ways hence, they spend years writing JAMB examination without gaining admission. While more discussions favour the eradication of quota system Orakpo et al., (2014) cited the situation where a national entrance examination result in 2012 showed Anambra State alone having a lion's share of 600 qualified candidates or the situation in a Law class in a University where some eastern Nigerian States had between 100 - 200 students, states Zamfara had only 3 – 4 students. In a situation of this nature, it means that the problem of quota system is chosen between the devil and the deep sea. Therefore, the paper seeks to find out the opinions of JAMB candidates on the quota system and admission into the universities in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to find out the opinions of Jamb candidates about Quota system and admission into Universities in Nigeria: Specifically, the purpose of this study was to:

1. Find out how Candidates feel about Quota System about students' admission into Universities.
2. Find out the effect of Quota System on candidates' admission into Universities.

Research Questions

1. What are the feelings of JAMB candidates about quota system and admission into Nigeria universities?
2. What are the effects of quota system on admission into Nigeria universities?

Null- hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of jamb candidates of south south and south east regions on the feeling of students about use quota system policy on admission into Universities in Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Jamb candidates from south south and south east regions on the effect of quota system on students' admission into Universities in Nigeria

Methodology

Design

The research adopted a survey design.

Population

The population of the study was all the JAMB candidates who met the cut-off point stated by the Ministry of Education who were qualified to write Post UTME examination (CBT) at the universities in South/East and South/South of Nigeria.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample size was 4,000 JAMB candidates drawn from Rivers, Bayelsa, Enugu states. Using the simple random technique, 400 was gotten from University of Education, Port Harcourt, 500

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from Rivers State University, 800 was gotten from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while 200 was gotten from Federal University, Otueke, Bayelsa State. These candidates were those who wrote JAMB in 2018/2019 academic session.

Method of data collection

Data collection was done through a structured questionnaire titled “Jamb Candidates and Quota System Questionnaire” (JOSQ) designed in a 4-likert scale. Out of the 4, 000 questionnaires distributed, 3786 were retrieved

Method of data analysis

Data was analyzed using mean and Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the feelings of JAMB candidates about quota system and admission into Nigeria universities?

Table I: Mean score and standard deviation of respondents on the feelings of JAMB candidates about quota system in admission into universities in Nigeria.

SN	ITEMS	Mean	Std
1	Quota system is discriminatory	2.6	0.98
2	Quota system is intended to marginalise	2.6	0.99
3	Quota system breeds underdevelopment	3.0	1.00
4	Quota system does not recognise merit	3.0	0.99
5	Quota system is frustrating	2.6	0.99
6	Quota system is good for all	2.3	0.87
7	Quota system should be stopped	2.4	0.89
8	Quota system should be revised	2.5	0.99
9	Quota system has outlived its goodness	2.7	0.99
10	Quota system is an intended barrier to favour some people	2.9	1.00
	GRAND MEAN	2.66	

Table 1 shows items 1,2,3,4,5,8,9,and10 as agreeing that quota system is discriminating, intends marginalization, breeds underdevelopment and is frustrating. Others are that it should be reviewed, has outlived its goodness and is a barrier to some others. Items 6 and 7 disagreed with mean points of 2.3 and 2.4 stating that quota system is good for all and that it should not be stopped.

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Research Question 2: What are the effects of quota system on admission into Nigeria universities?

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of respondents on the effect of quota system on admission in Nigeria universities.

SN	ITEMS	Mean	Std
1	Quota system frustrates the youth ambition in education	2.6	0.98
2	Quota system can lead one to commit suicide	2.4	0.97
3	Quota system can lead one to abandon his/her life dream	2.7	1.00
4	Quota system can make one study a course against will	2.8	0.99
5	Quota system can make one abandon education for menial profession	2.1	0.87
6	Quota system can make one hate other people from another region	2.3	0.95
7	Quota system reduces quality of the workforce	2.4	0.97
8	Quota system negatively affects productivity	2.5	0.97
9	Quota system weakens polity of people	2.6	0.99
10	Quota system can prevent someone to further education	2.7	0.98
	GRAND MEAN	2.51	

Table 2 shows Items 1,3,4,8,9 and 10 with mean rates of 2.5 and above indicating agreement having exceeded the midpoint of 2.5 which in other words means that Quota system frustrates the youths' ambition in education, quota system can lead one to abandon his/her life dream, quota system can make one study a course against his or her will, quota system can make one hate people from other region, quota system reduces quality of the workforce, quota system negatively affects productivity, quota system weakens polity of people and quota system can prevent someone to further education respectively. Items 2,5 and 7 have mean rates below 2.5, showing that quota system cannot lead one to commit suicide, quota system cannot make one abandon education for menial profession and quota system cannot reduce quality of the workforce, respectively.

Null- hypothesis H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of jamb candidates of south south and south east regions on the feeling of students about use quota system policy on admission into Universities in Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test of significant difference on feeling of students about use of quota system for admission into Universities

REGION:	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	DECISION
SOUTH/SOUTH	3, 291	0.96	1.23	3, 784	1.01	1.96	Accept H_{01}
SOUTH/EAST	495	1.34	0.91				

P : significant at 0.05

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The t-cal value is 1.01 while t-crit is at 1.96 tested at 0.05 level of significant. Since the t-crit is higher than the t-cal value, the nul hypothesis H_{01} was accepted, hence there is no significant difference in the mea ratings of jamb candidates of south south and south east regions on the effect of quota system on students' admission into Universities in Nigeria.

Nul- hypothesis H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Jamb candidates from south south and south east regions on the effect of quota system on students' admission into Universities in Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test analysis of significance difference on effect of quota system on admission of students into Universities in Nigeria.

REGION:	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	DECISION
SOUTH/SOUTH	3, 291	3.96	1.12	3, 784	1.31	1.96	Accept H_{02}
SOUTH/EAST	495	1.68	.91				

P : Significant at 0.05

The t-cal value is 1.31 while t-crit is at 1.96 at significant level of 0.05. since the t-crit is higher than the t-cal value, the nul hypothesis H_{02} was accepted hence, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Jamb candidates from south south and south east regions on the effect of quota system on students' admission into Universities in Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

On the opinion of JAMB candidates about the quota system on admission of students in Universities in Nigeria, it observed that the finding indicates general hatred hence; they said it breeds apathy, segregation and a total intent to marginalise some certain regions in favour of another and therefore, it is a wicked system. Joshua, Laramake and Ilomobola (2014) agreeing with the finding indicated that the Federal government of Nigeria system of quota in students' admission is a barrier to learning in the sense that there is nothing like equality of states which this mechanism seem to address. Hence, it is sheer injustice since the collective resources of the state to run educational institutions only to deny brilliant and serious minded candidates opportunities to actualize their dreams. Obielumani (2018) further observed that the system has brought a stalemate in the sense that quota system leaves some tertiary institutions over-population while others are under-populated. Therefore, Opara (2017) reported the country's Vice President, President Yemi Osinbajo as insisting that merit is important and should be maintained in admission of students into tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

The effect of quota system in candidates' admission in Universities in Nigeria has been described as dangerous and life threatening. Findings in this work have shown the effect of quota system in admission into the universities to include change of dream, poverty, physical and emotional trauma. Responding to these, Egbujo (2019) reported that this system is education corruption and the moral foundation is soggy. He stated that the system forecloses political inclusion of some states, and in the face of fierce global competition, Nigeria is on a self-destructive mode as it encourages mediocrity and destroys excellence. Which is a later run breeds tension cynicism and inefficiency. He further discovered that quota system in students' admission brings about poverty

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and unemployment which agrees with the work. Opara (2017) from his findings succinctly put that, that quota system creates imbalance, reduces career progression and effect national productivity hence, quota system is ludicrous. Egwu (2017) in his findings discovered contrary to this work that quota system does not negatively affect quality nor does it affect performance. This actually represents the views of the North-Central part of Nigeria who are among the prime beneficiaries of the quota system.

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