**EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ADMISSION INTO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR UNITY IN DIVERSITY AND NATION BUILDING.**

**BY**

**Prof. ‘Dibu Ojerinde, Mrs Aisha D. Dahiru, Dr. Yusuf Lawal & Mr Gani O. Abd’rahim**

Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) Nigeria

E-mail: dibu65ojerinde@yahoo.com; dadadahiru@yahoo.com;

yusflawal@yahoo.com; bisimeke@yahoo.com

Phone: +234(0)8035510001 +234(0)8033110976 +234(0)8033377744 +234(0)8037868585

**Sub-theme: Admissions to Higher Education**

**ABSTRACT**

In 1914, the colonialist amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria thereby collapsing into one country, over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups which had hitherto lived as autonomous nations with different and uneven levels of development, especially as it concerned western education that would later become the core pedestal on which individual life aspirations and the nation’s development and opportunities would be based. In recognition of the need to pursue nation building founded on the motto of Nigeria; Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board was set up to, among other functions, ensure equitable distribution of admission places into tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a major panacea for the Nation’s unity in diversity and development. The Board has carried out this function for over thirty (30) years. This paper examines the efforts of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board at providing and ensuring equitable opportunity of access to tertiary institutions in Nigeria for suitably qualified candidates. The paper also examines the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat of the state policy on admission with particular focus on equity.

**Keywords: Nigeria, Equitable, JAMB, Admissions, Quota Systems, Catchment, Educationally Less Developed, etc.**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is located on the western coast of Africa and has a population of over 140 million (Nigeria Official Gazette, 2006). It is the largest black nation in the world, and is blessed with diverse customs, culture and tribes. The nation’s most diverse feature is its people made up of over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups with about five hundred (500) Languages, spread across its Northern and Southern regions with marked differences in physical landscape, social orientation, religious affiliation and literacy.

The birth of Nigeria dates back to 1914 when the British Colony and Protectorates of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria were amalgamated by colonialists more for administrative and economic convenience of the colonialist government.

**Diagram 1: Map of Nigeria showing the Northern and Southern parts of the Country**

 

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009), the colonialist did little to promote education across the country during the colonial period because as at 1950, most schools in the western part where western education was first introduced were operated by Christian missionaries, whereas in the northern part, predominantly Muslim area, western education was prohibited, as the religious leaders did not want Christian missionaries interfering with Islam because Islamic education was already been provided in traditional Islamic schools.

Gani (1974) believed that the philosophy of the missionaries especially the Roman Catholics was to educate the children and baptize them at infancy. According to him, this method, and later with the Government’s grant-in-aid system, made the number of schools, their quality and output soared greatly. In the North on the other hand, the Christian missionaries had as their prime mission, the evangelization of the people but thought little of educating them. Culturally, the North was more resistant than the South which invariably impedes the expansion of western education.

The deliberate education policy of the colonialists which gave the southern region an edge, eventually produced different sets of people who worked as office clerks, teachers and administrative staff in the administrative machinery of the colonialists. This singular policy eventually made that part of the country more educationally advanced than the north. This became manifest in the ratio of enrolment in the primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions between the North and the South.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette of the report on the 2006 Census, the cumulative population of Northern Nigeria was Seventy Three Million, Eight Hundred and Sixty Three Thousand, Four Hundred and Eighty Three (73, 863, 483) while Southern Nigeria had Sixty Five Million, One Hundred and Sixty Two Thousand and Sixty Eight (65, 162, 068). The Federal Capital Territory has a population of 1,406,239. This therefore puts the total population of Nigeria at 140, 431,790 with 52.60% in the North, 46.40 in the South and 1.00% in the FCT.

Nigeria’s present political and administrative structure of thirty-six (36) states and a Federal Capital Territory has given rise to wider opportunities to correct some of the observed lapses which gave rise to the gaps, as successive governments since independence have adopted various intervention strategies aimed at achieving this objective. There has been improved budgetary allocation to the educational sector across board, additional universities have been established by both the Federal and State governments and licences have been granted to private individuals and organisations to establish universities. By August 2012, there are thirty-four (34) Federal Universities spread across the nation, thirty-five (36) States Universities and forty one (41) private Universities, all totalling 111 Universities in Nigeria.

Most importantly, Nigeria adopted a state policy of affirmative action to address the imbalances in the intake to the Nation’s tertiary institution through equitable distribution of admission into tertiary institutions. The policy aims at addressing the under listed imbalances:

1. Regional imbalance between North and South.
2. Discipline imbalance between Science and Arts.
3. Vocational imbalance between Technology and Non Technology.
4. Gender imbalance between Female and Male.

Meanwhile, the focus of this paper is on bridging of the gap of regional imbalance between the North and South of Nigeria.

* 1. **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to present the efforts of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board as the gateway and major channel of access for eligible Nigerians in line with guidelines of Government and ensuring equitable distribution of admission places to tertiary institutions, most especially the Universities, as a major panacea for the Nigeria’s unity in diversity and nation building.

* 1. **Statement of the Problem**

The glaring gap between the number of intakes from the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria into tertiary institutions in the country remains a matter of concern for all stakeholders, especially the leadership of the country. The problem is that the population of the country indicates that there are more people in the North than the South but ironically there are more Southerners who derive the benefits of western education than the populous North. In view of the fact that education remains the main means of livelihood for most citizens and the most veritable instrument used to attain great height, but on the other hand, taking into consideration that population is the bedrock of democracy, political leadership, governance and invariably developmental direction, government’s policy on equitable distribution of admission into tertiary institution was put in place to bridge the gap in educational opportunities between the North and the South. A problem associated with this policy is its perceived lack of fairness to performance and merit. It is in an attempt at evaluating these multi-facet problems that this paper examines Government policy implementation on equitable distribution of admission to higher education through the functions of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board.

* 1. **Methodology**

This study adopted the descriptive design method with data obtained, analysed and compared from the Nigeria population figures and statistics of applications and admissions of candidates at the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board examinations for selected academic sessions.

* 1. **Limitation**

The scope of this paper is limited to regional imbalance and the efforts at bridging it. The paper is also limited to the analyses of selected population figures and statistics of application and admission into Universities in Nigeria.

1. **ESTABLISHMENT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA**

Prior to independence in 1960, there were two higher institutions in Nigeria, both of which were located in the southwest region: Yaba Higher College (1934) now Yaba College of Technology and the University College, Ibadan (1948) now University of Ibadan, which was an affiliate of the University of London with frills from Oxford and Cambridge.

Four new Universities were established within two years after independence across the regions. University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the Eastern Region in 1960, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in the Western Region in 1961, University of Northern Nigeria (now Ahmadu Bello University) Zaria in the Northern Region in 1962 and University of Lagos in the Western Region also in 1962. The University of Benin was founded in 1970 as an institute of Technology and became a full fledge University in 1971.

The Federal Government of Nigeria established seven new Universities in 1976 in Ilorin, Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Jos, Calabar and Port – Harcourt. Out of these seven Universities, five were located in the North while the remaining two were located in the educationally less developed parts of the South. The exercise was aimed at addressing the inequalities in the location of Universities in the country. The ultimate objective was to ensure equitable distribution of tertiary institutions in the country, as hitherto, there was only one University in the North as against five in the South.

With these developments, there were thirteen Universities in Nigeria by 1976 namely:

**Table 1: Universities in Nigeria in 1976**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **SOUTHERN NIGERIA** | **S/N** | **NORTHERN NIGERIA** |
| 1. | University of Ibadan | 1. | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria |
| 2. | University of Nigeria, Nsukka | 2. | University of Ilorin |
| 3. | University of Ife  | 3. | University of Sokoto |
| 4. | University of Lagos | 4. | University of Maiduguri |
| 5. | University of Benin | 5. | Bayero University, Kano |
| 6. | University of Calabar | 6. | University of Jos |
| 7. | University of Port- Harcourt |  |  |

While the early Universities were established to cater for the teeming school leavers who were qualified for University education based on the number of applicants, the second generation Universities were meant to encourage increase in enrolment in the areas where they were located.

**3.0 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD**

By 1977, each of the thirteen (13) Universities conducted concessional examinations and admitted its candidates. This mode of admission revealed serious limitations and quite often, wastage of resources in the process of administering the concessional examination especially, on the part of the candidates who had to pay application fees to two or more universities among other challenges.

It was the awareness of the untidiness and uncoordinated admission which most times led to multiplicity of admission that made government to establish the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. The enabling laws of the Board mandate it to eliminate multiple applications, multiple entrance examinations and multiple admissions while also ensuring uniformity of standards in applications and examinations and placement of suitably qualified candidates into tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**4.0 EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ADMISSIONS TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

JAMB’s responsibility for equitable distribution of admissions in the placement of suitably qualified candidates in the Universities takes into account:

* The vacancies available in each University;
* The Preferences indicated by the candidates for Institutions/Courses;
* The guidelines approved for each University, among others.

Nigeria embraced the policy of equitable distribution of admission to tertiary institutions in order to ensure that admissions into federal institutions reflect the Federal Character principle as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is also in consonance with the National Policy on Education (1981), which stipulates that imbalances in inter-state and intra-state be corrected to foster unity among Nigerians irrespective of diversities by tribe, geography or religion. It is instructive too that state Governments and private proprietors of Universities have similar guidelines for selecting candidates for their respective institutions.

There are two basic modes of entry into Universities in Nigeria:

1. Direct Entry for candidates who possess Advanced Level or equivalent certificates or results of any examination above the secondary school;
2. Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by JAMB for candidates with Ordinary Level qualifications.

Salim (2003) opined that the problem of admissions into Nigerian universities would have been much easier if the only consideration is the quality of applicants to the universities. He posited that regional/ethnic disparities in awareness of and interest in western style education created a politically and highly sensitive dimension.

**4.1 Guidelines on Equitable Distribution of Admissions**

In addition to the provisions of the law establishing JAMB, the Federal Government issued guidelines on admissions into all tertiary institutions. Similarly, State Governments that are proprietors of higher institutions have similar guidelines in selecting candidates for the respective institutions. These guidelines are to ensure that admissions into these institutions are equitably distributed and reflect federal character as enunciated in the country’s constitution (JAMB 2008).

**4.1.1 The Admissions Guidelines (1978 – 1999)**

To ensure equitable distribution of admission places among the various geopolitical components of the country, in August 1981, the Federal Government introduced admissions guidelines as follows:

 Merit 40%

 Locality/Catchment Area 30%

 Educationally Less Developed/Disadvantaged States (ELDS) 20%

 Discretion 10%

Of the 10% discretion, the Universities were enjoined to reserve 2.5% for applicants from foreign countries, especially needy African countries.

**4.1.2 The Admissions Guidelines (1999 to Date)**

Following the removal of 10% discretion criterion, the guidelines were modified as follow:

Merit 45%

 Locality/Catchment Area 35%

 Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) 20%

**4.2 Criteria for Equitable Distribution of Admissions to Tertiary Institutions**

* Merit – under this criterion, candidates are considered solely by their performance in the matriculation examination. This is done in descending order from the highest scorer and it does not matter where the candidates who fall within the merit bracket come from.
* Catchment – This criterion is reserved for candidates from cluster of states which are usually contiguous to the location of a University.
* Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) – Based on the level of development of western education, some states are classified as ELDS and so this criterion is therefore applied to encourage candidates from such states in order to bridge the gap between the developed and less developed states. All the nineteen (19) states of the Northern part of Nigeria are so classified and a few from the South of the country also belong to this category.
* Discretion – As the name suggests, the Discretion criterion was exercised by the authorities (JAMB, Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts) to cater for candidates whose admission, in the opinion of the authority, was considered to be in the interest of the public good. These included Universities teachers whose biological children might not have made the necessary cut off mark but who were prima facie qualified to be admitted in view of their possession of prerequisite qualifications. They also covered biological children of diplomats who schooled abroad and who might have gone through curriculum and syllabus different from those of schools in Nigeria. However, in view of the perceived abuse of the discretion criterion, Government abolished it in 1999 and spread its allotted 10% to merit and catchment.

**Table 2: Location and Spread of Universities across the Six Geo – Political Zones in Nigeria as at July 2012**

Nigeria is presently composed of 36 states clustered into six (6) Geo-Political zones of North West (NW), North East (NE), North Central (NC), South West (SW), South East (SE) and South South (SS).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GEO – POLITICAL ZONES** | **STATES** | **FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES** | **STATE UNIVERSITIES** | **PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES** | **TOTAL** |
| **North West** | Kaduna | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Kebbi | Nil | 1 | Nil | **1** |
| Kano | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Katsina | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Sokoto | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Jigawa | 1 | Nil | Nil | **1** |
| Zamfara | Nil | Nil | Nil | **Nil** |
| **North East** | Bauchi | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Gombe | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Taraba | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Yobe | Nil | 1 | Nil | **1** |
| Borno | 1 | Nil | Nil | **1** |
| Adamawa | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| **North Central** | Kwara | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Kogi | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Niger | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Benue | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Plateau | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Nasarawa | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| **South West** | Osun | 1 | 1 | 5 | **7** |
| Oyo | 1 | 1 | 2 | **4** |
| Ogun | 1 | 2 | 5 | **8** |
| Ondo | 1 | 2 | 2 | **5** |
| Ekiti | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Lagos | 1 | 1 | 2 | **4** |
| **South East** | Abia | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Anambra | 1 | 1 | 3 | **5** |
| Enugu | 1 | 1 | 3 | **5** |
| Ebonyi | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Imo | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| **South South** | Rivers | 1 | 2 | Nil | **3** |
| Cross Rivers | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Akwa Ibom | 1 | 1 | 1 | **3** |
| Bayelsa | 1 | 1 | Nil | **2** |
| Edo | 1 | 1 | 4 | **6** |
| Delta | 1 | 1 | 2 | **4** |
|  **F. C. T.** | 1 | Nil | 3 | 4 |
|  **TOTAL** | **34** | **36** | **41** | **111** |

From the above statistics, there are a total number of 111 Universities in Nigeria with 39 (34.54%) in the North, 68 (61.81%) in the South and 4 (3.63%) in the FCT.

**Diagram 2: Pie chart showing the number of Universities in the Northern and Southern parts and the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria**

**Table 3: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria for 1997/1998 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **Population** | **Number of Applications** | **Number Admitted** | **Percentage of Admission in relation to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall total of Admission** |
| Southern Nigeria | 41, 613, 547 | 340,793 | 60,327 | 17.70% | 78.20% |
| Northern Nigeria | 47, 001, 027 | 56,904 | 16,821 | 29.56% | 21.80% |
| **Total** | **88, 614, 574** | **397,697** | **77,148** | **19.40%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 1998 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

*From the above analyses, the Northern Region with a higher population figure paradoxically recorded a lower number of applications and admissions. It means there are many school age children of Northern origin outside western education schools.*

*The number of applicants from the South is about six times the number of applicants from the North (ratio1:6).*

**Diagram 3: Bar Charts showing population figures of Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria and applications and admissions of candidates for the 1997/1998 academic session.**

41,613,547

47,001,027

**Table 4: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the highest figures from the Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria in the 1997/98 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population** | **Applications****Per State** | **Application per** **Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total** **Nos.****Admitted****Per****Region** | **Percentage** **of** **Admissions** **in relation to Applications** | **Percentage of Admissions on Overall Total** |
| Southern Nigeria | Imo | 2, 485, 635 | 37,840 | **101, 430** | 7055  | **15, 529** | **15.31%** | **74.99%** |
| Delta | 2, 590, 491 | 31,795 | 4638  |
| Edo | 2, 172, 005 | 31,795 | 3836  |
| NorthernNigeria | Kogi | 2, 147, 756 | 9864 |  **22, 038** | 1433  | **5, 180** | **23.50%** | **25.01%** |
| Kwara | 1, 548, 412 | 9382 | 3110  |
| Plateau | 3, 318, 257 | 2792 |  637  |
| **Total** | **123,468** |  | **20,709** | **16.78%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 1997 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

**Note: There are 19 States in the North and 17 States in the South.**

*From the above analysis, Plateau State with the 3rd highest number of applicants in the North has a population figure that is far higher than Imo State with the highest number of applicants in the South and invariably with the highest number of applicants in the country.*

**Table 5: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the lowest figures from the Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria in the 1997/98 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population**  | **Applications****Per State** | **Application** **per Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total****Nos.****Admitted****Per** **Region** | **Percentage of Admissions in relation****to Applications** | **Percentage of Admissions on Overall Total** |
| Northern Nigeria | Jigawa | 2, 873,121 | 278 | **1,190** | 69  | 301 | 25.30% | **3.99%** |
| Yobe | 1, 399, 687 | 454 | 60  |
| Kebbi | 2, 068, 490 | 458 | 172  |
| SouthernNigeria | Cross River | 1, 911, 297 | 5401 | **33,821** | 2923 | **7,250** | 21.43% | **96.01%** |
| Akwa Ibom | 2, 409, 613 | 13,404 | 1568  |
| Lagos | 5, 725, 116 | 15,016 | 2759  |
| **Total** | **35, 011** |  | **7,551** | **21.56%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 1998 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

*The comparative analyses of Tables 4 and 5 even reveals more self-contradictions. Jigawa State with least number of applicants in the country has a population figure higher than Imo State with highest number of applicants in the country.*

*The population figure of Lagos State is an exceptional one because the state is economic hub of the whole of West Africa coast accommodating virtually many businesses in sub Saharan region. It plays host to indigenes of all states of the Federation. However, indigenes of Lagos State have not fully seized the opportunity of the cosmopolitan nature of the state to better their educational prospects.*

**Table 6: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria for 2001/2002 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **Population** | **Number of Applications** | **Number Admitted** | **Percentage of Admission in relation to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall total of Admission**  |
| Southern Nigeria | 58, 719, 921 | 688, 620 | 74, 261 | 10.79% | 78.11% |
| Northern Nigeria | 66, 322, 068 | 151, 556 | 20, 817 | 13.73% | 21.89% |
| **Total** | **125, 041, 989** | **840, 176** | **95, 078** | **11.31%** | **100%** |

*The population figure was based on Nigeria annual exponential growth rate of 3.18%*

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2002 and Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette.*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**Diagram 4: Bar charts showing population figures of Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria and Applications and Admissions of Candidates for the 2001/2002 session**

South

North

58,719,921

66,322,068

**Table 7: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the highest figures from the Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria in the 2001/2002 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population** | **Applications****Per State** | **Application per Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total** **Nos.** **Admitted****Per Region** | **Percentage of Admission in relation****to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall****Total** |
| Southern Nigeria | Imo | 3, 507, 420 | 82,846 | **214,517** | 11,264  | 26, 922 | **12.55%** | **75.61%** |
| Delta | 3, 655, 379 | 70,662 |  6,338  |
| Anambra | 3, 946, 038 | 61,009 | 9,320  |
| NorthernNigeria | Kogi | 3, 027, 764 | 26978 | **70,163** | 3571  | 8, 681 | **12.38%** | **24.39%** |
| Kwara | 2, 184, 925 | 25537 | 2641  |
| Benue | 3, 884, 803 | 17648 | 2469 |
| **Total** | **284, 680** |  | **35, 603** | **12.50%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2002 and Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**Table 8: (Comparative Analysis of Population and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the lowest figure from the Northern and Southern Region of Nigeria in the 2001/2002 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population** | **Applications****Per State** | **Application per Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total** **Nos.****Admitted****Per****Region** | **Percentage of Admission in relation****to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall****Total** |
| NorthernNigeria | Yobe | 1, 975, 061 | 2074 | **7, 420** | 160 | **1, 067** | **14.38%** | **16.79%** |
| Jigawa | 4, 054, 191 | 2666 | 488  |
| Gombe | 2, 365, 040 | 2680 | 419  |
| SouthernNigeria | Ebonyi | 2, 176, 947 | 10928 | **37, 925** | 1793  | **5, 289** | **13.94%** | **83.21%** |
| Cross River | 2, 696, 986 | 13496 | 991  |
| Bayelsa | 1, 704, 515 | 13501 | 2505 |
|  | **Total** | **45, 345** |  | **6, 356** | **14.01%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2002 and Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**Table 9: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria for 2005/2006 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **Population**  | **Number of Applications** | **Number Admitted** | **Percentage of Admission in relation to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall total of Admission**  |
| Southern Nigeria | 65, 162, 068 | 824,462 | 50,413 | 6.11% | 80.61% |
| Northern Nigeria | 73, 863, 483 |  204,463 | 12,126 | 5.93% | 19.39% |
| **Total** | **139, 025, 551** | **1,028,925** | **62,539** | **12.04%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2006 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**Diagram 5:****Bar chart showing population figures of Northern and southern parts of Nigeria and Applications and admissions of candidates for the 2005/2006 academic session**

73,863,483 863863,483

65,162,068 863863,483

**Table 10: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the highest figures from the Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria in the 2005/2006 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population** | **Applications****Per State** | **Application per Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total** **Nos.** **Admitted****Per Region** | **Percentage of Admission in relation****to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall****Total** |
| Southern Nigeria | Imo | 3,927,563 | 104,517 | **254, 666** | 3503 | 9370 | **3.68%** | **60.80%** |
| Delta | 4,112,445 | 78,030 | 1528 |
| Anambra | 4,177,828 | 72, 119 | 4339 |
| NorthernNigeria | Kogi | 3,314,043 | 39,804 | **99,366** | 1167 | 6041 | **6.07%** | **39.20%** |
| Kwara | 2,365,353 | 31,871 | 535 |
| Benue | 4,253,641 | 27691 | 4339 |
| **Total** | **354032** |  | **15411** | **9.75%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2006 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**Table 11: (Comparative Analysis of Population Figures and Statistics of Applications and Admissions of three (3) States with the lowest figure from the Northern and Southern Regions of Nigeria in the 2005/2006 Academic Session.)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regions** | **States** | **Population** | **Applications****Per State** | **Application per Region** | **Nos. Admitted** | **Total** **Nos.****Admitted****Per****Region** | **Percentage of Admission in relation****to Application** | **Percentage of Admission on Overall****Total** |
| NorthernNigeria | Jigawa | 4,361,002 | 2655 | 9938 | 106 | **377** | **3.79%** | **7.70%** |
| Zamfara | 3,278,873 | 3315 | 238 |
| Yobe | 2,321,339 | 3968 | 33 |
| SouthernNigeria | Bayelsa | 1,704,515 | 18,327 | **58,799** | 1525 | **4520** | **7.69%** | **92.30%** |
| Ebonyi | 2,176,947 | 18811 | 1835 |
| C/River | 2,892,988 | 21661 | 1160 |
| **Total** | **68,737** |  | **4897** | **11.48%** | **100%** |

*Source: JAMB Annual Report 2006 and National Bureau of Statistics 1999.*

*The analyses of the above statistics are similar to those of 1997/98 Academic Session*

**5.0 STRENGTH OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ADMISSION**

Having had the sad experience of a 30 month civil war between 1967 and 1970, and following its end with a declaration of ‘No Victor, No Vanquished’, it became apparent that the country needed to build the Nation with all hands on deck and with all sense of belonging from every section of the country. The country needed to build a united Nigeria where every citizen would be equal and where everybody could attain his/her aspirations.

Therefore, as a means of achieving these noble and necessary objectives, Government initiated policies to promote unity and created agencies to amplify a sense of brotherhood. Amongst the policies is the equitable distribution of admission to tertiary institutions channelled through the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board.

The strength of the policy of equitable distribution of admission include:-

* **Ensuring Equitable Distribution of Educational Resources** – Resources allocated to the education sector are equitably distributed among the various components.
* **Creating Centres of Unity in Tertiary Institutions** **–** The tertiary institutions have become centres of unity as deliberate efforts are made to admit candidates from all states of the Federation.

* **Bridging Gap in Educational Attainment –** The guidelines are aimed to forestall geopolitical imbalances in admissionas a means of protecting the weaker geographical components from the ensuing stiff competition for the limited spaces in the universities. Concerted efforts are made to ensure that the wide gap between the North and South in the field of education is bridged.

* **Giving People a Sense of Ownership and Belonging –** The quota of the guidelines earmarked for locality and catchment gives people on whose land tertiary institutions are located and built, a sense of belonging and ownership which invariably promote partnership for development.

* **Promoting Peaceful Co-Existence –** As a consequence of the guidelines, students of varying background co-habit peacefully and live harmoniously with the host communities.
* **Ensuring Universality of University –** The guidelines give recognition to the widely acceptable norm about the universality of the university as a large community of people from different strata and a broader curriculum.
* **Assuring Merit in Selection** – Even in the ELDS, merit is not sacrificed as candidates with best scores are considered for admission.
* **Balancing variables amongst Geo-Political Zones and promoting Integration of the various Ethnics, Religious and Social Class Structures of the Country –** The guidelines were fashioned as a balancing mechanism to check the widening gap between geo-political zones as well as social classes by not allowing the educationally advantaged region or the more powerful social class fill up the available spaces in the universities to the exclusion of the others.
* **Ensuring Transparency** – All admitted candidates must have satisfied one criterion or the other before being offered admission, therefore making the admission process transparent.
* **Providing platform for Scholars and the Gifted from all over the Federation** **–** There is convergence of brilliant students from the different regions as only the best from the respective regions are admitted.

**6.0 WEAKNESSES OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ADMISSION**

* Some schools of thought see this policy as a violation of the principles of fairness and justice.

* There is also the fear that preferential treatment tends to mortgage quality and promote mediocrity.
* It can create tendency of inferiority complex syndrome on the part of those tagged as ‘less developed’, ‘backward’ or ‘disadvantaged’.
* It has negative effect on the psyche of the youth especially when the average students among them are admitted to school at the expense of some very brilliant ones who may have been affected by the policy.
* Reduces healthy competition among students from the different regions since performance may not necessarily be the only yardstick for selection.
* Lack of recognition of current minimum standards in education. Instead, the general perception of a region as less developed is still based on earlier perception.

**7.0 THREATS AGAINST EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION**

* Having gone through a 30 month civil war, which in itself was a corollary of a number of crises caused by mistrust amongst the different ethnic groups, Nigeria could not afford to treat with levity issues relating to real or perceived injustice and inequalities in the system, as no nation goes through two civil wars and survive. It is instructive that necessary steps are taken to forestall a repeat of such.
* There is also the need for Nigeria to avoid a system of segregation where there would be two classes of citizens in relation to acquisition of educational opportunities.

**8.0 OPPORTUNITIES OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ADMISSIONS**

* Opportunity of having a United, Strong, Indivisible and Virile Nation.
* Provides opportunity for growth and development of human and material resources.

**9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

* The current number of Universities is inadequate for a country with a population of over 140 million, especially when a large majority of this population is of school age. There is need to establish more Universities.
* There is need for concerted effort to de-emphasize the issue of place of birth/origin in admission process, but rather emphasis ought to be on place of residency.
* Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that minimum standards in teaching and learning are strictly adhered to all over the country.
* Concerted efforts should be focused on improvement in the enrolment of all school age children to meet the MDG’s goal of education for all. No child should be left behind.
* There is need for sustained manpower development in the country to enable the nation compete favourably in the global world.

 **9.0 CONCLUSION**

The policy of the Nigerian Government on equitable distribution of admission to tertiary institutions is aimed at achieving a desired objective of being a panacea for unity in diversity and nation building, especially when the efforts of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board is evaluated appropriately.

The transparent implementation of the guidelines has ensured that the inclusive process of admission is achieved thereby promoting a true federalism and a united country. The system also amplifies growth and national development, as human and capital resources required as impetus emerge through the opportunity for tertiary education spread across the nook and crannies of the country whereby every states of Nigeria is assured of high level education of its indigenes.

In spite of these positive actions, the seemingly discriminatory nature of the policy of equitable distribution of admission is also creating some apprehension especially amongst the numerous citizens in the Southern part of the country who perceive the policy has putting them at a disadvantage by drawing them backwards at the expense of another group of people.

To ease the tension, it would do a lot of good for the nation if more admission places are opened up through additional Universities that would accommodate the teeming number of school leavers who are qualified for University education.

This equitable admission policy is another Nigeria’s design at making positive impact on individuals, institutions and the Nation at large.

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