

RESEARCH ISSUE Brief

Issue 2, No. 11, February 2018

Challenges of Insufficient Admission Space in Nigeria Universities: Options for Federal Government

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I. Introduction

The need for access to university education has become very essential in the country. The increase in University-age population may be one of the factors responsible for the increase in demand for University education. Another important reason may be awareness of the role of university education in the development of citizens and as a source of new knowledge and innovative thinking for national development. Recent admission policies of Nigerian universities of reducing the cut-off points have not abated the problem of access to university. The admission policies seem dissatisfactory to the Nigerian public as many applicants and parents go through difficulties while seeking admission for limited available spaces in the existing universities in the country.

Universities often employ the guidelines set by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in admission processing. The National Universities Commission (NUC), which regulates university education in terms of standards, has set policies based on merit, carrying capacity, catchment areas, and quota for educationally disadvantaged states as criteria for admission into all universities. It appears as if these policies rather than enhancing access to university education, the criteria are restricting access to higher education. Each year, thousands of applicants sit for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examinations and less than twenty percent (20%) on the average gain admission into the universities. Hence, this brief seeks to proffer a sustainable and cost effective means of resolving the issue of limited admission space in Nigerian Public University system.

Current State of the Issue

- 1) As present Nigeria has 40 Federal universities, 38 state universities, 50 private universities, 128 polytechnics and monotechnics, 117 Colleges of Education and 57 Innovation Enterprise Institutions;
- 2) In total, the number of tertiary institutions is now 430;
- 3) Nevertheless, many Nigerian students seeking tertiary education are more interested in university.
- 4) In 2017/18 according to The Guardian study of seven universities admission figures, 46, 950 candidates (barely 20 per cent) were admitted from a pool of 244, 000 of the seven universities, who were successful in the post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (POST-UTME)
- 5) Of the 1.7 million candidates that wrote the last 2017 UTME, the totality of all the nation’s universities cannot take more than 570, 000.

II. Cross Country Experience

Densely populated nations such as China, India, South Africa, among others have been providing university education for their nationals and international students without the

establishment of new universities on a yearly basis. It is therefore very imperative that Nigeria takes cue from the experience of these countries

Country	Strategy
China	The problem of limited admission space was resolved in China through a system called IN-OUT-OUT-IN mode of learning. This is a system whereby only year one and finally year students will be on campus to take lectures directly from lecturers and other instructors. While those in levels two and three will be learning through a well-guided, sometimes industrial training-based distance or virtual system. This system

	allow for more intake as students progresses to second year and free up spaces and carrying capacity
India	India employ the collegiate approach. This approach allows several colleges to operate as affiliate of main Universities. The colleges operate the approved curriculum of the Universities while the Universities oversee the colleges in terms of quality assurance. There are thousands of such college with millions of students in India
South Africa	South Africa has used the multiple campus system and open distance learning model to resolve the issue of access to university Education.

III. Lessons for Nigeria

(1) Collegiate and Affiliation system: Nigeria may employ the collegiate system based on the experience of a densely populated country like India. Colleges may be affiliated to several Universities. These colleges would be monitor by the University and their programs must be accredited by National Universities Commission.

(2) Open Distance Learning: The open distance learning system employed by South Africa may also be employed. Students may not necessarily enroll in convention universities but Open University study centers across the country.

Most of the countries also employ dual mode University system to expand access. The dual mode involve providing learning through face to face and open distance learning.

Table 1: Statistics of conventional universities' dual learning programmes in some selected densely populated nations similar to Nigeria.

- 1) *In China 45 conventional universities are also licensed to run distance education system of various types. Annually theses universities admit more than 400,000 student;*
- 2) *In India, the Dual Mode Universities such as the University of India is serving more than 15 million students' educational need.*

3) *In Brazil over 5 million students are in either fully distance or dual mode (blended) courses; of which 1.1 million of them are doing degree courses¹*

Source: Compiled by the Authors (2018)

IV. Recommendation

This Brief is not interested in general admission spaces in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is only concern with admission spaces for those who have already passed all required examinations that qualified them to be admitted.

Therefore, the recommendation herein is made to resolve lack of admission spaces for successful post-UTME students. For this national issue to be resolved immediately:

- 1) Existing universities should be allowed to immediately start a structured close and open learning system similar to what some universities in China and other densely populated nations are practicing. This system is sometimes called IN-OUT-OUT-IN mode of learning. This is a system whereby only year one and finally year students will be on campus to take lectures, etc directly

from lecturers and other instructors. While those in levels two and three will be learning through a well-guided, sometimes industrial training-based distance or virtual system. This will enable existing universities in Nigeria to absorb triple of the current students each of them are at present admitting. This is because only two sets of students (levels one and final year students) will be on campus each year.

- 2) This system that is recommended to be implemented urgently should be restricted for now to only the first and second generation federal universities and other states' universities that have the required facilities. This distance learning component recommended will be easy to implement because the universities will learn from the Open University of Nigeria.

The views expressed in this Research Issue Brief are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute and its Management.

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