



Impact of Admission Policy on Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students as Perceived by Academic Staff, Senior Administrative Staff and Final Year Students in the Study Area

Orike, E.E.

**Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Rivers State University
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
evytek@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the Impact of Admission Policy on Academic Performance of Undergraduate students as perceived by academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students in South-South Zone, Nigeria. Three research questions and a hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study comprise of 25465 (twenty five thousand four hundred and sixty five) academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students from six(6) Federal Universities of south-south zone of Nigeria in the following categorization: 6700 (six thousand seven hundred) academic staff, 796 (seven hundred and ninety six) senior administrative staff and 17969 (seventeen thousand nine hundred and sixty nine) final year students from 6 (six) federal universities in south-south zone of Nigeria. The sample size consists of 3263 (three thousand two hundred and sixty-three) academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students of six federal universities in south-south zone of Nigeria. The combined population of 24669 academic staff and final year students were sampled at ten (10) percent because of the huge number involved ($24669 \times 0.1 = 2466.9 \approx 2467$). while entire population (796) of senior administrative staff was used because the number was manageable to be adopted for the study. The proportionate stratified random sampling was used. The instrument for data gathering consists of a self-structured questionnaire titled "Impact of admission policy on Academic Performance of Undergraduate students of Federal Universities Questionnaire" (IAPAPUSQ). An eleven item questionnaires made up of two section (A and B) and structured after a 4-point modified Likert scales; Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for data gathering. A reliability Coefficient of 0.68 was obtained using Cronbach alpha statistic. Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean to answer the research questions and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that the respondents generally agree that admission policies of university education have high impact on academic performance of undergraduate students of Federal Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. It was recommended that though some of the federal government policies on admission were targeted at national integration, emphasis should be placed more on merit against other considerations to curb mediocrity and improve the quality of universities education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Admission Policie; University education; students' academic performance

INTRODUCTION

University education has become very crucial for the socio-economic and technological development of any country including Nigeria because it provides the skilled manpower needed to transform the resources within a country into wealth (Farouq; Chaudhry; Shafiq and Beshanu, 2011). In recent past, university education has been overburdened with challenges of admitting her youths and adults to pursue diverse programmes within the university system as a result of huge number of eminently qualified candidates chasing limited admission space in the Universities. The crave for university education by Nigerian youths in particular and adult populace in general, grew in geometric proportion because of the belief that university education is more superior to all other tertiary

education and that attainment of university education raises the social status of individuals and their households. This has led to admission crises in the few universities with limited carrying capacity and according to Abdulkadir, (1988) the Executive Secretary of the NUC in his address during the Silver Jubilee of Centralized University Education in Nigeria, commented that greatly increased access to higher education over some decades had come at tremendous price causing severe and persuasive decline in academic quality.

Also, in the 1960s and early 1970s, enrolment into the regional universities was decentralized, each university handled its admission process autonomously. As a result, there was variance in the admission process as each university adopted what was considered most appropriate for it. However, over time, the need to harmonize admission processes across the country was realized because some intelligent candidates obtained admission into a number of universities but settled for one thereby denying many of opportunities of being considered for admission. Consequently, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established by decree No.2 of 1978 to coordinate and standardize university admission processes in the country. The board conducted its first unified examination in 1978. The duties of JAMB were aimed at selecting the best from the pool of those qualified; hence, prospective students for admissions register and write Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) coordinated by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Attempt to regulate this desire for university education with respect to available spaces and national spread within the university gave rise to the establishment of some admission policies which ensures that only individual(s) that fulfill some pre-conditions are granted admission into universities in Nigeria

Admission Policies and Students Academic Performance

The university organization has the sole responsibility of managing its internal challenges, admission processes inclusive (FGN cited in Koko, 2015) but recent events has shown admission interference policies by both internal and external forces to the management of university in Nigeria. The implication of this is that factors influencing university admission in Nigeria has become both internal and external in nature. From the external level, the Federal government regulate activities of the University through the National Universities Commission (NUC), a body saddled with the responsibility of coordinating University programmes in the country and the Joint admission and matriculation board (JAMB) for admission, while from the internal perspective, the NUC admission policy(1999) predominately reserved 10% of the admission to the discretion of the university management.

According to Olayi and Ibol, (2000), analysis of enrollment pattern shows an upsurge in the number of those seeking admission into the university as well as the mode of admission. According to Ogbonnaya, (2009) students' admission, is the formal acceptance into school or program of study for which certain requirements must be met. Sinclair in Omeje, Egwa and Adikwe, (2016) defined policy as set of principles, rules and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization like the university to reach its long-term goals, and those are typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible.

Among the major reasons that heightened the admission pressure on tertiary education in Nigeria are: government's policy on education especially, the free universal primary education (UPE) which witnessed a boom in enrolment without good provision to cater for their higher education; the assumption that university education is higher than every other degree and therefore guarantees good job and enhanced social status and limited spaces in the few universities in the country.

The Federal government of Nigeria approved admission guideline through the National University Commission (NUC,1999) with special consideration to federal character policy stipulates that 45% should be based on merit, that is those that score very high marks in JAMB and WAEC which are to be given priority placement into their choice of universities and courses; 25% should be for catchment areas consideration; 20% for educational disadvantaged states and 10% to the discretion of the vice chancellor and the university. Federal government admission policy was targeted at equalizing educational opportunities and enhancing National unity. The extent to which these aims are realized and their contributions to advancement of education in Nigeria leaves more to desire. Some of these policies include; catchment area policy, educationally dis-advantaged policy, quota system policy, Universities' discretion, discriminating school fees, university carrying capacity and basic studies.

Catchment area policy which allocated a certain percentage of admission slots to the host communities or indigenes of the areas in which universities are located. Catchment area according to

federal government of Nigeria, FGN, (2011) refers to the geographical or socio-cultural areas contiguous to the institution candidates applied to be admitted. Meaning that the states in the immediate vicinity of each university should derive special preferences in terms of admission

Educationally dis-advantaged policy which also reserved some percentage of admission chances to delineated states considered to be educationally dis-advantaged or backward

Quota system policy which ensured certain candidates benefited from certain percentages of admission chances reserved based on populations, ethnic considerations and states of origin.

Discriminatory fees policy attempts to lower the fees being paid by indigenes of the communities where university is located.

The above provisions were targeted at equalizing tertiary education opportunities to every citizen because one of the provisions must confer advantage to individual, ethnic group or state. According to Adejo in Okoroma, (2006), the federal character policy stipulates that all public authorities, semi-government agencies, institutions of learning and to some extent, the private sectors must ensure fair and effective representation of every state or local government areas or ethnic nationalities in positions of authority, power, enrolment chances into institutions of higher learning and so on. In a pluralized society like Nigeria, the concept of federal character becomes very important since it diffuses ethnic tension and promotes national integration because all citizens feel a sense of equal voice, equal representation and equal participation. In the same vein, the policy automatically mandates JAMB to admit students not only on merit but with special regard to the considerations stipulated by the federal government.

Ekundayo and Ajayi, (2009) is of the opinion that the federal character or equalization policy of the federal government ensures equity and fairness in the admission process. However, Oduwaiye (2011) observed that while the unifying advantage and encouragement the equalization policy confers on the educationally backward states sound good, he rather faulted a situation it is done in detriment of suitably qualified individuals that are denied admission as a result of their place of birth. Enemu, (2004) described this policy as encouraging social discrimination of one group against the other. He went further to observe that application of the policy on the admission process into the university could deny admission to meritorious candidates into the university. Ojedele and Ilusanya, (2006) maintained that the tendency to admit candidates with low scores in preference to those with high marks scores leads to high drop-out rates and poor academic performance in the universities. This assertion is in tandem with the research findings of Obioma and Salau, (2007) as they discovered that the public examinations in Nigeria, including the UTME, have weak positive relationship with students' academic achievements in the universities.

Discriminatory school fees and carrying capacity is another policy that has created inequality in the university admission system. In this policy, special consideration is given to indigene of a state where the university is located. This was why the policy document of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) described Nigeria as being characterized by patriarchal nepotism. University carrying capacity is yet another government policy placed on admission. Oduwaiye (2009) described university carrying capacity as a situation where admission of candidate's into the university is checkmated or matched with facilities available to carry the admitted number. This policy can be used to boost quality where it is consistently implemented but Oduwaiye argued that the gain is defeated and skewed in the negative where quota system swallows the few available spaces guaranteed by carrying capacity citing the case of University of Ilorin in 2009 where 90,000 candidates qualified for admission by JAMB into the university that has a carrying capacity of only 6,000 students that is beyond allocation to the quota system alone. Olonde in Okolo, (2014) described the situation in Nigerian universities regarding admission citing an erudite quote: "Universities suffered from arbitrary governance. Rather than being a place where justice and truth are nurtured, the universities triumphed on mediocrity and falsehood. Promotion was earned through sycophancy and the admission procedure became systematically bastardized as wives, children and cronies of vice chancellors had their own admission quota without reference to the established procedure of merit".

Another admission policy of University education in Nigeria include the basic Studies Programme and certificate programmes run by most Universities in south/south region of Nigeria from which successful candidates secure admission into the regular First Degree programme of the university. The two programmes are accomplished in one school calendar year and at the end a well supervised examination is given where successful students are granted admission into first level of university

education. These programmes were offspring of admission policy formally developed for the educational less developed states (ELDS) but now it is almost open to all candidates. In the brochure for example of University of Port-Harcourt (2010) it's clearly stated that the program was designed for the ELDS but the reason for providing this opportunity to the NON- ELDS students is to correct "the serious problems of public examinations, which frustrate many good students, but benefit the lazy and indolent students per exam malpractice" and other corrupt means. Despite the increase in the number of universities established, the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination and the JAMB have not been able to sieve the admission process ensuring that the right candidates are granted admission into tertiary institutions of learning. Hence some universities have introduced the concept of pre-degree admission whereby candidates are given opportunity to remedy deficiencies in their relevant discipline. According to Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa and Iderima, (2014) this preparatory programme is very intensive and rigorous. It also enables students to get acquainted with the university environment, lectures, lecturers' teaching methodologies as well as their personalities. This view is in line with the findings of Okpilike, (2011) on mode of admission of Undergraduates and their academic performance in a Nigerian University. The study revealed that Undergraduates who gained admission through Pre-Degree programme performed significantly better than their counterparts who were admitted through the UTME/PUTME in all courses combined together. The major difference between the basic studies and certificate programmes is that while basic studies programme is designed for the sciences the certificate programme is meant for the arts courses especially in education and humanities.

Some empirical studies have revealed that some of these admission policies indeed influence academic performance of students. In an opinion survey conducted by Okoroma (2008) on admission policies and the quality of university education in Nigeria using a sample population of 384 respondents drawn from eight (8) universities in the south-south zone of Nigeria, a questionnaire instrument used to gather data from the respondents and chi-square inferential statistics used to analyze the data, the survey findings revealed that such parameters like catchment area policy, educationally disadvantaged or backward policy, quota system policy and discriminatory school fees policy contributed to the reduction of quality of university education in Nigeria. This study is similar to the researcher's study in area of study and instrument for data collection and differs in population and statistics used for testing the hypotheses.

In another related study conducted by Omeje, Egwa and Adikwu (2014) which examined the impact of the quota system and catchment area policies on students' admissions in North Central Nigeria. The design adopted was descriptive research design with study population of 14,347 staff in the federal and state universities in North Central Nigeria. The stratified proportionate sampling technique was deployed to arrive at sample size of 1,435. A research question and a null hypothesis guided the study. Data were collected using questionnaire and interviews. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research question, whereas *t*-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed, among others, a high impact by quota system and catchment area admission policies on students' academic performance and also that a significant relationship did exist between quota system, catchment area admission policies and academic performance of undergraduate students' of federal and state universities in North.

In another study by Agboola, Adeyemi and Ogbodo (2014) on Academic Achievement and Admission Policy as Correlate of Student Retention in Nigerian Federal Universities. The research focused on determining the relationship between academic performances of students admitted through criteria policy and their retention in Nigerian federal universities, and revealed that significant relationship existed between academic performances of students admitted through criteria policy and retention. The study suggested that admission policy should be better aligned with institutional strategies that can improve student academic performance and subsequently impact on the retention of student.

Statement of the problem

The inability of University education to appreciably fulfill its aim to the society has given rise to several speculations as what could be responsible for such reverse output. Admission policies were put in place to regulate and checkmate students' admission into the universities, but sadly, its benefit has been reduced due to some unethical conduct in its implementation. It became more worrisome why some students graduate with very poor grades while others in the same university, subjected to

the same learning situation graduates with very good grades. This suggests that inherent factors in the students which would have been sorted out during the admission selection process but were overlooked due to the influence of one admission policy or the other in favour of the candidate, may have been responsible for the difference in the academic performances of the graduates of the Institution.

This has brought the screening or scrutiny process of the candidates before admission, the character and quality of students admitted into the university into question. Some scholars have argued that the JAMB that was established by federal government to solve the admission and quality problem in our educational system has failed to this responsibility as their activities are filled with intrigues that tend to compromise the process. Babalola; Eluemunor in Okoroma, (2006) believed that many unqualified candidates have been offered admissions into Nigerian Universities through JAMB thereby lowering standards in these institutions. Ifedili and Ifedili, (2010) observed that candidates who performed poorly in the UME performed better in their first year results in the universities and candidates who presumably did well in JAMB performed woefully in their first year results. The implication of this is that unintelligent and weak candidates may have bribed their way through with high JAMB scores into universities or may have deployed other mischievous ways to secure admission while intelligent ones that suffered deprivation by JAMB when they secure admission through other measures out-shine the inherent weak students. Ifedili and Ifedili, (2010) further commented that "Since JAMB started its operations, individuals, corporate bodies and different levels of government have accused JAMB of massive corrupt practices". An attempt to mitigate this infraction and curb its negative effect led to subjecting the successful candidates in JAMB to university internal re-assessment measure called Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Exams (PUTME), any candidate that beats the cut-off mark is finally admitted into the university to pursue his/her applied programme. All these put together has triggered the curiosity to investigate the impact of admission policy of University education on the academic performance of undergraduate students of Federal Universities in South-South zone, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of admission policies on academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by academic staffs, senior administrative staffs and final year students of six federal universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is to

- (1) Examine the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by academic staffs of six federal universities in the study area.
- (2) Determine the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by senior administrative staffs of six federal universities in the study area.
- (3) Ascertain the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by final year students of six federal universities in the study area.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions guided the study.

- (1) Examine the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by academic staffs of six federal universities in the study area?
- (2) Determine the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by senior administrative staffs of six federal universities in the study area?
- (3) Ascertain the impact of admission policies on the academic performance of undergraduate students as perceived by final year students of six federal universities in the study area?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis tested at 0.05 alpha level, guided the study:

- (1) There is no significant difference in the mean response of academic staff, administrative staff and final year students on the perceived impact of admission policies on academic performance of undergraduate students of six federal universities in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive design and conducted in six Federal universities in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The population of the study comprises of 25465 (twenty five thousand four hundred

and sixty five) academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students from six(6) Federal Universities of south-south zone of Nigeria in the following categorization: 6700 (six thousand seven hundred) academic staff, 796 (seven hundred and ninety six) senior administrative staff and 17969 (seventeen thousand nine hundred and sixty nine) final year students from 6 (six) federal universities in south-south zone of Nigeria.

The sample size consists of 3263 (three thousand two hundred and sixty-three) academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students of six federal universities in south-south zone of Nigeria. The combined population of 24669 academic staff and final year students were sampled at ten (10) percent because of the huge number involved ($24669 \times 0.1 = 2466.9 \approx 2467$). While the entire population (796) of senior administrative staff was used because the number was manageable to be adopted for the study. The proportionate stratified random sampling was used to categorize the sample size of academic staff and final year students (2467) into the following: 670 (six hundred and seventy) academic staff and 1797 (one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven) final year students added to 796 senior administrative staff from six (6) Federal Universities in South-South zone.

The instrument for data gathering consists of a self-constructed questionnaire titled “Impact of admission policy on Academic Performance of Undergraduate students of Federal Universities Questionnaire” (IAPAPUSQ). An eleven item questionnaires made up of two section (A and B) and structured after a 4-point modified Likert scales; Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for data gathering.

The questionnaire was validated by the researcher’s supervisor and other two research experts in Educational Management. A reliability Coefficient of 0.68 was obtained using Cronbach alpha statistic. Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean to answer the research question and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: *What is the impact of admission policies in university education on academic performance of university undergraduate students as perceived by academic staff from six federal universities in south-south zone, Nigeria?*

Table 1.1: Mean for Impact of admission policy on Students’ Academic Achievement as Perceived by Academic Staff

S/N	Statements	academic (n=458)		
		M	S.D.	RMK
17	Quota system and catchment area policies are good to certain extent but do not promote academic excellence.	3.53	0.51	A
18	Educational disadvantaged state’s policy could favor students’ admission into the university, but limited knowledge of foundation courses in secondary school can affect the students’ rate of assimilation of concepts in the university	3.21	0.98	A
19	Catchment area and quota system policy have given rise to corrupt practices like examination malpractice, cultism and other vices among students	1.66	0.48	R
20	Quota system and catchment area policies have no retarding tendencies and does not encourage mediocrity in universities in south-south zone of Nigeria.	1.45	0.52	R
21	Educationally disadvantaged states and university management discretion policies on admission have created unequal playing ground for students’ admission	3.56	0.50	A
22	Educationally disadvantaged state’s policy has placed undue advantage on weak students over intelligent and strong students.	3.32	0.85	A
23	Educationally disadvantaged state’s policy has lowered admission criteria to accommodate weak students thereby lowering the quality of university education system	3.41	0.70	A
24	The percentage allocation to merit admission should have been increased from 45% to 55% to give more opportunity to intelligent students to be admitted into the university.	1.90	0.37	R
Grand Mean		2.75		A

Field data, 2019 (A=Accept; R=Reject).

Research Question 2: *What is the impact of admission policies in university education on academic performance of university undergraduate students as perceived by senior administrative staff from six federal universities in south-south zone, Nigeria?*

Table 1.2: Mean for Impact of Admission Policy on Students' Academic Achievement as Perceived by Administrative Staff

S/N	Statements	admin (n=601)		
		M	S.D.	RMK
17	Quota system and catchment area policies are good to certain extent but not promote academic excellence.	3.55	0.52	A
18	Educational disadvantaged state's policy could favor students' admission into the university, but limited knowledge of foundation courses in secondary school can affect the students' rate of assimilation of concepts in the university	3.27	0.92	A
19	Catchment area and quota system policy have given rise to corrupt practices like examination malpractice, cultism and other vices among students.	1.69	0.49	R
20	Quota system and catchment area policies have no retarding tendencies and does not encourage mediocrity in universities in south-south zone of Nigeria.	1.47	0.59	R
21	Educationally disadvantaged states and university management discretion policies on admission have created unequal playing ground for students' admission	3.50	0.50	A
22	Educationally disadvantaged state's policy has placed undue advantage on weak students over intelligent and strong students.	3.34	0.85	A
23	Educationally disadvantaged state's policy has lowered admission criteria to accommodate weak students thereby lowering the quality of university education system	3.47	0.71	A
24	The percentage allocation to merit admission should have been increased from 45% to 55% to give more opportunity to intelligent students to be admitted into the university.	1.91	0.31	R
	Grand Mean	2.77		A

Field data, 2019 (A=Accept; R=Reject)

Research Question 3: *What is the impact of admission policies in university education on academic performance of university undergraduate students as perceived by final year students from six federal universities in south-south zone, Nigeria?*

Table 1.3: Mean for Impact of Admission Policy on Students' Academic Achievement as Perceived by Final year Students

S/N	Statements	student (n=1428)		
		M	S.D.	RMK
17	Quota system and catchment area policies are good to certain extent but do not promote academic excellence.	3.52	0.53	A
18	Educational disadvantaged state's policy could favor students' admission into the university, but limited knowledge of foundation courses in secondary school can affect the students' rate of assimilation of concepts in the university	3.21	0.98	A
19	Catchment area and quota system policy have given rise to corrupt practices like examination malpractice, cultism and other vices among students	1.65	0.49	R
20	Quota system and catchment area policies have no retarding tendencies and does not encourage mediocrity in universities in south-south zone of Nigeria.	1.47	0.57	R
21	Educationally disadvantaged states and university management discretion policies on admission have created unequal playing ground for students' admission	3.52	0.50	A
22	Educationally disadvantaged state's policy has placed undue advantage on weak students over intelligent and strong students.	3.26	0.88	A
23	Educationally disadvantaged state's policy has lowered admission criteria to accommodate weak students thereby lowering the quality of university education system	3.38	0.78	A
24	The percentage allocation to merit admission should have been increased from 45% to 55% to give more opportunity to intelligent students to be admitted into the university.	1.90	0.35	R
Grand Mean		2.74		A

Field data, 2019 (A=Accept; R=Reject).

Table 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 shows the result for the mean responses of academic staff, administrative staff and final year students from the six federal universities in South-South zone regarding the perceived impact of admission policies of university education on the academic performance of university undergraduate students. The result shows grand mean values of 2.75, 2.77 and 2.74 for academic staff, administrative staff and students respectively. This result shows that, academic staff, administrative staff and students from the six federal universities generally agree that admission policies have high impact on the academic performance of undergraduate students in the study area.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of academic staff, administrative staff and final year students regarding perceived impact of admission policy of university education on academic performance of undergraduate students of federal universities in south-south zone, Nigeria.

Table 1.2: ANOVA for Perceived Impact of Admission Policy on Academic performance of undergraduate students

Sources of Variances	SS	df	MS	F-cal	F-crit	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	.243	2	.122	2.901	2.999	.055	Retained
Within Groups	104.169	2484	.042				
Total	104.412	2486					

Field data, 2019

Table 4.9 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the hypothesis 1. As shown, calculated value of F (Fcal) at degree of freedom (2, 2484) is 2.901 and the critical value of F (Fcrit) is 2.999. Since the calculated value of F is less than the critical value of F, the hypothesis was retained. This implies that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of academic staff, administrative staff and final year students from the six federal universities regarding the perceived impact of admission policy of university education on academic performance of federal universities undergraduate students in south-south zone.

Research questions 1, 2 and 3 sought to ascertain the impact of admission policies of university education on the academic performance of university under graduate students as perceived by academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students from six federal universities in south-south zone, Nigeria. The result showed that the academic staff, administrative staff and students generally agreed that quota system and catchment area policies are good to certain extent but does not promote academic excellence. They equally agreed generally that educationally disadvantaged state's policy has lowered admission criteria to accommodate weak students thereby lowering the quality of university education system. They further agreed that educationally disadvantaged states and university management discretion policies on admission have created unequal playing ground for students' admission. Their views also converged positively that educationally disadvantaged state's policy has placed undue advantage on weak students over intelligent and strong students. On the other hand, they disagreed that Catchment area and quota system policy have given rise to corrupt practices like examination malpractice, cultism and other vices among students. They also generally disagreed that Quota system and catchment area policies have no retarding tendencies and do not encourage mediocrity in universities in south-south zone of Nigeria. Lastly, they disagreed that the percentage allocation to merit admission should have been increased from 45% to 55% to give more opportunity to intelligent students to be admitted into the university.

On the other hand, the test of hypothesis 1 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean response of academic staff, senior administrative staff and final year students from six federal universities regarding the perceived impact of admission policies of university education on academic performance of federal university undergraduate students in south-south zone. This unanimous response from the respondents across the six universities is not strange because they are aware of the limited admission spaces in Nigerian universities and the huge number of qualified candidates chasing the limited spaces which has led to overcrowded situation of Nigerian Universities. The academic staff across the universities in the study area have a common opinion on the impact of admission policies on academic performance of undergraduate students because they regularly engage these students during lectures and also assesses their abilities in examinations and class works, and pass informed judgement on their respective performance. On the part of the administrative staff of the universities, they are very much abreast with the admission challenges in the university system and different considerations in the form of admission policies made in cause of students' admission into the university. These may equally be responsible for their unanimous agreement.

As for the students, they pass through difficult situations in pursuit of admission into Nigerian universities and the respondents are also aware of the dubious tendencies and other corrupt measures deployed by students to gain admission into Nigerian universities such as bribing their way into the university, indulging in all manners of examination malpractices to gain admission into the university and gaining advantage as a result of government or institutional (admission) policies. These invariably affect the performance of the students as they progress in their studies. All these may have informed the unanimous opinion of the respondents as on how admission policy impact on academic performance of undergraduate students in the study area.

The above findings for research question 1, 2, 3 and hypothesis 1 are in agreement with the result obtained from an opinion survey conducted by Okoroma (2008) on admission policies and the quality of university education in Nigeria. The findings revealed that such parameters like catchment area policy, educationally disadvantaged or backward policy, quota system policy and discriminatory school fees policy contributed to the reduction of quality of university education in Nigeria. In another related study conducted by Omeje, Egwa & Adikwu, (2014) which examined the impact of the quota system and catchment area policies on students' admissions in North Central Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that a significant relationship did exist between quota system, catchment area, admission policies and academic performance of undergraduate students of federal and state universities in North central zone of Nigeria. In other words, these policies have gone a long way in influencing the outcome of students and the educational system in general.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that admission policies have far reaching impact on the academic performance of undergraduate students in the study area. Most admission policies of government and the university management need to be revisited if we must improve the academic performance of undergraduate students in universities across the country.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) Though some of the federal government policies on admission were targeted at national integration, the percentage for merit should be increased from the present 45% to 50% to curb mediocrity and improve the academic performance of undergraduate students of the universities.
- (2) Government should discard tagging a particular area as educationally disadvantage but intensify her effort to improve quality of education in such areas they see as being backward so that all students can be put on the same assessment.

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