Achieving Equality of Educational Opportunity on Access to University Education in Nigeria: A Case of Policy Implementation

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Abstract

The issue of policy implementation specifically on equality of education opportunities on access to university education was seriously neglected in Nigerian higher education research. Hence this study was motivated and intended to investigate the policy implementation on equality of educational opportunities on access to university education in Nigeria. This case study using Usman Danfodio University Sokoto as the context of study investigated the issue regarding to the policy on access to university. Qualitative approach using in-depth interview and documents analysis has been employed to obtain a greater avenue of understanding the issue of equality of opportunity on access to university. From the study, it is evident that the policy content and intentions were clear but they were hampered by weak implementation. This study also indicate that as populous country like Nigeria, while 1,375,653 applied for admission to university, less than 36% or 500,000 are accommodated, which indicate that achieving equal access to university education is a great challenge.

Introduction

Education is a concept that is universally accepted as being the impeccable instrument for the development of the potentialities of a nation which would ultimately bring about national development by way of combating poverty, illiteracy, disease and other social and economic problems (Wolfensohn, 1999). The United National Children's Fund (UNICEF) described education as a key factor in the drive for sustainable development (UNICEF, 2003). It is a birth right and not a privilege of every citizen of any country (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) This was echoed by many scholars such as Erese (1983) and Tomasevski (2003, p.41) when they affirmed that every person has the right to education and shall be made available to all children and in the same way as higher education shall be made accessible on merit with parents having the priority to choose the right education for their children. To facilitate these, Imam (2012) suggested that government should strive to make education available, accessible, acceptable, equitable and adaptable. Tierney (2006, p.8) stated that "higher education is no longer just the most direct route to a middleclass life; it has become essentially, the only route". This assertion substantiates the view of the World Bank (1999) that "education

in general and higher education in particular are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations". Thus knowledge is the pivot upon which economic and social development revolve globally.

While World Bank (1999) asserts that knowledge is key to the emergence of a knowledge economy and human capital development, Petermode (2007) corroborates the assertion by professing that higher education is the determinant in the process of evolving a viable socio-economy, politico-cultural and industry society. Higher education enables citizens to acquire skills which are then directed towards productivity, creativity, competence, initiative, innovation and inventiveness (Ehaimetalor, 1988). It's been regards as the bedrock of any form of structural or human development in any society and a veritable tool that can transform the individual to a positive thinking person who can contribute positively to the social economy, political development and well-being of his society (World Bank, 2004; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004). Kors (2008) and Amandi (2010) in similar view state that development comes to only those nations that utilize training at a higher level for the improvement of their manpower which produce people with the knowledge and understanding of sustaining any form of physical (infrastructural) or social growth in developing countries.

The need for education as a veritable tool for constructive development caused the Nigerian government to include equal and equitable education for all in the 1981 Constitution of the Federation. However, despite this constitutional provision, there is still a great void in the educational disposition of Northern and Southern Nigeria (Okoli, 2007; Umukoro, 2014). Chimombo (2005) asserts that for this reason, the need for equal opportunities for education has been stressed in Nigeria. Education can only truly be equal when the system is accessible to all and takes cognizance of the students in terms of access, progression and learning outcomes (Nkoane, 2006; Alston, 2005). The overriding concern in the wake of the expansion in higher education is who should be the beneficiary? Watson (2005, p.56) opined that for there to be widening participation so as everyone would be treated fairly, then the system must be evolved to expand.

In Nigerian context, the succeeding government has found it imperative to formulate policies that ensure equal higher education opportunities and to make sure the policies are implemented; this is on the presumption that individual competences and desire for knowledge should be equally distributed throughout society. Thus, this research paper is focused on investigating the standard of implementation of the policy of equal education opportunities in access to university education in Nigeria. This is with the understanding that public policy implementation consists of organized activities by government and directed towards achievement of stipulated goals and objectives that are articulated in authorized policy statement (Durlak & Dupre, 2008, p.45).

Statement of the Problem

The bane of development in almost all developing nations is poor policy

implementation; several research findings have shown this to be true. The Nigerian situation is no different as poor policy implementation (or lack of it) has created a wide gulf between intentions to achieve and results achieved (Honadle, 1979; Bruno et al., 1996; Chimombo, 2005; Zadja, 2005). The major cause of implementation farce is the inability of policy makers to take stock of the prevailing social, political, economic and administrative situations in the course of policy formulation. This is manifested in the Nigerian policy on education which has not proved its merit. Adesina (1977) posited that the weakness of the Nigerian Policy on Education can be attributed to defective planning process, lack of political will, financial constraints and statistical deficiencies; Adesina substantiated his observation with the case of the Policy on Universal Primary Education Policy 1976 and the Universal Basic Education Policy of 1999 which are yet to prove any feasibility (Billingham, 2008; Olubadewo, p. 206). It is paradoxical that such policies exist on paper but are not put into practice. The obnoxious altitude of non-implementation of policies pervades all sectors not only education (Ball, 1990; Clarke & Newman, 1997).

Facilitating equality of education opportunities, both in theory and in practice is a challenge which all states must meet if voice is to be given to the fundamental principle of non-discrimination and equality for all in education (Samuels & Galles, 2003; Hasnas 2002). To achieve this, discriminatory practices should be eliminated in favor of adoption of redeeming principles for those who may have being deprived of their right to education which is fundamental (Craissati et al., 2007; Hasnas, 2002). All states are obliged to emphasis on the application of the principles of equality in education at all levels. The report of the International Commission on Education for 21st century to UNESCO titled: "Learning: The Treasure within" (UNESCO 1996) states that "Education is a human right and as essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace" (UNESCO 1996, p.13-14 and 118).

Access to education opportunities still eludes many people despite universal state obligations to enhance it; it still remains true that education is a veritable toll for development. Equality of education opportunities is of paramount significance if the goals of education and societal development are considered and so it remains a global challenge (Bellamy, 1999; Colclough, 2005; McCowan, 2010; UNICEF, 2009; Wilson, 2004). This is more so for developing countries where inequality in education opportunities create imbalances in social and economic status. Thus, it is understood that there is a monumental need to facilitate access to equal education opportunities at the various levels in line with the provisions of the declaration of human rights (Alston, 2005; UNICEF, 2009).

In various reports submitted to UNESCO by nations, inequality in accessing educational opportunities by social groups is attributed to social and cultural barriers which have constituted and remained some of the most serious difficulties facing implementation of National Educational Policies (UNESCO, 2010; 2013). Furthermore, progress towards achieving EFA goals is hampered by failure of government to tackle persistent inequalities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity and language etc. (UNESCO, 2010 p.4, 7 and

29). Another report submitted later indicate that "governments are failing to address the root causes of marginalization in education" (UNESCO, 2013, p.22). It was also indicated that prevalent disadvantages enhance extreme and persistent deprivation that negate the principles of equal opportunities in education (p.137). It is thus incumbent on states to understand the different obstacles and their interrelationship that negate the principles of equality in education.

The Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR) and ECOSOC (CESCR) (2008) on the monitoring of the right of education stated that the elimination of inequalities and disparity in education can be achieved if emphasis is placed on the inclusive dimensions of the right of education which does not give room for discrimination or exclusion. The United National Special Rapporteur on the right to education (2013) has outlined areas in which stringent measures need to be taken at national and international levels so as to enhance equality of educational opportunity. It has also been observed at the attainment of equal educational opportunities that is in consonance with the charter on human rights is possible through a number of ways which include policy implementation which is the focus of the interest of this research.

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria – as cited above – is concerned with the contextual framework of "equal and adequate" educational opportunities to all citizens. However, the gap in educational opportunities between the North and the South still yawns. The North of Nigeria is still struggling to catch up with the south particularly in the lush field of university distribution and enrolment rate. (FCC, 1994; Okoli, 2007; Dada, 2004; Bakare, 2012). It has been observed that the economic state of the country often determines the level of its policy implementation process (Okoro, 2003; Lane, 1999; Makinde, 2005). This is true in the light of the Nigerian situation.

According to Ehiemetalor, (2010) the number of universities are the most minimal globally, in relation to the large population which they are meant to serve. It is this situation which has evolved the notorious problems of access to and equality in university education in the country and the enhancement of high standards. Statistics have revealed that countries around the world have universities that are at least, moderate in number considering the country's population. India has about 1 billion people with 8,407 universities, USA 290 million with 5,758 universities, Argentina 38.7 million with 1,705 universities, Spain 40.2 million with 145 universities, Bangladesh 138 million with 1,341 universities, South Africa, 43.5 million with 26 universities, Kenya 41.7 million with 28 universities, Ghana 34.7 million with 18 universities and Nigeria 160 million with 104 universities (Ehiemetalor, 2010; NPC, 2013; NUC, 2013).

It is however true that proliferation of universities does not determine accessibility to them but that political learning's and Godfatherism are factors which determine access to university education in Nigeria (Uvah, 2005; Okebukola, 2002; Moti, 2010) statistics released by JAMB showed that 61% of the 1,375,652 candidates who sat for its examination scored the required 180 cut-of marks to qualify for admission into universities. It means, therefore, that about 839,137 candidates were qualified to be admitted but it is unfortu-

nately that tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot accommodate 500,000 new students which mean that an average of 339,147 qualified candidates could not be admitted for want of space (excluding 370,000 who did not score the 180 required marks). It is a sad twist of fate that about 340,000 candidates cannot access university education through no fault of theirs (Moti, 2010; JAMB 2011). Researchers have shown that growing number of candidates without correspondent increase in physical structure has contributed significantly to the lack of access to university education in Nigeria (Ogboru, 2008)

It is also unfortunate that Nigeria researchers who have investigated issues on university education (Okebukola, 2006; Moti, 2010; Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010; Bakare, 2012; Esomonu & Adirika, 2012; Dada, 2004) in the country were mostly concerned over constitutional rights of access rather than the actual access itself. Available literature have indicated that very few studies have been undertaken to evaluate the relationship between equality of educational opportunity and its actual policy implementation (Amos &Abdulkarim 2013; Onwuameze, 2013; Amaele, 2003). The federal character policy of the Nigerian government has also been neglected as far implementation of education policy if concerned thereby allowing the huge gap in equality of education opportunity to persist and even grow wider (Biodun, 2000; Oyedeji; 2011, Imam, 2012). It has been suggested that this neglect be addressed so that the gap in educational opportunity maybe breached.

Case Study

The research design adopted for this study is the case study. This is because the case study is the most suitable for describing, explaining or evaluating a case which is defined as a specific, complex, functioning thing (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005; stake, 1995). Thus people and situations usually are prospective cases (p.2). In the same light, the case study makes it easier to study a general situation by focusing on a particular situation of the same happenstance in an in-depth manner and there exists within it the etic and emic perspectives (Gall, Gall Borg, 2005). Also according to Cresswell (2007) case study is a research design that involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and case-based themes. It is for these reasons that the case-study has been adopted for this research.

The case which forms the core of this research project is the manner of policy implementation with regards to provision of equal education opportunities for all in Nigeria. The particular site selected is Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto in northern Nigeria. This university was chosen as case study because it is situated in an educationally disadvantaged area even through it is owned, funded and controlled by the federal government of Nigeria (FCC, 1994). JAMB (2008) posited that Sokoto has the largest quota system and catchments areas to attend to when compared with other universities in Nigeria and this determines the manner of admission and by extension, equal educational

opportunities.

The Subject Informant

Khan and Best (2006) stated that participants (population) consist of "any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher; it may be all individuals of a particular type or more restricted to any part of the groups". Normally the members of the research population must share some common specified characteristics which would render them eligible for being included within the research population (Bichi 2004, p.454). In affirm with, the characteristics of the chosen subject informant were laid on the working experience in the field policy implementation and related matters at Usman Danfodio University Sokoto.

Considering the nature of research participants were selected through purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) was of the view that purposive sampling, being a most common method, tends to bring together research participants who share the same criteria which fulfill the requirements for a particular research situation vis-à-vis research questions. Cresswell (2003, p.185) posited further that qualitative research enhances the ability of the researcher to make comprehensive selections of the appropriate participants who, by dint if their intellectual disposition and possible promity to the site of the research topic, are best suited to give analytical responses to the questions which they would be assumed. As indicated earlier, the respondents were from Usman Danfodio University Sokoto within the top management officers of the university.

Research Instrument

The instruments selected for the collection of data for this research investigation are interview protocols and document analysis methods. This is in conformation of Eugene's (2009) observation that in policy research almost all likely sources of information, data and ideas constitute people and documents. Also Dvora Yanow (2007) was of the opinion that reading of documents is part of observation since documents provide background information prior to conduct of interview.

Ethical Consideration

In the conduct of any manner of research, researchers should tune the private life of the human elements to be used (Silverman, 2000 p.201) Cresswell (2003) suggests that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of respondents. Miles and Huberman (1994) are explicit on the issues which researcher should be cautious about while collecting and analyzing data during researches. Therefore, in preparing the grounds for this research, the researcher confirmed to Christians' (2000) admonition to, first of all, seek the consent of the interviewer who should not be deceived in any way in

the course of the interview just as their identities shall be treated in confidence and also their responses to be so treated.

In ensuring authenticity and credibility of findings Guba (1981) posted that a good researcher should be concerned with four issues the first of which is how to render credibility for his/her findings (truth value concern); secondly, how does a researcher determine the applicability of findings to other settings or respondents (applicability concern); thirdly, how can a researcher determine consistency in a similar context (consistency concern) and fourthly, how can it be determined that findings are without bias or selfish interests (neutrality concern). Waldendorf and Belk (1989) added a fifth concern which is; how can it be determined that the participants did not give false information (integrity concern). It has been observed that each research approach develops its own criteria for addressing the stated concerns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt et al, 2007; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). Therefore, this research was in full conformity with all the above protocols.

Policy research analysis technique

The raison d'etre for enrollmet out any research project is the collation of data. However, this in itself does not suffice for the research to be successful or to be seen as successful. For the data which have been collated to be comprehensive, they have to be analyzed in the most appropriate way which would make it possible for them to be interpreted into information. Therefore, data collection in a research borders directly on analysis and interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Marshall & Rosman, 2006) Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis of data generally, needs comprehensive guidance which, in this instance, would be in the form of the references that would be made to in the literature text of the research report.

The analysis of data in this research were in line with Wolcott (1994, p. 33) position that it is essential for the analyst to look for "patterned regularities" in the different aspects of the data. This involved reading the collected data over and over again in order to identify similarities and/or differences that may occur between the data and the whole scope of the literature review. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) corroborated this view when they stated that "it is useful therefore, to keep coming back to the same data with fresh analytic perspectives" (p.16). Data collection is a veritable exercise in the conduct of any research and so, by this very quality, data collection becomes indispensable. However, there can be no collection of comprehensive data, which would provide the means for finding and implementing feasible solutions without, in the words of Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.2) "never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously".

For this study, for the analysis of data for this study there was coding system which was used to regularize the analysis of all the data that was collected. This is with a view to creating a systematic approach that would all practical purposes; establish a taxonomic approach to the categorization of the data for easy and functional analysis. This was done

so as to conform to Walcott (1994) postulation that there should be a search for "patterned regularities in the data". According to Coffey and Atkinson (1966, p.27) "codes represent the decisive link between the original data, that is the textual material such as interview transcripts, observation notes or fields notes on the one hand, and the researcher's theoretical concepts on the other". In so far as coding is the distinguishing line between the actual data obtained in the field and the way the researcher percepts the situation, and then it behooves this researcher to adopt it as an instrument of achieving workability.

In affirm with the above, the open coding technique was used in the data analysis procedure for this study. The open coding system involves a microanalysis approach of coding data by means of reducing them into smaller parts which would make it more convenient for the researcher to study them for the purpose of obtaining comparisons and contrasts – similarities and differences (Coffey & Atkinson 1996). In adopting this approach, this study is not of the view that the qualitative research method involves number in the analysis procedure; rather it tends to seek for regularities in the occurrence of certain data.

Each code was assigned to a particular data or a group of data which have similar features in given a separate identity that would distinguish it from other data or groups. Subcodes was also assigned to sub-groups within the larger groups. This considering the fact that similarities (and even differences) may vary in context thereby giving larger and submeaning to all categories of data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 36) supplemented this theory when they preferred that "codes or their segments can be nested or embedded within one another, can overlap and can intersect". From this process of open coding usually emerges axial coding which is a process of the reformation of these data that were atomized in the earlier process of open coding.

Consequently, the researchers evolve memos and diagrams for data analysis so as to make the research findings to be built on concrete foundation. The memos and diagrams enable the researcher to obtain accurate records of the evolving changes in analytical and theoretical disposition of participants of this research. Memos, by their very nature are suitable for obtaining records of progress, feelings and the directional flow of optimum data analysis.

Document Analysis

Documents are one of the good sources of information as much of them exist prior to the conduct of a research. Document help the researcher to "track historical process or reconstruct past events and ongoing process that are not couldn't be recall and said during the interview" (Daymon & Holloway 2002, p.217). This is generally grounded in the real world and not produced for research purposes (Marriam, 2009).

Furthermore, document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document

analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention. Atkinson and Coffey (1997) refer to documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways (p.47). Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Bowen, 2009 p.36). The qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods (Yin, 1994).

Institutionalization of Admission System into Nigerian Universities

This section is of this article discusses the institutions overseeing the processes of admission in to Nigerian universities as well as ensuring effective implementation of the federal character policy of access to university education which aimed at given equal education opportunities among citizens.

Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)

Prior to 1978, each university conducted its placement examination and admitted its students according to the spaces available. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was founded by the federal government as the central placement examination body in 1978 (Nwadiani & Agbineweka, 2005). One of the reasons for the establishment of the JAMB was that each year thousands of applicants sit for university admission examinations and less than 20% on average gain admission into the universities (Moti, 2010) As a result, many applicants had to apply for admission to more than one university which, in turn, led to the problem of multiple applications, examinations, and dominance of opportunities by few individuals. JAMB therefore had the responsibility of regulating admissions into the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Then later in 1996, the federal government initiated and promoted a federal character policy and this led to the concept of equal opportunity in universities in the country (FCC, 1996; Adejo et al. 2005; Okoroma, 2008).

The main criticism against the establishment of JAMB is that it is the only body that controls and regulates admission to all institutions of higher learning in the country. Onyechere (2010) opines that in the whole world, Nigeria is the only country where one body such as JAMB has total control of admissions into all universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education. Onyechere further argues that while universities in other countries have full autonomy to admit their students, Nigerian universities do not have such autonomy because of the power of JAMB in controlling and monitoring admissions. Oyedeji, (2011) commented that the universities should be encouraged to take over

admission of their applicants; this will lead to an effective implementation of admission policies

National Universities Commission (NUC)

The then hierarchical command structure of the military regimes controlled all aspects of public service. The National Universities Commission (NUC) was an autonomous agency under the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) charged with the care of university education in the country; the rationale behind its establishment was for the orderly development of university education in Nigeria, expanding access, maintenance of high standards, and ensuring adequate funding (Uvah, 2005). It was created in 1962 and reconstituted as a statutory body in 1974, the NUC was originally intended to function as a modest university grants commission, offering suggestions to the government or advisory board on policy issues, defining norms for quality assurance, channeling block grants from the government to the universities, and ensuring the balanced and coordinated improvement of the higher education system (Saint, Hartnett, & Strassner, 2003). In 1992, the NUC's governing board was dissolved, leaving it accountable exclusively to the Federal Minister of Education (FME) and the Head of State. By the end of the military era in 1999, it had become a larger organization saddled with the responsibility of taking care of all aspects of university activities, including setting academic standards as well as overseeing polices implementation including that of admission. The NUC is involved in the selection of institutional leaders and members of governing councils. It accredits all new university course offerings and the physical development plans for each campus; it also takes part in the concession of staff salaries with the various academic unions (Saint et al., 2003).

Access to University Education in Nigeria

In the early years of the Nigerian nation, the numbers of universities and candidates seeking admission were few. However, with the growing awareness on the importance of education and the premium placed on it by successive governments from the 1980s – 2000s the demand for university education and the attendant need for more universities have doubled. This situation caused the government to allow private sector participation in the provision of primary, secondary and tertiary education particularly in the 1990s when government efforts failed to address the issue (Nwugwu, 2011). Recently, the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is put out 104 with an enrolment figure of 1,937,493 (NUC, 2010). However, the percentage of higher education participation rate is pegged at 8.1%. This is insignificant when compared to countries like U.S., Australia and Korea that have HEPR of 64%, 41% and 51% respectively (Daniel, kanwar&Uvalic – Trumbic, 2006).Access to education has been described as the opportunity for enrolment as well as the facilitation of entry and the encouragement of sustained enrolment by learners in

appropriate education programmes. Therefore, access involves features of openness to heterogenous population, supportiveness to a diverse clientele and relevance of diverse offerings (Roberts, 2003).

There is constraint to access to education in Nigeria at all educational levels with disparities manifesting glaringly. The level of access to education in Nigeria compares poorly with such economic competitions as South Africa (17%), Indonesia (11%), Brazil (12%) (Task Force, 2000). A report released by the Federal Ministry of Education (Nigeria) indicated that in 2008, 800,000 candidates were successful (23% success rate) in the university entry requirement whereas in that same year Nigerian universities had the capacity to admit only 248,323 (14%) (FRN, 2009). Consequently there is a persistent gap between the number of candidates who sit for university Matriculation examination yearly and the number that are actually admitted. Statistics released by JAMB show the number candidates and their fates from 1999 to 2004. In 199,593,670 candidates applied for admission; 64,358 candidates were admitted, 529,312 were rejected, 10.8% were successful while 89.2% failed. In 2000, 467,490 applied whereas 45,681 were admitted while 421,809 were rejected, 9.8% passed while 90.2% failed. In the year 2001 749,727 applied, 90,769 were admitted, 658,958 were rejected, 12.1% were successful but 87.9% failed. In the year 2002, 994,381 candidates applied, 51,845 gained admission, and 942,536 applications were rejected with 5.2% success and 94.8% failure. In the year 2003, 1,046,950 candidates applied where 105,157 were admitted while 941,793 were rejected with 10.0% success and 90.0% failure.

In 2006, 841,878 candidates applied, 122,492 were admitted while 719,386 were rejected and 14.5% success rate and 85.5% failure were recorded. In 2007, 916,371 candidates applied while 76,984 were admitted and 839,387 were rejected and 8.4% success and 91.6% failure were recorded. In 2008, 803,472 candidates applied, 88,524 were admitted, 714,948 were rejected, and 11.0% were successful while 89.0% failed. In 2007, 1,028,984 candidates applied while 129,445 were admitted and 899,539 were rejected, 12.6% passed whereas 87.4% failed. In 2009 1,192,050 candidates applied, 113,100 were admitted while 1,078,950 were rejected, 9.5% passed and 90.5% failed (JAMB Annual Report 2010).

Views of the policy implementers on the issue of issue of equality of educational opportunities on access to university education

In their responses to the question of the intent of the federal character commission most of the respondents were of the opinion that it was a commendable effort by the government to provide equal opportunities in access to education for all and thereby equal development in all parts of the country. One of the respondents comments that the federal character policy was a child of necessity looking at the huge gaps between the two regions of the country in terms of educational development. Therefore, the intention of the policy

to give an equal opportunity was of the national interest not really favoring one particular region or state as some are agitating. When asked to comment on the implementation of the policy on federal character, the respondents were of the opinion that the nation's universities are married with problems in implementing this policy as the individual states find it difficult to meet their quota, simply because these "tag" as educationally backward has numerous problems with their basic education system or secondary school in other words which the university depend upon to recruit its students. This is because on several occasion these favored states cannot filled in their quota allocated to them because of lack of qualified candidate from secondary schools.

Another respondent expressed the opinion that implementation is not a hazardous issue as even JAMB, and NUC, other stakeholders are in tune with the universities in the areas of admissions. On the issue of autonomy, both respondents agree that the universities have little autonomy as far as implementation of the federal character policies in areas equal education opportunities are concerned. Responding to the question of the problems being faced in the area of equal admissions in Usman Danfodiyo University scarcely faces any problem because it adheres strictly to the stipulations presented to it by policy content, another respondent stated further that there is no question of favouritism, fear or nepotism where the university's admission policy is concerned – standards are not towered.

However, all the respondents seriously decry major problem faced by the university is the enrollment capacity which goes hand-in-hand with the available resources. One of the respondent state "you see this year 2014/2015 over eight thousand students applied to this university for admission but we were not able to admits more than three thousand due to our enrollment capacity, and this problem is not only in this university, there is a university where forty thousand students applied and that university cannot accommodate more than six thousand students. So you see the problem there is no sincerity in distribution of resources not only to the university but to educational sector of the country. You know the recommended budget allocation by UNESCO, how much is the total allocation of education budget in the country? Furthermore, all other respondent commented that there are lots of elements of unseriouness from the government site because the universities are understaff, no laboratory equipment, no latest books, the lecture halls are very-very limited among many other problems, and all these are things that can determined the effective implementation of this policy. So the government is not really serious about given equal opportunity in access to university education in the country. When asked to comment on the disparity in admission and enrolment between male and female candidates, in Sokoto catchment areas, the respondent stated that compared to universities in other part of the country, UDUS is not doing quite well but he pointed out that the situation has improved significantly, the respondent concurred with this evaluation and added that the establishment of a state university in Sokoto has balanced the access to university education for both male and female.

What is the best policy practice in addressing the issue of equality of education as it concerns access to university education?

When asked to suggest a certain best policy practice that would enhance educational equality particularly on university education- respondents opined that states should progressively review their education policies in concrete terms. All respondents comes to agree that given equal access to university education in a country like Nigeria is very difficult task looking at the number of universities, their enrollment capacity as well as the number of students applying every year. Some respondents stated that there is need to increase the enrollment capacity of the universities so that they can be able to accommodate more students. However, when asked specifically, to suggest a best policy practice almost all the respondents agrees that as Nigerian population is concern where about two million students are applying for admission in to universities every year, and less than six hundred thousand are being accommodated then issue of given equal access is not feasible in this kind of situation, therefore suggested that Nigerian education polices and structure needs to have a system that would allow people to explore their potentialities, let them believe they can earned without having a university degree, let someone believed that he can became a technician, he can become a plumber, and many others which can make him a successful individual without a university degree. One of the respondent states that "You see the system was design in such a way people believed that they can only survived by having a university degree, which is not true. There are lot of people out there that are successful in other businesses such as farming and they have never went to university, so we need to review our system and these review should be done within our basic education system that is primary and secondary education, it should be design in such a way that a student would have an avenue to explore his potentialities for him to realized that I can became a farmer without having university degree." Another respondent states that " You see all these jobs like shoemaker, plumber, mechanics among others, you will realised that all most all the people doing them are foreigners while our youth are here waiting for many years to get admitted in to universities because the system make them believed for them to earned living they most have university degree. Look at the fertile soil we have in Nigeria, we are having one of the best fertile land in West Africa. Do you most have Bsc Agriculture to become a farmer? All you required is basic education and basic training from agricultural extension workers- that is all"

The data from policy implementation documents indicated that in the last ten academic sessions, only forty percent of the candidates that applied for admission were been accommodated. According to the document the reasons are not separated from the reasons stated by the respondents which include the enrollment capacity set to the university by National Universities Commission and the NUC used the manpower and other facilities available as it is yardstick for each program to determine the number of student that should be admitted in order to ensure quality of academic standard. And it is clearly known that the availability of manpower, facilities and learning materials cannot be

separated from resources available to the universities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first research question on what are the views of policy implementers' on the existing university policy, its intent and implementation in Sokoto State in relation of the issue of equality of educational opportunities, was design to explore the views of policy implementers on this policy in question and the coded frequencies shows that about 96% of the respondents shows the intent of the policy was a great development geared towards the reducing the gap in educational development between the two regions of the country. Consequently, these findings are in according with philosophy and ideology of Federal character commission on this policy in question (FCC, 1994). On the challenges of the implementation 98% of the respondents believes that are several challenges on the implementation of this policy starting from the basic education of these states considered to be educationally backward. And it is unfortunate that despite the policy backing and favor given to these states they cannot simply fill in their quota in the universities merely because of poor secondary school graduates.

All the respondent with no exception agrees that the major challenges with implementation of this policy on equal access to university is lack of resources in the university which always resulted to large number of students being unadmitted due to the of lack of enrollment capacity. The universities have series of problems that could not be simple imagined starting from short of man power, ranging from number of staff and their quality standard. There are also serious shortage of classrooms and so many uncompleted and dilapidated buildings. These findings agree with several studies conducted on higher education (Ehiemetalor, 2010; Moti, 2010). Furthermore, a studies conducted by (Obroru, 2008) agrees that the increase number of candidate applying for university education in Nigeria is quite alarming looking at number of facilities available in universities.

On the issues of policy practice it was quite believed that given equal access to education in a country like Nigeria is a tedious task and there is no element of its feasibility at the moment this is simply because the system has inculcated in people that they a need university degree to survive life in Nigeria, which was a very wrong impression according to this study. A populous country like Nigeria that requires many services of human endeavor, there are many human services that does not required university degree to offer and earned, and that was what the respondents are calling on government to consider simply because until date the universities across the country are not accommodating even half of the students that are applying for admission. However, this study was the first of its kind that comes up with this type of policy practices, therefore it could be said to be the first findings of its kind. Nevertheless, several studies show that achieving equal opportunity education is very difficult such as (Uvah 2005; Okebukola, 2002; Moti, 2010). But to suggest a policy practices to solving this particular challenge this is the first suggestion of its kind.

Consequently, from the research findings it is clear that there is need to urgently review the basic or secondary education of the states "tag" to be educationally backward which the universities depend upon to admit students, simply because it is sad that despite the policy backing and favor for some of these states to access university education they cannot make it. It has also come out clearly from this study that there is need to aggressively readdress the channeling of resources to universities, at same time the universities should adopt measures to well manage the little resources they received from the government. As it has shown that achieving equal access to university education in Nigeria is not feasible, there is therefore, need to review the basic educational system to make it such a way that it can allow youth to explore their potentialities and talent to other businesses or endeavors in life to let them know that they must not to go university or possess university degree to became successful.

This policy case study indicated that the intent and the intentions of the policy are clear looking at the huge gap in the educational development between the regions of the country, it is however unfortunate that the secondary students graduate from these educational backward are affecting the implementation of this policy. Furthermore, the study discovers that lack of resources is another setback towards implementing this particular policy of achieving equal opportunity. The study also discovers that achieving equal access to university education in Nigeria is not feasible at the moments, however, this study suggested an entirely best policy practice towards achieving the said equality in question.

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