

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE QUOTA SYSTEM IN  
NIGERIA WITH EMPHASIS ON THE EDUCATION  
SECTOR

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## 1.0 Introduction

Since 2011, the mood to rethink the country in its political, economic and social ramifications has heightened, leading to the national conference of 2014<sup>1</sup>. The recommendations of this conference have fueled national divide along regional fault lines. The call for political restructuring, the agitation for autonomy and separation, the violence occasioned by feelings of deprivation and those motivated by religious fervour have combined to put the country on edge yet again (Adetunberu & Bello, 2018; Abbas & Wakili, 2018)<sup>2,3</sup>.

The quota system was aimed at giving a higher percentage of admission spaces in Federal Government's schools, colleges and universities to candidates of northern<sup>4</sup> origin to, overtime correct for the lopsided initial endowments in education in favour of the south. The Federal Character, which has an established commission, is similar to the quota system but applies to employment in the federal public services. Though the two are related, this study is however limited to the quota system of admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Over the years, much debate has taken place in the public space on the merits and demerits of the quota system. The Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, recently described it as an index of corruption and advocated for merit in place of its. While only very limited number of qualitative studies, (some with conjectured findings) have been undertaken on the quota system in Nigeria (see Anyanwu, 2010; Adeyemi, 2011), this study evaluates the quota system policy of admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria with a quantitative bent. We propose to:

- (i) measure the tertiary admission gap between the North and South.
- (ii) evaluate the key factors responsible for the widening or closing of the education gap in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
- (iii) recommend strategies to more effectively narrow the education gap between the North and South.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.premiumtimesng.com/national-conference/wp-content/uploads/National-Conference-2014-Report-August-2014-Table-of-Contents-Chapters-1-7.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/biafra-restructuring-nigeria/>

<sup>3</sup><https://allafrica.com/stories/201803280739.html>

<sup>4</sup>When later, many more states were created in Nigeria, four states from the south - Rivers, Cross River, Bayelsa and Ebonyi were added to the disadvantaged states of the North. In order to cover for the North-South combination of states, the nomenclature changed to educationally less developed states (ELDS). In spite of this addition, the North constitutes over 80 percent of the disadvantaged states and therefore worthy of generalization as a policy focus on the North.

<sup>5</sup>See <https://guardian.ng/opinion/nigeria-osinbajo-and-the-quota-system/>

## 2.0 Country Context of Quota System in the Education Sector

### i. The experience of other countries

The application of the quota system varies across countries and it has been applied in various areas such as job recruitment, political position, gender, and wealth distribution, etc. This section reviews the educational quota system across selected countries. The quota system policy is known as affirmative action in the United States, reservation policy in parts of Asia (India and Nepal) and positive discrimination in the United Kingdom. The quota system policy in the education sector aims to promote educational attainment of underrepresented groups (less represented, poor, caste etc.). The history or origin of the educational quota system varies across countries and it is constitutionally recognized in some countries.

The criteria for entering into college vary across countries, and sometimes, across individual schools/institutions. In the countries reviewed, school admission is not solely based on merit, but a number of other considerations such as race, gender or ethnic origin. Below is a brief on the quota system in three countries - India, Kenya and Brazil as comparator countries to Nigeria.

#### **India**

In India, the educational quota system is called the reservation policy. It was first introduced in 1950 and is documented in Article 15 (4) of the Indian Constitution. In order to ensure an inclusive educational system, the reservation policy was initially created to give special provision for the educational advancement of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups. The reservation policy was revised to include the Central Educational Institutions -The Central Educational Institutions policy provided exclusive reservation of 15 percent for Scheduled Caste (SC); 7.5 percent for Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 27.5 percent for Other Backward Caste (OBC). This brings the total quota or reservation to 50 percent, while the rest of the 50 percent reserved for admission is for open category which utilizes merit-based admission (Jangir, 2013). Although the reservation policy is still applicable in India, some studies have noted that institutional habitus as perceived and experienced by SC could significantly influence educational mobility and outcomes of SC students (Malish & Ilavarasan, 2015).

#### **Kenya**

The educational quota system in Kenya is constitutional and aimed at strengthening local interest and commitment towards the development and maintenance of their schools. Unlike some countries under review, the educational quota policy in Kenya is largely applicable to primary and secondary education. According to Kataka (2014), the educational quota policy is applicable to national schools and it allows 85 percent of students admitted in a school to come from that school's home district (catchment area) and 15 percent of the students admitted from outside the district.

## **Brazil**

In the case of Brazil, the educational quota system was approved by the Brazilian Senate in 2012, with plans to discontinue it in ten years<sup>6</sup>. The quota system was directed towards groups and populations underrepresented in public universities. Specifically, it gives favourable considerations to black, brown and indigenous students. The policy states that “not only a percentage of students from certain minority groups but also students from public schools, will face different admission requirements within public higher federal education institutions” (Marques, 2013). The system allocated 50 percent quota to poor black students from public schools, and another 20 percent to black students in general (Marquez, 2013). The Brazilian quota system is mandatory for public institutions and optional for private institutions.

### **ii. Nigerian Context**

The agitation for quota policy dates back to the 1950s when Northern Nigeria advocated for a system that would promote increased enrollment of its indigenes in the University College, Ibadan (UCI) (Anyanwu, 2010; Joshua et al, 2014). This de facto policy which was established to ensure equal representation of the various ethnic nationalities in the education sector was given formal effect with the establishment of JAMB in 1978. The quota policy on admission is applicable to Federal Government tertiary institutions as well as Unity Schools owned by the Federal Government. The scope of this study is limited to the former.

Admissions into tertiary institutions in Nigeria are regulated by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The distribution of education quota in tertiary institutions was established by the JAMB and contained in the JAMB admission brochure, which spells out all the general guidelines for admission into tertiary institutions (States, Federal, Private) in Nigeria.

At the inception of JAMB, the admission quota guideline stipulated that 40 percent of qualified candidates should be admitted on Merit, 20 percent on catchment/locality<sup>7</sup>, 30 percent reserved for Educationally Less Developed States<sup>8</sup> (ELDSs) and 10 percent reserved for discretion of the Vice-Chancellor (NUC, 1999). This system was operated for about two decades but was later modified in favour of merit and catchment area, by reducing the percentage given to ELDSs. Specifically, in 2000, merit quota was increased from 40 percent to 45 percent, catchment area, from 20 percent to 35 percent, while the quota for educationally less developed states was reduced from 30 percent to 20 percent (see Figure 1). This structure currently holds for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria (JAMB Admission Guidelines, 2018). A similar guideline is applicable to State

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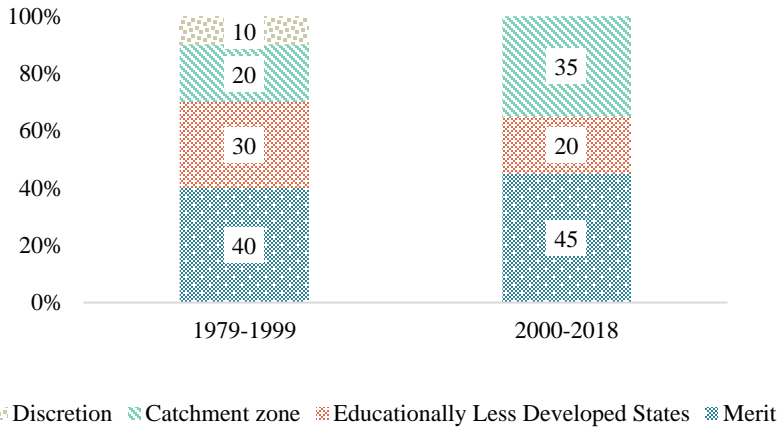
<sup>6</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19188610>

<sup>7</sup>States geographically contiguous to the institution.

<sup>8</sup>This also refers to the quota system. The educationally less developed states are : Kaduna, Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Ebonyi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara.

Government-owned tertiary institutions at the state level, while the privately-owned institutions have autonomy on admission matters.

Figure 1: Distribution of Educational Quota in Tertiary Institutions



Source: NUC; JAMB and Authors' computation (2019)

Furthermore, the admission process in tertiary institutions is complicated by the prescribed quota for Science and Art course of study. For instance, conventional universities are required to follow the 60:40 percent ratio for Science and Art. For non-conventional universities<sup>9</sup>, they are required to follow the 80:20 Science to Art ratio. The implication is that candidates are given admissions to read science and or art courses for which they did not apply, to ensure that the university complies with the ratio requirement for funding purposes.

### 3.0 Tertiary Admissions in Nigeria: Evidence from secondary data.

Recent data show that despite the existence of quota policy in the past four decades, most Northern states still have low levels of educational attainments. As noted earlier, the intention for setting up the education quota policy in Nigeria is to bridge the education gap between North and South. Figure 2 shows the literacy rate<sup>10</sup> by states in Nigeria (2016/17). As depicted in the figure, the average literacy rate in the North was 56 percent, much lower than the average literacy rate in the South which stood at 94 percent. This disparity has been attributed to the low acceptance of western education in most Northern states (Ogebe & Adeniran, 2019).

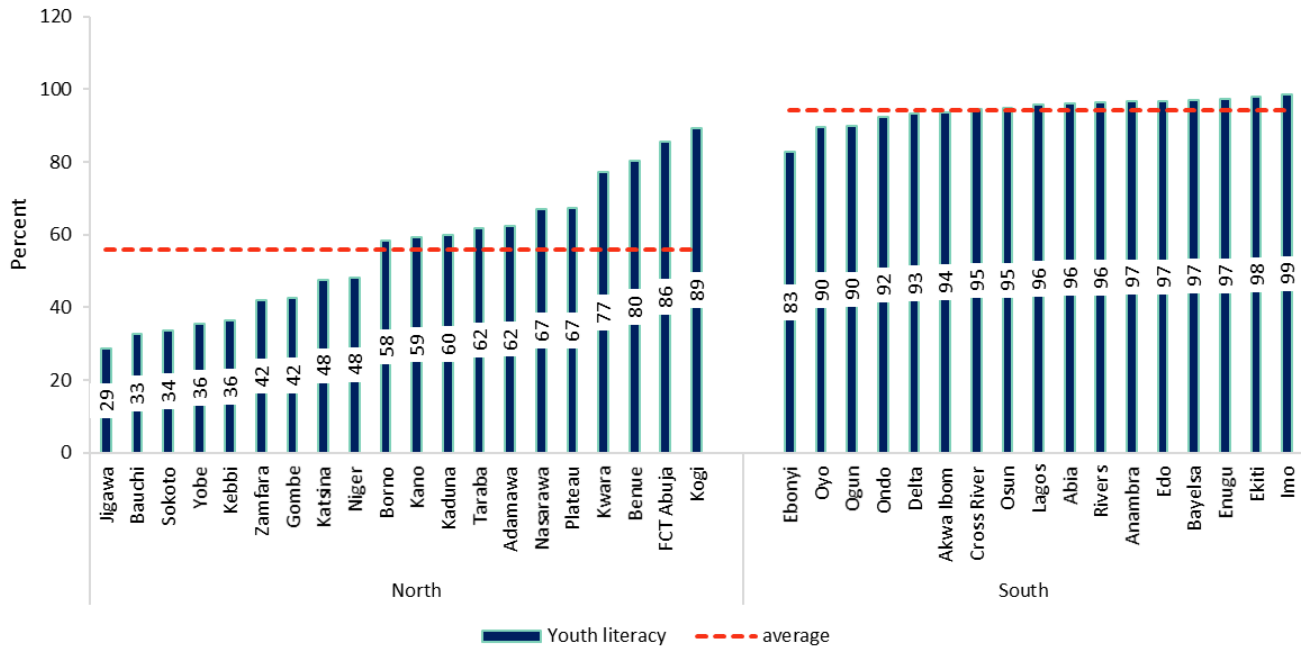
In the North, Jigawa (29 percent), Bauchi (33 percent) and Sokoto (34 percent) had the lowest literacy rate, while the highest literacy rate was in the North Central states such as Kogi (89

<sup>9</sup>Non-conventional universities offer limited or specific courses -- example a University of Agriculture, or a University of science and Technology, etc.

<sup>10</sup>An individual is considered literate if he/she can read a complete sentence in English or have basic formal education.

percent), FCT Abuja (86 percent), Benue (80 percent) and Kwara (77 percent). Among the Southern states, Ebonyi with 83 percent had the lowest literacy rate, while Imo with 99 percent had the highest. This wide disparity in officially measured literacy attainment suggests that basic education gap between the North and South remains wide.

Figure 2: Literacy Rate in Nigeria (2016/17)



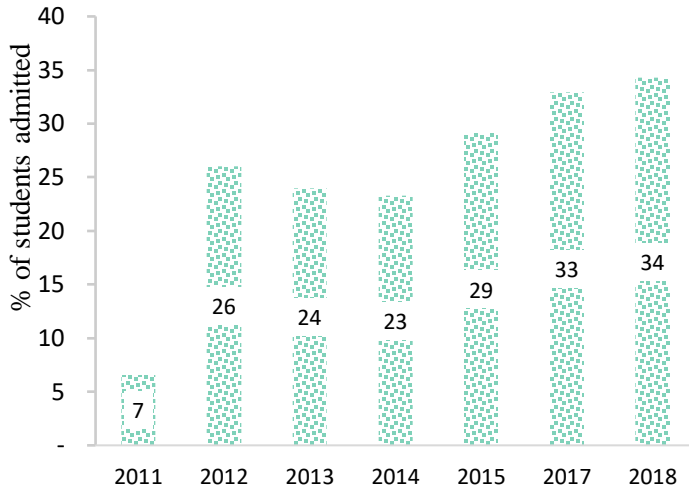
Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2016-2017); authors' computation (2019)

The admission rate<sup>11</sup> in Nigeria still remains low (below 35 percent) despite the rapid growth in public and private tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have grown in recent years. For instance, today Nigeria has a total of 170 universities of which 43 or 25.3 percent are owned by the Federal Government, 48 or 28.2 percent by state governments and 79 or 46.5 percent by private entities (see Figure 4). Despite the rapid growth in the number of accredited universities in Nigeria, the percentage of students admitted into tertiary institutions was relatively low. As depicted in Figure 3, the average admission rate from 2011 through 2018 was below one-third.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>This is the percentage of students admitted. It is computed by dividing the number of students that are admitted by the number of students that applied for admission through JAMB. We note that the admission rate used in this study covers all tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education etc...)

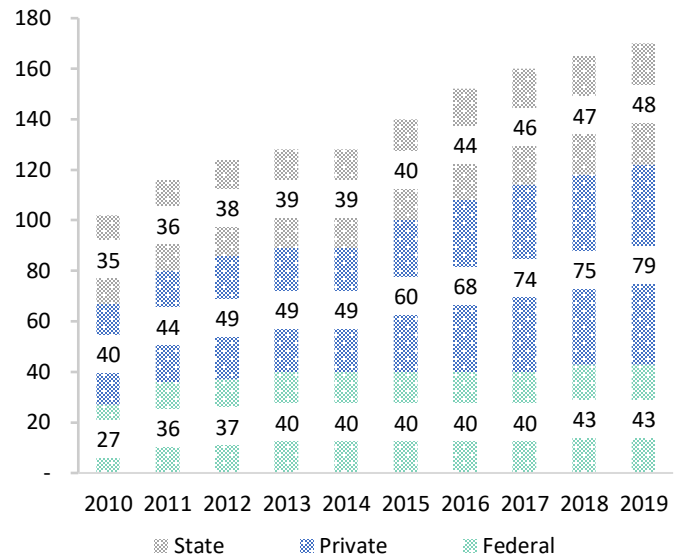
<sup>12</sup> 2011 is an outlier occasioned by strikes and low performance at the JAMB.

Figure 3: Tertiary Admission Rate in Nigeria



Source: Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), NBS and Authors' computation (2019). Note: no available data for 2016.

Figure 4: Number of Universities in Nigeria



Source: NUC Bulletin (June 2019) and Authors' computation (2019)

### 3.1 The Case For and Against the Quota System

Educational quota policy promotes social justice and increases access to education for deprived groups. Weisskopf (2004) described the educational quota policy in India as socially just. The study empirically established that the educational quota system in India increased admission for both the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups. Also, the study noted that the educational quota policy attracted a significant number of deprived groups (SC and ST students) who would not otherwise pursue higher education. Gosh (2006) supports Weisskopf's main finding, arguing that although the educational quota policy may not be the best measure to correct the long-standing discrimination, it is still needed in India to narrow the admission gap in higher education. According to Gosh, social discrimination and exclusion will not only persist, but will be strengthened in the absence of the educational quota policy in India.

In a similar study, Thorat (2006) empirically showed that the quota system policy in India has increased the enrollment rate of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups in most higher institutions. The study noted that the proportion of SCs among total graduates increased from 3.3 percent in 1981 to 7.8 percent in 1990s, while that of Scheduled Tribe (ST) increased from 0.8 percent in 1981 to 2.7 percent in 1990s.



Marquez (2013) analyzed the effect of the Brazilian educational quota policy on admissions into higher education. The study noted that most poor black Brazilian citizens who have low levels of education are less likely to reach a high social status, to exercise an occupation of prestige and to be well paid. Based on this, the study concludes that the quota system admission policy is indeed socially just as it gives access to the deprived poor and blacks in Brazil.

Some studies have noted that the educational quota system promotes diversity. According to Vieira & Arends-Kuenning (2018), the educational quota system policy in Brazil has encouraged diversity as the proportion of students from poor background and blacks in public universities have increased significantly. The study compared the Grade Point Average (GPA) of students admitted based on educational quota and those admitted through merit. They found no significant disparity in GPA between students admitted on quota and those admitted on merit. They concluded that educational quota policy promotes diversity and that it is a sure pathway for people from disadvantaged racial and economic groups to enter the upper-middle and elite class.

Francis & Tannuri-Pianto (2012) examined the application of educational quota system in National University of Brasilia and concluded that the educational quota policy contributed significantly to increase the proportion of black students as well as students from lower socioeconomic status. Similarly, Telles & Paixão (2013) found that the quota system policy in Brazil has helped reduce large-scale racial inequality, and that further reductions can be achieved if more positive discriminatory policies are implemented. Using a sample of three universities in Brazil, Childs & Stromquist (2014) showed that educational quota policy increased diversity. Also, they noted that, although students admitted through quota had worse scores on the vestibular than non-quota students, the difference was not significant. In a related study, Santos & Queiroz (2016) studied the educational quota policy in the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. Their findings showed that the quota system significantly increased access of indigenes and the poor into tertiary institutions, hence it narrowed the admission gap between the rich and poor individuals as well as blacks and non-blacks in Brazil.

In addition, some studies have shown that the educational quota policy has helped increased educational attainment among certain deprived groups. In a more recent study, Cassan (2019) found that the educational quota policy in India contributed positively to improve literacy in secondary schools when the Scheduled Caste (SC) group was considered. The study noted that the educational quota policy increased educational attainment for the Scheduled Caste (SC).

Studies have argued that the educational quota policy does not promote merit. In a recent study, Tarun & Renuga (2018) examined the impact of reservation system on educational opportunities in India, using a sample of 200 respondents from Chennai (one of the four metropolitan cities in India). Their results showed that although the reservation policy in India has uplifted and promoted both socially and economically backward people in terms of admission into higher education, the

policy increased the enrollment rate of under-qualified and undeserving candidates in higher institutions, thereby significantly reducing the quality of graduates in search of jobs.

In Nigerian, studies have shown that the educational quota for tertiary institutions also undermines merit. It allocates only 45 percent to merit and 55 percent for catchment area and Educationally Less Developed States. According to Abati (2017),<sup>13</sup>, most tertiary institutions in Nigeria admit less than 45 percent of students based on merit and they do not respect the admission quota as prescribed by JAMB. He also observed that the maximum threshold for admission by catchment area is 35 percent and 20 percent for educationally less developed states, and that most universities still admit more than the stipulated quota for catchment area and educationally less developed states. This limits the opportunity of admission of more qualified students from other parts of the country. Agbu (2016) opined that the existing quota system in Nigeria largely fosters nepotism, undermines creativity and glorifies mediocrity through the abuse of the policy.

In line with previous studies, Nwagwu (1997) noted that the educational quota system policy in Nigeria is discriminatory and undermines merit as a basis of admission into public tertiary institutions. According to the study, the educational quota policy has led to the rejection of many brilliant candidates and admission of weak ones because of their place of origin. The study noted that the quota system encourages bribery, corruption and nepotism in Nigeria. Nwagwu (1997) found that brilliant candidates often lose faith in merit, justice and fair play, hence they turn to assorted nefarious ventures where pursuit of money takes precedence over academic pursuit.

According to Akpaku (2013), the educational quota policy in Nigeria has inequitable effect on admission of candidates. The study noted that the quota system policy on tertiary admission has increased the production of low-quality graduates and encouraged unethical practices during admission processes. Adeyemi (2001) noted that some states have more candidates than their given quota, while others don't have enough candidates, and this gives rise to internal manipulation of the admission process.

The educational quota policy in Nigeria contradicts the basics of human development. Obi & Ezeogu (2016) condemned the application of quota system to the tertiary education in Nigeria. They noted that educational quota policy contradicts the rudiments of human development; having in mind that human development is the primary concern of education. Thus, they argued that the basic standard for educating people should be on merit and not discriminatory quota policy that encourages mediocrity.

#### 4.0 Methodology

The common factor in the litany of claims about the quota system in Nigeria is that the quantification of the educational gap and its trend over time has never been investigated. In fact,

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<sup>13</sup>[https://www.jamb.gov.ng/Reuben\\_Abati.aspx](https://www.jamb.gov.ng/Reuben_Abati.aspx)

the quota policy did not come with its monitoring and evaluation framework. In consequence, the size of the educational gap cannot be assessed and reviewed for policy modifications.

Given that the quota system was aimed at bridging the education gap between the North and South, this study constructs an index to measure the education gap (EGAP) between the North and South. Also, the factors responsible for widening or closing the gap in tertiary institutions were examined.

### Measuring Education Gap (EGAP)

We developed a simplified formula to measure Education Gap (EGAP) between the North and South. Although the ELDS is made up of 23 states – 19 Northern<sup>14</sup> and 4 Southern<sup>15</sup> states, this analysis of this study focuses on the North and South. First, the quota system policy was originally meant to bridge the education gap between the North and South. Also, as at the creation of ELDS, two of the Southern states (Bayelsa and Ebonyi) now included in the ELDS policy were not created. Second, the Northern states constitute a proportion (83 percent) in the ELDS criterion.<sup>16</sup> These underscores the choice of our analysis which is based on North and South.

The EGAP is defined as the defined here as the difference between Admission Index (ADI) in the South and North. The ADI is the difference between the percentage of candidates that passed the required tertiary entrance examination (JAMB) and the ratio of candidates admitted into the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The EGAP is computed in two stages. First, we calculate the ADI, as shown in Equation 1:

$$ADI_t^i = \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{NPASS_t}{NAPPLY_t} - \frac{NADMIT_t}{NAPPLY_t} \right) \quad (1)$$

Where;

ADI = the Admission Index in region i (i= 1, 2) at time t

NADMIT = is the number of candidates admitted into tertiary institutions

NPASS = the number of candidates who applied and passed the tertiary entrance

NAPPLY = the number of candidates who applied for admission in period t.

The first term on the right hand of equation (1) measures the expected admission if merit was solely considered and the second term measures the actual admission index which is based on both merit, catchment area and quota system. However, due to the non-availability of disaggregated data on the admission criteria, we further simplified equation (1) by normalizing the first term on the right-hand side as follows:

$$ADI_t^i = \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{NADMIT_t}{NAPPLY_t} \right) \quad (2)$$

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<sup>14</sup> Kaduna, Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara.

<sup>15</sup> Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi and Rivers.

The Admission Index ranges from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates no student was admitted in a region and 100 indicates all candidates that applied from a region were admitted.

The second stage entails computing the difference between the admission index in North and South (see Equation 3).

$$EGAP_t = ADI_t^{South} - ADI_t^{North} \quad (3)$$

Where  $EGAP_t$  measures the education gap at time  $t$ . The EGAP which is the difference between the ADIs shows the admission displacement rate.

### a. Research methods

We estimate the EGAP between the North and South in Nigeria with data on the number of students that applied for JAMB examination from each of the 36 states and FCT, and the number of students that were admitted from each state.<sup>17</sup> The Northern region consists of three zones - North Central, North East and North West. The Southern region consists of South East, South South and South West. The choice of the period 2011 to 2018 is based on the availability of data.<sup>18</sup> The data on number of candidates that applied for JAMB and those admitted from 2011 to 2015 was sourced from JAMB, while the data from 2016-2017 was sourced from NBS.

We also employed qualitative data through the administration of interviews to ascertain the perspectives of relevant officials of the universities<sup>19</sup>. Key respondents were asked how admissions are conducted in their universities and the applicability of quota system.<sup>20</sup> Also, questionnaires were administered to ascertain whether the quota system policy has increased access to tertiary education as well as tertiary educational attainment for certain deprived groups.<sup>21</sup> The interview and questionnaires were to key respondents in the University of Ibadan (UI) and Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), the first two first-generation universities in the North and the South respectively. The sampled respondents consist of Registrars, Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs) academics and lecturers with admission experience. A minimum of 10 respondents were sampled in each university.

## 5.0 Admission Process in the ABU and UI

Admission processes in ABU and UI are similar and are based largely on their respective carrying capacities. Admission in ABU is done at the level of the departments in collaboration with the central admission unit of the school. In line with the JAMB admission requirements, they consider

<sup>17</sup>The data was sourced from JAMB website (<https://www.jamb.gov.ng/Statistics.aspx>) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) ([https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries\[search\]=JAMB](https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries[search]=JAMB))

<sup>18</sup>Data on key indicators are only available from 2011 to 2018. The sample period skipped 2016, due to non-availability of data.

<sup>19</sup>This includes Registrars, Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs) academics and lecturers with admission experience.

<sup>20</sup>A sample of the interview guide is presented in Appendix B.

<sup>21</sup>A sample of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

the 45 percent merit, 35 percent catchment<sup>22</sup> and 20 percent for ELDS. When asked about how admission is conducted in ABU, a key respondent explained that, based on the carrying capacity of the university, a department selects 45 percent on merit first, followed by a cut-off for catchment and ELDS (quota system). However, some key informants noted that the quota system is sometimes abused.

Admission process in UI, on the other hand, is done at the central admission unit in conjunction with various departments. A key respondent noted that UI follows the prescribed 45 percent, 35 percent and 20 percent for merit, catchment and ELDS respectively. Also, the respondents noted that all states in Nigeria are catchment areas to the University of Ibadan. This was also confirmed in the recent 2019 JAMB Brochure. The third category is ELDS which is barely filled, given the low student application from most states classified as educationally less developed. Also, our key informants revealed that UI does not have discretionary admission quota for the Office of Vice-chancellor, but follows the prescribed JAMB admission guideline. When asked about how admission is done, our informant noted that they first admit the best 45 percent of candidates irrespective of their state of origin, then they consider catchment areas. Since UI is a catchment area to all states in the federation, it considers highest scores of students in all states to select a cut-off which must be above 200 even for the ELDS and which ensures that at least one candidate is admitted from each state of the federation.

## **6.0 Education GAP (EGAP) between North and South**

Our findings show that the education gap (measured by tertiary admission) has narrowed between the North and South (see Table 1 and Figure 6). The admission index of Southern candidates increased from 4.8 percent in 2011 to 28.7 percent in 2017 but dropped marginally to 17.9 percent. This shows that more Southern candidates have been admitted into tertiary universities in recent time. Similarly, the admission index of Northern candidates increased from 1.7 percent in 2011 to 16.4 percent in 2018. The result shows that admission rate of Northern candidates grew faster than admission rate of Southern candidates. This implies that Northern candidates have displaced Southern candidates in terms of tertiary admissions. The resulting Education gap (EGAP), which represents the tertiary admission displacement rate, was 3.1 percent in 2011 but increased to 6.8-6.9 percent between 2012 and 2015. In subsequent periods, it declined to 4.4 percent in 2017 and 1.5 percent in 2018. The declining education gap between the North and South suggests that the major objective of the quota system has been achieved.

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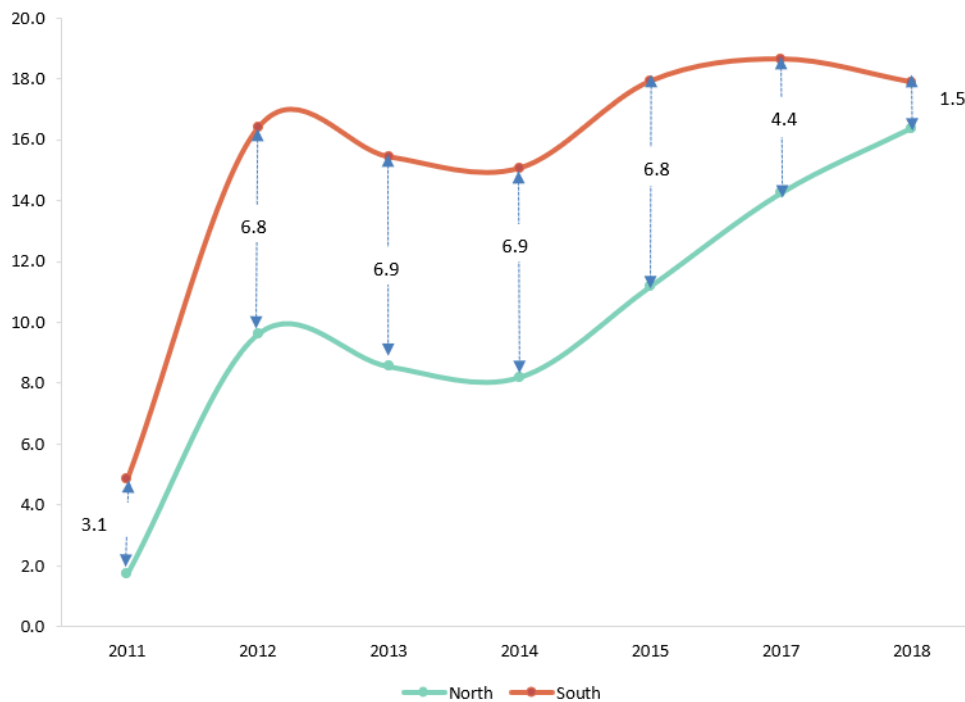
<sup>22</sup> Most states in the North are catchment area to ABU- Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba. Yobe, Zamfara.

Table 1: Education GAP in Nigeria<sup>23</sup>

	% of Southern candidates admitted	% of Northern candidates admitted	Tertiary Education Gap in Nigeria (%)
2011	4.8	1.7	3.1
2012	16.4	9.6	6.8
2013	15.4	8.5	6.9
2014	15.1	8.2	6.9
2015	17.9	11.2	6.8
2017	18.7	14.2	4.4
2018	17.9	16.4	1.5

Source: JAMB, NBS and authors' computation (2019).

Figure 6: Trend in Education GAP in Nigeria

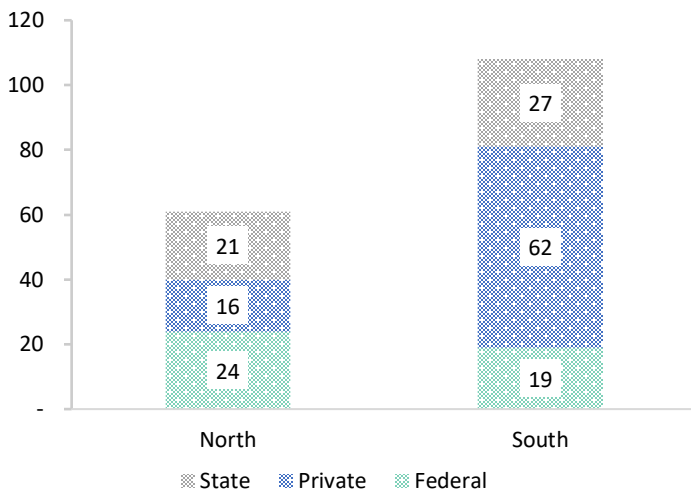


Source: JAMB, NBS and authors' computation (2019).

<sup>23</sup>As against subtracting the Northern ADI from Southern ADI, we also computed the EGAP by subtracting the ADI of ELDs from ADI of non-ELDs. Although not reported in this study, there is no significant difference in the EGAP distribution when both methods were considered.

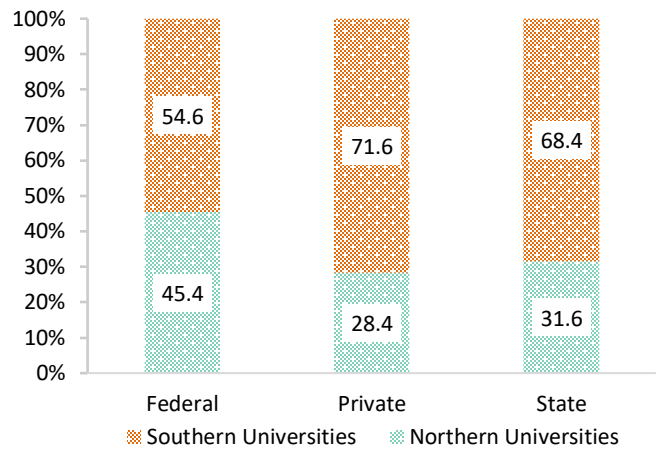
Federal, state and private universities in the South have higher carrying capacity (in terms of admission) than their counterparts in the North. Federal universities in the South admitted 54.6 percent of total students, state universities in the south admitted 68.4 percent, while private universities in the South admitted the highest (71.6 percent) (see Figure 7). This suggests that public universities in the South have higher carrying capacity than public universities in the North. The education quota (ELDS) is applicable to federal universities, while the catchment area is largely applicable to state universities. This places Northern candidates on a higher advantage in terms of admission into federal universities. Also, Northern candidates have an additional advantage in admission into state universities in the North given the catchment area policy. The recently established universities in 2011 mostly in the north swelled the number of federal universities without commensurate carrying capacity.

Figure 7: Number of Universities by Region



Source: NUC Bulletin (June 2017); Authors’ computation (2019).

Figure 8: Number of Students Admitted in Northern and Southern Universities (2017)



Source: NUC Bulletin (June 2017); Authors’ computation (2019). Note: Only 141 universities (excluding National Open University) reported the actual number of students admitted.

Further investigation shows that ABU has a higher carrying capacity than UI. ABU accounted for about 7 percent of total students admitted in 2017, while UI accounted for only 2.5 percent (see Figure 9). In terms of regional share, ABU accounted for 16.3 percent of total students admitted in Northern region, while UI accounted for 4.5 percent of total students admitted in the South (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: Percentage of student admitted (% of total)

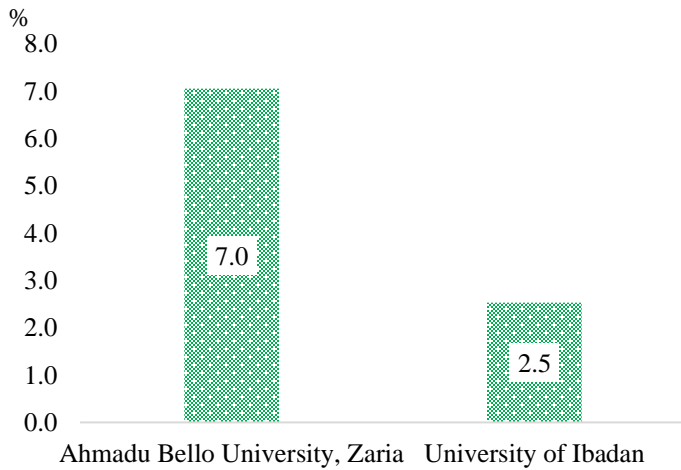
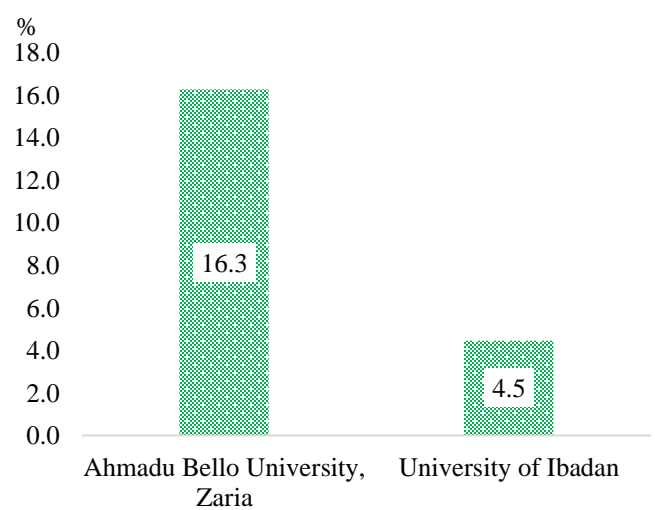


Figure 10: Percentage of student admitted (% of region)



Source: NUC Bulletin (June 2017); authors' computation (2019).

Source: NUC Bulletin (June 2017); authors' computation (2019).

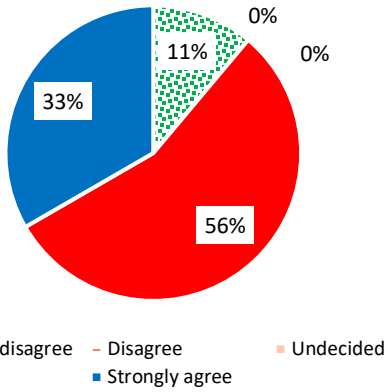
### 7.0 Further Assessment of the Quota System Policy in Tertiary Institutions

Finding shows that quota system increased access to tertiary education for Northern candidates. About 56 percent of the respondents agreed that the quota system increased access to tertiary education for Northern candidates, while 33 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the quota system increased access to tertiary education for Northern candidates (see Figure 11). On the contrary, 11 percent strongly disagree that the quota system has increased access to tertiary education for Northern candidates. None of the respondents disagreed or could not decide.

Also, the quota system has enhanced educational attainment in the North. Most of the respondents are of the view that the quota system policy has enhanced educational attainment in the North. In Figure 12, about 45 percent of respondents agreed that the quota system policy has enhanced educational attainment in the North, while 44 percent strongly agreed. About 11 percent of the respondents disagreed that the quota system policy has enhanced educational attainment in the North. None of the respondents strongly agreed or could not decide.

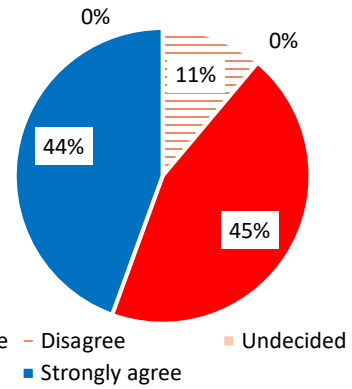


Figure 11: The quota system policy increases access to tertiary education for certain deprived groups (Northern candidates)



Source: Field Interview (2019)

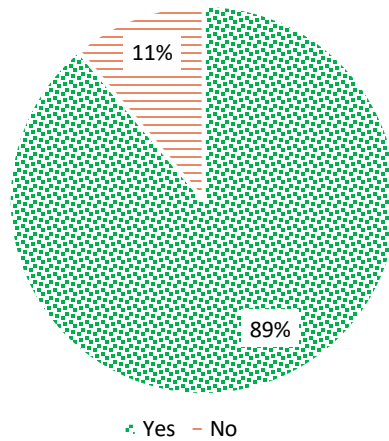
Figure 12: The quota system policy has increased educational attainment among certain deprived group (Northern candidates)



Source: Field Interview (2019)

The quota system policy has increased human capital development in the North. As shown in Figure 13, 89 percent of respondents indicated that the quota system policy has an influence on human capital development, while 11 percent noted that the quota system policy has no influence on human capital development.

Figure 13: Do you think the quota system policy in tertiary institutions affects the human capital in terms of education and skills development?



Source: Field Interview (2019)

According to the respondents, lower admission requirement for Northern candidates is the likely factors responsible for the reduction in the education gap over time. Respondents indicated that

Northern candidates face less stringent admission requirement compared to candidates in the South. For instance, the quota system was designed to ensure increased representation of candidates from the North<sup>24</sup> because the policy gives more admission opportunity to candidates in the North.

Respondents further suggested that tertiary admission process should focus on merit; noting that if the tertiary institutions consider only the merit criterion for admission, the ensuing competition between the North and South will encourage the Northern candidates to perform better and close the education gap.

Respondents also advocated for more enlightenment and advocacy campaigns to increase the level of education, especially in the North. They noted that Northern children should be enrolled in schools from childhood and agencies (government and non-government) should enlighten parents and students (primary and secondary) on the need to be well educated.

Given that the admission process depends on the carrying capacity of each institution, respondents advocated for increased government interventions in tertiary institutions in order to increase their carrying capacity. They also noted that state government should increase spending on basic education and enforce the existing policy on compulsory education up to nine years as a national rather than a Northern issue.

In addition, respondents suggested that more qualified and motivated teachers should be employed in primary and secondary schools. They also noted that adequate training facilities should be provided in primary and secondary schools nation-wide

In general, the respondents advised the government and universities to gradually withdraw the quota system policy in the admission process.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The origin of the educational quota system dates back to the 1950s. At the time the quota policy was conceived, proprietorship of tertiary institutions was largely restricted to the regions and later transferred to the Federal Government. Over time, proprietorship has broadened to include state governments and the private sector. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board is the sole institutional body responsible for issuing guidelines on admissions to tertiary institutions and the enforcer of the multiple criteria for admissions. The current admission process in public schools is tied to three major criteria – Merit, Catchment area and the Educationally Less Developed States (quota system). In recent times, the admission criteria have continued to shift in favour of merit and catchment area, with both criteria currently accounting for 80 percent of all admissions and 20

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<sup>24</sup> Though four states from the South (Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Rivers) were selected among the educationally less developed states

percent reserved for the ELDS that approximates the quota system. Also, the increasing share allocated to merit and catchment (though reasons are not given for the shift) appears to be the exit strategy out of the quota (ELDS) criterion.

Our study shows the apparent closing of gap in admissions between the North and South. Also, the total number of candidates admitted is barely 1/3 of total number of applicants. Given the carrying capacity of the universities system in Nigeria, the quota system that restricts admission on merit is a source of additional frustration and the dampening of the spirit of competition in university entry. The carrying capacity of the universities appears to be the major constraints for all admissions, irrespective of the geographical origins of the candidates. The capacity constraint is further complicated by the 60:40 Science/Arts ratio through which candidates are (to meet the funding ratio) arbitrarily placed in courses for which they did not apply, and consequently frustrating or permanently distorting the life ambitions of graduates.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

- i. As the quota system of admission becomes less relevant, policy should shift in favour of uniform and competitive entry requirements for all candidates, while retaining the Merit and Catchment area criteria, both of which can be accommodated under uniform admission criteria. This is possible when merit criterion is raised to a range, say from 60 percent and above.
- ii. Federal and State Governments should address the challenge of the carrying capacity of universities, which is the sore point for most ASUU strikes. The carrying capacity, defined to include requisite staff, science laboratories, classrooms, library facilities, students' accommodation, other teaching and research facilities, is the main reason for the low admission rate for all candidates.
- iii. In view of the growing fusion between Science and Arts, under the new ICT learning environment, the 60:40 Science to Arts ratio is outdated and should be abolished. This will allow students to read not only the courses of their choice in the universities, but allow for an imaginative combination of the Arts and Sciences that new ICT learning environment promotes.

## **Next steps**

**We recommend that a more detailed study be focused on:**

- a) Disaggregated data on admissions into merit, catchment areas and quota and on gender and disability considerations**
- b) Tracking students' performance based on admissions criteria.**
- c) Assessing the carrying capacity of each university and its sensitivity to the admission criteria, especially in terms of how increased carrying capacity diminishes the need for quota policy as well as the gender distribution of admissions.**

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to collect data about the existing quota system policy in tertiary education. Basically, it collects information on admission process and effectiveness of the existing quota system policy in tertiary institutions. Please be rest assured that the responses from this survey would be treated with strict confidentiality.

#### A. Personal Bio Data

1. Gender (a) Male ( ) (b) Female ( )
2. Name of your institution/university \_\_\_\_\_
3. Department/Rank \_\_\_\_\_
4. Work experience (in years) \_\_\_\_\_
5. State of origin \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you think the quota system policy in tertiary institutions affects the human capital in terms of education and skills development? (a) Yes ( ) (b) No ( )

#### B. Quota System Policy in Tertiary Institutions

7. Which of these policies would you recommend tertiary institutions to adopt in their admission process (a) Merit system ( ) (b) Quota system ( )
8. Has the quota system policy lived-up to its objective of closing the education gap between the North and South? (a) Yes ( ) (b) No ( )
9. On a scale of **0 to 10**, where **0** is no gap and **10** is a wide gap, kindly estimate the education gap between the North and South in terms of admission into tertiary institutions. **My estimate is**  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How effective is the quota system policy in meeting its objective of closing the gap between the North and South? (a) Very ineffective ( ) (b) Ineffective ( ) (c) Effective ( ) (d) Very effective ( )
11. The education gap between the North and South has expanded over time (a) True ( ) (b) False ( )  
**Note: if true, move to question 13. If false, move to question 15.**
12. If true to question (12), what are the likely factors responsible for the widening education gap
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_

13. What are the likely implications of the widening education gap

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_

14. If false to question (12), what are the likely factors responsible for the reduction in education gap

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_

15. What are the likely implications of the reduction in education gap

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_

16. Kindly rate (*tick* ✓) your perception on the existing quota system policy as it applies to tertiary institutions in Nigeria

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The quota system policy increases access to tertiary education for certain deprived groups ( <i>Northern candidates</i> )					
The quota system policy <i>doesn't</i> promote social justice as it favours certain deprived groups ( <i>Northern candidates</i> )					
The quota system policy has increased educational attainment among certain deprived group (Northern candidates)					
The quota system policy <i>doesn't</i> promote merit					
The quota system policy allows internal manipulation of admission by many universities					
The quota system policy contradicts the basics of human development					

17. Kindly list the merits of practicing the quota system policy in tertiary institutions?

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_

18. Kindly list the demerits of practicing the quota system policy in tertiary institutions?

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_

19. Kindly propose strategies, if need be, to more effectively narrow the education gap between the North and South

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Your advice to the government on the existing Quota System Policy (QSP)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. Your advice to universities on the existing Quota System Policy

(QSP) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B**

**Interview Questions (University of Abuja)**

This research instrument is designed to collect data on the existing Quota System Policy (QSP) in tertiary education. Views or answers expressed by the respondent would be treated with strict confidentiality.

1. Kindly describe the admission process in your university

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2. Unlike the Federal Character Policy (FCP) which is documented in the Nigerian Constitution, there seems to be little/or no evidence of the Quota System Policy (QSP) in the Constitution. Do you think the Quota System Policy should be brought into the Constitution?

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3. The Quota System Policy (QSP) was set-up to bridge the education gap between the North and South. Do you think the Quota System Policy (QSP) has lived-up to its objective of closing the education gap between the North and South? \_\_\_\_\_

4. If YES to question (2), what are the likely factors/reasons responsible for the widening education gap

i. \_\_\_\_\_

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ii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iv. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. If YES to question (2), what are the likely implications of the widening education gap

i. \_\_\_\_\_

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ii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iv. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. If NO to question (2), what are the likely factors/reasons responsible for the reduction in education gap

i. \_\_\_\_\_

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ii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iv. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. If NO to question (2), what are the likely implications of the reduction in education gap

i. \_\_\_\_\_

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ii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iii. \_\_\_\_\_

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iv. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. If NO to question (2), kindly list the merits of practicing the quota system policy in tertiary institutions?

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What are the merits of implementing the quota system policy in tertiary institutions?

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Kindly propose strategies, if need be, to more effectively narrow the education gap between the North and South

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Your advice to the government on the existing Quota System Policy (QSP)

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Your advice to universities on the existing Quota System

Policy \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please we would like to share the findings of this study with you. Kindly share your contact (email) \_\_\_\_\_