

**Call for action at a one day National Conference on exploring the effectiveness of quota system policies in higher education in Nigeria, held Thursday, August 8, 2019 at the Nicon Luxury Hotel, Abuja, organised by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD) with support from the Ford Foundation**

**Preamble**

Quota system is universal and used in several countries around the world including India, South Africa, Kenya, USA and Uganda. In many of the countries, the system is transitional. However in Nigeria, the quota system has no exit date or strategy. Despite this, the quota system policy in Nigeria has achieved some good outcomes in regional distribution of educational opportunities and guaranteed diversity in Nigerian public university campuses helping to foster cohesion and national unity.

Participants however observed that the policy has not succeeded for some reasons;

- One of the reasons the quota system has not succeeded as expected is the inability of the primary and secondary schools to produce the right quality of students to feed into the higher education system. Data presented showed that in many of the educationally disadvantaged states, there were less than 20% of students sitting for WAEC exams passing with a minimum of five credits thereby making majority of students ineligible to gain university admission.
- The carrying capacity of Universities in Nigeria is one of the major hindrances to higher educational attainment. Despite the rapid increase in the number of universities in Nigeria over time, the number of students seeking admission grew at a faster pace than the spaces available in Nigerian universities. This has created intense pressure on the system with increased yearly pool of qualified candidates who are unable to gain admission into universities because the spaces just simply do not exist.
- Data presented at the conference showed that decisions to apply to a university are largely driven by economic resources, proximity to home, availability of course of study, and ease of admission rather than knowledge of catchment areas or quota system
- The current quota system is not inclusive enough as it only distinguishes between educationally disadvantaged and advantaged states without taking into consideration other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities amongst others

**Recommendations**

At the end of the conference, participants agreed to the following recommendations:

- Participants agreed that the current quota system as it is currently constituted has not delivered the expected outcomes, therefore, there is a need to revisit and review the policy and its implementation in terms of geographical coverage and target demographic groups.

- In view of advances in technology and innovation which has significantly shifted the disciplines that drive development, the policy of 60:40 ratio for science and arts courses in terms of admission should be reviewed to reflect current trends.
- Governments at all levels, federal, state and local governments, should invest in the development and delivery of high quality primary and secondary education, through enforcement of the universal basic education program, as a means to create a stronger feeder system to connect young people to higher education and bring to effect the intended gains of the quota system.
- Uniform and competitive entry criteria should be enforced for all candidates to replace the quota system applied to the educationally less developed states, in addition to supporting catchment area criteria, both of which can be accommodated under a uniform admission system.
- Government should make necessary investments to improve the quality of teachers, by insisting and ensuring regular capacity building for teachers.
- The conference recommends that Government at Federal and State levels look into strategies and opportunities to increase the carrying capacity of existing institutions as against establishing new ones.

## CONCLUSION

The conference concluded that the current educational realities in Nigeria showed that the quota system in education has not delivered as expected. The need to urgently review it to accommodate all the recommendations outlined above is key. The National Assembly therefore need to immediately commence the process of organising public hearing on the quota system policy with a view to harvesting stakeholders' opinion and research findings to inform the review. State Governments need to be part of the process by developing a robust package of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of primary and secondary education, including investment in recruitment, training and retraining of teachers, development and provision of adequate teaching aids, removal of hidden fees to ensure those who cannot afford have access to school, books and laboratory equipment and prioritize prompt payment of teachers salary.

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**Call to Action: The National Conference On Exploring The Effectiveness Of Quota System Policies In Higher Education In Nigeria**

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