

Public Policy and National Development in Nigeria: A Focus on Admission Policies in Tertiary Education

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ABSTRACT

We have in this study examined the issue of public policy and national development in Nigeria with a specific focus on admission policies in tertiary education. The study is actually framed on the assumption that the linkages between public policies and national development in the case study country are weak. We further hypothesized that the relationship between tertiary education policies and national development in the country is in a net-negative position. The typology of the work is qualitative. The theoretical framework is the public choice theory, while the methodology of the contribution is logical argumentation. Secondary sources of data were principally utilized in our analysis. The study indeed found that generally in public administration in the country (and in the specific context of educational policies-articulation, formulation and implementation), rigid rules and arbitrary orders have continued to be propagated as public policies. The study further found that in national developmental trajectories the admission policies in tertiary education in the country have not led the Nigerian state to glaringly plausible destinations. The implication of the attendant scenarios therefore are continuing uncertainties in developmental strides in the country.

KEYWORDS: Public Policy, National Development, Admission Policy, Tertiary Education

INTRODUCTION

Public policy and national development are related in both conceptual and empirical paradigms. Hence, effective public policies can truly catalyze national development. Invariably, ineffective public policies would accentuate the issues that translate to national underdevelopment. Education (specifically tertiary education) of the relevant type is also an indisputable key factor in successful national developmental computations. Hence, within the context of a nation state, especially under a multi-tribal federal

structure such as in the Nigerian federalism, admission policies into tertiary educational institutions become matters of critical national importance. Such policies become so important because of their bearing with national developmental expectations.

The general objective of this paper therefore is to study public policy and national development in Nigeria with a focus on admission policies in tertiary education in the country. In more specific trajectories, the study also focuses on recent trends in cut-off marks for admissions into these institutions and the implications of such admission cut-off scores for national development in the country. A critical research question of the study thus borders on how admission policies in tertiary education in Nigeria have impacted national development and the influence of self-interest and parochial considerations on these guidelines of government action.

The design of the study is qualitative. The theoretical framework is the public choice theory, while the methodology of the contribution is logical argumentation. We highlight that in public choice theory, people are principally motivated by self-interest. The origin of public choice theory is locatable in the field of economics and attributable to James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock. But public choice has since also become a framework of analysis in some other fields, inclusive of political science and public administration, particularly in the specific subject matter of public policy analysis (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971; Hill, 1999; Buchanan, 2003; Mueller, 2004). And in the context of this study, the self-interest thesis of this theory is operationalized to extend to certain other parochial and contentious interests. Furthermore, secondary sources of data were generally utilized in our analyses.

This work is indeed considered highly significant. The results of the study would be of immense value to policy planners in the Nigerian case study-country in general and the policy makers and executors in the tertiary education-setting in particular. As part of the study's empirical relevance therefore its findings would assist the country's Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in gauging the mood of the Nigerian nation over its extant policy postures. Results and findings of the study would also be of enormous benefits to tertiary education regulatory bodies in other plural states, where policy making is currently characterized by sectional and self-centered considerations.

Then according to Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013, p. 25), Tertiary Education is the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centers such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the national Teacher' Institutes (NTI). No wonder then Nwuzor & Ocho (1985, p.147) aptly acknowledged that the use of the term, "tertiary" in reference to higher education was becoming very complex, as the concept began to generically cover all types of third level institutions. In the face of these complexities therefore, we underscore the fact that our focus in this study is essentially on Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education and

how public policies attendant to the operations of these institutions impact national development in the Nigerian nation.

WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

A policy is a definite course or method of action, selected from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions, to guide and usually determine present and future decisions. Policies are usually denotable, as private or public. When it is public policy, it refers to what public administrators implement (Presthus, 1975, p. 14; Henry, 2004; Okeke, 2015, p.145). A public policy is accordingly whatever governments choose to do or not to do (Dye, 1978, p.5). But we must point out that this conception of public policy imbues the concept with certain measures of possible arbitrariness. The key characteristic of public policy however, is that it has to do with the government (Ikelegbe, 1994, p.4). It has to do with actions taken or to be taken by public authorities. Definitions of public policy as decisions and intentions of governments may therefore be right in relating public policy to the deliberate decisions or actions of government but were also weak and narrow because they could not be used as proper basis for policy analysis. Such conceptualizations indeed encourage the notion that governments may do or refrain from doing whatever the decision-makers like, in exclusion of citizens' participation in decision-making processes (Egonwam, 1991, pp.1-2).

Public policy can also be seen as the strategic use of resources to alleviate national problems of governmental concern (Chandler and Plano (1988, p.107). Abdulsalami (1998:1) equally argues that public policies refer to hard patterns of resource allocation represented by projects and programmes designed to respond to perceived public problems or challenges requiring governmental action for their solution. And public policies may also refer to the template of methods that guide the actions of public administrators in given situations (Okeke, 2015, p.145). According to Clark (1982, p.116) public policies are series of steps taken by a government to solve problems, make decisions, allocate resources or values, implement programmes and in general to do the things expected of them by their constituents.

Okeke (2001, p.3) thus surmises that the whole gamut of definitions of public policy revolves around government-governmental actions, governmental decisions, governmentally proposed actions, etc. Egonwam in Okeke (2001, p.4) consequently regards the definition by Jenkins (1978) as all-encompassing. According to Jenkins, (public) policy is a set of interrelated decisions by a political actor or a group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve. But public policies above all should seek to consolidate or further the public interest (Okeke, 2001, p.3). They must be seen to reflect the best interests of the people as against the self-evident narrow choices of the policy formulators.

Nnadozie (2016, p. 8) has thus aptly posited that public policies as the name implies are meant to protect and advance the interest and general welfare of members of the public. Ekpo (2014, p.5) in Nnadozie (2016, p. 18) consequently avers that a public policy in very simple language can be described as a purposive course of action followed

by the government or public institutions in an attempt to achieve a particular goal of the state or the other. In the viewpoint of Maduegbuna (2005, p.6) a public policy may be regarded as a decision by government, organization or organized state dealing with humanity.

Then Dimock in Maduegbuna (2005, p.7) deposes that public policies are the consciously acknowledged rules of conduct that guide administrative decisions. A decision by the highest organ of government handed down to lower authorities for implementation can also be called public policy. Government may formulate policies for the welfare of the people or for other purposes. But irrespective of the purpose of the policy-formulation, the people-factor is critical to the essence of public policy. It must not be for welfare purposes. It must however be imbued with the wishes of the people. In fact the word “public” concerns people in general (Maduegbuna, 2005, pp.7-10). Public policies therefore are expected to reflect the viewpoints and worldviews of many of the people (as identified and articulated by those who lead or represent them).

CONTEXTUALIZING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) in Idike (2014, p.163) avers that development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. However, Gboyega (2003), subsequently cited in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) opines that development implies improvement in the material wellbeing of all citizens, not the most powerful and the rich alone, in a sustainable way, such that today’s consumption does not imperil the future; it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal / physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances (Idike, 2014, p.163). Development thus involves growth and progressive change (Ozigi & Canham, 1979, p.188). Development (of a nation / a developed nation) is depicted in Okeke (2015, p.145) as where there is only a minimal or negligible level of poverty, misery and insecurity among the citizenry. Noyoo (2000) in Okeke (2015, p.145) therefore further opines that ideally, development should be a process that raises the material and living conditions of people

National Development therefore refers to nationwide development in a nation-state. It implies the well being of a covert majority of the citizens in material terms. It implies decreases in inequality levels. Above all, national development implies the guarantee of security of lives and property in the nation-state. It is not denoted in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) paradigms that leave the average citizen bewildered and even neglected (Idike, 2014, p.163). The occurrence of national development should not be disputable. It therefore entails a process that is indisputably in evolution. Once disputes begin to arise about the progress in this positive movement it is symptomatic of underdevelopment. Invariably, national development is engendered by effective public policies.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Formal education (the Western European model) in Nigeria dates back to 1842 when the Wesleyan Methodist Society opened up a Christian mission station at Badagry, near Lagos (Ejiogu, 2001, p.1). Politically, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was united

(amalgamated) with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1914. It was the year Nigeria came under one political leadership as we know it today. In the field of education however, the two territories maintained distinct departments of education. Then on 17 July 1929, Mr. E.R.J. Hussey was appointed the first Director of Education for the whole of Nigeria, thus succeeding the erstwhile Directors in the North and South respectively (Ejiogu, 2001, p.25). The first higher institution (tertiary educational institution), the Yaba Higher College, was established in 1932 (Ejiogu, 2001, p.27). Deriving from the foregoing therefore, this study is conceptually interested in how the Nigerian educational landscape has fared from 1842, through 1929, 1932 to the contemporary times.

And the truth is that in historical terms, the nation's educational policies have not taken the country to any particularly desirable destination in national developmental terms. For instance, in 2017 over 1.6 million candidates applied for admission into tertiary educational institutions in the country but the carrying capacity for all the institutions is about 500,000 (Ejigbo, 2017). What happens to the 1.1 million others? Then the National Policy on Education (2013, p. 25) says that the goals of tertiary education in the country shall among other objectives be to contribute to national development through high level manpower training. And today in the Nigerian nation it may be plausible to posit that the level of manpower training has indeed become immensely high. The critical question however borders on the impact of the ostensible high-level manpower on national development. There seems to have remained a national deficiency in the area of availing students in the country the knowledge and skills for self-reliance, particularly at the tertiary education level.

Despite the apparent availability of high-level manpower in the national system therefore, it is still glaring that generic skill shortages have persisted in the economy. National unity which is a desideratum for national development has accordingly continued to be increasingly deficient in the country, as a result of sectional and self-centered policy inclinations and implementation. Thus, from the point of admission to the period of graduation, tertiary education in the Nigerian nation continues to produce worrisome tendencies.

ADMISSION POLICIES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD NEXUS

The statutory body that overarchingly regulates admission policies in tertiary education in Nigeria is the Joint admissions and matriculation Board (JAMB). The body came into being via decree No.2 of 1978 and later amended by Decree No. 33 of 1989 (under military dispensations in Nigeria when the Armed Forces of the country were in government and ruled by decrees). From the Decrees establishing the Board, the functions of JAMB remain basically those of:

- Conducting entrance examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria;
- Placement of suitably qualified candidates in the tertiary institutions after having taken into account:-
- The vacancies available in each tertiary institution;

- The guidelines approved for each tertiary institution by its proprietor or other competent authority;
- The preference expressed or otherwise indicated by candidates for certain tertiary institutions and courses; and
- Such other matters as the Board may be directed by the Minister of Education to consider, or the Board itself may consider appropriate in the circumstances;
- Collection and dissemination of information on all matters relating to admissions into tertiary institutions or to any other matter relevant to the discharge of the functions of the Board, and
- Carrying out of such other activities as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it (Salim, 2003, p.5-6).

Salim (2003) has indeed given a graphic account of the history of JAMB (even the body's pre-history), the politics of the examination body, its peculiarities and challenges and by implication the consequences of all of this for national development in Nigeria. Salim has accordingly demonstrated that:

- JAMB was founded to address the issues of multiple application, multiple examination and multiple admissions into the universities that existed in the country, prior to its founding. It stands to reason that these multiplicities were inchoate and unreasonable and implied monumental financial outlays for the institutions, great financial burden on parents and national waste in its entirety.
- The founding of JAMB was a brainchild of the Committee of Vice Chancellors of the then Nigerian Universities but the idea was subsequently hijacked from them by the Federal Military government in Nigeria, putatively for nation-building purposes.

According to Salim (2003, p.11) therefore it can be said that the then Federal Military Government did not necessarily have similar objectives as the universities that initiated what eventually saw the emergence of the Board. While the universities wanted an agency that would conduct the entrance examination, the then Federal Military Government wanted an agency that would help it solve existing geo-political problems: those of assuring access to university education; assuring semblance of geo-political representation in the universities and using same to achieve the much needed national unity (Salim, 2003, p.11). These portended nothing short of an understandable resistance to the Board by the universities as it in many respects went against their original intention and most importantly violated their powers under their laws to admit their own students – a right they had sought to protect from the very beginning. To the universities therefore, the Board was government's tool for reduction of the universities autonomy and bringing in the quota system of admissions through the back door (Salim, 2003, p.11).

The quota system essentially entailed differential/discriminatory cut-off points for deciding on whom to admit or not to admit into the universities. The nomenclature of the JAMB examination has since inception undergone different metamorphoses, namely: JAMB University Matriculation Examination (JAMB UME), Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (JAMB UTME) and currently JAMB UTME_CBT (the CBT

alias standing for Computer-based Tes). Then JAMB MPCME (for Monotechnic, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education Matriculation Examination) follows by the sidelines. Citing Edukugho (2012) and Exametry (2013), Ikoghode (2015, p. 102) further highlights that prior to the modification of JAMB-UME to JAMB UTME and to JAMB UTME_CBT, the examination body was conducting separate entrance examinations for the various tertiary education segments in Nigeria.

The university matriculation examination alone was then termed JAMB-UME. The admission tests for Polytechnic, Monotechnic and Colleges of Education was also known as Monotechnic, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education Matriculation Examination (MPCME), introduced by JAMB in 1989. JAMB introduced what was only known as UTME in 2009 but the examination was first conducted in 2010. UTME was introduced to replace UME and MPCME and to serve as the common entrance examination into all tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria, to cater for all the institutions with a single examination. The UTME_CBT was subsequently introduced in 2015 (Ikoghode, 2015, pp. 102-106).

The fact of the foregoing expositions is that in current times, admission policies into tertiary educational institutions in the country have presented an amalgam of largely unwieldy issues that truly border on endless experimentations. In the case of the universities, there is the additional narrative of post-UME, post-UTME or post-UTME_CBT. So, how did the nation come about these “post-scenarios”? Citing Amatareotubo (2006) and Isaac (2010), Ikoghode (2015, p.102) further explains that prior to the introduction of the then Post-UME by Nigerian universities, JAMB was solely and constitutionally given the responsibility of conducting examination and admitting students into Nigerian educational institutions, among other functions as it was established by law in 1978, amended in 1989 and 1993 respectively. This was unlike the Post-UME that emerged from policy decision of the federal government of Nigerian without legal backing as the policy of Post-UME screening by universities was only approved by the then Minister of Education.

Isaac (2010) in Ikoghode (2015, p.102) further enumerated the reasons behind the decision for the then Post-UME screening to include amongst others: the outcry in most Nigerian tertiary educational institutions over abysmal performance of students presented solely by JAMB for admission; complaints by institutions that most of the students recommended by JAMB were not university materials and that many of them cannot even write their names when tested in year one; that impersonation had crept into the then JAMB UME, etc. As such, the universities clamoured for supplementary examination for the students before admission. This gave rise to post-UME, which metamorphosed to post-UTME and currently goes by the sobriquet of post-UTME_CBT. And so, according to Ikoghode (2015, p.107) from 1978 UME to 2012 UTME, JAMB examinations had always come in the Paper-and- Pencil Testing (PPT) format but in 2013 and 2014 UTME, JAMB introduced Dual-Based Testing (DBT) i.e CBT alongside the usual PPT. (In the tradition of a long narrative of unwieldy policy nomenclatures, sobriquets and acronyms). And finally in 2015, the Nigerian national examination body

(JAMB) retained only the CBT mode of tests which is an electronic form of UTME that adopts the use of computer to display and answer test-items and give immediate results.

FURTHER NARRATIVES ON ADMISSION POLICIES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

And so in all of these the nation of Nigeria (to say the least) has only been moving forward in a proverbial examination circle. It is immensely doubtful that all the putative policies and nomenclatures above are adding value to the educational system in the country. And indeed, the complex webs of issues that have led to such immobility have amply been touched upon by Salim (2003) and Ikoghode (2015). Then to call a spade by its proper name (in place of calling it a work-implement) the germane issues truly border on policy inconsistencies and policy failures borne out of a complicated national question. Hence, in the original design which has continued to undergo modifications, the JAMB admission guidelines stipulated that 40 percent of the candidates should be selected on merit, 30 percent on locality (which in most cases is the geographical or socio-cultural area contiguous to the institution); 20 percent is reserved for candidates from the educationally disadvantaged states; and 10 percent is left to the discretion of each institution (Salim, 2003, p.8).

Of this 10%, the universities were enjoined to reserve 2.5% for applicants from foreign countries, especially distressed African countries. The Guidelines were subsequently adjusted, with the 10% discretion criterion abrogated and shared between merit which became 45% and locality which was made 35%. The criteria and the percentages now read: merit, 45%, locality, 35%, educationally disadvantaged states, 20% (Salim, 2003, p.8). This is the complete scenario of the quota system of admission into the university system in Nigeria (expected to be reflected in the admission policies of the other federally owned tertiary educational institutions in the country). The critical question thus remains: were these policies glaringly in the public interest or were they motivated by sectionalism?

The quota system of course has its complement in the constitutionally entrenched policy whereby everything done in the name of Nigeria must reflect federal character which simply means that the various states and regions of the federation must be as adequately represented as the available spaces permit. But is the federal character principle actually in tandem with the critical requisites of national development or does it merely satisfy some normative requirements of nation-building? The concern for an equitable share of posts and resources among its components is as old as the founding fathers' dream of transforming the Federal State of Nigeria into a nation. The Federal Character Principle and Formulae, fostered by the idea of quota system was devised as a response to this concern (Chukwumerije, 2008, p. 6). Subsequently the federal character principle became legitimated by the various Nigerian constitutions from 1979 to 1999. Citing Dada (2004), Odigwe & Swem (2016, 327) thus contend the quota admission system portrays that a candidate from the Southern state with university matriculation examination scores of 300 out of 400 may not get admission into the university but

his/her counterpart from the Northern part of the country with a lower score may be admitted.

Odigwe & Swem (2016, 327) thus further argues that similarly, a candidate with 280 score out of 400 from educationally advanced states may not get admission but his/her counterpart from educationally disadvantaged state with lower score may be admitted. Thus, quota system has created inequality in the provision of university education as merit and equity have been sacrificed on the altar of quota system of admission. Some candidates with better scores are thus denied admission on grounds of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy. But a candidate for admission should not be made to suffer greater burden than the other simply because of his place of birth and locality (Odigwe & Swem, 2016, 327).

THE EXTANT CUT-OFF MARK CONUNDRUM

Ikoghode (2015, p.103) posits that the then Post-UME policy of 2005 actually made it mandatory for all tertiary educational institutions to independently screen successful candidates in JAMB examination before giving admission. Initially, the procedures of the screening was that after candidates with a score of 200 and above were shortlisted by JAMB, their names and scores would be sent to their universities of choice which would further screen them using aptitude tests, oral interviews, etc. But over time the cut-off mark of JAMB examination scores have not been fixed on 200. In some years it was pegged on 180 and above and some other years 200 and above depending on the average performance of candidates in that year (Ikoghode, 2015, p.103).

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in August 2017 fixed the cut-off marks for admission into higher institutions of learning in the country for the 2017/2018 academic session. At a policy meeting held with the heads of institutions and other education regulatory bodies, the examination body ratified 120 as the minimum mark for degree-awarding institutions. For the polytechnics, the lowest mark that would qualify a candidate for admission became 100, while the highest that an institution can fix is 180. Same mark applies to Colleges of Education. The admission cut-off mark for Innovative Enterprise Institutions ranges between 110 and 120 (Iroegbu, 2017). JAMB Registrar, Prof. Isiaq Oloyede, said the newly agreed marks would over-ride the previous marks submitted by the institutions. Oloyede pronounced that the Board would not allow any institution to go below the ratified marks in their admission process. He further opined that the reduction in the 2017/2018 admission cut-off marks did not portend any danger for education standard and would not translate to a fall in education standards in the country (Iroegbu, 2017).

But the new cut-off point regime received lots of criticisms from parents, civic right groups, and students (Adedigba, 2017a). And subsequently, all tertiary institutions in Nigeria complied with the JAMB cut-off marks. As directed by the examination body, none of the universities decided on cut-off marks below 120, while none of the polytechnics and colleges of education had cut-off marks below 100. The cut-off marks, decided by the Senate and Management of each institution, were communicated to the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, JAMB (Adedigba, 2017b). Many stakeholders

in tertiary education in the country saw the new policy as anti-developmental. Polytechnic teachers in the country under the umbrella body of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) distanced themselves from any purported meeting where the new cut of marks was arrived at. JAMB had earlier claimed that the new cut-off marks were decided on after a meeting with Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts of universities, polytechnics, monotronics and colleges of education in the country. ASUP said the policy would adversely affect the standard of education in the country (Ejigbo, 2017).

ASUP opined that there is nowhere in the world where 25 per cent which would give the 100 marks for polytechnics cut-off score (based on four subjects taken in the examination) would be considered pass mark. The union posited that the new policy is not good for the development of education and even the candidate. The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) which unifies tertiary education students in the country, on its part threatened to call for the scrapping of JAMB if it failed to reverse the low cut-off marks (Ejigbo, 2017).

THE CURRENT CUT-OFF MARKS FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS' ADMISSION IN NIGERIA: SOME LINKAGES AND PROGNOSIS

We opine that from the preceding expositions what Madukwe (2008) appropriately calls practice without policy is indeed pervasive in the public sector in Nigeria. And in its more worrisome trajectories the same phenomenon is describable as living with ostensible policies. With specific reference to the university setting, Odigwe & Swem (2016, 327) posit that concern has been raised about the decline in the quality of education universities offer in Nigeria as this is evident from the quality of graduates produced in recent years by the institutions. Prior to this period, they argue, graduates were substantially produced by government-owned universities until recently when a number of private universities were licensed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which is the umbrella under which Nigerian universities operate. According to Odigwe & Swem (2016, 327) the quality of education offered by Nigerian universities are not in line with the expectations and the problem may be from the area of the initial admission process involving the quota system.

An aspect of the worrisome dimensions of the extant cut of mark of 100-120 points is its implications for STEM education. The term "STEM education" refers to teaching and learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and typically includes educational activities across all grade levels, from pre-school to post-doctorate, in both formal (e.g., classrooms) and informal (e.g., afterschool programs) settings. STEM education has been called a meta-discipline, the creation of a discipline based on the integration of other disciplinary knowledge into a new 'whole' (Gonzalez & Kuenzi, 2012, p.1; Morrison, 2006; Tsupros, Kohler & Hallinen, 2009); Lantz Jr, 2009, p.1). Is it then the products of the 100-120 cut of marks that would develop the STEM literacy and with it the ability of the Nigerian nation to compete in an imminent new (global) economy?

Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria are expressly expected to pursue the lofty goals of the national policy on education in the country through quality student

intake (National Policy on Education, 2013, p. 25). But it is immensely doubtful that such objectives would be achieved when cut-off marks for admission are reduced to twenty five percent per subject which the 100 cut of mark for some of the institutions imply. According to Nnadozie (2016, p.1), public policies are instruments of the state through which the government addresses the problems and the needs of the people in any country and in the course of doing this, the country moves forward; that is to say, the society develops. A policy is therefore not a whimsical exercise, rather it is a process that is thought through and reasoned out before it is pronounced or adopted (Nnadozie, 2016, p.1).

Parsons (1999) in Nnadozie (2016, p.19) also argues that a policy is an attempt to define and structure a rational basis for action or inaction. We want to continue to believe in this paper that the extant cut-off mark policies in the country are thought through and reasoned out before they are pronounced or adopted. We want to continue to think that such policies are borne out of rational basis of action. Then according to Okoli (2003, p.1) administration of national development is carried out primarily through public organizations. The efficiency and effectiveness with which this is achieved he suggests depends critically on the efficient performance of these organizations and this can only safely be measured through their decision-making processes.

We argue that the decision-making processes of public organizations are intricately interwoven with policy outputs. Are such decision-making processes positively flexible or are they merely flexible to reflect the whims and caprices of new government officials so that the new officers would be seen to be different from their predecessors in office? According to Maduegbuna (2005, p.7) in order to achieve its aims public policy should be flexible but this is only to accommodate emerging situations as a policy which is effective today may turn out to be bad or unsuitable tomorrow. Public policies are accordingly not cast on stone and are actually to be differentiated from rigid rules and arbitrary orders which can never be accepted as public policies. Maduegbuna (2005, p.8) thus further argues that people's views are one of the ingredients that make up good policies as the essence of policies is to achieve the welfare of the people (for whom the policies are made).

Devoid of such positive impacts therefore, such tendencies will only end up as arbitrary orders or authoritarian impositions but not public policies and they hardly lead to national development. Ozigi & Canham (1979, p.189) had in this regard argued that there is obviously a close relationship between development and education because the key to all development is good education. However, education in itself does not necessarily lead to development, as a society may have a large percentage of educated people and yet experience little progress in its development. Hence, a lot depends on other factors such as the quality and type of education its citizens are receiving and the nature of its political and economic circumstances (Ozigi & Canham, 1979, p.189).

The cumulative efforts and thoughts which eventually became known as the National Policy on Education were enacted for Nigeria in 1977 (Ejiogu, 2001, p.139). The original version of the resultant public policy document has accordingly since undergone several critical modifications. However, forty years down the line, the reality

of national existence in the Nigerian state is still characterized by gargantuan underdevelopment crises bordering on economic insecurity, inter-ethnic belligerence and animosities, unrelenting exchange of hate-speeches among the peoples of the country and indeed sundry instances of elite insensitivities.

The level of unemployment in the country is becoming unbearable, roads are increasingly dilapidating and electricity generation is incomprehensibly insignificant for national developmental purposes. Hence, a summation of the foregoing negative features is a pointer to the egregious nature of the weak linkages between public policy and national development in our case study country. Above all, subject negative narratives are fully indicative of a net adverse position between generic educational policies (tertiary education strategies in particular) and national development in the country.

CONCLUSION

National development we conclude is a function of effective public policies which is interwoven with functional tertiary education. In other words, without purposeful and effective tertiary education policies, beginning with the admission policy trajectories, generic public policies would become jaundiced and national development certainly impaired. The central issue in all of this thus becomes the deepness of public policies (for tertiary education). When it is negatively-headed, induced by sectionalism and self-centeredness, national development remains stillborn. Hence, in the articulation and formulation of national educational policies for the country rigid rules and arbitrary orders should not be positioned as public policies. It is therefore recommended in this study that the JAMB cut-off mark for admission into the applicable tertiary educational institutions in the country be permanently fixed at 160 marks (for all the educational institutions).

The need to reduce pressure on the carrying capacities of the institutions cannot also be over emphasized. A commensurate cut-off mark-regime will be critical to the engendering of such pressure-reduction. It is further recommended in this study that an aggressive national policy which would include study-incentives and post-graduation compensation be mounted in the country, aimed at encouraging Nigerian citizens to adopt the Open University option in the acquisition of tertiary education. The Open University system whereby the individuals study and work is invariably a formidable mechanism of generic contributions by a country's citizens towards self-evident national development.

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