



## Educational Services Deregulation, Admission Criteria and Quality of Products in Nigerian Universities

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**Abstract.** The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of deregulation of educational services, admission criteria and quality of products in both public and private universities. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Data were elicited based on the following variables as they relate to ensuring admission criteria and quality of products. The theoretical framework of the study is based on public interest theory of deregulation, the design of the study is ex-post facto while the population of the study is all academic administrators in both public and private universities in the study area, and the sample size is 714. Questionnaire titled: “Deregulation of provision of Provision of Educational Services and Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities” is the main instrument used for generating data. The instrument was subjected to scrutiny by three experts. T-test statistic was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results show that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of academic administrators in public and private universities in deregulation of educational services on admission criteria as well as quality of products in Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Deregulation, Educational services, Admission criteria, Quality of products, Nigerian universities.

### 1. Introduction

Recent events in the twenty first (21<sup>st</sup>) century points to the fact that education is a necessary condition precedence for the development of the society. Thus, this makes the postulation of the pragmatist philosophers a reality. For the pragmatist philosophers, education is a necessity of life. Their stand is borne out of the fact that the development of

any nation is predicated upon the knowledge base of the citizens. This goes to tally with what Francis Bacon in his work titled “Meditation’ as cited by Ogar and Asira(2012) said ”*ipsa Scientia potestas est*”. these phrases were derived from the latin aphorism “*scientia potestas est*” meaning “knowledge is power”.

Knowledge is power here implies that any man who has acquired any level of education has control on his life and environment using the strength of the knowledge so acquired. The ability to acquire knowledge, preserve and pass it on to the future generation makes man powerful. It enables him to control the forces of nature and use them for his benefit or advantage. By so doing, man will be able to transform his environment.

Okafor (2004:230) elucidly buttering this point eloquently wrote:

*Never in any other period of man’s history has it become as evident as it is today that the wealth and power of a nation depend on the successful education of its citizens, and in the number of highly talented men and women within the national compass a nation succeeds in providing with superior and divergent education.... Education is the wheel-base around which all the other factors revolve. It serves as a catalyst to individual self-actualization, national development, and international relations.*

Education, therefore, as a process for the acquisition of knowledge, is the most important weapon which can be used to change the world. With all these importance, should it be deregulated? Is quality assurance necessary in any educational system? Can admission process be used as a yardstick to ensuring quality in the educational system? And finally, how can the products of an educational system be used in

ensuring quality in the educational system? These and many other unanswered questions, gave impetus to the to the choice of this work.

## 1.2 Conceptual Framework

Education by categorization can be either traditional, Islamic and Western. Traditional education is akin to a particular or community, or has to do with the culture, mores values and beliefs of such a society. In a nutshell, it revolves around the transmission of the culture of such a society from one generation to another. "Traditional Education is also a process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it and to pass on to them its culture" (Okafor, 2004:352). Islamic education emanated out of Islam as a religious sect, therefore Islamic education is the inculcation of Muslim culture- this culture of theocentrism, having the teachings of Mohammad as substratum. Here schools are established and or in connection to Mosque.

Western education on the other hand is akin to the western world. It is an educational system that originated from the West after Islamic education. Its main approach was the modernization of social life through science and technological advancement. In order to achieve its aim, it is segmented into various levels or segments starting with the lower level known as primary or elementary, followed by secondary and then higher or tertiary levels.

Tertiary education is the educational level after the secondary. It comprises the Polytechnics, Colleges of Education/Agriculture and the University. The University is set apart from any of the aforementioned because of its peculiarities.

Western education was imported into Nigeria. At the early stage of its importation, the management or control was left in the hands of those who initially brought it (the missionaries). Colonial government or administration did not show enough commitment. But later, due to the public outcry and the huge financial involvement but lean financial resources of the missionaries, government began to show interest. As time went on too, government shifted its responsibilities of funding education back to the missionaries and other public spirited individuals who showed interest in the provision of educational services. This gave birth to the concept or idea of deregulation.

Deregulation technically put, and as it is applicable to this study means withdrawal from solely been the provider of education (Danhassan & Abducnrine,

2005). By Implication, government of Nigeria threw open the doors of the provision of Western Education by allowing interested individuals or corporate bodies to participate. This view tallies with Ejide (2005:16) who avers that deregulation of education means "decentralizing the control of educational system, free the schools from rules, mandates and government' monopoly and allowing the control of the educational system to revolve on Local authorities nearer to the students". Furthermore, according to Ekpo & Atuna (2005:63) "Deregulation as a new applicable concept in education means government divesting its interest in its and encouraging private sector participation in the management of the pre-determined objectives and goals of education".

As stated above, one of the pre-determined objectives and goals of education is to ensure quality in the system so that its products can compete favourably in the labour market (Archibong, 2013). This brings to mind, the concept of Quality Assurance. Quality Assurance in this context refers to whether the current educational system in Nigeria when placed side by side with other educational systems of other countries can stand the test of time. Quality assurance also involves a systematic procedure of ensuring that education is meeting the specified conditions requisite to the actualisation of its goals.

Admission criteria is another variable in ensuring quality assurance. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) saw the need for this and clearly stipulated that each tertiary institution is at liberty to select candidates for admission. It went further to state that this has to be done in conjunction with the authorised board. In this sense, the authorised Board is Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). JAMB has the prerogative of conducting quality entrance examinations for intending candidates and setting the cut – off marks. Of recent, there is duplication of functions as various universities or tertiary institutions are now organising Post – UME (tagged screening or aptitude test). The essence of this is to synchronise candidates' scores in JAMB. Admission into all universities therefore must be on merit. Laid down parameters must be strictly adhered to by both public and private tertiary institutions. Entry requirements is another yardstick for admission. Candidate must of necessity possess five credits either at one or two sittings in relevant subjects relating to candidates' proposed course. If this is maintained, the end products will be credible graduates.

One problem that greatly confronted the education sector before the introduction of deregulation was auspicious situation where most graduates from the nation's tertiary institutions can neither defend their certificates nor compete favourably with their peers or counterpart from outside the country or where they cannot cope in their work places or labour market. Quality product from any institution is a result of good and well articulated input. The essence of education in Nigeria is to make products of the system to be useful to themselves and the society at large. A good quality product here refers to a good graduate from the various tertiary institutions whether public or private. A graduate from university 'A' should be able to compete favourably with another graduate from university 'B' or a graduate from outside the country.

From the fore-going, quality assurance becomes the bedrock of any system of university education the world over. It has become pertinent to rebrand university education in Nigeria as well. The underlying purpose is to ensure that universities produce high quality and competence graduates who can compete globally in their respective discipline (Ehi-Oshio, 2016).

The genesis of university education in Nigeria started with the establishment of the Yaba College of Education in 1932 which gave birth to University College in Ibadan 1948 as a campus of the University of London. With the setting of the Ashby and Harrison Commissions in 1959 and 1960 respectively to examine the man power need of the country, and their recommendations that the country needed both intermediate and higher level man power, more universities were established. The Universities are: the Universities of Nigeria, Nsukka, (1961), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1962), University of Lagos (1962), University of Ife (1962), and University of Benin (1970), (Obunadike, 2011).

University is a tertiary level of educational institution for the purpose of impacting higher level knowledge. Admission into it is after the attainment of secondary and/or National Diploma or Nigerian Certificate in Education. University education prepares people for the acquisition of knowledge and skills for effective job performance in all facets of the national economy and an individual's personal life (Mgbekem, 2004). In other words, university education offers people specialized education, making them experts in their respective fields (Obunadike, 2011). The only medium open to them to do or achieve this is strict compliance to quality assurance indicators as laid down by the various regulatory bodies mandated to

do this. For instance, Okojie (2010:101) writes that "the National Universities Commission is a regulatory agency for university education in Nigeria which has the mission of ensuring the orderly development of a well coordinated and productive university system that will guarantee quality and relevant education for national development and global competitiveness". But unfortunately today, most of the universities are in dire need of quality staff, dilapidated buildings are scattered everywhere in our university campus, infrastructural facilities are in short supply, admission processes are shrouded in secrecy with many candidates each year not being able to secure admission.

The stake-holders in university education as well as parents and employers are complaining about the inability of graduates from the university system to defend their certificates. Mbipom, Bassey and Archibong (2004) carried out a study on the topic "Students Perception of Education Deregulation Policy in South – eastern Nigerian Federal Universities". The purpose of the study was aimed at investigating students' perception of education deregulation policy. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study while the design adopted to carry out the study was survey inferential design. The population of the study consisted of 3000 students who were selected through simple random sampling technique. The data for the study were collected using a researcher – developed questionnaire "The Student Perception of Deregulation Policy Questionnaire (SPODEPQ)". The data gathered were analysed using population t – test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed both positive and negative perception by students towards deregulation of education policy.

Some of the positive perceptions are:

- Deregulation of educational services will widen the scope of admission into the university since they will have ample opportunities of attending public or private universities of their choice.
- Ensuring of quality in standard and encouraged healthy competitions.
- Lessen low quality of facilities in public universities.

Their negative perceptions centred on:

- Production of low quality of graduates because of commercialization of grade and mass production of graduates in order to attract public patronage by private

universities managers. This portends doom for quality assurance.

- Brain – drain due to mass exodus of some academic staff with penchant for juicy pay or greener pasture.

The relevance of this study to the present stems from the fact that some of the variables discussed in the study tally's with those of the present study. On the other hand, there is a disparity or disconnect between the reviewed study and the present study on the ground that the reviewed study ignored state and private universities in its consideration. Also, the reviewed study has its focal point on students for the population of the study.

Ojong, Atsu, and Ettah (2009) carried out a study research on the topic "Towards ensuring quality graduates output from Nigerian Universities in a Deregulated Education System". The purpose of the study was to examine factors that ensure the production of qualitative graduates from Nigerian Universities. Five research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey was the research design while the population of the study consisted of 400 respondents. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The major findings of the study were:

- To ensure the production of quality graduates output from Nigerian universities, there must be enough qualified lecturers as well as other supporting staff.
- There must be adequate infrastructure / facilities for effective teaching and learning.
- Admission process must be devoid of sharp practices, especially by private university managers, and should be strictly based on merit against other unethical practices. The National Universities Commission's regulation on admission should be adhered to.

When all these, and other points not included here are followed, then can the system be sure of turning out qualitative products or graduates that will stand the test of time. The nexus between the reviewed study and the present study lies on the fact that some of the variables treated are also major variables under examination in the present study. Furthermore, it provided insight into the reason behind poor graduate performance in some of their workplace. However, a noticeable short – coming in the reviewed work or study emanated from its – holistic approach to variables treated in the present study like calibre of students, quality of facilities, etc.

Achu (2010) undertook a study on the topic "University education in Nigeria, an examination of private participation and quality assurance". The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of private individuals in provision of educational services in Nigeria. Secondly to ascertain whether the standard of education provided by these private universities is better than those in public. Four research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study while the design adopted for carrying out the study was ex – post facto. The targeted population was both lecturers and students and the sample size was 300 respondents that were randomly selected through stratified sampling technique. The instrument used to elicit responses from the respondents was a structural questionnaire captioned, "university Education in Nigeria, an Examination of Private participation and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (ENEPPQAQ). Mean score was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t – test at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings of the study include:

- Private individual's participation in the provision of university education can enhance quality in the system due to improved facilities for teaching and learning.
- Guarantee qualitative calibre of products due to the absence of rampant strike as it is common with public universities and examination malpractice.
- Admission is not strictly based on merit in both public and private universities and often, some universities admit students more than their carrying capacity.

These findings are important to the present study because it touches on a number of variables under consideration by the present study such as quality of facilities, calibre of products (graduates) and admission criteria. However, the study did lack an in – depth comparison of the fact between public (state, federal) and private universities. This actually created a gap between it and the present study.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

The administration and provision of education in Nigeria has passed through many stages. Initially, it was in the hands of the missionaries without the colonial government showing interest. During this time, the standard of instruction and the quality of the products were adjudged to be alright. Later the colonial government showed interest and joined in the provision and management of educational

services. At this time, the management and provision of educational services became a joint venture between the government and the missionaries. The admission criteria and quality of products were seen to be alright and the products capable of defending their certificates.

After independence, the trend continued especially during the era of oil-boom when “money was not a problem but how to spend it.” But after the civil war, in 1970, the military government decided to take over the provision and management of the education services from the missions. This was short lived as there arose public outcry about the fallen standard of education (dilapidated buildings, poor infrastructural provision, near lack of teaching and learning facilities, incessant strikes leading to the production of half-baked graduates).

With the return to democratic rule, the door of the provision and management of education was once again thrown open. This time around, the policy of deregulation was introduced. This cut across all levels of the education sector (the University inclusive). The worrisome and unanswered question that gave impetus to the choice of this study is whether deregulation as a policy is a magic wand that will turn around the misfortune of the Nigerian education system especially at the university level. Put in question form: Will admission criteria and quality of products if properly managed bring succour to the Nigerian Educational systems or universities?

#### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the systems approach theory.

The systems approach theory was propounded by Von Bertalanffy in 1972. The theory takes a holistic view of the entire organizational system and processes.

The principal teaching of the theory is that every organization is an embodiment of a whole containing sub-units that work harmoniously together in order to achieve organizational goals or objectives. Consequently, this interrelatedness calls for a closer synergy between every segments of the organization. Furthermore, the proponent of the theory is of the view that there must be a closer rapport between inputs and outputs of any organization.

The proponents went further to enunciate how the systems theory can be applied in the administration

and management of the school system. Human and material resources must be harnessed efficaciously in order to achieve the aims and objectives of establishing the school system. All components of the school system must be in tandem with the workings of the system (rules and regulations). Applied to the university system, the National universities Commission, the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deans, Heads of Departments as well as Heads of Units, lecturers and students must view themselves as working towards the attainment of the same goal.

The importance of this study to the present study therefore emanated from the understanding of the complex inter-relationship between the government, private individuals and corporate organizations, communities and the school system towards the attainment of quality in the university system.

#### 1.5 Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to determine the impact of the deregulation of educational services on, admission criteria and quality of products in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on the admission criteria into public and private universities in Nigeria in line with quality assurance indicators.
- Ascertain the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on the quality of products from public and private universities in Nigeria.

#### 1.6 Research Questions

The following research question were stated to guide the study

How has the admission criteria into public and private universities in Nigeria as a means of maintaining quality assurance been affected by the deregulation of educational services

How has educational deregulation affected the products from public and private universities in Nigeria with regards to quality assurance policy?

#### 1.7 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean rating of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of

provision of educational services on admission criteria.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on quality of products.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Population of the study

The population of the study consists of 714 academic administrators in public and private Universities in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. There are six federal, six states and seven private universities, in the zone.

### 2.2 Sample

The sample size is 714 academic administrators drawn from all the public and private universities in the study area.

**Table One:** Summary of t-test for Hypothesis One

S/N	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	Sig.	Decision
1	Academic administrators in public universities	608	2.90	.27	12.32*	712	0.00	Rejected
2	Academic administrators in private universities	106	2.54	.29				

\*Significance of groups at  $p < 0.05$

Table 1 presented the summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on admission criteria. The data revealed a probability value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 at 712 degree of freedom, meaning that there is significant different in the responses of public and private academic administrators of universities. Therefore, hypothesis one was rejected, meaning that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on admission criteria.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on quality of products. To test this hypothesis, the academic administrators were grouped into public and private universities. The mean responses of the two categories were analyzed as shown in Table 2

## 3. Data Analysis

The data in both variables were analysed using t-test statistics (independent), at 0.05 significant level and 712 degrees of freedom.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on admission criteria.

### Hypothesis One

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**Table 2: Summary of t-test for Hypothesis one**

S/N	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	Sig.	Decision
1	Academic administrators in public universities	608	2.72	.27	10.10*	712	0.00	Rejected
2	Academic administrators in private universities	106	3.14	.41				

\*Significance of groups at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 presented the summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on calibre of products from the Nigerian universities. The data reveals a probability value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 at 712 degree of freedom, meaning that there is significant difference in the responses of public and private academic administrators of universities on calibre of products from the Nigerian universities. Therefore, hypothesis one was rejected, meaning that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational services on calibre of products from the Nigerian universities.

#### 4. Discussion of findings

Deregulation of educational services, admission criteria and quality of products in public and private universities in relation to quality assurance.

The result of the analysis in hypothesis one showed a probability value 0.00 which is less than 0.05 at 712 degree of freedom, meaning that there is significant difference in the responses of public and private academic administrators of universities on admission criteria. Therefore, hypothesis one was rejected, meaning that there is significant difference in the mean rating of academic administrators in public and private universities in deregulation of educational services on admission criteria. This finding is in consonance with Mbipom, Bassey and Archibong (2004), who carried out a study on the topic “Students Perception of Education Deregulation Policy in South – eastern Nigerian Federal Universities”. The purpose of the study was aimed at investigating students’ perception of education deregulation policy. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study while the design adopted to carry out the study was survey inferential design. The population of the study consisted of 3000 students who were selected through simple random sampling technique. The data for the study were collected using a researcher – developed questionnaire “The Student Perception of Deregulation Policy Questionnaire (SPODEPQ)”. The data gathered were analysed using population t – test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the

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## 5. Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of the study, the following conclusions was reached by the researcher that:

- There is a significant difference in the mean rating of academic administrators in public and private universities in deregulation of educational services on admission criteria.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ratings of academic administrators in public and private universities on the impact of deregulation of provision of educational service on quality of products from the Nigerian universities

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- The National Universities Commission should ensure that private universities adhere strictly to the laid down admission policy.
- Quota system of admission should be discouraged or abolished. By so doing, the incidence of admitting candidates who should have no place in the university system will be minimised thereby paving way for the production of qualitative products who can compete favourably in the labour market in any part of the globe.

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