
LIMITED ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION BY PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD***A.I. Ajayi and F.O. Afolabi***Department of History, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Nigeria**Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo,*E-mail: ajayi_gboyega@yahoo.com, afolabi52@yahoo.com**ABSTRACT**

We have established in this study, through some statistical inferences, how severely limited access to tertiary education by prospective candidates has become in Nigeria over the years. Evidently the phenomenal increase in the number of tertiary institutions has not been commensurate with the equally phenomenal increase in the number of candidates. The problem has been compounded by the fact that the existing institutions have low carrying capacities and are poorly funded leading some of them to extortionist tendencies in the admission process. When this is juxtaposed with candidates' inadequacies in terms of qualifications, mental ability and unscrupulous attitudinal dispositions, which usually elicit severe sanctions from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the problem comes out more vividly. We have suggested improved funding of existing institutions in order to beef-up their carrying capacity. We are also well disposed to the upgrading of some tertiary institutions to the status of autonomous universities.

Key Words: *Tertiary Education, Admissions, Examination, Malpractice*

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education is perceived by many secondary school leavers in Nigeria today as a passport not only to self fulfillment, but also a ladder to higher socio-political status in the society. This perception has led to high demand for tertiary education and paved way to sharp increase in the cost of tertiary education in Nigeria. Of all the problems facing many qualified secondary school leavers, seeking admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions in the last decade none is as critical, persistent and agonizing as the problem of making their admission dream a reality. This problem is attributed to the low carrying capacities of the tertiary institutions, especially the public ones. Thus, thousands of qualified admission seekers have their hopes for higher education dashed. No nation can rise beyond the level of the capability of its educational system to produce their right caliber of middle and high level manpower required for its development. Thus investment in tertiary education is per excellence investment in human capital development. According to Amaele (2005:27) "a developed or an educated society is one that has enough manpower and each occupying his or her rightful position to enhance the growth of the society". Buttressing the importance of tertiary education, Ajayi and Afolabi (2009:12) affirmed that "tertiary education could be perceived as an indispensable tool which would not only assist in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspiration, but would also inculcate in the individual, knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that would foster national development and self actualization. In his own contribution to the importance of tertiary education in Nigeria, Ojerinde (2011:175) declared that "in Nigeria, tertiary education plays a critical capacity building and professional training role in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)". It is therefore a formidable tool

for the nation’s economic buoyancy, political stability, social reconstruction and cultural integration. The goals of tertiary education, as clearly spelt out in the National Policy on Education (2004:30) are to:

- (a) contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (c) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- (d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self – reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) forge and cement national unity; and
- (g) promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria could be traced to 1932, when Yaba Higher College was established and in 1948, the first University in Nigeria, the University College, Ibadan also came on board. Since then, the rate of growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria had been phenomenal. In 1962, four additional universities were established in four towns in Nigeria. The number increased to twelve in 1977, while eight additional universities were established in 1983. With many state governments, private individuals and religious organizations having their own universities, by 2008, Nigeria had ninety three universities, consisting of twenty six Federal government-owned, thirty two owned by State governments, thirty four owned by private individuals and religious organizations and one military university. Also, other tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been on increase over the years. As indicated in Table 1 below as at December, 2008 there were 93 Universities; 36 Monotechnics; 23 Innovation Enterprise Institutions; 64 Polytechnics and 80 Colleges of Education.

Table 1: Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria as at December 2008.

Forms of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria	Number Available as at December 2008
(a) Universities:	
Federal,	26
Military	01
State	32
Private	34
Total	93
(b) Monotechnics	36
(c) Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs)	23
(d) Polytechnics:	
Federal	21
State	30
Private	13
Total	64
(e) Colleges of Education	
Federal	21
State	41
Private	18
Total	80

Source: Ojerinde, Dibu (2011): contemporary educational issues in Nigeria, India: Melrose Books and Publishing Ltd, P. 174.

Over the years, the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, kept on increasing. For instance within four years, that is, between January 2009 and January 2012, twenty additional universities had been established, indicating 21.5% increase. Other additional tertiary institutions established within the period as presented in table 2 include ten polytechnics representing 15.6% increase, seventeen Monotechnics representing 47.2% increase; and twenty two Innovation Enterprise Institutions indicating 96.7% increase over that of 2008.

Table 2: Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria as at January 2012

Forms of tertiary institution	Ownership	Number
(a) Universities	Federal	35
	State	35
	Private	43
	Total	113
(b) Polytechnics	Federal	23
	State	33
	Private	18
	Total	74
(c) Colleges of Education	Federal	20
	State	43
	Private	17
	Total	80
(d) Monotechnics	Federal	27
	State	24
	Private	2
	Total	53
(e) Innovation Enterprise Institutions	Private	45

Source: Statistical report on 2011 admissions and 2012 UTME applications, Abuja: JAMB.

In spite of the phenomenal rate of growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, many qualified applicants could not be offered admission into these institutions due to their inadequate facilities. According to Durosaro (1998:131), "Every child's aspiration is to reach to the top of the educational ladder. Yet, the facilities available in the system cannot accommodate the number of qualified applicants". As graphically put by Ojerinde (2011:178):

Many parents and admission seekers complain about being denied admission, not realizing that the spaces are not just enough for qualified candidates. Some of them can be seen hanging around the institutions, pleading and begging to be considered. Some admission seekers end up as 'No future Ambition' in these institution. This probably explains why there is so much desperation, manipulation, influence peddling, gratification, cutting corners, corrupt practices and so on, encountered in the process of admission into tertiary institutions these days.

Up to 1977, admission of students into the available tertiary institutions was done by individual institutions using different admission criteria. In case of the Universities, there were two modes of entry. The first was the concessional entry route, by which a comprehensive concessional examination was conducted for candidates, who possessed the basic entry academic requirements of credit in a specified number of subjects at

Ordinary Level. The candidates that passed and possessed the required academic qualifications in the School Certificate were offered provisional admission into the Universities. While the second mode of admission into the Universities was the Direct Entry route for candidates who passed well in two or three subjects at Advanced Level, Nigeria Certificate in Education and National Diploma. For the Polytechnics and Monotechnics, entrance examination was conducted for candidates with good results in the School Certificate, or City and Guilds intermediate certificate. While Direct Entry admission was offered to candidates with National Diploma. In case of Colleges of Education, admission was offered to candidates that passed the entrance examination conducted by the Colleges and possessed School certificate with three credits at one sitting or four credits at two sittings. The ordinary level credits are equivalent to merit at the Teachers Grade II Level. In 1978, there was a drastic change in the admission scenario into Nigerian tertiary institutions. The old practices bedeviled by myriads of problems such as multiple admissions to candidates in various institutions, multiple application entries, geographical imbalance in admitting students into the institutions, lack of quota system in the admission process and so on gave way to a joint and centralized arrangement under the management of a newly established body. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) came into existence in 1977, with its enabling Act signed into law on 13th February, 1978 as Decree No 2 of 1978. The law mandated the Board to place suitably qualified candidates into the tertiary institutions after having considered the available spaces in these institutions (FMG, 1978). In December 1989, the Federal Government repealed Decree No 2 of 1978 and replaced it with Decree 33, which vested in the Board the additional responsibility of conducting admissions into other tertiary institutions in Nigeria namely the Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education. This decree further empowered the Board to monitor and unify the admission processes into all tertiary institutions in Nigeria (FMG, 1989).

The functions of JAMB as clearly spelt out in Decree No 4 of 1993 include:

- (a) The placement of suitably qualified candidates into tertiary institutions after having taken into account:
 - i. The vacancies available in each tertiary institution;
 - ii. The guidelines approved for each tertiary institution by its proprietor or any other competent authority;
 - iii. The preferences expressed for certain institution and courses; and
 - iv. Such other matters as the Board may be directed by the Minister of Education to consider or as the Board itself may consider appropriate in the circumstance.
- (b) The collection and dissemination of information on all matters relating to the admissions into tertiary institutions or to any other matter relevant to the functions of the Board (FMG, 1993).

These functions are being performed meticulously by JAMB, which has been conducting the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Matriculation Examination (MPCEME), alongside the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME), till the year 2009. As a way of improving access and the quality of the entrants into Nigerian tertiary institutions, the Federal Government merged the UME and MPCEME to become Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) in 2010. The introduction of UTME according

to Ojerinde (2011:330), would tackle many admission problems often faced by the candidates, just as it would help to harmonize the academic calendar in such a way that admissions into tertiary institutions would be conducted and concluded early within a record time.

- (a) What activities are embarked upon by JAMB towards the smooth take-off of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination in the new dispensation?
- (b) How does the JAMB carry out its admission processes?
- (c) What are the impediments to the placement of suitably qualified candidates into Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- (d) What are the challenges of admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions?

These and other related issues shall be addressed sequentially in the sections below before indicating the way forward in the concluding section.

The Activities of JAMB in Ensuring Smooth Take off of UTME

The various activities embarked upon by JAMB toward ensuring the smooth take off of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination in 2010, as highlighted by the Registrar and the Chief Executive of the Board, include:

- (a) harmonization of the UME and MPCEME brochure;
- (b) review of the existing online registration details;
- (c) review and harmonization of the UME and MPCEME answer sheets;
- (d) review and harmonization of the entry requirements;
- (e) inspection and validation of examination centres;
- (f) review and harmonization of the list of existing examination officials and documents for test administration;
- (g) harmonization of the UME and MPCEME syllabus;
- (h) review and harmonization of the list of existing examiners for test development;
- (i) review and harmonization of the policy and technical committee meeting on admission; and
- (j) sensitization of the students, public and other stakeholders through workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures, radio jingles, television announcements, advertisements and press conferences (Ojerinde 2011: 330).

Admission Processes into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions are conducted by JAMB, in collaboration with the Institutions. The admission processes are discussed below:

- (a) **Placing Advertisement on Media:** Applications for admission into Nigeria tertiary institutions are usually advertised on media, indicating clearly the application fee, mode of application, entry qualification, date of examination, closing date for the submission of application forms and so on. The Board ensures strict adherence of the candidates to the closing date for registration.
- (b) **Registration:** Each eligible candidate applies through the Board by registering online. At the point of registration, the candidates are required to make six choices of institutions as follows: two from the Universities, two from Monotechnics, Polytechnics or specialized institutions and two from the Colleges of Education. All pertinent materials required by the candidates such as brochures, JAMB syllabus, writing materials and calculators are provided by the Board on payment of application fee.

- (c) **Examination Administration:** The UTME is administered to all the registered candidates on the specified examination day, at the designated centres within and outside Nigeria, using people of high integrity as monitoring team, supervisors, invigilators, security men and assistants.
- (d) **Release of UTME Results:** The UTME results are usually released within three or four working days after the conduct of the examination. The candidates could easily check for their results online. The detailed results are compiled in computer print-outs and sent to the institutions of first and second choices.
- (e) **Provision of Admission Quotas:** As soon as the UTME results are released, the National Regulatory Bodies namely the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) provide admission quotas to guide the Board and the institutions concerned in the joint selection exercise.
- (f) **Government Guidelines:** The inevitable need to ensure equity in the placement of students into existing places in the tertiary institutions considering the political nature of the nation and the educational imbalance existing among States, compelled the Government to give approved guidelines for admission into the tertiary institutions, through JAMB. The guidelines stipulate that admissions into Federal Institutions, in particular must be based on 45% merit, 35% for the catchment area and 20% for the Educationally Less-Developed States (ELDS). However, each tertiary institution has complete autonomy and prerogative in its choice of cut-off scores for each category of admission.
- (g) **Screening the Recommendations made by the Institution:** The recommendations made by the various tertiary institutions from the results sent to them by the Board are usually subjected to screening by a special committee on admissions, whose members are drawn from the Board and the collaborating institutions. Commenting on the importance of screening, Adesina (2005:187) remarked that "candidates seeking admission into educational institutions at all levels must be properly screened not only to ensure that they are prima facie qualified for admission, but also to weed those among them that are of questionable background and character". The screening exercise is embarked upon by the committee to ensure strict adherence to the admission guidelines provided by the Federal Government and to adequately cater for the peculiarities of each institution.

The Impediments to the Placement of Suitably Qualified Candidates into Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Many suitably qualified candidates could not be offered admission into various tertiary institutions in Nigeria due to the following impediments:

- (a) **Remedial Programmes in the Institutions:** Many tertiary institutions in Nigeria run remedial programmes which attract exorbitant fees, such institutions prefer to admit the bulk of their candidates through their performances in the remedial programmes. In recent years, JAMB had directed that students on remedial programmes should register and sit for the UTME. Hitherto the students were offered admission into the institution using lower cut-off points.
- (b) **The Rigid Federal Government's Guidelines on Admissions:** Quite a large number of the Federal Institutions are beset with the problem of finding suitably

qualified candidates from their immediate environment to fill either their merit list or educationally disadvantaged States list. This situation constitutes an onerous task for them in filling their admission quotas in certain courses.

- (c) **Irregular Academic Calendars in some Institutions:** As a result of staff industrial actions, students militancy or violent protests, that usually lead to the closure of some institutions, the system has been witnessing irregular academic calendars. Consequently, they usually bring their recommendations and submissions to the Board months behind schedule, while some usually merged their admission quotas due to suspension of a particular academic session. All these constitute serious bottlenecks to candidates seeking admission into the affected tertiary institutions.
- (d) **Sharp Practices by some Admissions Officers in some Institutions:** Some dubious admissions officers have resorted to sharp practices about admissions. Their illegal practices include inflating UTME marks of some candidates who could not meet the cut-off points; recommendation of unqualified candidates; indiscriminate submission of admission lists without considering the carrying capacity of their institutions and other illegal practices. When discovered these constitute serious impediments to the placement of candidates into the institution.
- (e) **Non-Conformity of some Candidates with JAMB's Instructions on Registration and Examination:** At the point of purchasing the scratch card, the Board provides each applicant with a brochure and CD which contain pertinent information on how to complete the application online. Many errors are carelessly committed by some candidates in completing such application online; also, simple instructions, on examination questions are not strictly obeyed. The Board over the years has been reporting various cases of irregularities in their OMR (Answer sheets). Non-conformity of these candidates with JAMB's instructions on UTME has often resulted into their failure in the placement examination into Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The Challenges of Admission into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

The various challenges of admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions are discussed below:

- (a) **The Challenge of Inadequate Places in Nigerian Tertiary Institution:** Over the years, inadequate places in Nigerian tertiary institutions have been a serious challenge to the teeming population of candidates seeking admission into the institutions. It is quite obvious in Table 3 presented below, that the number of students admitted yearly are negligible relative to the number of applications. For instances in 2007, 129,528 (12.59%), were admitted out of 1,028,988 applicants, in 2008, 175,358 (19.96%) were admitted out of 1,172,313 and in 2009, 211,991 (17.90%) were admitted out of 1,185,574 applicants. This situation has been attributed mainly to inadequate facilities in the universities.

Table 3: Population of Applicants viz-a-viz Available Vacancies in Nigerian Universities

Academics Year	Admission Quota (Carrying Capacity)	Number of Applications	Number Admitted	Percentage Admitted
2003	82,756	1,043,361	108,148	10.40
2004	82,756	962,133	125,673	13.10

2005	91,362	1,030,670	107,161	10.40
2006	149,033	893,259	106,304	11.90
2007	155,533	1,028,988	129,528	12.59
2008	183,420	1,172,313	175,358	19.96
2009	183,420	1,185,579	211,991	17.90

Source: Ojerinde, Dibu (2011) *Contemporary Educational Issues in Nigeria, India: Melrose Books and Publishing Ltd. 217.*

(b) **The Challenges of Examination Malpractice:** Examination malpractice according to the World Bank Education Website (2001) is “a deliberate act of wrong doing, contrary to the offered examination rules and is aimed at placing a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage”. The perpetrators of examination malpractice in Nigerian institutions should be considered as saboteurs of the entire educational system hindering and threatening the future development of the nation and its citizenry. Examination malpractice has been a serious challenge to JAMB, but the Board has not relented in its efforts at combating this knotty problem. From the statistics on 2012 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, 7,575 cases of examination malpractices were witnessed. While in 2011 UTME, 19,893 cases of examination malpractice were identified. This indicates 61.9% decrease in the number of reported cases of examination malpractice in the UTME. Table 4 below presents the report on 2012 UTME irregularities figures.

Table 4: Report of 2012 UTME Irregularities Figure

S/N	Nature of Irregularity	Total Number of Candidates	Penalty
1.	Colluded with other candidates / examiners / external agents	603	Result cancelled
2.	Lateness to examination hall without valid reason	852	Result cancelled
3.	Left examination hall without permission	39	Result cancelled
4.	Smuggled out question papers / answer sheets	149	Result cancelled
5.	Spying / copying from prepared answers	2030	Result cancelled
6.	Swapping of examination documents	163	Result cancelled
7.	Use of GSM phone / electronic device	2,972	Result cancelled
8.	Violent / unruly behaviours to examiners	732	Result cancelled
9.	Wide spread cheating	35	Result cancelled
	Total	7,575	0.05 of total number of candidates

Source: *Statistical report on 2011 admissions and 2012 UTME application, Abuja: JAMB.*

The various forms of examination malpractice include not partaking in the e-registration and non-possession of the e-registration slip; absconding with the answer scripts; spying or copying from prepared answers; impersonation; the swapping of examination documents; violent and unruly behaviours towards the examiners; the use of GSM phone; the smuggling of question papers or answer sheets; colluding with other candidates or with examiners and external agents; leaving the examination hall without permission and non-submission of scripts (Ojerinde, 2011:219). Without doubt any candidate caught perpetrating these acts risk cancellation of results and denial of admission.

(c) **The Challenge of Preference for Degree Programmes:** Most suitably qualified candidates who would have secured admission into other tertiary institutions like Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education preferred to get University degrees at all costs. Ironically, most of these candidates are ignorant of the fact that National Diploma (ND) and the Nigeria Certificate in Education obtainable respectively from Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are requisite qualifications for direct entry admissions into the Universities. Table 5 below presents applications into Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and the Colleges of Education between 2001 and 2009.

Table 5: Application into the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education between 2001 and 2009.

Year	Application into the Universities (UME only)	Percentage (%)	Applications into the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education	Percentage (%)
2001	893,259	82.02	195,788	17.98
2002	1,028,988	82.68	215,541	17.32
2003	1,172,313	82.10	255,659	17.90
2004	1,043,361	81.02	244,463	18.98
2005	962,133	85.20	167,089	14.80
2006	1,030,670	86.32	163,331	13.68
2007	893,259	84.65	162,031	15.35
2008	1,028,988	77.00	307,215	23.00
2009	1,185,574	77.60	342,499	22.40

Sources: Dibu Ojerinde (2011) Contemporary Educational Issues in Nigeria, India: Melrose Books and Publishing Ltd, P. 328.

As clearly indicated in Table 5, in 2007 the applications into Nigerian Universities are 893,259 representing 84.05%; while 162,031 applications representing 15.35% were received for the entire Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. In 2008, 1,028,988 (77.00%) for Universities, and 307,215 (23.00%) for other Nigerian tertiary institutions; in 2009, 1,185,574 (77.60%) applications were received for the Universities and 342,499 (22.40%) for other tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

(d) **The Challenge of Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination Screening Exercises:** In 2004, the National Universities Commission (NUC) permitted the Universities to screen and re-examine their candidates through interviews and admit suitably qualified candidates into the Universities. The post-UTME screening exercise by various tertiary institutions in Nigeria appears to be a welcome development as long as such screening exercises are directed towards ensuring that qualified and high quality students who meet the JAMB cut-off points of 180 for the Universities and 160 for the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and perform impressively in the Post-UTME screening exercises are admitted into the tertiary institutions. It is, however, disheartening that many tertiary institutions have abused the Post-UTME screening exercises, in so many ways. For instance, some perceive the screening exercise as a way of generating revenue for their institutions. Universities would invite candidates that scored 180

and above in UTME to the post UTME screening and collect exorbitant application fees from them. All candidates that scored between 180 and 199 would not be considered for admission eventually, regardless of their high performance in the post-UTME screening tests. This has been the usual practice of some Federal and State Universities. This is crass exploitation of indigent candidates.

Moreover, the Post UTME screening tests administered by some of the tertiary institutions are of low quality and poor standards. They are unstructured, and not based on a particular syllabus and operational modules and often fail to indicate the skills, abilities or aptitudes they examine. As succinctly remarked by Mishra (2008:87) "it is essential that teachers and examiners should review very carefully what parts of the total field of the pupils knowledge is to be examined", Commenting on the standard of Post-UTME tests, Ojerinde (2011:186) affirmed that, observations have shown that some institutions have exploited the Post-Universities Matriculation Examination screening to such an extent that they have further watered down the standards to an intolerably low level. As Nigerian academic institutions, they are bound to adhere to the minimum standards as prescribed by the National Universities Commission and Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in a circular dated 26th September, 2005. Admission of students into Nigerian tertiary institutions should not be commercialized. The shady conduct of Post-UTME by some Nigerian tertiary institutions may continue to be a serious bottleneck in the admission of eligible candidates into the institution, if not checked by appropriate authorities.

- (e) **The Challenges of "Sharp" Practices of Cybercafe Operators:** Many eligible candidates seeking admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions find it difficult to register personally at the cybercafé's due to their low level of computer literacy. The only option for them is to depend on the services of the cybercafé operators, who unwittingly register them wrongly for different courses, faculties, institutions and other clearly defined parameters. Moreover, some admission officers in some institutions usually connive with some cybercafé operators to inflate the UTME scores of their favoured candidate, to enable them meet the cut-off points. Such candidates are issued fake result slips and recommended for admission, only to meet their Waterloo at the screening exercise by JAMB admissions screening panel.
- (f) **The Challenge of e-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination:** It has been affirmed by the Registrar / Chief Executive of JAMB, that e- Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination would be adopted by 2013. This is a welcome development in the smooth conduct of the UTME as the candidates would receive immediate feedback on their performance in the examination. This innovation will definitely confront the following challenges:
- i. Coping with large number of candidates applying for admissions into Nigerian tertiary institutions yearly;
 - ii. Non-availability of internet facilities in some towns and rural areas;
 - iii. The epileptic electric power supply in the country;
 - iv. Inadequate knowledge of many candidates in the use or handling of computers and other accessories;
 - v. Provision of sufficient number of computers and their accessories for the teeming population of candidates at the designated examination centres;
 - vi. Time allocation viz-a-viz shifting arrangement for the candidates at the examination centres;

- vii. Inadequate bandwidth provided by the Internet Service Providers (ISP) on their communication channels;
- viii. Desperation and anxiety on the part of the candidates who want to pass the UTME and gain admission into the tertiary institutions at all costs.

JAMB must take due cognizance of these challenges and factor them into the planning and organization of the e-UTME, come 2013.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Access to tertiary education by prospective candidates in Nigeria has remained severely limited in spite of the phenomenal increase in the number of tertiary institutions in the country over the years. We have identified and discussed the limiting factors employing statistical data to drive home our point. The low carrying capacity of existing institutions; phenomenal increase in the number of eligible candidates; mental incapacity of some candidates and their penchant for cutting corners in desperate bids for admission as well as the over-romanticisation of university education have been dealt with among other inhibiting factors. We also examined the role of JAMB in the admission process highlighting its innovative initiatives and coping strategies some of which have plugged the loopholes which unscrupulous candidates have been exploiting to breach the system. Without doubt, as the number of applications into Nigerian tertiary institutions keeps on increasing, JAMB will continue to face more challenges. It has become imperative, therefore, that the body (i.e. JAMB) should be strengthened in terms of funding, logistic supports and recruitment of the right personnel especially in the areas of tests and measurement; computer appreciation and programming for greater efficiency. But more importantly, existing tertiary institutions should be better funded in order to increase their carrying capacity while the federal government must give positive consideration to the increasing demand for the elevation of some degree awarding Colleges of Education and Polytechnics to the status of autonomous universities.

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