



JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 1, Number 2 (September, 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-0618 (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: September 25, 2025 Accepted: September 29, 2025 Published: September 30, 2025

Citation: Ogunsakin, Ayodele B. & Isaac-Philips, Modupe M. (2025). "Admission Quota and Academic Achievement of Full-Time Students in South-West Nigerian Public Universities." *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 1 (2): 115-123.

Article

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ADMISSION QUOTA AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Ayodele Barnes Ogunsakin¹ & Modupe Margaret Isaac-Philips²

Department of Educational Management, Lagos State University, Ojo^{1&2}

Email: barnesayodele@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this study was to find out which of the admission quotas ensures that students who are academically better are admitted into the universities. The research instrument consisted of records observation format; the secondary data obtained were transcribed into Grade Points Average for data treatment purposes. The design of the study encompasses descriptive, ex post facto and correlational research types. Three research questions were answered. The sample consisted of 6000 students randomly selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The study revealed that less than 1% of the graduating class had first class divisions, between 14% to 25% had second class upper divisions, between 43% to 50% had second class lower divisions, between 20% to 32% had third class divisions and between 4% to 10% had pass class. Results also showed that the percentage academic achievement of those admitted on merit that had first class and second class upper (0.70%, 23.90%) divisions on graduation was higher than those admitted on catchment area and ELDS policy (0.40%, 20.40%) respectively. The percentage academic achievement of male students admitted through ELDS that had first class and second class upper was higher than their female counterparts whereas the percentage academic achievement of students admitted through merit that had first class was higher in female students than in male students. This study revealed that the quotas for students' admission have a relationship with students' academic achievement. It is therefore recommended that the existing quota system of admission should be reviewed with the provision that the merit percentage be increased to accommodate the best candidates from each State in the Federation to improve academic achievement of students in the university.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Admission Quotas, Educationally less Developed States, Catchment Areas, Merit Admission.

Introduction

University education is very crucial for socio-economic and technological development of any country. It provides the manpower needed for quality training and skills development of Nigerian students. Every year, several Nigerians and Non-Nigerians searching for university education applied the available limited vacancy. University admission in Nigeria is therefore very competitive due to the large number of applicants applying for the limited spaces. It is thus expected that only the best will be admitted. There are two main categories of students admitted into Nigerian universities for bachelor degree. These are part-time and full-time students. The full-time students are admitted based on Federal Government admission quotas: merit (45%), catchment area (35%) and educationally-less-developed states (20%). Graduate students, on the other hand, could be categorized with respect to their academic achievement based on their cumulative grade point averages (CGPA) on graduation into First Class (4.5 – 5.00), Second Class Upper (3.50 – 4.49), Second Class Lower (2.50 – 3.49), Third Class (1.50 – 2.49), Pass (1.00 - 1.49) and Fail (0.00 – 0.99) (Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa and Idenwa, 2014). Meanwhile, the admission criteria should contribute to predicting academic achievement, retention and continued enrolment in universities and other tertiary institutions (Ogbebor, 2012 in Atilade and Osunniran (2024). Wilson in Dunham and Mac Innes (2018) is of the opinion that the academic achievement of candidates admitted into any higher institution affects the level of research and training within the institution, and by extension, has an overall effect on the development of the country. Therefore, the need to investigate the various admission quota policies adopted by Nigerian universities for students' admission in order to ensure that only the students who are academically qualified are admitted.

The introduction of post-UTME and subsequent post-UTME by Nigerian universities is a pointer to the notion that university authorities are not satisfied with the academic performance of the entrants after admission. Salahdeen and Murtala cited by Aciro, Onen, Malinga, Ezati and Openjuru (2021) identified certain factors that needed to be considered for placement of students seeking admission into Nigerian Universities to be Federal Government policy on admission such as Science: Arts (60: 40) admission ratio, effect of catchment area, merit and discretion admission, students' performances in SSCE, UTME and post-UTME. Effects of factors such as gender, students age, and students' high school scores on the level of university academic achievement cannot be underestimated. Since Nigeria gained independence, it has explored different policies on admission. The simple reason is for it to achieve qualitative education at all levels in order to realize its dream of using education as an instrument par excellence for achieving national development. At the tertiary education level, the Federal Government according to Olusola (2015), has at one time or the other introduced new innovations such as: the establishment of the National Universities Commission, (NUC) to ensure standard; centralization of admission by the introduction of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in 1978; diversification of the curriculum of tertiary education through introduction of various courses; establishing specialized mono institutions of technology/science and increasing admission quota in these disciplines. For example, Science to Art ratio is 60:40 while Technology to Non-Technology is 70:30; privatization of tertiary institutions; introduction of Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME)/ Post-UTME Screening to ensure quality of entrants; introduction of

biometric devices and computer based testing; establishment of Open University and Outreach programmes; etc.

The reliability of Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) cum post-UTME scores in predicting students' academic achievement in Nigerian universities is also of paramount importance. Aribisala, Dosunmu, Akanbi and Shittu (2018) showed that UTME have a weak positive relationship with students' academic achievement in the universities while Ifedili and Ifedili (2010) in Orike (2019) observed that candidates who performed poorly in UTME performed better in their first year results in the university. Designing admission quota policies that is responsive to national development necessitates the need to restructure the education policy. In 1976, the government set up a National Committee on University Entrance whose terms of reference included the possibility of setting up a Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB). The primary functions of the Board were to conduct a joint matriculation examination for candidates seeking places in these institutions and place suitably-qualified ones in the available places in the universities. The most notable opposition to JAMB was concentrated in northern Nigerian universities where students significantly relied on the School of Preliminary Studies to gain access to, especially, northern universities (Nwafor and Joseph (2021). To cope with events such as these, Akinyemi and Ogunsakin, (2010) mentioned that Nigerian government gradually evolved an admission policy (a quota system) for all federally-controlled institutions based on an extremely flexible formula that apportions percentage points to include merit, catchment area, educational less developed states, and discretion

Admission on Merit (40%): Candidates with very high scores in each matriculation examination are given first consideration for their first choice of course and institution before other candidates. The admission is based on a combination of secondary school examination results, the results of the entrance examinations to the university conducted by JAMB and Post-JAMB screening.

Catchment Areas (30%): Consideration is given to students who fall within the locality or geographical area of the Tertiary Institution chosen. All the federal universities in the south west states of Nigeria have all the states in the south west as their catchment areas while UNAB and UI have all the states of the federation as their catchment areas (JAMB Brochure, 2010 in Akinyemi and Ogunsakin (2010).

Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS, 20%): Candidates from these states are given special concession for admission. The tertiary institutions assign lower cut-off marks to this category of candidates so that they can be given opportunity for admission to forestall a lopsided development of education in the country.

Discretion (10%): Candidates in these categories are given admission based on the individual circumstances of the applicant (Nwafor and Joseph, 2021).

The basis for the Quota System of Admission has been questioned in several submissions as morally indefensible and contrary to the spirit of the constitution that the inauguration of the 6-3-3-4 National Policy on Education should, by now, have given the so-called educationally less developed states the opportunity to catch up. The more radical critics of the quota system have therefore advocated its total abolition (Nsoedo, 2014). The Nigerian Federal Government, in its reaction then proceeded to review of the admission quotas which gives merit 45%, catchment 35%, ELDS 20% while the discretion admission was totally

scrapped. This, Agbaire (2021) describes as a policy decision which simply perpetuate the existing system. Gusen and Olarioye (2006) cited by Nwenearizi, Ebeigbe and Egwuelu (2018, p.42) observed the effect of quota system on admission thus:

well-qualified and bright students are sometimes denied admission into Nigerian universities on the grounds that they come from 'privileged areas' where educational facilities have existed for a long time and where many indigenes have already benefited from higher education. The effect of this practice on the citizenry will be rather disintegrating than integrating.

Academic Achievement and Admission Quota Policies in Universities

The concept of academic achievement expresses the learning achievement of an individual or a group at the end of an academic programme. Academic achievement is generally used to determine how well an individual is able to assimilate, retain, recall and communicate his knowledge of what has been learnt. This concept has close relationship in meaning with academic performance and academic attainment. It is a demonstrated achievement of learning as opposed to the potential for learning. A student's academic achievement is usually measured in examinations or continuous assessment tests and could be expressed in various ways depending on what the scores will be used for. Academic achievement in Nigeria universities are reported based on Grade Points A (5 points), B (4 [points), C (3 points), D (2 points) and E (1 point). The Cumulative Grade Point Averages (CGPAs) are graded into First Class (4.50-5.00), Second Class Upper (3.50-4.49), Second Class Lower (2.50-3.49), Third Class (1.50-2.49), Pass (1.00- 1.49), and Fail (0.00-0.99) (Kpolovie,2014).

An analysis of some selected university results, based on information documented in 2007/2008 session shows that few graduates made First Class that is consistently in great demand in the labour-market. It becomes a point of much concern that in spite of the rigorous screening exercises, many of them still come out with Second Class Lower and below (Kpolovie, 2014). Over the years, academic achievement as it relates to set quotas has attracted the attention of many researchers. The researcher in this study suspected that the variations in the academic achievement of graduates might be a resultant effect of the admission quota policies adopted for the admission into their respective academic programmes. Hence this study was designed to investigate how admission quota policies contribute to quality of students admitted into the universities in terms of their academic achievement before admission and on graduation. Since there are various quotas of entry into Nigerian Universities, the study attempted to establish which of these admission quota policies have correlation with students' academic achievement. Hence, the specific objectives of the study was to:

- i. determine the difference between the academic achievement of students admitted into the universities on merit and those admitted through the catchment area policy in public universities in South-West Nigeria.
- ii. investigate the difference between the academic achievement of male and female students admitted on merit in public universities in South-West Nigeria
- iii. find out the difference in the academic achievement of male and female students admitted into the public universities based on educationally-less-developed States in South-West Nigeria?

The following research questions were asked as a guide to the study:

Q1. Is there any difference in the academic achievement of students admitted into the universities on merit and those admitted through the catchment area policy after admission in public universities in South-West Nigeria?

Q2. What is the difference between the academic achievement of male and female students admitted on merit in public universities in South-West Nigeria?

Q3. What is the difference in the academic achievement of male and female students admitted into the public universities based on educationally-less-developed States in South-West Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted a multivariate design which encompasses descriptive, *ex post facto* and correlational research types. The sampled universities were selected on the basis that they offer similar courses and to ensure equal representation of both Federal and State universities in the sample. The faculties that were considered include Faculties of Education, Administration, Social Sciences, Arts and Sciences because they have four years duration for students to complete their courses. The matriculation lists of full-time students from 2004/05 to 2008/09 were collected from the Admissions Officer to get the admission details. Also, the graduation lists from 2007/08 to 2011/12 were also collected to locate the graduation details of those on matriculation list, that is, year of graduation and class on graduation. A simple random sampling method was used to get the representative samples from each stratum (faculty). The main admission criteria used to select names of students for this study was availability of complete set of information required for the study for each name randomly selected. That is, candidates' JAMB scores, UTME scores, gender, year of admission, admission quota, and state of origin. Both the matriculation lists and graduation lists formed the secondary data used for the research. Data collected for the study were answered and analysed using both descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentages for answering the research questions while t-test statistics and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Results

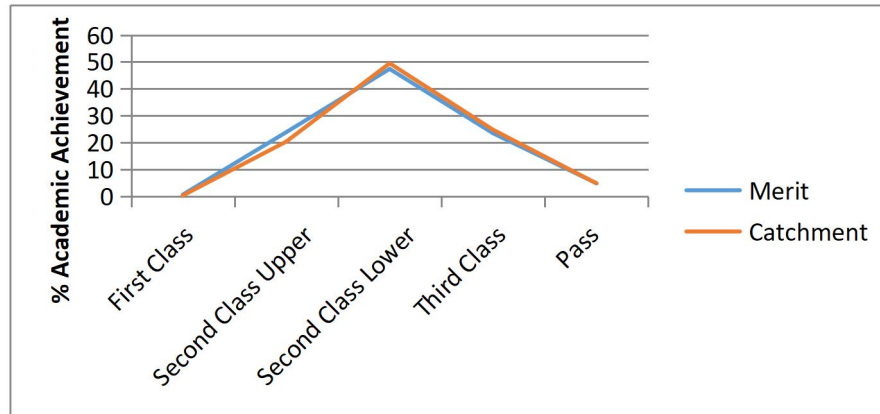
Admission through Merit Versus Admission through Catchment Area

Table 1: Percentage Academic Achievement of Students Admitted into the Universities on Merit and those Admitted through Catchment Area in South-West Nigeria

Academic Year	Merit					Catchment				
	1 st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass	1 st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass
	MERIT					CATCHMENT AREA				
2007/2008	0.20	25.50	46.5	22.70	5.10	0.40	22.10	51.10	21.50	4.90
2008/2009	0.80	24.70	41.2	25.60	7.70	0.50	25.20	43.90	27.80	2.60
2009/2010	1.30	24.80	46.3	26.30	1.30	0.30	16.90	46.60	29.00	7.20
2010/2011	0.50	19.90	52.9	20.50	6.10	0.70	14.60	54.00	23.30	7.40
2011/2012	0.70	24.50	50.1	19.90	4.80	0.10	23.20	51.90	22.40	2.40
Mean	0.70	23.90	47.4	23.00	5.00	0.40	20.40	49.50	24.80	4.90

The analysis on Table 1 shows that 0.70% of students on merit admission policy had first class degree which is higher in number than that of the catchment area with 0.40% of

students having first class degrees. Also, 23.90% had second class upper on merit admission as against 20.40% from catchment area. However, a larger percentage of 49.50% had second class lower division from catchment areas than 47.40% from merit admission policy. The students with third and with pass class of degrees slightly differed (Table 1). This trend of academic achievement is also depicted by Figure 1 below.



It can therefore be observed from the graph or the table that there is a slight difference in the academic achievement of students admitted through merit and catchment area policies in all the classes of degree.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Academic Achievement of Male and Female Students Admitted into the Universities on Merit in South-West Nigeria

Academic Year	Male					Female				
	1st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass	1st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass
2007/2008	0.20	27.10	48.30	22.70	1.70	1.10	26.90	48.20	21.20	2.60
2008/2009	0.70	23.90	40.10	27.40	7.90	0.80	23.80	42.10	28.30	5.00
2009/2010	1.20	24.50	46.10	25.40	2.80	1.30	24.40	46.20	26.10	2.00
2010/2011	0.60	19.70	48.30	21.30	10.10	0.60	19.30	49.00	20.80	10.30
2011/2012	0.80	24.30	49.70	19.70	5.50	0.70	24.20	49.30	19.20	6.60
Mean	0.70	23.90	46.50	23.30	5.60	0.90	23.70	47.00	23.10	5.30

The analysis shows that 0.70% of male students had first class degree which is lower than that of the female students with 0.90%. Also, 23.90% of the male students had second class upper division against 23.70% females. Similarly, a largest percentage of 46.50% of male students and 47.00% females had second class lower division. The percentage of students with third class and with pass class of degrees slightly differed. This shows a difference in the academic achievement of male and female students admitted through merit at the 2nd class lower, 3rd class and pass division while at the first class and 2nd class upper division, the difference is also slight but a bit higher.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Academic Achievement of Male and Female Students Admitted on Educationally-Less-Developed States (ELDS).

Academic Year	Male students of ELDS					Female students of ELDS				
	1st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass	1st	2 ¹	2 ²	3 rd	Pass
2007/2008	0.30	26.10	49.20	20.60	3.80	0.10	25.90	48.40	21.00	4.60
2008/2009	0.10	24.40	42.00	20.70	12.80	0.00	24.80	42.30	28.10	4.80

2009/2010	0.10	25.60	40.30	22.10	11.90	0.10	25.40	46.00	26.30	2.20
2010/2011	0.40	20.60	43.30	23.70	11.70	0.70	19.70	49.10	20.20	10.30
2011/2012	0.10	23.30	47.70	20.20	8.70	0.10	22.20	49.20	19.00	9.60
Mean%	0.20	24.0	44.50	21.50	9.80	0.20	23.60	47.00	22.90	6.30

In Table 3, the mean percentage showed that 0.20% of male students and 0.20% of female students had first class degree. Also, 24.00% of the male students had second class upper division as against 23.60% females. However, a larger percentage of 47.00% of female students than 44.50% male students had second class lower division. The percentage of students with third class and with pass class of degrees slightly differed. This trend above shows that there is a slight but negligible difference in the mean academic achievement of male and female students based on ELDS in all the classes of degree.

Discussion of Findings

This study set out to investigate the effect of admission policies on academic achievement of university students in South-West Nigeria. The admission quota policies considered were Merit, Catchment Area, and Educationally-Less-Developed States (ELDS). Academic achievement was considered on the basis of class of degree (1st class, 2nd class upper, 2nd class lower, 3rd class and pass division) obtained on graduation. There has been the pertinent question of which of the admission quota policies produce graduates with highest academic achievement in terms of their CGPA/ class of degree in their university final examination. Findings showed that differences of various degrees existed in the academic achievement of students based on the different quota of admission. For example, the percentage academic achievement of those admitted on merit that had first class and second class upper (0.70%, 23.90%) divisions on graduation was higher than those admitted on catchment area policy (0.40%, 20.40%) respectively.

This finding is supported by Obielumani (2015) and Ojerinde (2011) in Ibrahim (2024). Adeyemi in Adekile (2017) who reported that the drop-out and repetition rate for the students admitted through catchment area policy was three times higher than the merit-based group. Oni, in Obielumani (2015), argued that the overall effect of admission quota system is institutionalization of mediocrity in the university system. Akinyemi and Ogunsakin (2010) also pointed out that the existing quota system of admission should be reviewed with the provision that the merit percentage be increased to accommodate the best candidates from each State in the Federation. The difference of these findings from other studies may be due to improvement in teaching methodologies, universities facilities, maturity of the students and the scholarship grants awarded to indigenes by various state governments. The influence of gender difference was also considered on the academic achievement of different quotas of admission. For example, the percentage academic achievement of male students admitted through ELDS that had first class (0.2%) was at par with their female counterparts (0.2%). The finding of this study was supported by Udo in Francis (2015) and Otokunefor (2011) in Adegunju, Onivehu, Odetunde, and Oyeniran, (2017) who said that the quality of the products (graduates) to a large extent depends on the quality of input (entrants) and the quality of process. Also, the finding shows that the percentage academic achievement of male students admitted through merit that had second class upper (0.7%) was higher in female students (0.9%) than in male students. The results of this study support the submission of Olusola (2015) that students' academic success is largely a function of the amount of efforts put into study and not necessarily as a result of quota of entry into the university. The above depicts that the achievement of the students in university education

depends on some other factor(s) of students under the influence of the university instructional environments.

Considering all the quotas of admission together, the study revealed that less than 1% of the graduating class had first class divisions, between 14% to 25% had second class upper divisions, between 43% to 50% had second class lower divisions, between 20% to 32% had third class divisions and between 4% to 10% had pass class. In Conclusion, the results of this study showed that the different admission quota policies, to some extent, had relationship with academic achievements of students. Though the variations are not large, the relationships were not statistically significant. Hence, all the quota of admission should still be used to process admission. For there to be satisfactory learning achievement for students and invariably high academic output in Nigerian universities, pragmatic and result-oriented admission strategies that are focused on students' quality should be put in place. It is recommended, based on the findings of this study as follows:

- i. Both JAMB and NUC should thoroughly supervise the universities to ensure that they adhere strictly to the prevailing policies on admission, also to ensure that students' academic achievements through any of the admission quota policies translate into better academic performance and hence have positive impacts on the academic achievements of the students on graduation. The NUC should also ensure that universities have facilities and manpower needed to train their students to be at their best.
- ii. Attempt should be made to motivate female students to put in more effort so as to bridge the gaps in academic achievement between them and their male counterparts. Both male and female students should still be given equal opportunities to compete and the best among them is offered admission.
- iii. A policy that will support academic achievement and at the same time give both the Educationally Advanced States (EAS) and ELDS as well as Catchment areas opportunities for admission, that is, leveling the playing field should be formulated. Efforts should be made by university authorities to ensure that none of the categories of students is discriminated against but treated the same way as others so as to produce good quality graduates.
- iv. Nigeria's admission policy should be based on the continuous assessment of the students and not just on only one examination or test and it should be tailored towards market need and labour demands and not just admitting students into all courses available in the university, not minding whether the courses are relevant to the present need or not.
- v. Findings from this study had shown no significant relationship between academic achievement and quota of admission, hence, university stakeholders are duty bound to look inward into the quality of both material and human resources available in their institutions. Both students and teachers should be motivated to give their best.
- vi. It is also recommended that the present admission policies in Nigeria should be given an upward review to ensure they have significant impact on students' academic achievement on graduation. Based on this, a new admission policy which could be called M.M.C.E. admission policies. M stands for merit entry, C for catchment area entry and E for ELDS entry which gives 45% admission to merit from catchment area candidates, 35% of admission to merit from non-catchment area candidates, 10% non-merit discretion to catchment area candidates, and 10% non-merit discretion to ELDS candidates should be adopted.

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