

QUOTA SYSTEM REGIME FOR ACHIEVING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN NIGERIA: A RETHINK

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Abstract

This paper examines the quota system in Nigeria's education sector, evaluating its effectiveness in achieving equal educational opportunities. It scrutinizes the historical context, implementation, impacts, and criticisms of the quota system. The study aims to provide a comprehensive rethink of the policy's role in promoting educational equality, suggesting reforms based on current challenges and global best practices. Equal educational opportunity means that the school's obligation is to provide an opportunity by being available within easy geographical access of the child, free of cost (beyond the value of the child's time) and with a curriculum that would not exclude him from higher education. The problems associated with the implementation of equal educational opportunity in Nigerian constitution were what drew the attention of the writer.

Keywords: Education, quota system regime, equal education, rethink (proposals for reform)

Introduction

Education is an essential process in human development. It is different from schooling. Schooling is just one of the ways in which education is provided, whereas education deals with the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties are trained and different skills are developed. Education is also defined as the act or process of educating or applying discipline on the mind or a process of character training. It is a dynamic instrument of change. Education is expected to affect or condition the social behavior of the person being educated. Education is a life-long process which is always used to imply a positive state of mind. Education like many concepts has divergent meanings depending on the multiplicity of views to give it meanings from different perspectives. However, some scholars have offered their perspectives on what education is. Education is seen as the act or process of educating or applying discipline to the mind or a process of character training (Adesemowo & Tumininu, 2022). Also, Bamisaiye in Adesemowo & Tumininu (2022, p.1), sees education as a “cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, Skills, and attitudes, all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life generally”. Education is the purest form of learning, making us permanently capable and inclined to benefit ourselves and other members of society through the application of such learning. John (2020) sees education as a method for polishing the human mind developing and training it. The name Education, like the concept of education, has an ambiguous root. Educare and Educatum are Latin terms that mean "to educate." The former implies rising, whereas the latter refers to the skill of teaching and training (John, 2020). Thus, education can be described simply as a system or activity that seeks to teach an individual a new skill or new concept. Furthermore, it sharpens minds and develops moral standards in individuals (John, 2020). T. P. Nunm in Sumanta (2018, p.11) sees education as ‘the complete development of a child so that he can make an original contribution to human life according to the best of his capacity’.

According to Bamisaiye (1989), Education is “a cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, Skills and attitudes, all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life generally” (p. 9) education is the pristine essence of learning which makes us permanently able and disposed to benefit ourselves and other members of the society in the use we make of such learning. Schooling may lead to negative behavior, knowledge can be negatively used, learning too can also be negative, but education must be positive. The type of school attended does influence one's behavior. One can succeed in carrying out a negative, anti-social behavior like “pen-robbery”, armed robbery, examination malpractices, raping, or activities of secret cult members in higher institutions which are acquired through negative learning, but for one's behavior to have educational worth, it must be positive.

The various stages of learning which one goes through in school do not in themselves constitute education. However, each of the stages plays significant roles in making one educated. Education, broadly speaking consists of all the influence involved in shaping the development of an individual. The whole life of an individual is education and it ceases when one dies. Education can be given at home, in school, church or mosque, community village or town. Only the literacy aspect of education is best given at school. There are many types of education, viz; literacy education, mental education, social or moral education. Mental education is the development of a child mentally while in literacy education, the child must be able to develop a sound life. Mind and be God-fearing in all aspects of life. The educated person must adjust himself to any environment. Education is sometimes referred to as imitation in the sense that anybody that comes into society does not know the norms and the other essential things to be known in a society.

Education is also the means by which we transmit culture, norms, tradition, rules from one generation to the other and this is done so that the society can continue to exist. The idea of education in any developing country which has undergone a colonial experience in terms of the transmission of culture should be different from that of a country that has not got this experience. Hence in the transmission of culture in the developing country, it must not constitute only the alien culture but also the indigenous culture. Education is being regarded therefore as a veritable tool for inculcating in the individual the skills, abilities, aptitudes, attitudes, interest, values and skills which are necessary for functioning effectively in the society. Education is also essential for salvaging virtues of all shades in a way that is beneficial to the society. It is a known fact that not all learning can be defined as education, three characteristics that distinguish true education from such things as rote learning, purely mechanical training, indoctrination or brainwashing. According to him, true education; Deals with knowledge that is recognizably worthwhile and capable of achieving a voluntary and committed response from the learner. Education is seen as the act or process of educating or applying discipline to the mind or a process of character training (Adesemowo & Tumininu, 2022). Also, Bamisaiye in Adesemowo & Tumininu (2022, p.1), sees education as a "cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, Skills, and attitudes, all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life generally. Formal education is seen as a sort of education that is organized and structured. Learning takes place in specially constructed, purpose-built institutions such as primary and secondary schools (private and public), special schools for the handicapped, colleges, colleges of education, colleges of technology, and universities (Adesemowo & Tumininu, 2022). Syllabi, schemes of work, course outlines, lesson plans, and timetables are used to meticulously arrange and structure the instructions to be taught.

Education is a critical component of human progress. That is not the same as schooling. Schooling is only one method of providing education, whereas education is concerned with the entire process of human learning in which knowledge is transmitted, faculties are exercised, and various abilities (Adesemowo & Tumininu, 2022). Education ensures the survival of the human species, preserves its intellectual and cultural traditions, and aids in the development of enlightened civilization for human well-being and economic progress, as witnessed and observed throughout history (Sumanta, 2018). Humans, unlike other organisms, are capable of learning and being educated. Modern times have seen a significant increase in the importance of education in human life. The human child needed to study significantly less in past civilizations to live a convenient life. The amount of experience, knowledge, information, and talent that has been garnered over time has greatly risen due to the growth of human civilization, technical advancement, and social innovation. As a result, the modern individual requires additional schooling to understand how to live an efficient adult life. Education prepares people for their environments, both natural and social, through the development of their abilities, which continues throughout their lives (Sumanta, 2018). Education was originally intended to enlighten the intellect and, in particular, to foster moral development; however, the onset of the industrial revolution altered the role of education. As a result of industrialization, skill sets became increasingly specialized, with more complicated knowledge necessary to hold such skill sets. As a result, education determines the skills that are available in a market

(Onuoha, 2018). Marxian political economy shows that certain necessities called productive forces are needed for production to take place. They include the objects of labor, means of labor and labor power which are a combination of the natural resources upon which man applies labor on, the tools that are used in production and the physical and psychological capabilities of man to produce in other words, skills.

The quota system regime was introduced in Nigeria to address the issue of unequal access to education. However, this system has been criticized for its limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities for all. This journal article will examine the quota system regime and its impact on achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria. The quota system regime was introduced in Nigeria in the 1970s to address the issue of unequal access to education. The system was designed to ensure that each state had equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of their population size or economic status. However, this system has been criticized for its limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities for all. The quota system regime has been criticized for its limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities for all. Studies have shown that the system has failed to address the issue of unequal access to education, particularly for disadvantaged groups (Adeyinka, 2007; Olaniyan, 2017). The system has also been criticized for its inequitable distribution of educational resources, limited access to quality education, and inadequate funding for education (Adeyinka, 2007). This system of education can be assessed diagonally i.e.

Strengths:

1. The quota system regime has been implemented to address the issue of unequal access to education in Nigeria.
2. The system aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or socio-economic status.
3. The quota system regime has been in place for several decades, providing a sense of stability and continuity in the education sector.

Weaknesses:

1. The quota system regime has been criticized for its limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities for all.
2. The system has been accused of being inequitable, with some states and regions receiving more funding and resources than others.
3. The quota system regime has also been criticized for its focus on quantity over quality, with a emphasis on increasing access to education rather than improving the quality of education.

Opportunities:

1. The current quota system regime provides an opportunity for reform and improvement.
2. The government can increase funding for education and improve the quality of education in Nigeria.
3. The quota system regime can be reformed to address the issue of unequal access to education and provide more opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Threats:

1. The quota system regime is facing criticism and opposition from various stakeholders, which could lead to its abolition.
2. The system is also facing challenges in terms of funding and resources, which could impact its effectiveness.
3. The quota system regime is also facing challenges in terms of corruption and nepotism, which could impact its credibility and effectiveness.

The quota system regime in Nigeria has both strengths and weaknesses. While it has been implemented to address the issue of unequal access to education, it has been criticized for its limitations and inequities. The system provides opportunities for reform and improvement, but also faces threats in terms of funding, corruption, and opposition. Therefore, a rethink of the quota system regime is necessary to address. Furthermore, educational inequality remains a significant issue in Nigeria, rooted in historical, socio-economic, and regional disparities. The quota system was introduced to bridge these gaps and promote equal access to educational opportunities. However, decades after its implementation, the efficacy and fairness of this system are subjects of intense debate.

Historical Context of the Quota System in Nigeria

The quota system in Nigeria was institutionalized during the post-independence era to address the educational imbalance between the northern and southern regions. The policy aimed to ensure that students from less educationally developed states had access to federal educational institutions. This affirmative action was seen as a necessary measure to foster national unity and equitable development.

Implementation of the Quota System

The quota system allocates a certain percentage of admissions to candidates based on their state of origin, with less developed states receiving favorable consideration. This system operates alongside merit-based admissions, creating a dual framework intended to balance equity and excellence.

Impact of the Quota System

Positive Outcomes

Increased Access: The quota system has enabled students from underrepresented regions to gain admission to federal educational institutions, thus promoting regional balance.

National Unity: By fostering a more diverse student body, the system has contributed to greater national cohesion and understanding among different ethnic and regional groups.

Negative Outcomes

Merit Compromise: Critics argue that the quota system compromises academic standards by admitting students with lower qualifications over more meritorious candidates.

Perpetuation of Mediocrity: There is concern that the system may inadvertently perpetuate mediocrity by failing to incentivize high academic achievement in favor of quota-based admissions.

Inequity within States: The system does not address inequalities within states, often benefiting the elite in less developed regions while neglecting the truly disadvantaged.

Criticisms and Calls for Reform

The quota system has faced considerable criticism for being outdated and ineffective in achieving its intended goals. Key criticisms include:

Lack of Focus on Quality: The emphasis on quantity over quality has led to a decline in educational standards.

Administrative Challenges: The system is plagued by inefficiencies and corruption, with some students exploiting loopholes to gain undeserved admission.

Socio-Economic Factors: The quota system does not adequately address the broader socio-economic barriers to education, such as poverty and inadequate infrastructure.

A Rethink: Proposals for Reform

Emphasizing Merit and Equity

A reformed quota system should balance merit with equity, ensuring that admissions prioritize academic excellence while still addressing regional disparities.

Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers

Policies should focus on addressing the root socio-economic causes of educational inequality, such as poverty, infrastructure deficits, and inadequate funding for schools in less developed areas.

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

Improving the transparency and accountability of the quota system is crucial. This could involve strict monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to prevent abuse and ensure that the intended beneficiaries are reached.

Regional Development Programs

Investing in regional development programs that improve the quality of education in less developed states can reduce the need for a quota system, as all regions would be capable of competing on an equal footing.

The quota system in Nigeria's education sector, while well-intentioned, requires significant reforms to truly achieve equal educational opportunities. A balanced approach that emphasizes merit, addresses socio-economic barriers, and enhances transparency and accountability can create a more equitable and effective educational landscape. As Nigeria continues to develop, rethinking and reforming the quota system is imperative to ensure that all citizens have access to quality education, irrespective of their region of origin.

Equality of Education

Equality comes from the word equal. Equal is defined as "having one measure; the same in magnitude; quantity, degree, worth, evenly balanced, level or uniform in operation. Equality of education means that educational policy in a state or nation should have one measure, reaching all the territorial integrity of the state, for all the citizens of the state to receive equal educational opportunity. It is the responsibility of the state to see that this policy is made and enforced to the benefit of her citizens' education, without discrimination whatever. Equality of educational opportunity implied that any two children of the same abilities shall receive equivalent forms of assistance in developing those abilities, whatever their parental circumstances are. Equality of educational opportunity exists when a child's educational opportunity does not depend upon either his parent's economic circumstances or his location within the state. Agbarevo (1996) held that equality of educational opportunities could also be seen as the provision of education

needed by every Nigerian citizen with respect to his abilities and potentials to enable him live a productive life in the society that is devoid of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sex and socio-economic background. This means that every Nigerian citizen should be able to fit into the educational system including the precarious and the handicapped.

The Need for Equal Education in Nigeria

The provision of equal educational opportunity has been a central theme of educational system round the globe. In the middle of nineteenth century, Horace Mann and other reformers fought for the extension of the common school system in U.S. They had a goal to help children from low-status families. Their public school system becomes the first in the world to aim at providing all students with educational opportunity through high school and post secondary levels. The development of equality of educational opportunity was one of the most hopeful and civilized features of western industrialized societies. Equality of educational opportunities makes the unacceptable acceptable, the persistent differences of power and position in a deeply unequal society. Education is a very important means of advancement in life. The importance of education for equality cannot be overemphasized. Education is the foundation for individual and national development without which the state cannot exist. The state operators must be educated for them to govern the state. Ulinfun (1993) had it that education helps to prepare men and women who direct and carry out the varied activities that sustain the society. Education provides the man power for the political, economic and social institutions upon which the state revolves.

Equal Education In Place of Quota System

Equal education is geared towards providing equal education to those who are educationally disadvantaged. This it will do by.

- (a) Providing educational institutions to them.
- (b) Providing properly trained man-power to facilitate equal education to the less advantaged.
- (c) Creating adequate incentives, such as providing books, clothes, etc. for the students.
- (d) Enacting enabling law to make education compulsory to a certain level in such disadvantaged states.
- (e) Providing for adequate funding for education.

Furthermore, Osuoha (1998) emphasized the need for -adequate funding for any meaningful quality education at any level in Nigeria. She maintained that for Nigeria to run and maintain any meaningful and qualitative education at any level there must be a cautious approach (by the federal government of Nigeria) towards adequate funding for such education.

Purpose of Study

The study seeks to:

1. Examine the quota system regime and its impact on achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria.
2. Identify the limitations of the quota system regime and explore alternative approaches to achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The quota system regime was introduced in Nigeria to address the issue of unequal access to education. However, this system has been criticized for its limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities for all. The problem with the quota system regime is that it has failed to address the issue of unequal access to education, particularly for disadvantaged groups. The researcher tends to investigate if the Quota System Regime has really addressed Equal Educational Opportunity in Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design that I adopt is a qualitative research design, specifically a case study design. This design is appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth examination of the quota system regime in Nigeria and its impact on achieving equal educational opportunities. This study used a qualitative research approach to examine the quota system regime and its impact on achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria. Data was collected through interviews with education stakeholders, including teachers, students, and policymakers. The quota system regime in Nigeria was introduced in the 1970s to address the issue of unequal access to education. The system was designed to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or socio-economic status. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying and coding themes and patterns in the data.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research question.

1. Does quota system regime affects equal educational opportunities in Nigeria?
2. Does the limitation of the quota system regime and alternative approaches affects equal educational opportunities in Nigeria?

Findings and Conclusions

The findings of the study indicate that the quota system regime has both positive and negative impacts on achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria. The study also found that the quota system regime has several limitations in achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria. Some of the limitations include; Inequitable distribution of educational resources, Limited access to quality education, Inadequate funding for education and Corruption and nepotism in the education sector.

To achieve equal educational opportunities in Nigeria, there is a need to rethink the quota system regime and explore alternative approaches. The quota system regime in Nigeria has both positive and negative impacts on achieving equal educational opportunities. While the system has increased access to education for disadvantaged groups and promoted diversity and inclusion, it has also been criticized for its limitations and focus on quantity over quality. Therefore, a rethink of the quota system regime is necessary to address these issues and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to access quality education.

Recommendations

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

1. Review and reform the quota system regime to ensure equitable distribution of educational resources.
2. Increase funding for education to improve access to quality education.
3. Address corruption and nepotism in the education sector.

4. Explore alternative approaches to achieving equal educational opportunities in Nigeria.

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