

Attitude of Tertiary Institution Lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination as a Method for Ensuring Quality Higher Education in Nigeria

Dr. Ajiboye Samuel Kolawole
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
Email: skajiboye@yahoo.com

Abstract

The global quest for quality education as entrenched in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) was born out of the dire need to improve people's lives through the training of high level cognitive and non-cognitive skills which will enable students to contribute to worthwhile development in the society. In that direction, goals of tertiary education in Nigeria focus on the training of high-level manpower through high quality lifelong education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills and character for self-dignity. However, a major constraint to the achievement of the goals is the unsatisfactory performance of students, which has been blamed on single entrance examination process. Towards ensuring quality higher education, therefore, tertiary educational institutions are saddled with the mandate of ensuring quality student intake through the conduct of multiple entrance examinations, particularly the Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME), which has generated mixed reactions across the country in recent times. This study therefore investigated attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as a method for ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive method. A total of 508 respondents participated through purposive sampling while a structured questionnaire entitled, "Attitude Towards Post-UTME Questionnaire (ATPUQ)" was used to collect data. The descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data and all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels. The results revealed that respondents showed positive attitudes towards Post-UTME. There was a significant difference in the attitude of the respondents based on institution type and career cadre. It was recommended that lecturers should be adequately involved in the conduct of the Post-UTME; and lecturers in private tertiary institutions should be more educated on the benefits of Post-UTME in enhancing quality higher education.

Key Words: Attitude, Post-UTME, quality higher education, lecturers

Background of the Study

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), a global aspiration, has 10 targets encompassing many different aspects of education. Target 3 aims at ensuring quality

tertiary education, which cuts across institutions of higher learning. In order to key into this particular objective, nations all over the world have been taking necessary measures that will not only establish but also sustain quality higher education. In Nigeria, one of the measures considered necessary is to improve the student intake into tertiary institutions through multiple entrance examinations. Thus, the previous single entrance method, the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), was modified to accommodate a second stage procedure called the Post-UTME, which requires that successful candidates at the former (UTME) are subjected to further take the latter exam (Post-UTME) conducted by the managements of various tertiary institutions. Candidates are required to obtain a certain score set as the benchmark before given admission.

The history of higher education in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-independence era when the Elliot Commission was set up by the then British Colonial Government in 1943. The commission recommended, among others, the establishment of a university college in Nigeria. This resulted in the founding of University College, Ibadan in 1948. In 1960, University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established while other institutions of higher education were subsequently established across the country (Abiri & Jekayinfa, 2010). The demand for higher education in Nigeria has been on the increase in recent times (Ajiboye, 2017). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) described higher (otherwise referred to as tertiary) education as the education given in institutions such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and mono-technics after secondary education. The core goals of the higher education institutions in Nigeria include contributing to national development through manpower training, providing

quality learning opportunities, promoting and encouraging scholarship, and providing high quality lifelong learning (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2013). One of the strategies advanced in order to achieve the goals is the process of matriculating quality students, i.e., the procedures for entrance examination into higher institutions.

At the inception of higher education in Nigeria, not much attention was given to the matter of admission process. As a result, each existing institution of higher learning conducted its own entrance examination and admitted its own students without a central control. Salim (2006) noted that after some time, these systems of admission revealed serious limitations and waste of resources in the process of administering the entrance examinations. This development led to the establishment of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1978. The establishment of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was a direct response to the failure of earlier systems to effectively accommodate and guarantee quality applicants into the few universities in Nigeria. Thus, the JAMB was endowed with the responsibility of conducting entrance examinations and coordinate admission into various universities in such manner that would enhance quality higher education. In this direction, the JAMB conducts the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) on a yearly basis as the entrance criterion for candidates seeking admission into institutions of higher education. However, the credibility of this (UTME) entrance examination became questionable considering the poor performance of students who gained admission through the process. Okoje (2008) inferred that the ability of the UTME to produce quality candidate for admission into universities was no longer reliable because of the high level of

examination malpractice that has accompanied the process. Both students and parents are involved in unethical practices out of desperation to secure admission into institutions of higher learning across the country. In a bid to ensure quality higher education through quality students' intake, the management of higher institutions and the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Post-UTME exercise in the year 2005 (Orakpo, 2016).

Prior to the introduction of the Post-UTME, JAMB was solely and constitutionally given the responsibility of admitting students into Nigerian higher educational institutions through a single entrance examination, the UTME. Oye (2006), however, noted that the failure rate among candidates who enter universities with high UTME scores was very disturbing. Also, Isaac (2010) enumerated the reasons behind the introduction of Post-UTME screening to include among others as: the outcry in most Nigerian higher educational institutions over abysmal performance of students presented by JAMB for admission through UTME; complaints by institutions that most of the students recommended by JAMB could not exhibit required potential; that impersonation had crept into the UTME, hence the clamour for supplementary examination for the prospective students before admission. The Post-UTME policy made it mandatory for all higher educational institutions to independently screen successful candidates in UTME before giving admission. The proponents of Post-UTME upheld that the examination would help ensure the best candidates to be selected for admission; sieve out those candidates who are not potentially fit for higher education, and eliminate unethical practices that could limit the process of achieving quality higher education.

Since the introduction of the Post-UTME in Nigeria, there had been voluble reactions from different quarters. While the proponents of Post-UTME believed that Post-UTME screening ensures quality in Nigerian higher education, many people in the society opine that it only places a financial burden on the students and their parents/guardians as well as creating room for nepotism in institutions of higher learning. Edukugho (2012) reported that parents demonstrated a negative attitude towards Post-UTME because they considered it exploitative. Oyedeji (2017) found that lecturers across different cadres were similar in their attitude towards cancellation of Post-UTME while staff of private institutions discouraged the adoption of Post-UTME. Isaac (2010) found that heads of universities and parents showed negative attitudes towards Post-UTME because it puts the managements at risk of legal action from different quarters. Considering the positions of different groups of professionals and members of the society on the method appropriate for ensuring quality education, it is imperative to investigate attitudes of lecturers of tertiary institutions in order to ascertain their viewpoints. Attitude, which is the way an individual views a phenomenon or programme, determines the behaviour towards such an event. Myers (2010) described attitude as the prediction of one's action and reactions. It represents a person's likes and dislikes, attraction or aversion to things, ideas or any other aspect or events in the environment. In the context of the present study, the attitude of the lecturers of tertiary institution therefore is an evaluation of their positive and negative predispositions towards the introduction of Post-UTME as a method of ensuring quality higher education.

Statement of the Problem

The global quest for quality education, as entrenched in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) was born out of the dire need to improve people's lives through the training of high level cognitive and non-cognitive skills which will enable students contribute to worthwhile development in the society. In that direction, goals of tertiary education in Nigeria focus on the training of high-level manpower through high quality lifelong education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills and character for self-dignity. However, a major constraint to the achievement of the goals is the unsatisfactory performance of students, which has been blamed on a single entrance examination process. Towards ensuring quality higher education, therefore, tertiary educational institutions are saddled with the mandate of ensuring quality student intake by conducting multiple entrance examinations, particularly the Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME), which, unfortunately, has been generating mixed reactions across the country since inception. It thus became imperative therefore to carry out this study to ascertain the attitude of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

What is the attitude of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria based on institution type.

2. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria based on cadre.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria with the view to recommending strategies for achieving SDG4 in Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive method of survey type was adopted for the study which involved a representative sample of the population. A total of 508 lecturers participated by responding to the structured questionnaire. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants in accordance with the moderating variables of the study, which are the institution type and cadre. After the selection, the participants were stratified across the variables. The questionnaire administered to the respondents was designed by the researcher and entitled “Attitude Towards Post-UTME (ATPU)”. It has two sections: Section A contained demographic data while Section B contained 15 items on attitude towards Post-UTME patterned in positive statements. The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.83 having been subjected to the test re-test method and the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation procedure. Since the questionnaire was patterned after the Four-Point Likert type response scale with score from 4 to 1 on a continuum, the mid-point is 2.50 ($(1+2+3+4=10/4)$). Thus, any item having a mean score

from 2.50 and above represents positive attitude. However, the highest cumulative mean score is 60.0 while the lowest is 15.0; the range is 45.0 (that is, 60-15). Cumulative mean score from 45.0 and above indicates positive attitude while otherwise is interpreted as negative. The t-test (inferential) statistics were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Institution Type		
Public	386	76.0
Private	122	24.0
Total	508	100.0
Career Cadre		
Below Senior Lecturer	361	71.1
Senior Lecturer & above	147	28.9
Total	508	100.0

Table 1 shows that 76.0% and 24.0% of the respondents were from public and private tertiary institutions respectively. There are more lecturers in public institutions than the private. More lecturers (71.1%) below senior cadre participated than those from senior lecturer and above (28.9%).

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post- Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination as a method of ensuring quality higher education in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of the responses on attitude towards Post-UTME

In ensuring quality higher education, I believe Post-UTME:	Mean	Rank
should be encouraged	3.69	1 st
helps to produce world-class students	3.68	2 nd
enhances quality students' intake	3.42	3 rd
is more dependable	3.31	4 th

is not meant to bring disparity in university admission process	3.24	5 th
improves institutions' output	3.21	6 th
checkmates incidence of examinations malpractice	3.19	7 th
helps to discover students' potential	3.17	8 th
encourages hard work among students	3.14	9 th
reduces impersonation during entrance examinations	3.13	10 th
encourages transparency in the admission process	3.11	11 th
enhances high level of skill acquisition among students	3.10	12 th
encourages competitiveness among students	3.08	13 th
eliminates favouritism during admission	3.07	14 th
prevents multiple admission of candidates	3.04	15 th
Cumulative mean	48.58	

The result in Table 2 reveals that each of 15 items has mean score above 2.50, which was adopted as the cut-off point for making decision on the attitude of the respondents towards Post-UTME: the respondents significantly aligned with all the items. On the whole, the cumulative mean of 48.58 is equally higher than the mean range of 45.0; hence tertiary institution lecturers are positively disposed to Post-UTME as a method of enhancing quality higher education in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the most prominent beliefs of the respondents are that Post-UTME: should be encouraged; helps to produce world-class students; enhances quality students' intake; and it is more dependable. This finding disagrees with the earlier study of Isacc (2010) which reported that parents in Ekiti State, Nigeria showed negative attitudes towards Post-UTME. The reason for the dissimilarity between the previous and the present study could be as result of difference in the nature of the respondents used in both studies. While parents may show negative attitudes towards Post-UTME because of the accompanying financial burden, lecturers might consider the exercise from the advantage of added quality to

higher education and global competitiveness. Since lecturers showed positive attitudes towards Post-UTME as a method for enhancing quality higher education, it follows that they are of the belief that the single entrance examination (UTME) procedure should be replaced in order to achieve the SDG4 objective on quality higher education.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME a method of enhancing quality higher education in Nigeria based on institution type.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the attitudes of lecturers towards Post-UTME based on institution type

Institution Type	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-val	Crit. t-val	p-value
Public	386	56.87	4.10	506	*5.32	1.96	.0001
Private	122	52.39	4.36				

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the null hypothesis is rejected because the p-value of .0001 is less than 0.05 alpha level. Thus, significant difference exists between the attitude of public and private tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME as method of enhancing quality higher education in Nigeria. However, the statistics showed that respondents from public institutions were more positively disposed to Post-UTME than those from private. Oyedeji (2017) similarly reported that private higher institutions discouraged adoption of Post-UTME because it reduces their students' population as well as income generation. This same reason may be responsible for the low level of disposition of respondents from private institutions in

the present study. However, it is imperative that stakeholders in higher education need to realise the importance of quality above other needs or aspiration of the tertiary institutions. Pertinently, the more adequately lecturers embrace Post-UTME, regardless of any variable, the greater the possibility of achieving SDG4 objective on quality education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State towards Post-UTME a method of enhancing quality higher education in Nigeria base on career cadre.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the attitudes of lecturers towards Post-UTME based on cadre

Career cadre	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.t-val	Crit. t-val	p-val
Below Senior Lecturer	361	56.02	4.12	508	1.20	1.96	2.31
Senior Lecturer & Above	147	54.83	5.34				

Table 4 shows that the calculated the p-value (2.31) is greater than the alpha level (0.05); hence the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, there was similarity between attitude of respondents below senior and those from senior lecturer and above. Thus, all the respondents, regardless of career cadre, are positively disposed to Post-UTME for enhancing quality higher education and achieving the SDG4. Oyedeji (2017) equally reported similarity between attitudes of junior and senior staff of University of Ilorin towards cancellation of Post-UTME. This shows that career cadre did not significantly influence attitudes of lecturers towards entrance examinations into tertiary institutions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Going by the findings of this study, it could be concluded that tertiary institution lecturers in Kwara State showed positive disposition to Post-UTME entrance procedure as a method of enhancing quality higher education in Nigeria and achieving the SDG4 objective on quality tertiary education. In that direction, lecturers are likely to provide support for effective implementation of Post-UTME in a way that promotes quality higher education which would measure up to global aspiration enshrined in the SDG4, Target 3 that specifically focuses on higher education. In addition, public tertiary institution lecturers have more positive attitude towards Post-UTME than those in the private institutions. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Tertiary institution lecturers should be adequately involved in the conduct of Post-UTME since they realise its contribution to quality higher education;
- Lecturers in private tertiary institutions should be encouraged to develop a more positive attitude towards Post-UTME like their counterparts in public institutions in order to enhance quality higher education; and
- Post-UTME exercise should become a permanent pre-requisite for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria in order to achieve the SDG4 objective on higher education.

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