

The Cause of Poor State of Technology Education (Polytechnic Education) in Nigeria

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Abstract—The polytechnic system in Nigeria is really degrading and time-wasting. Every student in the polytechnic spends a minimum of five years to get his or her HND which will take another two years after the compulsory one year youth service to go for post graduate diploma which would be degree equivalent. This dichotomy between Polytechnics and University in Nigeria has reached and assume a worrisome dimension, which the government has found difficult to address. Urgent steps need to be taken to salvage the situation. The purpose of this paper is to analyze jamb statistics and it shows a wide gap between candidates seeking admission into universities and polytechnic with preference for universities.

Keyword—Polytechnics; Candidates; Higher education; University; JAMB

I. INTRODUCTION

According to wordiq.com (1), the term polytechnic, from the Greek πολύ *polú* meaning "many" and τεχνικός *tekhnikós* meaning "arts", is commonly used in many countries to describe an institution that delivers technical education, other countries do not use the term and use alternative terminology. Polytechnics, in name, have existed since at least the 18th century but became increasingly popular since the post-WWII expansion in technical education (2).

Most secondary school leavers seeking admission into higher institutions in Nigeria would hardly choose polytechnics as their preferred institution, and it is easily understood why it is so. Why should they choose polytechnics when the university is there for them? Why go to the polytechnic to obtain Higher National Diploma that will take additional two years to go for post-graduate diploma that will make it degree equivalent? Why would you go through all these and still not be sure about gaining an employment after all the rigorous exercises?

Some of these students have vowed not to go to polytechnics for any reason. The question this paper will try to answer the 'why' and how the 'why' can be addressed.



Fig 1: Cross section of students writing examination

II. HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

According to the Federal Ministry of Education (3), Higher education in Nigeria is provided by universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, as well as institutes that prepare students for professional courses such as accounting, law, architecture and mass communication (4).

In many countries, polytechnics are considered as engineering schools which is only partially correct. These are educational settings that are made use of in imparting practical knowledge and apart from engineering degrees; these centers are used to provide knowledge in applied sciences and industrial arts. This is of great help to students who want a degree or diploma that gets them immediate jobs after completion. There is also a difference in the duration of courses. In universities, courses typically are of longer duration, taking 2-5 years to complete, whereas polytechnics are famous for diplomas and certificates in industrial arts that get completed in 6-12 months and a student gets absorbed in the industry immediately thus, solving the problem of unemployment greatly (5).

A. Polytechnic education

The polytechnic system was originally adopted or rather inherited from our colonial master. This unjust disparity continued to create ill-will in the British educational sector until 1992 when it was abolished under the Higher Education Act, hence all the polytechnics in the UK were subsequently elevated to

conventional universities. So, there are no polytechnics awarding HND in the UK now as they all award degrees or their equivalent.

Academic degrees in polytechnics were validated by the UK Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) from 1965 to 1992. The CNAA was chartered by the British government to validate and award degrees and maintain national quality assurance standards. The CNAA subject boards from their inception were from the universities. A CNAA degree was formally recognised as equivalent to a university degree and the courses were under strict scrutiny by assessors external to the polytechnics (6).

At their peak there were over thirty polytechnics in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the English ones being primarily located in urban areas large enough to support industry or commerce, from which they usually took the city name. These are now universities. This status was attained in 1992 (7).

III. JAMB STATISTICS AND DISCUSSION OF POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION

Analyzing the joint admissions and matriculation examinations helps to throw more light on the students enrolment figures for four years before JAMB started conducting a joint examination Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME).

The UTME ensures that candidates write one exam into any of the three tier of the Nigeria tertiary education.

Table 1: UME and MPCE enrolment figures by JAMB

Years	UME	MPCE	Total
2007	911,679	167,836	1,079,515
2008	1,192,050	310,022	1,502,072
2009	1,184,651	342,908	1,527,559
2010	1,330,531	45,140	1,375,671
Total	4,618,911	865,906	5,484,817

Source: (8,9)

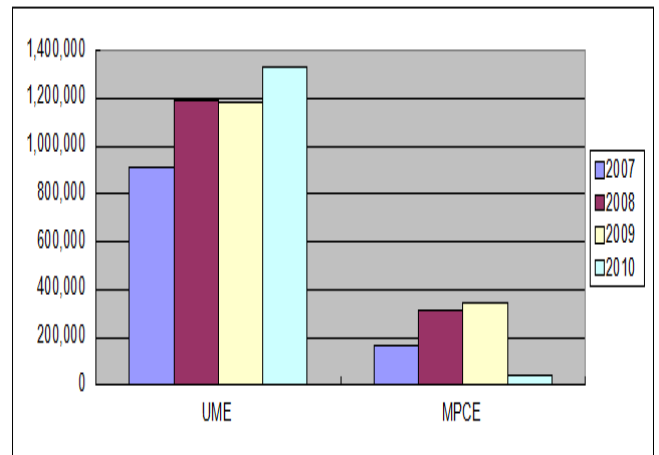


Fig 2 : showing a bar chart of the UME and MPCE enrolments

*Universities Matriculation Examinations (UME)

*Monotechnics, Polytechnics & Colleges of Education(MPCE)

*Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)

Note: that the MPCE is for both polytechnics and colleges of education

Table 1 and Fig 2 above gives us a graphic description of the of candidates enrolment for tertiary education in Nigeria and from above it is very obvious that students or candidates prefer the universities to either the polytechnics or the colleges of education. Candidates enrolment for universities totals 4,618,911 for the years under review while a combined figure for polytechnics and colleges of education totals just 865,906.

Table 2: Showing Statistical analysis in table 1

Years	UME	MPCE	Total	% UME	% MPCE
2007	911,679	167,836	1,079,515	84.45	15.55
2008	1,192,050	310,022	1,502,072	79.36	20.64
2009	1,184,651	342,908	1,527,559	77.55	22.45
2010	1,330,531	45,140	1,375,671	96.72	3.28
Total	4,618,911	865,906	5,484,817	84.21	15.79

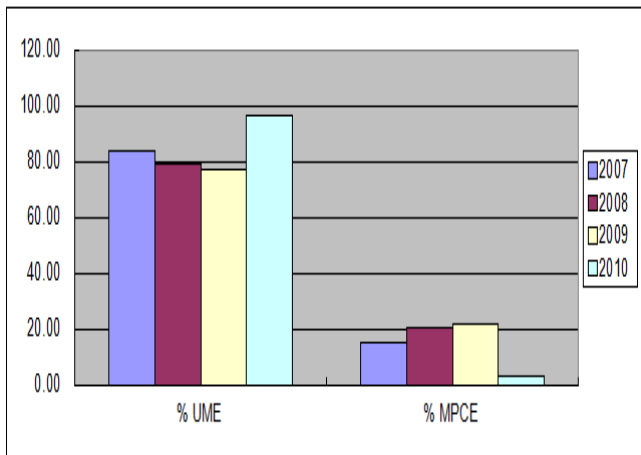


Fig 3: Showing bar chart of the percentage enrolments of the total

From table 2 and fig 3 it reveals that the university enrolment in the years under review is 84.21 percent while the combined percent for both polytechnics and colleges of education is just 15.79.

IV. THE SITUATION OF POLYTECHNIC IN NIGERIA

The situation of the enrolment figures as discussed above shows that the dichotomy needs to be addressed.

Nwali (10) opined that only very few students seeking admission into the university would want to go to the polytechnic and this is only after such students have tried unsuccessfully in gaining admission into the university or the parents are not financially stable. While a university student spends an average of four to five years as the case may be to obtain a degree, a polytechnic student spends a minimum of eight years including one year compulsory youth service. Eight years to just obtain a degree that people spend two years to acquire in other countries. That's really ridiculous and time wasting. This does not mean that all the polytechnic students or graduates are dummies; not at all. Polytechnics are very good and if not mistaken even far better than some universities in Nigeria.

According to Edet and Okeke (11), the former Minister of Education Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai told journalists that no formal document has been presented by Federal Government to bring the Higher National Diploma and degree qualifications at par, despite public outcry against the existing dichotomy.

V. CONCLUSION

From a BBC report (12), observes that the UK has been hit with the shortage of technical skilled workers due the fact that there are no longer Polytechnics. Unlike universities Polytechnics tended to serve their local communities and offered more vocational-oriented qualifications, accredited by professional bodies. Reviving polytechnic status would give vocational learning a much needed boost in an

economy which suffers from "significant shortages" of technical skills.

The government should revive the term 'polytechnic' argues a report into the future of higher education in England. New polytechnics are needed to help redress skill shortages in industry, a report argues.

The best thinker the world has ever produced is from a polytechnic, Albert Einstein, from Zurich polytechnics (now called Federal Institute of Zurich, Swiss).

There are university graduates who are better than a polytechnic graduates likewise; there are also polytechnic graduates who are also far better than the university graduates. The practical oriented scheme of the polytechnic system is something to also to be encouraged. Skills are all we need in this age to control our future as a nation as Napoleon Hill puts it "knowledge is not power, applied knowledge is" (9). Nigeria can avoid the impending technical/polytechnic educational tsunami in the educational sector by dealing with the inequality between graduates of Polytechnics and Universities.

From the BBC report United Kingdom have a problem which is traceable to the abolishing of polytechnics as touching their technical manpower and I think Nigeria should learn from that.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Sometime ago the issue was five credits as entry requirement for Universities and Poly four credits but that is no more because both is now five credits.

The inequality between the two big players in the Nigeria educational system need to be addressed to save the sector.

- Upgrading the Polytechnics- governments should come out with modalities to upgrade polys to universities or give them rights to award degrees.

- Lecturers differences- there should be a common document regulating lecturership employment and promotion including nomenclature and professorship.

- UK system-government can design or replicate the UK experience before 1992 where a central regulating body was saddled with the responsibility to award degrees to polytechnic graduates on completion of the programme e.g. either by interview or writing examinations.

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