

Implications of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) on Teacher Education in Nigeria

By

Prof. 'Dibu Ojerinde
Registrar/Chief Executive
Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Nigeria
and President IAEA
[e-mail:dibu65ojerinde@yahoo.com](mailto:dibu65ojerinde@yahoo.com)

Abstract

Admissions into tertiary education in Nigeria have been skewed towards University education since most candidates seeking admission into tertiary institution preferred universities to the Monotechnics, Polytechnics or Colleges of Education. While more than one million candidates apply into the Universities yearly, the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of education together hardly record up to 350,000 applicants.

From available statistics, a lot of wastages were recorded between 2003 and 2008. The number of prospective undergraduates who failed to secure admission into the Universities was in a steady increase and thereby constitutes a societal problem.

With the introduction of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), access would be expanded for quality entrants seeking for admissions into tertiary institutions.

This paper looks at the implications of UTME in tertiary education in general and teacher education in particular.

KEY WORDS: Admissions, Teacher-Education, Unified-Tertiary-Matriculation-Examination (UTME), Nigeria.

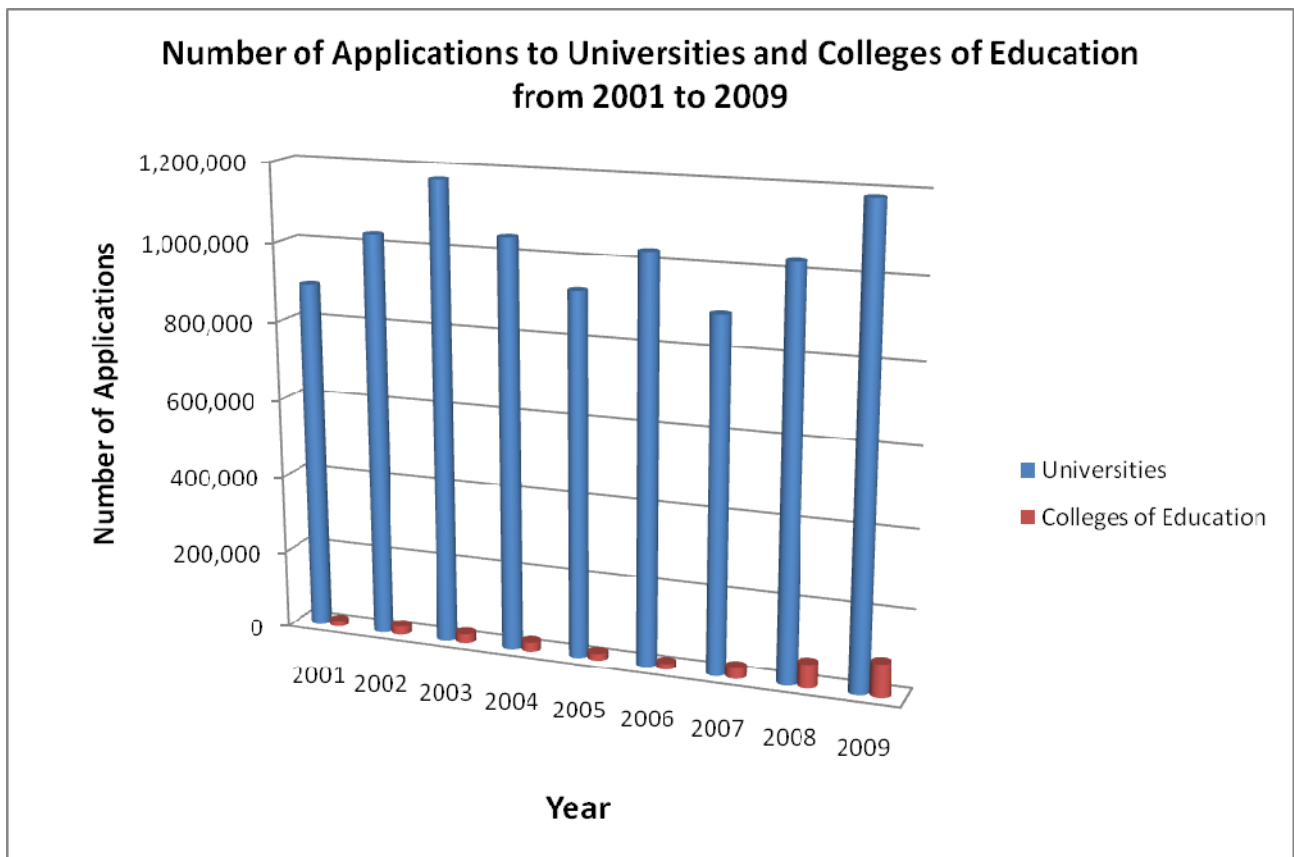
INTRODUCTION: Why UTME in Nigeria?

Over the years, admissions into tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, Monotechnics and colleges of education) in Nigeria had been skewed towards the universities. Most prospective applicants preferred universities to the Monotechnics, Polytechnics or Colleges of Education. While more than one million candidates apply into the Universities yearly, the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, together hardly record up to 350,000 applicants.

Table 1: Applications and admissions into the Universities, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and their percentages from 2001-2009

Academic year	Universities			Monotechnics, Polytechnics			Colleges of Education		
	Applications	Admissions	%	Applications	Admissions	%	Applications	Admissions	%
2001	893,259	106,304	11.90	181,450	47,305	26.10	14,338	12,415	86.60
2002	1,028,988	129,525	12.60	193,863	47,518	24.50	21,678	13,815	63.70
2003	1,172,313	175,358	14.90	232,490	43,903	18.90	23,169	9,197	39.70
2004	1,043,361	108,148	10.40	220,852	17,311	7.80	23,611	5,490	23.70
2005	926,133	125,673	13.10	149,707	28,686	19.20	17,382	10,408	59.90
2006	1,030,670	107,161	10.40	148,769	19,587	13.20	14,562	7,284	50.00
2007	893,259	149,033	16.70	135,237	25,604	18.90	26,794	12,355	46.10
2008	1,028,988	183,420	17.80	247,398	55,841	22.60	59,817	41,358	69.10
2009	1,185,574	211,991	17.90	258,153	56,597	21.90	84,346	59,650	70.70

Figure 1; Bar chart showing the Number of Applications to Universities and Colleges of Education from 2001 to 2009



From available statistics, 1.2 million candidates applied for the available for about 200,000 spaces in the universities in 2009, whereas the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of education were under-subscribed.

UTME is part of the Education Roadmap being proposed by the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria to create a level playing ground and create more access to tertiary education for the teeming applicants so that those who could not be admitted to the universities admissions could be placed in the Monotechnics, Polytechnics or Colleges of Education. This policy will encourage young people to take up technical education as well as teacher education

The policy will reduce the disparities between University and Polytechnic graduates and eliminate discriminations in terms of career progression. It will also enhance the harmonization of the academic calendar.

GUIDELINES ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Teachers are builders. No nation rises above the level of her teachers. The technological advancement of a country is an indicator of how grounded the teachers who impact knowledge are.

Teacher Education in Nigeria is often divided into three broad categories namely:

1. Initial Teacher Training/Education (a pre-service course geared towards equipping teachers before the actual classroom experience).
2. Induction (the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching in a school) and
3. Teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD). This refers to an in-service process for practicing teachers.

These guidelines also directly or indirectly contribute to the increased number of teachers and the enhancement of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

CHALLENGES OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

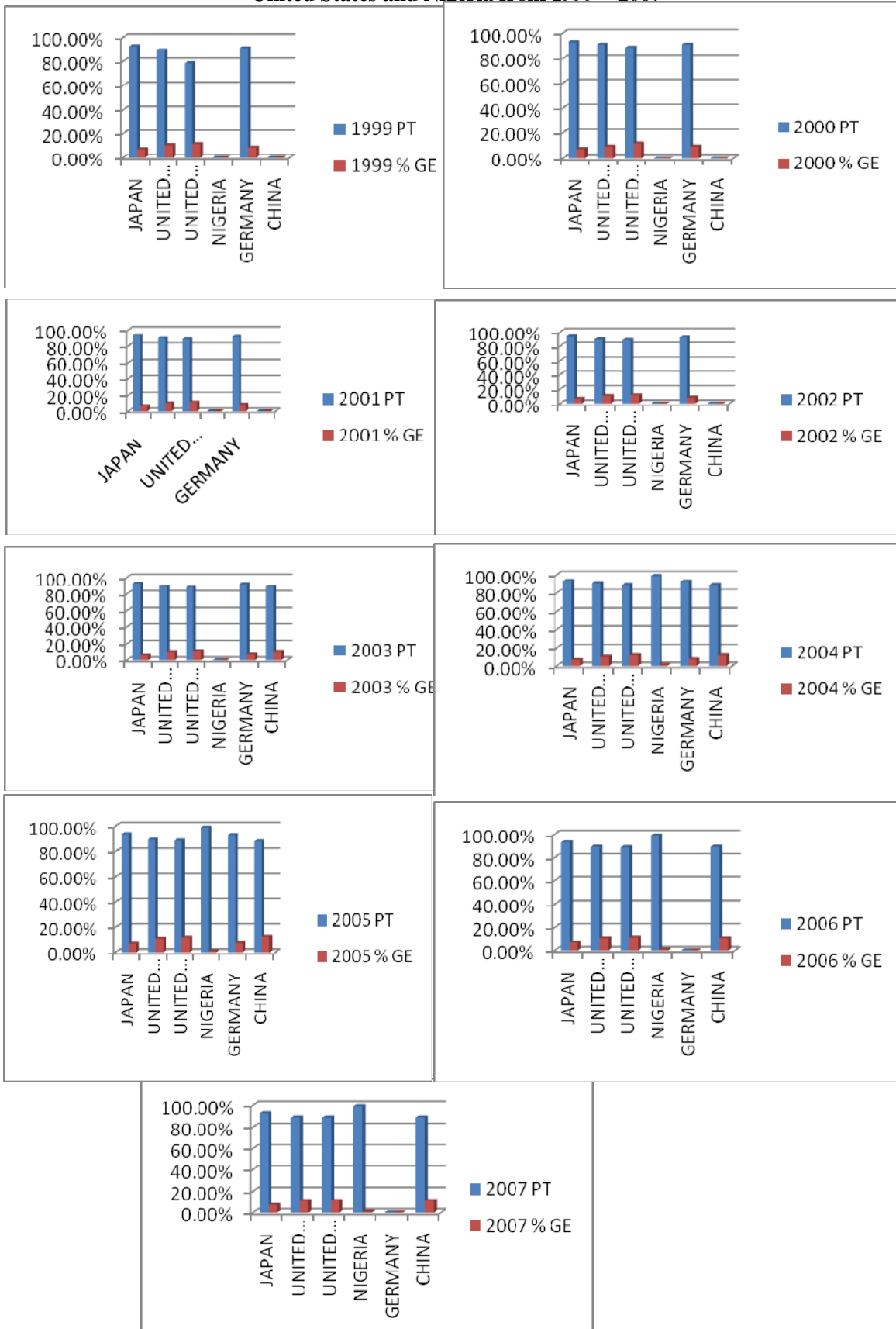
The problem of low enrolment in Teacher Education is not only peculiar to Nigeria as can be seen from the tables below.

N.B: PT – Population of students in tertiary institutions
% GE – Percentage of tertiary graduates in education

Table 2: Enrolment versus Percentage of Education Graduates in Tertiary Institutions

SN	COUNTRY	1999		2000		2001		2002	
		PT	% GE	PT	% GE	PT	% GE	PT	% GE
1	JAPAN	8,772,412 (92.8%)	7.20%	8,351,251 (92.90%)	7.10%	8,032,001 (93.1%)	6.90%	7,782,504 (93.2%)	6.80%
2	UNITED KINGDOM	3,488,064 (89.4%)	10.60%	3,481,846 (90.9%)	9.10%	3,505,746 (89.6%)	10.40%	3,562,134 (89.3%)	10.70%
3	UNITED STATES	19,260,977 (78.6%)	11.40%	19,559,680 (88.5%)	11.50%	19,,875,061 (88.5%)	11.50%	20,200,886 (88.4%)	11.60%
4	NIGERIA	11,722,281	NA	12,107,393	NA	12,478,625	NA	12,833,629	NA
5	GERMANY	4,446,929 (91.4%)	8.60%	4,474,827 (91%)	9.00%	4,520,351 (91.3%)	8.70%	4,580,889 (91.7%)	8.30%
6	CHINA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SN	COUNTRY	2003		2004		2005		2006	
		PT	% GE	PT	% GE	PT	% GE	PT	% GE
1	JAPAN	7,591,738 (93.1%)	6.90%	7,440,876 (93.1%)	6.90%	7,298,511 (93.1%)	6.90%	7,142,413 (92,9%)	7.10%
2	UNITED KINGDOM	3,647,363 (89.4%)	10.60%	3,748,864 (90.1%)	9.90%	3,849,600 (89.4%)	10.60%	3,936,743 (89.0%)	11.00%
3	UNITED STATES	20,532,389 (88.5%)	11.50%	20,861,355 (88.3%)	11.70%	21,179,380 (88.5%)	11.50%	21,479,356 (88.5%)	11.50%
4	NIGERIA	13,173,208	NA	13,499,136 (99.7%)	0.30%	13,814,789 (99.8%)	0.20%	14,123,275 (99.8%)	0.2
5	GERMANY	4,657,395 (92.2%)	7.80%	4,739,131 (92.5%)	7.50%	4,813,692 (92.5%)	7.50%	4,871,383	—
6	CHINA	475,755 (89.2%)	10.80%	473,217 (88.31%)	11.70%	469,890 (88%)	12.00%	465,891 (89.0%)	11.00%
SN	COUNTRY	2007		2008		2009			
		PT	% GE	PT	% GE	PT	% GE		
1	JAPAN	6968410 (92.8%)	7.20%	6,787,174	—	6,608,534	—		
2	UNITED KINGDOM	4,005,485 (88.9%)	11.10%	4,057,278	—	4,093,316	—		
3	UNITED STATES	21756739 (88.8%)	11.20%	22,008,178	—	22,229,741	—		
4	NIGERIA	14424828 (99.8%)	0.2	14,720,397 (99.6%)	0.40%	15,014,881	NA		
5	GERMANY	4,908,686	—	4,924,663	—	449,035	—		
6	CHINA	460,703 (88.9%)	11.10%	454,534	—	449,035	—		

Figure 2 Bar Chart showing Population of Students in tertiary institutions in Germany, Japan, United States and Nigeria from 1999 – 2007



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Global Education Database 2010
<http://ged.eads.usaidallnet.gov/query/do?program=/eads/ged/themeUNE>

The educational system has various sub-systems (the primary, secondary and tertiary levels) that make it up. These sub-systems are inter-dependent such that a problem in one can affect the others. Enumerated below are some of the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria.

I. Low Enrolment

Globally, the enrolment for teacher education is very low despite the importance of teacher education in national development.

II. Production of Qualified Teachers

A major challenge facing teacher education in Nigeria is the production of quality teachers to take care of all strata of the educational system. Greater funding must be made available to ensure sufficient number of qualified teachers in the country.

III. Poor Remuneration and Recognition of Teachers

In most countries of the world, teaching remains a low paying and low prestige occupation. Teachers receive few monetary or motivational incentives. In Nigeria for example, teachers are not well paid and because they are not well paid, they are not motivated to give their all. In some schools, teachers are seen hawking when they ought to be teaching. This does not augur well for national development. Teachers must be motivated and encouraged to discharge their duties well. Improved remuneration and conditions of service, especially at the primary and secondary school levels must be ensured and sustained. This will provide enough incentives to getting the best out of them.

IV. Poor Teaching Methods

The teaching methods adopted by a school or teacher could make or mar the students. If the teaching methods are good, better understanding comes but if not, the students would be the worst for it. Therefore, teaching methods must be improved to keep pace with the challenges of the 21st century.

IMPLICATIONS OF UTME ON TEACHER EDUCATION

I. Technological advancement

The increase in enrolment into these institutions will help to achieve the technological advancement of the country.

II. Realization of vision 20:20-20

Qualitative and functional education is one of the 7-point Agenda of the present administration to make Nigeria one of the 20 largest economies in the world. This can only be achieved through redirecting the students to focus on technical and vocational education.

III. Improvement in the quality of teachers

With the UTME, the erroneous impression that only those with low academic status study education courses will be eroded as the minimum entry into every institution will be five (5) O/L credits. This, consequently, will enhance the quality of teachers.

IV. Increase in teacher/student ratio.

Research has shown that the fewer the student/teacher ratio, the better the performance of students (Adeyemi, 2006). Increased teacher enrolment will lead to larger turnout which invariably will reduce the failure rates in school and national examinations.

V. Restoration of the dignity of teachers and graduates of Polytechnics, Monotechnics and specialized institutions

With the harmonisation of entry requirements into all tertiary institutions in Nigeria, there is bound to be a reduction in the inferiority complex formerly associated with people in technical/teacher education cadre. It will also be a step towards eliminating the existing dichotomy.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR IMPROVING TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The way out therefore, is for the Federal and State Governments to make teaching more attractive in order to retain qualified teachers who are already in service and attract new entrants into the teaching profession. There is also the urgent need to formally recognize teaching as a profession and to accord teachers the status they deserve. A special salary scale being proposed for teachers is most desirable. The Federal Government should fund Teacher Education adequately.

The Federal and State Governments should go further to establish more Colleges of Education (Technical) to train Technical Teachers. Currently, very few of such Colleges exist in Nigeria. It is also desirable that existing Colleges of Education be assisted to mount special courses to train teachers in Mathematics and the sciences to meet the increasing demand for this category of teachers.

One of the ways out is the introduction of the UTME. The new system would also boost technology and teacher education as some Polytechnics and Colleges of Education would begin to award the Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degrees respectively.

The resources being spent on institutions like the National agency for re-orientation could be ploughed into education because education can re-orientate the citizenry better. Also, not much can be attained by training technical teachers abroad. We have the resources, both human and material to train most of our teachers locally.

The improvement of teaching methods must also be pursued vigorously. This is another way forward for teacher education in the country. This will ensure that teaching methods will remain current and relevant to contemporary needs.

Another way to improving teacher education in the country is by strengthening Teacher Training Institutions to adequately respond to teachers' needs and demands. Governments should therefore set aside part of their budgets for teacher professional development.

The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) being the new admission policy in the country for tertiary education will go a long way to improving Teacher Education in the country. The Board recognises the importance of Teacher Education and knows that the teacher is a critical element in the educative process. Good teachers they say produce good pupils. Hence, the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) is set to increase student enrolment especially in programmes such as education.

The issue of investment in the human capital of nations is not an issue to be over emphasised. This is due to the obvious benefits such investments accrues to the nation or country in question, education is the only instrument that can play an effective role in the progress and upliftment of the country as well as improve the quality of the human resources.

It is imperative for the country therefore to fund her education sector adequately. The Nigerian government must realise that the 21st century is a century of knowledge and hence must dedicate resources to its education sector. Teacher education must be encouraged and the only way to do that is by making funds available to nurture and groom teachers.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

This is a process whereby teachers (like other professionals) reflect on their competencies, maintain them up to date and develop them further. CPD is very crucial to the growth of Teacher Education in the country. In most cases, in Nigeria teachers are hardly sent on courses to sharpen their skills and ultimately the lives of the children they teach. Training and re-training of teachers must be a continuous thing, because , the world that teachers are preparing our young people for is very dynamic just as teaching skills and knowledge are evolving. Thus, no single process of teacher education is sufficient to prepare a teacher for a career of 30 or 40 years.

Teacher Education Policy

The kind of policy put in place for teacher education in a country could contribute to the growth of Tertiary Education in that country. Therefore policy makers must realise the importance and formulate policies that will benefit teacher education in the country.

Regular and Continuous Review of Curriculum

Regular and continuous review of academic programmes and contents will help enhance the quality and relevance of such programmes to the needs/expectations of the stakeholders. The Nigerian government through the Ministry of Education must ensure that this is done regularly to enable the continuous relevance of teacher education because without teachers, there will be no doctors, engineers, etc.

CONCLUSION

The place of teacher education in the technological development of any nation can not be overemphasized. Every nation therefore, must give teacher education the first priority.

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