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TRENDS AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES OF ADMISSIONS INTO EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA (2017-2022)

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Abstract

Admissions into educational management programmes are critical for preparing professionals responsible for educational leadership, policy implementation, and strategic planning. In Nigeria, understanding the patterns and regional disparities in such admissions is essential to achieving equitable access and balanced development in the education sector. This study examined the annual trends and regional disparities in admissions into educational management programmes across Nigerian universities between 2017 and 2022. A longitudinal descriptive research design was used. Data were sourced from the Federal Ministry of Education's Tertiary Institutions Statistics (TIS) portal. Descriptive statistics, line graphs, pie charts, and regression analysis were employed using SPSS, Excel, and EViews software. Findings revealed fluctuating admission patterns with a peak in 2020 and a significant drop in 2021 likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, also regional disparities were pronounced with the South West accounting for nearly half of the total admissions, while the North East contributed only 2%. Regression analysis showed no statistically significant increase in admissions over the six-year period. The study emphasize the need for targeted policy interventions to address regional inequities in access to educational management programmes in Nigeria. Addressing these disparities is essential to ensure a more balanced distribution of educational leadership across Nigeria. It was recommended that, the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should encourage and support the establishment or expansion of educational management departments in universities located in under-represented zones particularly the North East and North West, universities should adopt inclusive admission policies that promote regional equity, and campaigns to raise awareness about the relevance of educational management as a viable career path.

Keywords: Educational management, Admissions, Regional disparities, Higher education, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Educational Management is a cornerstone discipline for the training of educational leaders, administrators, and policymakers tasked with the governance and strategic direction of educational systems. As nations pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education, the demand for skilled educational managers has intensified globally (UNESCO, 2021). The training of educational administrators is critical to ensuring that the nation meets its objectives for educational excellence and sustainable development (Olagboye, 2004).

Educational Management refers to the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling educational resources including human, financial, and material to achieve institutional goals (Peretomode, 2001). Olagboye (2004) highlighted the role of educational management in translating policy into actionable programs, stressing strategic planning and accountability. Umesi & Nwanguma (2025) framed management as foundational to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, showing that weak management undermines curricular and infrastructural progress. Hence, management could be seen as effective and efficient utilisation of humans, materials, funds, and time to achieve a set goals. Programmes in educational management aim to produce a critical mass of professionals equipped to take on leadership and administrative roles across primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions (Odukoya et al., 2019).

The National Universities Commission (NUC, 2022) reported rising demand for university education but noted significant fluctuations due to political disruptions, economic instability, and public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2021). Admissions into less-publicized programmes like educational management may be more vulnerable to such shocks due to limited public awareness and weaker institutional prioritization (Okebukola, 2020). Access to higher education in Nigeria varies significantly by region. The South West and South South are home to more tertiary institutions and consistently record higher admission rates compared to the North East and North West (Adebayo & Olanrewaju, 2021). These disparities stem from differences in infrastructure, security, government investment, and cultural perceptions of education, particularly in Northern Nigeria (Ajayi et al., 2020).

This study is hinged on Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964). The theory posits that education is an investment in human skills and knowledge that enhances productivity, income, and economic growth. In the context of this study, admissions into Educational Management programmes are viewed as investments in leadership and governance capacity within the education sector. A region's under-representation in such programmes implies a gap in its educational human capital, which can have long-term consequences for school quality, teacher supervision, curriculum implementation, and policy execution. This reinforces the need for balanced and equitable access across all regions to ensure national cohesion and educational sustainability (Adedeji, 2021).

Over the years, the patterns and consistency of admissions into educational management programmes across Nigeria have raised concerns, particularly regarding variations in enrolment across the six geopolitical zones (North East, North West, North Central, South

East, South South, and South West). Despite the increasing importance of educational management in driving effective educational systems, there is limited empirical data on the annual admission trends and regional disparities in this field between 2017 and 2022. This gap poses a risk of uneven development in the availability of skilled educational managers across the country. Therefore, this study examined the trends and regional disparities of admissions into educational management programme in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022.

2. Purpose of the Study

- examined the annual trends in admissions into educational management programme across Nigeria from 2017 to 2022.
- identified and analysed regional disparities in admissions into educational management programme across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones from 2017 to 2022.
- determined whether there is significant increase in admissions into educational management programme in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022.

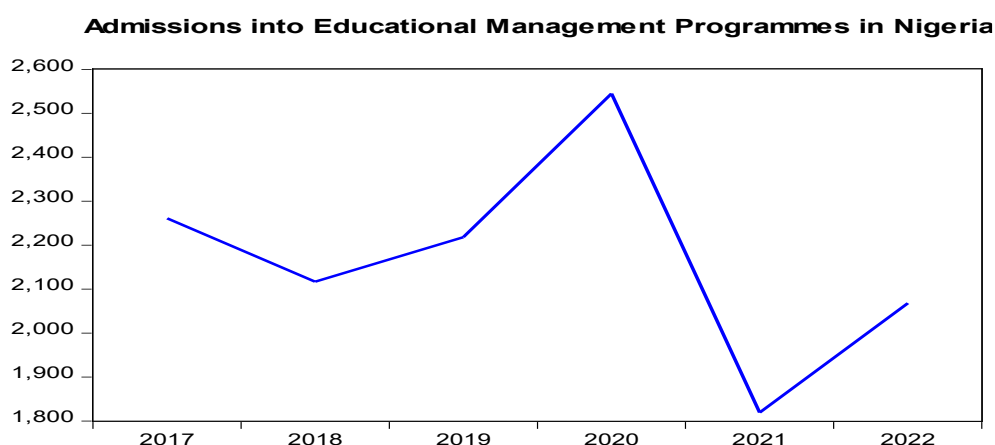
3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative longitudinal descriptive research design to analyze trends and disparities in admissions into educational management programmes across Nigeria from 2017 to 2022. The population comprised all Nigerian universities offering educational management programmes, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select universities with complete and accessible admission records during the study period. Secondary data were sourced from the Federal Ministry of Education's Tertiary Institutions Statistics (TIS) portal. Descriptive statistics, line graphs, pie charts, and regression analysis were employed using SPSS, Excel, and EViews software for data analysis.

4. Results

Research Question 1: What is the annual trends in admissions into educational management programme across Nigeria from 2017 to 2022?

Figure 1: *Annual Trends in Admissions into Educational Management Programme across Nigeria from 2017-2022*



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The trend in admissions into educational management programmes in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022 shows a fluctuating pattern. Admissions declined slightly from 2,261 in 2017 to 2,117 in 2018, with a slight increase of 2,218 in 2019 followed by a gradual increase that peaked in 2020 at 2,545. This peak was followed by a sharp decline in 2021, where admissions dropped to their lowest point of 1,819, likely due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, there was a modest recovery, with admissions rising to 2,068. While there were periods of growth, the data reflects the impact of external factors on admission trends during the observed period 2017 to 2022.

Research Question 2: Are there significant disparities in admissions into educational management programme across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones from 2017 to 2022?

Figure 2: Admissions in Educational Management Programme in Nigeria (2017-2022)

**Admissions in Educational Management Programme
in Nigeria (2017-2022)**

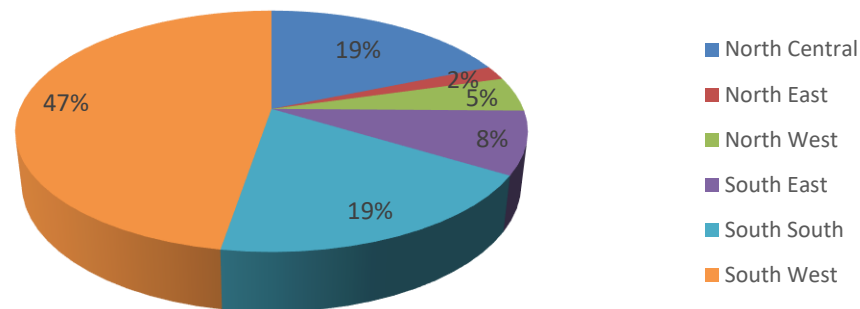


Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Admissions in Educational Management Programme in Nigeria (2017-2022)

Admissions	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimu m	Maximu m
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
North Central	1	2443.00	.	.	.	.	2443	2443
North East	1	243.00	.	.	.	.	243	243
North West	1	601.00	.	.	.	.	601	601
South East	1	1099.00	.	.	.	.	1099	1099
South South	1	2473.00	.	.	.	.	2473	2473
South West	1	6169.00	.	.	.	.	6169	6169
Total	6	2171.33	2167.047	884.693	-102.84	4445.51	243	6169

The data on admissions into educational management programmes in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022 reveals significant disparities across the six geopolitical zones. According to the pie chart and descriptive statistics, the South West zone had the highest admissions,

accounting for 47% of the total, with a mean of 6,109 students far surpassing all other zones. In contrast, the North East had the lowest with just 243 students, representing only 2% of total admissions. Other regions like North Central and South East each contributed 19%, while the North West and South South accounted for 5% and 8% respectively. These figures indicate a strong regional imbalance, suggesting unequal access to educational opportunities in Educational Management, with the South West being significantly more represented than the northern zones, particularly the North East. This disparity may reflect broader socio-economic, infrastructural, and policy-related differences among the regions.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant increase in admissions into educational management programme in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022

Table 2: The regression output tests Hypothesis 1

Dependent Variable: ADMISSIONS

Method: Least Squares

Date: 06/13/25 Time: 00:01

Sample: 2017 2022

Included observations: 6

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	90567.73	121670.1	0.744371	0.4980
YEAR	-43.77143	60.24763	-0.726525	0.5078
R-squared	0.116576	Mean dependent var		2171.333
Adjusted R-squared	-0.104280	S.D. dependent var		239.8388
S.E. of regression	252.0339	Akaike info criterion		14.15821
Sum squared resid	254084.4	Schwarz criterion		14.08879
Log likelihood	-40.47462	Hannan-Quinn criter.		13.88034
F-statistic	0.527839	Durbin-Watson stat		2.832236
Prob(F-statistic)	0.507752			

The regression output tests Hypothesis 1, which states that there is no significant increase in admissions into educational management programmes in Nigeria from 2017 to 2022. The analysis, based on a least squares regression with six observations, shows that the coefficient for the year variable is -43.77 with a p-value of 0.5078, indicating that the relationship between year and admissions is not statistically significant at the 5% level. Additionally, the R-squared value is 0.1166, meaning that only about 11.7% of the variation in admissions is explained by the year. The F-statistic (0.527839) and its corresponding p-value (0.507752) further confirm the model's lack of overall significance. Therefore, the data provides no evidence of a significant trend positive or negative in admissions over the period, and the null hypothesis is not rejected.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings shows a fluctuating trend in the annual admissions into educational management programmes across Nigerian universities. This pattern may be influenced by external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, which disrupted academic calendars and reduced institutional capacity to admit students (World Bank, 2021). The modest recovery

in 2022 suggests resilience but also exposes the vulnerability of admissions processes to systemic disruptions. From a Human Capital Theory perspective (Becker, 1964), this inconsistency in enrolment represents a missed opportunity for sustained investment in educational leadership capacity, which is vital for systemic educational reform. As education systems grow in complexity, the supply of well-trained administrators must expand correspondingly.

The second major finding revealed significant regional disparities in admissions across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. This reflects inequitable distribution of human capital investment, with long-term consequences for educational development. These findings aligned with Adebayo and Olanrewaju (2021), who found that access to tertiary education in Nigeria is strongly linked to infrastructural availability, institutional concentration, and socio-political stability. The relative under-representation of the northern zones particularly the North East and North West can be attributed to ongoing challenges such as insecurity, limited access to higher education institutions, and socio-cultural barriers, especially for women (Ajayi et al., 2020). This uneven access undermines national efforts to produce a balanced workforce of educational managers, thereby entrenching regional inequalities in school leadership, curriculum supervision, and education quality (Ezeokoli & Egbule, 2020).

The regression analysis showed that there is no statistically significant increase in admissions into Educational Management programmes between 2017 and 2022. This result confirms that admissions into Educational Management programmes are not growing over time, and that there is no linear progression in intake despite national education policies aimed at capacity building. This aligned with Ezekwu & Ojukwu (2022), who observed that disparities in educational opportunities and lack of strategic educational investment hinder balanced enrolment and progression across sectors.

6. Conclusion

The study investigated the trends and regional disparities in admissions into educational management programmes in Nigerian universities from 2017 to 2022. The findings revealed that admission patterns were inconsistent, with no significant growth over time; there are profound regional disparities with the South West significantly dominating admissions while the North East remains critically underrepresented; and these disparities reflect unequal opportunities for capacity-building in educational leadership. Viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory, these findings underscore the urgent need to address systemic inequities in educational investment. Regions that are unable to produce adequate numbers of trained educational managers risk lagging behind in school governance, policy execution, and education quality assurance. Moreover, the stagnation in national admission growth suggests insufficient prioritization of educational leadership development in higher education policy. In light of the Sustainable Development Goals and Nigeria's Education Sector Strategic Plan, addressing these disparities is not merely an academic concern but a national imperative. Ensuring equitable access to educational management programmes is a strategic pathway to fostering inclusive development, especially in regions facing chronic educational and institutional challenges.

7. Recommendations

To redress the identified disparities and promote a more balanced development of educational leadership across Nigeria, the following recommendations were made:

- The Federal Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should encourage and support the establishment or expansion of educational management departments in universities located in under-represented zones particularly the North East and North West. This could be facilitated through special funding incentives, infrastructural support, and accreditation fast-tracking.
- Universities should adopt inclusive admission policies that promote regional equity. For instance, quota systems or supplementary admission considerations for applicants from disadvantaged zones can help bridge the access gap.
- There is a need for advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the relevance of educational management as a viable career path. This is especially crucial in regions where public knowledge about the field is limited or undervalued.

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