

ADDRESS OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION,
ADAMU ADAMU,
AT THE POLICY MEETING ON 2017/2018
ADMISSIONS EXERCISE TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA HELD AT THE
NATIONAL JUDICIARY INSTITUTE, ABUJA ON TUESDAY, 22ND AUGUST, 2017

PROTOCOL

I am delighted to address you all at the 2017 Policy Meeting on Admissions to tertiary institutions in Nigeria which incidentally, is the second under my watch as minister of education, the fact that the last exercise was a success is not in doubt, even though most of the issues that arose and which necessitated certain decisions and pronouncements may now be subject to review based on new thinking, feedback and the dynamic nature of education all over the world. I am glad that we have all worked together to create a synergy for the advancement of the education sector in Nigeria.

Let me use this opportunity to restate the commitment of this administration to ensure expansion of access, equity, quality, relevance and inclusiveness. We are equally committed to refocusing our curriculum to meet our developmental needs. Accordingly, the government is putting in place necessary mechanisms for expanding access to higher education, in order to accommodate as many qualified admission seekers as possible through a transparent and flexible process. This will take into consideration the autonomy of the Senate and Academic Board of **each** institution, without compromising standard, or infringing of the laws, or an imposing unbearable burden on parents. We are determined to ensure an expansion of opportunities but this will be done with fairness and justice.

As I mentioned recently in Kano at the 62nd meeting of the National Council on Education, the Federal Government recently approved the establishment of many private universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in an effort to create quality learning opportunities and meet the ever-increasing demand for tertiary education. Many other applications are still being processed and I am confident that, with the exacting standards and painstaking effort with which

these applications are being handled, the country will continue to have world-class tertiary institutions.

I am delighted to inform this distinguished gathering that the bill to formally end the dichotomy between the Higher National Diploma (HND) graduates and bachelor's degree holders has gone through second reading in the National Assembly. There is no doubt that the passage of this bill, among others, will help in improving the standard of tertiary education and guarantee parity in employment opportunities for graduates of universities and polytechnics. It would equally expand access to tertiary education as many admission seekers would be more willing to take up available vacancies in the polytechnics. This will also, hopefully, give a boost to our efforts to expand TVET.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the recent unfortunate attacks on the University of Maiduguri and the forceful abductions of some of university personnel while on exploration activities have further challenged our determination to remain undeterred and not to succumb to any attempt to blackmail and desecrate the nation's education sector. I join well-meaning patriots in your prayers for the release of the abducted lecturers and all others in captivity. I commend the Nigerian military for the outstanding effort of officers and men at fighting the insurgents.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen I have been briefed by the Registrar of JAMB that over one million, seven hundred thousand (1.7m) candidates applied to study various courses in tertiary institutions across the country in 2017. It is believed that majority of eligible admission seekers with requisite qualifications will now find it easier to gain admission to the institutions of their choices, particularly with the introduction of flexible cut off points. For Jamb scores.

I have also observed that the board has simplified its examination administration to cater for candidates who are not conversant at handling the computer mouse with the introduction of the use of only eight (8) keys. This has enabled many students who are not computer-literate to take the examination without any anxiety; and this has been widely applauded. This fit is apart from the adoption of measures designed to facilitate equal opportunity

to physically challenged candidates in line with the stipulations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In response to request for assistance premised on the recognition of Nigerian's leadership position in the sub region of West Africa in particular and based on further confirmation of the quality of the Nigerian's university system, the Federal Government is currently considering sister African countries with the admission of foreign candidates to the nation's universities perhaps as early as this academic session.

I am aware that, JAMB is also conducting examination in nine countries namely; Republic of Benin, Republic of Cameroun, Ghana, Cote d' Ivoire, South Africa, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and, lately, The Gambia. This effort at improving and expanding the internationalization of the university system in Nigeria is encouraged, supported and endorsed by the Federal Government. I urge all universities to make conscious efforts to admit candidates from all over the country and the world at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to also reiterate this administration's zero tolerance for corruption and its disdain for any form of exploitation and extortion. It was based on good intention that I announced the cancellation of the conduct of Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination last year as it had become an avenue for exploitation with its attendant tendencies for corruption. It had equally become a repetition of the same form of examination conducted by the JAMB. Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

However, following the cancellation of the post-UTME, some institutions resorted to the use of Senior School Certificate Examination Results which culminated in the provision of inflated grades by some candidates, on the basis of which some institutions conducted their admission, only to discover at the point of registration that there were mismatches between the genuine and the fake results provided by the candidates. This abuse of process led to the cancellation of the admission exercise in some institutions, and this caused some delays in the completion of the exercise.

This, amongst other reasons has led to a revisit of the decision on the cancellation of the conduct of Post-UTME. While it is not mandatory for every

institution to conduct the Post-UTME, the Senate and Academic Board of each institution is hereby allowed to exercise its autonomy to determine the parameters for the process and selection of candidates in addition to the result of the UTME.

However, wherever the Post-UTME is chosen as an option for the additional selection process by any institution, such institution should not conduct another Achievement Test, as already being done by the JAMB. Rather the institution should administer an Aptitude Test, and the fee for the exercise must not exceed two thousand naira (₦2,000) while the whole exercise must be in conformity with this administrations is position on zero tolerance for corruption.

I will not end my remarks without acknowledging, appreciating and commending the remarkable efforts of the registrar, management and staff of JAMB in repositioning and refocusing the board, and in prosecuting its mandate in line with the original objectives of its founders, and, particularly, in aligning its recent performance under his leadership with the best practices of the change agenda of this administration.

I am aware of the deep involvement and large scale involvement of the officials of tertiary institutions in the construction of the test and administration of the 2017 UTME, thereby eliminating the “Us and Them” syndrome which had hitherto characterised the relationship between the Board and the Tertiary Institutions.

In the same spirit, it is already in the public domain that the board has saved and contributed the sum of Five Billion, One Hundred and Seventy-Seven Million, Five Hundred and Eighty Thousand, Two Hundred and Ninety-Seven Naira, Eight Kobo (₦5,177,580,297.08), to the Federation Account. There is no doubt about it that this is a result of the registrar’s personal integrity and the regime of accountability, transparency, honesty and patriotism that he has engendered in JAMB. That this is coming from an agency in the education sector makes us very proud.

The Federal Ministry of Education is poised to use the board as an example and a template not only at ensuring accountability in all its agencies, but ensuring that the education sector should become a major fiscal contributor to the nation's economy. The example of the JAMB has clearly shown that this administration is changing the way and manner of doing government business and also changing the notion that government officials and public officers only hold positions of authority for personal aggrandisement through corruptive means. Therefore, I once more salute the leadership of the board, management and the entire staff of the JAMB for this worthy example. I assure you that the Federal Government of Nigeria is appreciative of your effort and this administration will do everything possible for you to continue in this stride.

On this note, and in the Name of God, I declare the 2017/2018 Admission Exercise to Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria open.

Thank you.