



**University of
Reading**

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Institute of Education

**Examining the Potential Role that Professional Bodies
could play in Facilitating Access to Higher Education in
Nigeria**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September, 2016

Confirmation of Authorship

I confirm that this is my own work, and that the use of all materials from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

30th September 2016

Signed -----Date-----

DEDICATION

To **higher education aspirants in Nigeria** whose higher education access challenge motivated this study. May the information contained in this thesis assist in helping them navigate their career journeys with joy and fulfilment.

Abstract

For decades the demand for higher education in Nigeria has been significantly more than the available places. The current rejection rate for applicants who compete to get into higher education through the country's Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is above 80%. This means that fewer than 2 out of every 10 applicants for higher education in the country are successful. The annual demand for higher education places in the country's formal higher education system is approaching two million. The (annual) secondary school graduation rate in the country is also about two million.

The effort of the Nigerian government to improve higher education access in the country in recent years through the establishment of more universities and licencing of private universities has not improved the proportion of higher education aspirants who are admitted annually for higher education. The high population growth rate of the country, which is currently the world's 6th most populated country, appears to account for this. Parents who have the financial means send their children abroad for higher education but they constitute a small minority as Nigeria is a low-income country.

Professional bodies in Nigeria offer professional examinations, which could be an alternative route to higher education, but have experienced minimal demand for such examinations. This study, which employed mixed methods of investigation including interview, focus group discussion, document analysis and questionnaire examined some of the factors that may be hindering the take up of professional examinations as an access route to higher education. Higher education aspirants who were 213 number and drawn from four secondary schools in Lagos State along with their school Counsellors and 9 Registrars of professional bodies in Nigeria participated in the study. Some of the data for the study were collected through document analysis.

The study revealed that direct university admission that higher education aspirants in Nigeria generally prefer to other routes such as Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Professional bodies is the route that significant persons in their lives including school counsellors, and employers directly and indirectly promote to them. Most of the school counsellors and higher education aspirants who participated in the study did not demonstrate a good understanding of how professional examinations can give access to higher education. The study also revealed that ease of passing the relevant examination, the

preferences of parents, the desire to study away from home and information collected from the internet were major influences on the choice of route to higher education chosen by the higher education aspirants who participated in the study.

The study concludes that professional examinations, which have good potential of helping to reduce the difficulties young people experience in their effort to access higher education, have been poorly promoted to higher education aspirants in the country.

The study recommends the adoption of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) that employs both traditional and new media for helping higher education aspirants in the country to appreciate how writing of professional examinations can be a means of resolving the problem of access to higher education. Such an effort, if done with commitment, may help Nigeria reduce to a significant level, the frustration young people who aspire to benefit from higher education seem to be currently experiencing. In a broader sense, such an effort may contribute to the accelerated development of Nigeria, a country that is endowed with diverse natural resources but largely dependent on crude oil for government revenue and currently grappling with socio-economic and political challenges such as unreliable electricity supply and high youth unemployment.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgement	ix
Chapter 1- General Introduction	1
1.1. How the Study Developed	1
1.2. Study Background	3
1.3. Study Problem	6
1.4. Research Questions.....	10
Chapter 2- Study Context.....	12
2.1. Introduction	12
2.2.1. The Country, Nigeria	12
2.2.2. Nigeria’s Political History	12
2.2.3. Nigeria’s Economic Landscape.....	14
2.2.4. Nigeria’s social Landscape	17
2.3. Overview of Nigeria’s Higher Education	19
2.3.1. Introduction	19
2.3.2. Meaning of Higher Education	19
2.3.3. RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	20
2.3.4. SUPERVISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA	20
2.3.5. STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.....	21
2.3.6. GCE A Level: Issues of Access and Equity	23
2.3.7. ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES CONFRONTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA ...	24
2.4. Professional Bodies in Nigeria.....	26
2.4.1. Introduction	26
2.4.2. Functions of Professional Bodies.....	26

2.4.3. Professional Bodies May Help Deal with Higher Education Access Problem.....	28
2.4.4. The Obstacles.....	34
2.4.5. Summary.....	35
Chapter 3- Theoretical Framework.....	36
3.1. Introduction.....	36
3.2. Forms of Capital.....	36
3.2.1. Human Capital.....	37
3.2.2. Cultural Capital.....	39
3.2.3. Social Capital.....	40
3.3. Diffusion of Innovations.....	41
3.4. Summary.....	42
Chapter 4- Review of Relevant Literature.....	43
4.1. Introduction.....	43
4.2. Education for Empowerment.....	43
4.2.1. Introduction.....	43
4.2.2. Meaning of Education.....	44
4.2.3. The Value of Education.....	45
4.2.4. Education Empowers Individuals.....	46
4.2.5. Education Empowers Communities.....	47
4.2.6. Barriers to Acquisition of Education.....	48
4.3. Perception.....	55
4.3.1. Introduction.....	55
4.3.2. Meaning of Perception.....	56
4.3.3. Factors Influencing Perception.....	57
4.3.4. Perception Management.....	60
4.4. Attitude.....	64
4.4.1. Meaning and Formation.....	64

4.4.2. Resistance to Change and How to manage it	66
4.5. Career Management During Adolescence	72
4.5.1. Introduction	72
4.5.2. Profile of Adolescents	72
4.5.3. Career Management	75
4.5.4. Factors Influencing Career Success	77
4.5.5. Summary	82
Chapter 5- Methodology.....	84
5.1. Introduction	84
5.2. Study Paradigm	84
5.2.1. Ontology.....	85
5.2.2. Epistemology.....	87
5.3. Methodological Approach	88
5.4. Research Design.....	91
5.5. Case Study.....	92
5.6. Study Population and Sample.....	96
5.7. DATA COLLECTION METHODS	105
5.7.1. Introduction	105
5.7.2. INTERVIEW	107
5.7.3. Question Types	110
5.7.4. Focus Group Discussion	111
5.7.5. Questionnaire	114
5.7.6. Document Analysis	117
5.8. Data Analysis.....	120
5.9. 1. Trustworthiness of the Study.....	121
5.9.2. Triangulation.....	123
5.10. Pilot Study.....	125

5.11. Ethical Considerations	126
5.12. Researcher’s Positionality	128
Chapter 6 -Data Analysis and Discussion	131
6.1. Introduction	131
6.2. Routes to Higher Education in Nigeria.....	133
6.3 Career Strategies of Higher Education Aspirants in Nigeria	161
6.4 Extent of Higher Education Aspirants’ Awareness of Professional Bodies in Nigeria ..	174
6.5 Implications of Higher Education Aspirants’ Awareness of Professional Examinations for Their Career Strategies.....	202
6.6. Summary of chapter	210
Chapter 7- Summary of Findings and Conclusion.....	212
7.1. Findings	212
7.1.1. Demand and Supply of Higher Education Places in Nigeria	212
7.1.2. Factors Accounting for Higher Education Aspirants’ Insistence on Direct University Admission.....	215
7.1.3. The Mandate of Professional Bodies in Nigeria and their Activities that are Relevant to the Study	216
7.1.4. Factors That Account for Low Patronage of Professional Examinations.....	217
7.2. Recommendations	220
7.3. The Study’s Contribution to Knowledge	226
7.4. Study’s Contribution to Research	230
7.5. What the Researcher has learned	231
7.6. Areas for Further Research	232
7.7. Limitations of the Study	233
Bibliography	235
Appendices.....	246

Acknowledgement

The very enriching journey of undertaking this project was quite challenging financially. Its completion could not have been without the understanding and compassionate supervision I enjoyed. I am therefore deeply grateful to my Supervisor, Professor Naz Rassool for going the extra mile to support me on this journey.

My wife, Lola looked after our children and my business back home in Nigeria while I was undertaking this project in the United Kingdom. This was at considerable inconvenience to her. I appreciate that sacrifice and the prayers she offered in support of the project. Our children, Marvellous, and Godswill demonstrated a sense of responsibility morally and academically beyond their (teenage) years while the project lasted, and through their sterling academic performance during the period, encouraged me to give the project my best effort. I appreciate their encouragement and support.

The Registrars of the professional bodies that participated in this study were generous with their cooperation for the success of the study. I received similar help from the Counsellors whose schools participated in this study. I am grateful to them and the proprietors of their schools who granted me access. My gratitude also goes to the officers of the other public educational institutions and agencies that granted me interviews and facilitated the collection of the additional data I needed for a good insight into the study problem.

The higher education aspirants who participated in this study deserve my special appreciation. They were marvellous with their insights and candid opinions. The sincere interest in the study, which they demonstrated through their passionate comments and follow up questions, was one of the major sources of inspiration for me. It is my hope that the outcome of this study blesses them in more ways than I can imagine.

The European Educational Research Association (EERA) offered me amazing development opportunities while I was doing this doctoral research. Those opportunities for which I am grateful contributed enormously by way of knowledge, skills and network to the completion of this project.

Helen Apted of the University of Reading Graduate School was very helpful with relevant resources. Her help and the prompt services of her colleagues in the Doctoral Research Office assisted me on the journey. I am grateful to all of them.

My younger brother, Benjamin made significant financial contributions to the project. My mother-in-law was generous with her prayers for the success of the project. I am grateful to both of them for their contributions. I am also grateful to the following and anyone I may not remember to acknowledge for their financial and moral support: Pastor Segun Adegbiyi, Samson Adamolekun, Kyrian Nwamara, Samuel Sanusi, Salawu Lawal, Isaac Idikwu, Morris Bernard, Ifeanyi Onyenma, and Bryan Ibe.

Chapter 1- General Introduction

1.1. How the Study Developed

My doctoral research experience was a very interesting and enriching one. I arrived in Reading in October, 2013 hoping to research into “how professional training can be used as a capacity building and livelihood improvement strategy in Nigeria”. The contents of this thesis reflect in clear terms, the effect of the supervision and training I received in the course of my doctoral training. Needless to say, the topic I arrived Reading with became less realistic given the time frame within which I had to finish my doctoral programme and my limited resources given my self-funding status. I also became aware of the need to focus on the research gap in my area of research interest in order to make a useful contribution to knowledge in the area. I have therefore ended up “Examining the potential role that professional bodies could play in facilitating access to higher education in Nigeria”. How did I arrive at this point?

The reading and writing tasks I did on “higher education access in Nigeria”, and “the activities of professional bodies in Nigeria” paved the way for this narrowing of focus. These tasks were directed by my Supervisor in the first month of my programme. The Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) and Education specific sessions I attended helped me greatly in getting this focus. I started the programme with some anxiety although I was not afraid since I believed that I could learn and get better given my interest in my area of research and the conviction that the University of Reading had the resources I needed to get ahead. The ‘Welcome programme’, which the Graduate School organized in October of 2013, also provided information that helped to encourage me to face my studies with confidence that is built on hard-work. The services of the wider university including ITS, Counselling and Wellbeing, Library, and Study advice helped me to acquire some information technology and soft skills that have helped me in investigation and documentation. The Summer Schools organized by the European Educational Research Association (EERA) which I was fortunate to attend also impacted positively on how my research developed.

I read extensively on relevant issues to my study including higher education in Nigeria, professional education, diffusion theory, attitude formation and attitudinal change, perception, education and development, socio-cultural and economic capital, career management, philosophical and methodological underpinnings of research, and research methodology with its dimensions of design, population, sample and methods and instruments among others. I discovered intriguing things in the process including the fact that access to higher education is problematic not only in the developing countries such as Nigeria but even to some extent, in advanced societies. It became clear that the challenge for Nigeria is lack of a clear and realistic strategy to deal with the problem in the face of high population growth rate that is likely to keep the problem getting worse if stakeholders fail to intervene with a realistic access strategy. The professional bodies, which seem to have the platform that could help, also appeared ignorant of what they could do with the platform they have. Most of their promotional strategies for reaching young people with the benefits of their professional examinations and membership have not been driven by evidence. All of this provided enough motivation for me to continue with my research in the knowledge that what the study might reveal could help society to resolve a major social problem.

What I have achieved largely reflects the plans and time lines I agreed with my Supervisor early in my programme including the outcome of my "Learning Needs Analysis". I attended much more than the minimum number of RRDP courses prescribed for doctoral researchers. I was not required to attend more than 12 of those sessions in the course of my doctoral programme. I attended over 70 of them some of which provided me technical research skills while others equipped me with the social intelligence and management skills to plan and execute a research project successfully. The courses were quite helpful. I also signed up for a Master's module on "Social Policies for Development" and attended all the sessions in the spring term of 2013/2014 session. The module was offered by the Institute of International Development and Applied Economics (GIIDAE) of the University's School of Agriculture. It was meant for my own personal enrichment and to enhance my awareness of social policy challenges in the developing world, access to higher education being one of them.

I am happy for the opportunity to engage in this study and the research skills that I have developed during my doctoral research that would be of help to me also in the future. It is my hope that its outcome will go beyond earning me a doctoral credential to setting a new agenda for fair, equitable and just access to higher education for improved livelihoods in Nigeria.

It will be my pleasure to remain the recipient of the kind of support that came from my Supervisor and the wider University as I potentially go into public scholarship to promote the ideas detailed in this thesis. All things considered, my judgement is that this doctoral programme was worthwhile in spite of the very tasking financial demands it made on me and my family. The next section clarifies the study's background and identifies the problem it set out to resolve.

1.2. Study Background

Humankind has for long been recognized as having the natural tendency to seek self-improvement (Alderfer, 1972). Education is the major tool that both the individual and the larger society employ for the purpose of helping people realise their potential within boundaries that bring them personal fulfilment while collaborating with others to promote the larger societal interest and welfare. Without it, society may not be able to reproduce itself and guarantee the welfare of its members. It is therefore a socialisation tool which is applied to help individuals learn acceptable ways to society as well as conducts that can attract sanctions in order to protect society from the harmful effects of deviation (Durkheim, 2006).

Education does not only ensure conformity, it also equips people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that help them get better at solving problems and attain the greatest height they have the potential to achieve. In effect, the individuals who are denied education may not even come to the knowledge of what they are capable of doing and lack the capacity to solve their own problems and may therefore become liabilities to society. When the individual is provided education by society, community members have such liabilities taken off their shoulders and get the extra benefit of improved collective capacity to continually improve the quality of livelihood available to members of society. This may be one of the reasons why it has been described as one of the basic welfare needs of people (Drake, 2001).

The differentiating factor between the winners and losers in society, especially in a globalised world that is knowledge driven, could therefore, be education. This should be considered true not only for individuals but also for economies (Becker, 2006). As Halpern (2005:251) has observed, "central to the cycle of disadvantage is educational failure- the failure to acquire human capital...". According to Halpern, the extent of human capital parents acquire through education is usually a predictor of what to look forward to in their

children. This is in line with Bourdieu's (Lin, 2001) argument that the dominant elites deliberately and strategically invest in their children's education in order to give them competitive advantage in society. Brown and Hesketh (2004) make a similar observation when they indicate that the middle class use their assets to confer cultural capital on their children thereby letting them start positional competition from a point of strength at the expense of the lower class. This may mean that one of the major ways of dealing with the problem of inequality in society is to make education easily accessible to the poor and under privileged. Education is able to achieve this largely because of its convertibility to other forms of capital which position people well to pursue and realise their goals (Bourdieu, 2006). This prescription may also be efficacious for closing the gap between the developed and the developing world, the achievement of which may have a positive effect on world peace and global prosperity. Stopping at the provision of basic education may not achieve this effect. Within a technological era the education that can achieve the empowerment being envisaged here should deliver not only prose literacy but also the other dimensions of literacy including document, quantitative, cultural, vernacular, and for effectiveness in a modern society, computer literacy (Rassool, 1999). We now live in a knowledge-driven environment where high skills delivered essentially through higher education provide the empowerment envisaged here. In this kind of environment where the use of rapidly advancing technology is pervasive, production of top quality human capital through functional and accessible higher education becomes essential for survival, growth, and development (Mirvis, 1993). Countries burdened by enormous development challenges may discover that quality higher education that is accessible to their citizens, who have the capacity to benefit from it, is a reliable source for resolving those challenges. Higher education can do this because it generates the human capital needed for the advancement of the society economically, socially and technologically and the extent of its availability can be a predictor of the pace of prosperity achievable (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013). Hoping to achieve accelerated development and global competitiveness when most people in society capable of benefitting from higher education lack access to it may amount to chasing a mirage (Akinyemi and Igot, 2012).

The situation gets more problematic if school counsellors employed to help young people make career-enhancing choices lack the information they need to guide them appropriately. This may be the case in Nigeria where school counsellors have the responsibility to guide students in their study and career strategies as well as in the resolution of their

psychological and social problems. They also serve as consultants to school administrators, teachers and parents who are involved in helping students deal with their academic, social, psychological, mental health and other personal challenges. A previous study conducted by this researcher who is himself a counsellor but currently in private practice (see Chapter 5.12 for more information on his background) revealed that the availability and quality of counselling service in the Nigerian school requires urgent improvement. The continued neglect of this need may combine with other factors to deny the country the human capital it needs to realise its potentials.

1.3. Study Problem

Access to higher education has remained a major development challenge in Nigeria. Access to higher education in the country has remained below 15% of the demand for it (Sunday, 2010b). Current demand is a minimum of 1.5million annually. Given the high population growth rate of the country and the underfunding being experienced by most of the 143 universities in the country (NAN, 2016), the situation may get worse. Academic staff of universities in Nigeria were on industrial action for about six months in 2013. This meant that most universities in the country could not admit new students for the 2013/2014 academic year. This carried the implication of a demand burden the higher education system in the country lacked the capacity to carry in the following year (Adeoye, 2013). Nigeria has therefore become a country with a large number of youths who are neither in education nor in employment. Nigeria's government has remained ambitious in spite of the obvious exclusion of a large fraction of its population in the generation of the ideas and strategies for the country's development.

The political leadership of the country have for some years now promoted UNESCO's inspired "Vision 20:2020" which aims at making Nigeria one of the top 20 economies in the world in the year 2020. This is a vision being pursued in a knowledge-driven world that is getting more sophisticated, and competitive as well as continually changing. In such a world, the best results tend to be achieved by well informed and highly skilled individuals who function in cohesive teams that leverage on their collective intelligence (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). Employers in Nigeria and even teachers in the higher educational institutions in the country lament the poor quality human resource power being produced by the country's higher educational institutions. Academics in the country argue that the education system in the country which is under resourced is to blame, but have lost confidence in the government's ability to find solutions to the problem and have called on other stakeholders to intervene (Newspapers, 2013).

In the face of this challenge, education corruption in the form of examination malpractice and the use of what one scholar referred to as different 'currencies' (including bribery) to

secure admission into the university (Willot, 2011) has been on the increase (Edet, 2013). When the supply of places for higher education is far below the demand for them, this may be the natural consequence. The rejection rate for applications to some disciplines available in the country's higher education system can be as high as 95% (Shu'ara, 2010). Those who formulate policies for the country's education system acknowledge that limited access to higher education is one of the major challenges facing the system but seem to lack solutions to the problem (Education Sector Analysis Unit, 2005). They are critical of higher educational institutions admitting more students than they have the capacity to provide for. For them, the temptation to admit more than the capacity of the system in light of the high demand for available places results in management problems and poor quality products of the system. This raises questions about how placing caps on admission without a deliberate effort to increase the system's capacity can get youths with legitimate aspirations to improve their human and social capital into higher educational institutions. This is a country where university education has been constructed for youths as an indispensable tool for navigating the current economy successfully. Some scholars (Brown and Hesketh, 2004:65) have acknowledged that "people are being encouraged to invest in a university education in the promise of improving their chances of becoming knowledge workers in the future".

Some stakeholders suggest promotion of the country's Open University which was established over ten years ago as a major way forward since the problem of limited access cannot be wished away (Ibara, 2008a). The significant difference that the Open University can make in Nigeria is yet to be seen. After over ten years of being in operation, the university had its third convocation on January 18, 2014 (NAN, 2014). It graduated 4,308 of its students on that occasion and this number was much larger than what it has achieved in the past. The annual demand for higher education places is now seldom below 1.5 million (Adeoye, 2013). It may not be fair to blame the country's Open University entirely for its poor performance over the years although management issues may be involved. The ability of an open university to deliver on its mandate depends to a large extent on the quality of its immediate environment. Its students should have the computer literacy and the infrastructural support as well as capacity for independent study to get the best from the system. As stated earlier, Nigeria is a low-income country. The country faces enormous human development challenges (UNDP, 2016d) and has one of the worst internet access rates in the world (Amaefule, 2013). Open and distance learning may therefore not be accessible to many higher education aspirants even when the service is available.

Open University education also places a significant fraction of the learning responsibility on the learner. Self-motivation and an inquisitive attitude to learning become critical characteristics for success in such a system. Most higher education aspirants in Nigeria have passed through a secondary school education system that is largely didactic with the teacher telling learners things most of the learning time. Lacking independent learning skills, graduates of secondary schools in Nigeria may not consider the Open University truly accessible and a realistic route to higher education.

The private university system in the country may be looked up to for places that can close the gap between the demand for higher education in Nigeria and the supply for it. They are, however, also limited in capacity and depend largely on the struggling public higher education system for manpower when statistics indicate that they do not have enough for their own needs (Shu'ara, 2010). The private system of education in the country has also been criticized for being beyond the reach of the average citizen in terms of the tuition costs the students have to pay and promoting inequality by contracting the public space that should enable young people from diverse backgrounds to interact and forge a common vision for national goals. Many of these are owned by religious organisations whose vision for venturing into education may differ from the declared public goals for education in the country. Nigeria is a country that has in recent times been experiencing religious conflicts which may promote narrow, religion-based education.

Nigeria is not alone when the focus is on under-resourced education systems in the world and countries with limited higher education access. Even some advanced societies have some measure of these problems (Rassool, 2007). Brown et al (2001:253) confirm that even in the United States of America and Britain, a significant number of young persons have been "... excluded from gaining the qualifications that would permit them to compete in the market for jobs". The difference lies in the steps the relevant governments are taking to address such problems. The United Kingdom aimed at full access to higher education with effect from the year 2015 and has removed caps on the number of students higher educational institutions in the country can admit. The country's Chancellor of Exchequer (Osborne, 2013) while making this government's position known, argued that "... access to higher education is a basic tenet of economic success in the global race..." When there is a cap on access to higher education, society can have the view that talents are scarce (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). The challenge with the Nigerian higher education crisis is the government's obvious lack of a realistic idea regarding how to grant more youths from

diverse backgrounds access to higher education (FederalMinistryofEducation, 2005). One way the government can help itself and the country is to adopt a broader definition of higher education as is used, for example, by the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Akinyemi and Igot, 2012). This definition recognises all post-secondary educational and training institutions running programmes approved by relevant state authorities as higher education providers. This contrasts with the narrow definition of higher education which appears to limit it to the education provided by only universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013). The wider definition will accommodate most of the professional bodies in the country as either providers of higher education or channels through which those seeking higher education can have access.

Most professional bodies in the country have been established via laws to regulate the relevant professions including maintenance of appropriate standards and certification of practitioners usually through public examinations. The Professional Diplomas awarded to successful candidates are generally seen by employers and other higher educational institutions as the equivalents of polytechnic and university awarded academic credentials and can serve as the basis for admission into universities for further studies. As a means of accessing higher education, professional certifications enable their holders to secure direct entry admissions into academic programmes in tertiary institutions such as university where they do top-up programmes, studying for shorter durations to earn higher education credentials. Since all stakeholders should be given the space to make their unique contributions towards Nigeria's development (Agabi et al., 2012), promoting professional examinations to higher education aspirants as alternative routes for arriving at their goal may go a long way in addressing the higher education access crisis confronting the country. Since it may not be fair to blame the higher education aspirants who are experiencing this frustration for their plight, the realistic way forward may be to use an appropriate social policy and coordinated actions by relevant stakeholders to remove the structural and systemic obstacles in the way of higher education aspirants (Dean, 2006). Midgley (1995), relying on institutional perspectives to development, has made the point that everyone wins when the state harnesses the energies and potential of different societal actors in fostering social development. When such actors function independently of one another, they tend to achieve much less than they can when they collaborate in pursuit of goals which, when realised, can improve society and its individual members.

It has been observed that people who survey their environment with an imperfect lens may be struggling with problems that have easy solutions (Calhoun, 1993). This means that ignorance may be preventing many higher education aspirants in Nigeria from seeing the alternative routes to their destination following the narrow construction of higher education they have received by significant persons and institutions in their lives. A reconstruction of routes to higher education that includes the opportunities professional bodies offer may help to address the challenge of limited higher education access with little or no cost to the government and other stakeholders.

A survey of relevant literature reveals that researchers have not given recognition to this possibility and conducted investigation into it. There may be an urgent need for this since the higher education access crisis in Nigeria may become worse given the high fertility and population growth rate of the country. What is standing between many higher education aspirants in Nigeria and their goal may be a lack of knowledge of alternative routes to their goal. Empirical evidence indicates that when people living with economic and social challenges are helped to discover risk-free solutions to their problems, they adopt them with open arms (HystraHybridStrategisConsulting, 2013). This realisation led me to embark on a research study that is asking questions that could produce helpful answers.

1.4. Research Questions

In the light of the problem the study has set out to resolve, the following becomes the major question:

To what extent does awareness of the opportunity professional bodies provide for higher education encourage higher education aspirants in Nigeria to include professional examinations in their strategy to access higher education?

The sub questions are:

- I. What are the routes currently available to higher education aspirants in Nigeria?*
- II. What routes to higher education do higher education aspirants in Nigeria choose for the purpose of accessing higher education?*
- III. How do higher education aspirants in Nigeria determine the route they choose for access to higher education?*
- IV. To what extent are higher education aspirants in Nigeria aware that professional examinations are available as an alternative route to higher education?*

- V. *Is information on professional examinations as alternative route to higher education provided to higher education aspirants in Nigeria by school counsellors?*
- VI. *To what extent do professional bodies in Nigeria promote their examinations to higher education aspirants as alternative route to higher education?*
- VII. *What are the views of policy makers regarding the problem of access to higher education experienced by young people?*

Chapter 2- Study Context

2.1. Introduction

The focus of this study is on the potential role that professional bodies could play in facilitating access to higher education in Nigeria. This chapter will provide background information about the context within which the investigations took place.

The chapter discusses the socio-economic and political situation in Nigeria. It also focuses on the current structure of higher education in Nigeria and the opportunities and challenges confronting higher education aspirants in the country. The chapter ends with the identification of the focus of the research, namely, the professional bodies in Nigeria who may be in a position to facilitate access to higher education in the country. The structure of the opportunities they provide and their other peculiar features are also presented.

2.2.1. The Country, Nigeria

This section highlights major developments in Nigeria's political history as well as the country's past and present economic and social circumstances. Although the discussion will focus on the peculiarities of Nigeria, it will be discussed also in relation to the wider context of the country's neighbours and the global community. It is hoped that this will facilitate the understanding of the country's background.

2.2.2. Nigeria's Political History

Nigeria is a former colony of Britain and was under British rule for 60 years, beginning from 1900 and ending in 1960 when the country gained independence. The country did not, however, exist as a unit until 1914 when the Northern and Southern Protectorates of the country were amalgamated and named Nigeria by the British government.

During colonial rule the people of Nigeria did not choose their own political leaders democratically; rather they were the subjects of the British Crown. The country until independence was run by Britain as part of its empire. Governors, all of whom were British ran the affairs of the country as appointees of the head of the British Empire which was either a King or a Queen. Nigerian nationalists engaged in struggles for the country's independence for almost the entire duration of the country's colonial experience. They included journalists, and trade union officials who campaigned against unfair labour practices and the denial of political rights to the locals. Their efforts yielded fruits gradually, culminating in the granting of political independence to the country with effect from

October 1, 1960. It was, however, not until October 1, 1963 that the country became a republic, the year the British government granted Nigerians the right to choose their own political leaders including their President and Prime Minister. Until then the country had a Nigerian, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe as Governor-General of the country from October 1, 1960 to September 30, 1960 but he was an appointee of the British Monarch, the Queen of England, and not elected into office by Nigerians. Following Republican status in 1963, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was elected as President of the country while Alhaji Sir Abdullah Tafawa Balewa became the Prime Minister of the country following the success of his political party, the Northern People's Congress, in a general election. Nigeria, which is a member of the British Commonwealth, a multilateral body made up of former British colonies, inherited a parliamentary system of government from Britain meaning that the President had ceremonial status while the Prime Minister headed the government. The country at independence had three political regions that developed at different paces, namely, the Eastern Region, Western Region, and Northern Region. The Eastern and Western Regions gained political independence two years before the Northern Region, which gained political independence in 1959, just one year before the country as a whole was granted political independence from the British Empire. Democratic governance in the country was interrupted in 1967 when a military coup took place, putting governance in the hands of the military forces ostensibly to defuse the rising political tension in the country. The civil war that followed the secession of Eastern Nigeria from the rest of the country lasted from 1967-1970. The secession was not successful. The military held onto political leadership of the country until October 1, 1979 when they handed governance back to civilians following democratic elections. The Military interrupted democracy in the country again with effect from December 31, 1983 and held political power until October 1, 1999 when the current democratic dispensation commenced.

Nigeria is a key member of the Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU) and now operates a Presidential system of government which has an Executive President, without a Prime Minister. It is also a pseudo federation made of 36 states, which are run by elected Governors and a Federal Government, which runs the central government headed by the President. Laws are made for the states by Houses of Assembly while federal laws are made by two complementary chambers, namely, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. As a pseudo federation, the country has only two legislative lists namely the Exclusive Legislative list and the Concurrent Legislative list. The

federal government has exclusive right to make laws on the items listed in the Exclusive Legislative list while both the federal and state governments can make laws on the items that are on the Concurrent Legislative list. In the event of a clash between a federal law and a state law, the federal law supersedes. According to the 1999 Constitution, defence, immigration, currency, policing, power, treaties, and aviation are among the items on the Exclusive Legislative list. Education is on the Concurrent Legislative list. This explains why both federal and state governments own and run educational institutions at all levels but the federal government provides the overall policy direction and controls the institutions that regulate tertiary institutions in the country. Those institutions include the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) that recruits students through an entrance examination for all tertiary institutions in the country including universities, polytechnics, monotechnics (institutions specialising in only one discipline), and colleges of education. Some stakeholders in the education sector in the country argue that this political arrangement does not permit the various states of the federation to develop in line with their own situations and are concerned that this might have negative implications for the quality of education tertiary institutions in Nigeria offer young people (Ayodele-Bello, 2016).

2.2.3. Nigeria's Economic Landscape

Nigeria is currently the largest economy in Africa but paradoxically has one of the lowest per capita incomes on the continent with over 60% of the country's population living in poverty (UNDP, 2016a). The country's current economic challenges are largely traceable to its status as a mono-product economy, depending largely on crude oil for most of the revenue that funds government projects and recurrent expenditure. The price of crude oil has declined drastically in the last two years (Krishnan, 2016), resulting in marginal economic growth and rising economic challenges including the loss of jobs even for bank workers. Investments and youth employment have stagnated during this period. This has meant difficulty in the payment of salaries for many public and private sector organizations (Sotubo, 2016), low disposable incomes and high dependency ratio in the country. This may impact on the quest for foreign education and the patronage of local private universities that have even before recent times charged fees the parents of most higher education aspirants could not afford. As Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show, Nigeria has been one of the top 5 countries whose citizens patronize the United Kingdom's higher education but recent admissions show a decline in enrolment.

Table 2.1**Nigerians in UK's Higher Education: 2010/2011-2014/2015**

Year	Number of Students	Outside EU Ranking⁺
2014/2015	17920	3
2013/2014	18020	3
2012/2013	17395	3
2011/2012	17620	3
2010/2011	17585	3

+ Ranking among countries outside the European Union whose nationals are students in the United Kingdom's higher educational institutions. Nigeria ranks 3rd after China and India but records a decrease of 1% over the period reported.

Source: United Kingdom's Higher Education Statistics Agency report (2016) on "Top ten non-European Union countries of domicile in 2014/15 for HE student enrolments by location of HE provider and country of domicile 2010/11 to 2014/15".

Table 2.2

Nigerians' Annual Enrolment in UK's Higher Education:

2010/2011-2014/2015

Year	Number of Students	Outside EU Ranking⁺
2014/2015	9475	4
2013/2014	10265	4
2012/2013	9630	4
2011/2012	10010	4
2010/2011	10140	4

+ Ranking among countries outside the European Union whose nationals enrol in the United Kingdom's higher educational institutions. Nigeria ranks 4th after China, United States and India but records a decrease of 8% over the period reported.

Source: United Kingdom's Higher Education Statistics Agency report (2016) on "Top ten non-European Union countries of domicile in 2014/15 for first year HE student enrolments by location of HE provider and country of domicile 2010/11 to 2014/15".

The economic challenges in the country are manifest not only in education but also in other industries. Electricity supply in the country is sporadic and other economic infrastructure including roads, water, and Broadband Internet access are in worrisome states. The current political leadership of the country has promised a diversification of the economy and huge investments in major sectors of the economy including education to spur economic growth and create employment opportunities for the youth (Emejo, 2015). The corporate community complain of an unfriendly investment climate and some analysts worry about budgetary allocation to education which they consider too low given the need for huge capital and recurrent expenditures in the industry to improve the standards and quality of education (Oche, 2016). Top policy makers in the education industry have acknowledged

that the country's economy may not deliver more than the quality of manpower being produced by the education system can permit it to deliver and expressed the government's determination to improve the situation.

It could be argued that if the country's large population is economically empowered through full employment, it might become a model economy in Africa and attractive to foreign investors. Education may be one of the tools to be employed in pursuit of such an objective.

2.2.4. Nigeria's social Landscape

Nigeria is a very diverse country with over 250 languages but only three dominant ones which are Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Following British colonial legacy, English Language is the country's lingua franca. This may also account for why Britain has remained a top destination for Nigerians who seek foreign education (see Tables 2.1, and 2.2). The United States of America and Canada are similarly affected. In the year 2015, 9,494 Nigerians were studying in the USA with 50.2%, 35.2%, 12.6% and 2% respectively studying on undergraduate, postgraduate, optional practical training and non-degree programmes respectively (Adesulu, 2016). As indicated in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the cost of foreign education to the country is giving the country's policy makers concern especially in the face of dwindling economic fortunes. The expenditure on such education for the year 2015 has been put at two billion dollars (Ikpefan and Adanikin, 2016). When put in the context of the number of Nigerians aspiring to benefit from higher education, the number of Nigerian students studying in foreign countries loses significance. That number gains significance when the cost of their education is brought into focus. Their tuition bill for 2015 is larger than the country's federal budget for education for the year 2016 (Ikpefan and Adanikin, 2016).

Many of those who benefit from foreign education do not return home after their studies. This brain drain may be denying the country some of the skills that can help in resolving the enormous development challenges confronting the country. The situation, however, is made worse by emigration to western countries of large numbers of professionals who were trained with the scarce resources available to the country's education system. In the year 2015, 227 Medical doctors emigrated in search of better quality living (Adesulu, 2016). This is at the expense of the country's health sector, which is so incapacitated, that health tourism is one of the country's major foreign exchange consumers. The country's political leaders including the current president regularly receive medical treatment in Europe and America. Professionals in the industry have condemned this and asked the country's political

leaders to develop the local health sector (Ogiri, 2016) but thus far to no avail. The vast majority of the country's population which is approaching 190 million (Worldometers, 2016) cannot afford foreign trips for medical treatment. This has negative implications for the life expectancy of Nigerians. The pervasive poverty in the country appears to be among the factors fuelling the rising insecurity in the country which may have implications for the country's political stability (UNDP, 2016d).

The country has made gains in recent times regarding primary school enrolment and girl-child education (Foundation, 2015). If complementary gains are made in the quality of education available at this level and at the other levels of the country's education system, the human resource requirements for the country's development may be positively served. Nigeria does not have to crawl in the pursuit of such a goal. It could leapfrog, learning from the development experiences of other countries and leverage on the amazing technological advancement the world has witnessed in the last few decades (Steffen, 2008). The next section will provide an overview of the country's education system, which will include the structure of higher education in the country.

2.3. Overview of Nigeria's Higher Education

2.3.1. Introduction

The higher education system in Nigeria has grown significantly over the years (Sunday, 2010a), starting with only one university in the 1940s and getting to the point today where the country has 143 universities. In addition, there are many polytechnic and monotechnic institutions as well as colleges of education. Despite this, there are large numbers of young people who would like to advance beyond secondary education but are currently not studying in higher institutions of learning. This has been recognized by the federal government agency for the management of education in the country as a major challenge to the nation's leadership (FederalMinistryofEducation, 2005). This chapter will highlight the structure of the country's higher education system, its regulatory system and discuss its place in national development. It will identify some of the challenges confronting the Higher Education system and outline the routes that can help the country to maximize provision.

2.3.2. Meaning of Higher Education

UNESCO (2013) indicates that Higher Education as it applies to Nigeria means education people receive after primary and secondary schooling in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in preparation for gainful employment. Akinyemi and Igot (2012) maintain that institutions that come under the definition of higher education are those authorized by relevant government agencies to provide educational and training services to students who have successfully completed secondary school education and engage in research for the advancement of knowledge. These authors observe that in the case of Nigeria, higher education refers to post-secondary education received in a university or polytechnic or college of education operated by a federal or state government or a private individual or organization.

Some other scholars who have attempted a definition of higher education as it applies to Nigeria have given similar definitions. Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) have for example argued that in the Nigerian context, higher education refers to education received in tertiary institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics and universities.

The bodies established by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) to regulate higher education in the country reflect this observation. National Universities Commission (NUC) is the regulatory body for universities in the country. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) regulates the operations of polytechnics in the country while National Commission

for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is the regulatory body for Colleges of Education. These bodies give licences for the establishment of new tertiary institutions in their areas of jurisdiction and have responsibility to determine and monitor to uphold minimum standards of operation in those areas.

Additional areas to consider lie in the Non-Formal Education sector (NFE). Some scholars (Akpama et al., 2012) suggest that the opportunities provided by such platforms should also come under the definition of higher education since NFE may target workers including women who need to study within an organized system to close specific skill gaps within a flexible time frame. Ibara (2008b) identifies with the idea of expanding the opportunities available to people in Nigeria for higher education. Ibara further suggests that open and distance learning platforms are promoted as realistic routes to higher education in the country given the obvious failure of the conventional higher education system to cater for the large numbers of people in Nigeria who aspire to access the benefits of higher education. Professional bodies in Nigeria may be among the institutions that may provide such opportunities. What is the relevance of higher education?

2.3.3. RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Akinyemi and Igot (2012) argue that higher education has become an indispensable tool for national development and competitiveness in a globalized environment. They maintain that educational planning authorities in Nigeria recognize this but are achieving much less than they desire in the face of the exponential increase in demand for higher education without a corresponding increase in carrying capacity. They note that in the period 2003/2004-2007/2008, the universities in Nigeria could only admit 4.5% of applicants who desired a place to study at university. Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) similarly argue that higher education is a major determinant of the pace of development and prosperity of any nation since, according to them, it is the instrument that generates the human resource capacity needed for socio-economic and technological advancement. Chapter 4.2.3 – 4.2.5 (Literature Review) provides further arguments in favour of investment in education including the higher education dimension.

2.3.4. SUPERVISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The overall responsibility for policy formulation, prescription of standards and enforcement of regulations relating to higher education in Nigeria lies with the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). Education including the higher education level is on the concurrent

legislative list in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. This means that both the federal and state governments in the country can make laws on higher education although a federal law will override a state law on any aspect of education in the event of a conflict between the two laws. State governments therefore have state ministries of education that have responsibility for guiding state university leaderships on how to manage their institutions.

As indicated earlier, Nigeria's Higher Education is regulated by three major bodies which reflects what the Federal Ministry of Education has termed a tripartite higher education structure (FederalMinistryofEducation, 2005). They are:

National Universities Commission (NUC), which prescribes standards for universities, licences new universities, accredits university courses and generally plans for the entire university system in the country and does advocacy for them.

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), which plays similar roles for polytechnics and monotechnics in the country.

National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) - the council prescribes standards for colleges of education and provides direction for their activities.

All higher educational institutions have governing boards with most members serving in non-executive capacities. Such appointments are largely influenced by political considerations and are made by the "Visitor" to the institutions, a term that refers to the owner of the institution. Members of the board for all federal tertiary institutions are appointed by the President of Nigeria while State Governors make the appointments for those who serve on the board of tertiary institutions established and run by the relevant states. Members of such boards tend to be political associates of the Visitor, prominent traditional rulers and notable media personalities. Private tertiary institutions have the individual or head of the organization that established them as the visitor to the institution.

Universities have Vice Chancellors as chief executive officers and implementers of the decisions of the University Senate, which has the University Registrar as the administrative head and secretary to the Senate. The equivalent of Vice Chancellor in a polytechnic is Rector while at the College of Education, a Provost occupies a comparable position.

2.3.5. STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria runs a 6-3-3-4 system of education. This means that children at the age of 6 years start primary school where they spend 6 years and transit to junior secondary school where

they spend 3 years to complete 9 years of basic and compulsory education. Thereafter they proceed to senior secondary school where they spend 3 years to complete their secondary education. Those who secure admission to higher education spend a further 4 years in the tertiary education system. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) which was established in 1978 has the mandate to conduct a selection examination to determine the applicants who should be admitted by tertiary institutions in Nigeria for undergraduate programmes (Ibeawuchi, 2016). This selection examination named Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) which is conducted once in a year requires the candidates to respond to 50 multiple choice questions for each of four subjects most relevant to their desired disciplines of study within four hours. This examination has been the subject of much debate and protests (Ikpefan, 2016b) in recent times.

The United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria (2013) observes that public universities in Nigeria which are institutions established and operated by the Federal or State Governments are grouped into three generations, namely, first generation established between 1948 and 1965, second generation established between 1970 and 1985, and third generation established between 1985 and 1999. More public universities have, however, been established in the last 15 years bringing the number to the present 143 (NAN, 2016).

The 6-3-3-4 system has assumed that all undergraduate programmes at higher education level lasts 4 years. This is not the case in reality as some university courses such as Law, Pharmacy, Engineering and Architecture last 5 years in Nigerian universities while Medicine has a duration of 6 years.

The Universities also do not constitute the only component of the higher education system in Nigeria. Polytechnic and monotechnic institutions offer technical education and generally run a 5-year programme that is divided into three segments. The first two years of polytechnic education enable students to study for a 'National Diploma' (ND) after which they enter a one year 'Industrial Attachment' which is supposed to give them the opportunity to acquire practical experience in the world of work. They return to school thereafter for another two years of study during which time they pursue a 'Higher National Diploma' (HND). Not every holder of a National Diploma returns to the polytechnic system in pursuit of the HND. Acceptance for a HND programme is usually subject to the availability of places on the course. Those who do poorly academically during their ND programmes tend to run the risk of not securing admission for HND programme. This may be partly responsible

for the general preference secondary school products have for university programmes since those who gain admission into the university, enrol for university degrees. The minimum admission requirement for entry into the polytechnic system is possession of 4 credits in the Senior School Certificate examination. These subjects should be relevant to the applicant's desired field of study. For most Science and Business courses, a credit in Mathematics is compulsory.

There are also Colleges of Education that run a three-year programme and have comparable admission requirements with the polytechnics. Their focus is teacher education especially for the primary level of education in the country. The demand for student places at this level of education by people desiring higher education in Nigeria is very low compared to the almost crisis situation that exists at the university level. Some of the issues accounting for the unpopularity of polytechnic education may be involved here in addition to the general low social status of teachers in Nigeria.

Sunday (2010a) recognizes limited university access as one of the major challenges confronting the Nigerian education system. According to Sunday, less than 15% of applicants into universities in Nigeria do secure admissions to study within the system. He holds the view that a way out of this problem is to allow the universities to have a multi campus system. It is also his view that poor funding of the system as well as the burden of social problems such as HIV/AIDS have taken their pound of flesh from higher education in Nigeria.

2.3.6. GCE A Level: Issues of Access and Equity

The 6-3-3-4 system also ignores the fact that some university programmes in Nigeria are completed within three years. Candidates who enter Nigerian universities with General Certificate of Education Advance level (GCE A' Level) normally complete their programmes within three years if they study any of the courses in the Arts, Humanities and Social sciences including education. Although the selector of candidates for university education in the country (JAMB) has made direct entry provisions for such candidates in that they do not write entrance examinations, the country's hierarchy of schooling has made no provisions for a system that prepares candidates for the acquisition of GCE A' level papers. No federal or state educational institution runs any programme for the writing of GCE A level examinations. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and its national counterpart,

National Examinations Commission (NECO), also do not conduct examinations that award that level of academic credential. Only private sector organizations run such programmes and usually for youths from elite families who can afford the higher tuition fees for the relevant training and examinations of the Cambridge University (UK). Issues of equity may arise since those who choose this route because their parents can afford it tend to move faster on the educational ladder.

What government classifies officially as higher education ignores vocational training offered by both the private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy. There are for example, schools of Nursing and Health Technology managed by government departments. Many private tuition institutions run certification programmes that lead to the award of professional credentials which many of the formally recognized higher educational institutions and employers equate with higher education degrees and accept them as a basis for both further studies and employment. By not recognizing and promoting their relevance and potential for helping to significantly deal with the problem of limited higher education access, the government may be denying the Nigerian society of one of the most efficient and effective platforms for upgrading the country's human capacity to pursue its declared development goals including the desire to become one of the 20 biggest economies in the world by the year 2020.

This research intends to examine the potential of such platforms to reduce the higher education access crisis and establish whether there are efficient and effective approaches for promoting these to the affected individuals.

2.3.7. ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES CONFRONTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's corruption watch dog, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) recently discovered as many as 41 illegal universities in the country (Leadership Newspapers, 2013). The Leadership Newspapers (2013) in an editorial, considered the figure alarming and wondered how such illegal university operators could flourish in the country in spite of the existence of a relevant regulatory body, namely, the National Universities Commission (NUC) and suspected complicity and corruption within the system while also blaming a situation such as this for the declining quality of the products of the system. The question is whether there is a connection between the large number of

applicants who fail to secure spaces in the accredited universities and the setting up of illegal universities in the country.

Large-scale examination malpractice at secondary school level, also appears to be one of the major headaches afflicting higher education in Nigeria. Recent reports (Edet, 2013) indicate that the problem is on the increase in the country. The report indicates that as many as 18 out of every 100 candidates writing the Senior Secondary School Examination are involved. The situation may be worse than this report admits. This may have a link with the declining quality of higher education products and may carry ominous implications for the country's future, according to a stakeholder in the industry (Ibrahim, 2013). This may be a genuine concern since students at the higher education level are products of secondary schools where this problem is rife.

This study may reveal one of the major ways Nigeria can follow to deal effectively with the problems afflicting higher education in the country. Professional bodies in the country seem to have the potential to serve as one of those ways. The next section will identify some of them and highlight the opportunities they offer which may facilitate access to higher education.

2.4. Professional Bodies in Nigeria

2.4.1. Introduction

Professional bodies have received scant attention both in terms of research and academic writing. The situation is worse for the developing world where such organizations may have a critical role to play in the formulation and execution of development programmes. Nigeria is a developing country with a poor human development index including an education system that is giving stakeholders serious concern (UNDP, 2013). The higher education sub-sector in the country appears to be weighed down by challenges that include poor funding, mediocre governance and learning as well as access crisis, an area where professional bodies may have potential solutions. This section will highlight the professional bodies in Nigeria and examine the feasibility of giving serious consideration to the possibility of taking advantage of their certification programmes in the effort to resolve the higher education access crisis in the country.

2.4.2. Functions of Professional Bodies

Professional bodies play diverse roles. They not only provide continuing professional education to their members but also engage in activities that protect and promote their careers. It has been observed that they provide relevant educational and training institutions advice on curriculum, conduct research in the effort to advance their professions, determine the ethics their members have to subscribe to, and monitor the professional activities of their members to ensure that they respect relevant standards. All of this they do in addition to making public statements in the promotion of socially responsible behaviours that guarantee the sustainability of the environment (Yilfashewa, 2011).

In the award of practice licences, these professional bodies consider the applicant's academic attainment and practice experience (Stan, 2009). This means that accessing professional membership of professional bodies requires hard work demonstrated through writing and passing the prescribed examinations or the presentation of a credential awarded by a higher educational institution, which runs a relevant programme that the body has accredited. Lester (2009) observes that professional bodies are now encouraged by some stakeholders to liberalize the qualification process to let in more practitioners without compromising standards. He further comments that different professional bodies are at different levels of improvement in the way they admit members. This is an indication that they respond to societal demands by adjusting their processes to meet the needs of

stakeholders. They are, however, generally insistent on applicants meeting minimum standards in terms of knowledge, skills, experience and values before they can be awarded practice licences and frown at none members doing jobs that belong to their areas of jurisdiction. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria, one of the professional bodies in Nigeria not only insists that practitioners of advertising must possess the requisite knowledge and skills before they are certified for practice but also requires them to submit all their advertising copies to the body for vetting prior to exposure to their target audience. This, they say is to guarantee that unverifiable claims are prevented and the rights of the consumers are protected (Nigeria, 2013a). To guarantee compliance with standards of practice on the part of their members, the average professional body requires prospective members to subscribe to a code of ethics (Nigeria, 2013c) before they are given a practice licence and sanctions applied where violations are established.

To minimize cases of professional misconduct and poor output that may be traceable to gaps in knowledge and skills, most professional bodies now have programmes for members' continuing professional development which members desiring enhanced performance and professional recognition are required to undergo. They are therefore aggressively promoting life-long learning among their members (Relations, 2013). This serves the best interest of today's professional who has to practice within a globalized environment where change is taking place at a breath-taking speed. This can set their members up for success even in a very competitive environment and justify the resources they invest in their membership and self-development. Some professional bodies have even gone into collaborative arrangements with their counterparts in the advanced societies in the efforts to let their members get training content that meets international standards. Institute of Chartered Stockbrokers (Stockbrokers, 2013) and Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria (Nigeria, 2013e) are among such professional bodies. This can give the beneficiaries the kind of exposure that will provide them the confidence to function within international contexts and advance their careers.

As indicated later in Table 2.4.2, many of the professional bodies in Nigeria have been established via specific legislations. This would suggest that the government recognizes that they have a crucial role to play in the prosecution of its development agenda especially as it concerns the protection of the interests of those who consume the services of professionals whether they are employers or ultimate consumers of products and services.

Professional bodies are non-profit organizations that are run by elected officers who are generally speaking, individuals who are recognized by their colleagues to possess the professional competence and leadership ability that can project and protect the best interests of the members and the other stakeholders. Such elected officers constitute the governing council who formulate policies for the body and provide leadership in the area of advocacy for the profession. The decisions of the governing council which typically has members who do not earn salaries from the body are implemented by a secretariat that is headed by a registrar who holds a tenured salaried position and most times, a member of the body who understands not only the essentials of the profession but also what it takes to maintain a reputable entity that can advance the interests of members. Most professional bodies have departments that provide membership, training, consultancy, communication, administration, accounting, and examination services. Examples include Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (Nigeria, 2013d), Nigerian Institute of Management (Management, 2013), Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (Nigeria, 2013b), and Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (Nigeria, 2013f).

The question therefore arises: Given the systems professional bodies already have in place, is it not possible that they may be in a position to help address the higher education access crisis in Nigeria?

2.4.3. Professional Bodies May Help Deal with Higher Education

Access Problem

The problem of limited higher education access in Nigeria has been persistent and is getting worse. One of the reports in recent years (Adeoye, 2013) lamented the sale of forms in 2013 for the 2014 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) in Nigeria. The report predicted that up to 1.5 million candidates would enter for the examination in the face of a similar number who sat for the 2013 examination and were yet to have their admission processes finalized given the five months old industrial action embarked upon by the academic staff of public universities in Nigeria. This meant that Nigeria was faced with a situation in 2014 where up to three million higher education aspirants were seeking opportunities to get into higher educational institutions in one year. Poor funding was the major issue involved in the five-month old industrial action by academic staff of public universities in the country. If the government is unable to fund the education of those who are already in public higher educational institutions in the country, is it reasonable to expect

that the system can be expanded soon to accommodate the large number on queue to get in without generating industrial actions for the sector which reports (Obateru, 2013) say, come with very serious socio-economic implications for the society? Even if funding improves, can the technology, manpower and other facilities required to cater for additional hands in the system be increased in the short run? The answer may be no, especially with respect to manpower since it takes training and mentoring in addition to other processes to produce competent personnel for any institution and more so for academic institutions because of the high level of knowledge and skill it takes to be an effective educator. Should the resolution of the higher education access crisis in Nigeria be the exclusive responsibility of the government?

It has been suggested that other stakeholders like employers and professional bodies should get involved in the development of the needed capacity for Nigeria's development (Agabi et al., 2012). Even the leadership of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria acknowledge the decay in the Nigerian higher education system and have appealed to all stakeholders to help through advocacy to reverse the dangerous trend, which has robbed products of the system of global competitiveness. The president of the union expressed lack of confidence in the government to honour collective agreements that can put the system back on the path of growth and development (Newspapers, 2013). This may be a pointer to the possibility that major stakeholders are beginning to perceive the problems of higher education in the country as being complex and most probably requiring innovative solutions. As official government sources have indicated, the higher education system in Nigeria is performing poorly in virtually every domain including access where past efforts at remedying the situation have yielded little or no results (Education Sector Analysis Unit, 2005). The information in Table 2.4.1. gives an indication to this effect.

TABLE 2.4.1**HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATION AND ADMISSION TREND**

YEAR	TOTAL NO. OF HE^x APPLICANTS	TOTAL UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS OFFERED	NO. OF HE APPLICANTS FROM LAASS⁺	UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS OFFERED TO LAASS APPLICANTS	PROBABILITY OF UNIVERSITY ADMISSION IN LAASS
2007	1,079,515	NA	NA	NA	NA
2008	1,502,072	NA	NA	NA	NA
2009	1,527,559	155,489	NA	56,191	Under 10%using 2010 as benchmark
2010	1,375,671	NA	698,285	NA	NA

X= Higher Education, += Law, Arts, Administration, and Social Sciences, NA=Not Available

Adapted from (Shu'ara, 2010)

In 2009, universities in Nigeria could absorb only 10% of all higher education aspirants who applied for places in higher educational institutions in the country. This means that about 90% of those who probably desired to get into the university that year for further studies were actually chasing a mirage. Most higher education aspirants in Nigeria prefer university admissions to polytechnic or college of education admission. This is probably as a result of the discriminatory employment practices in Nigeria that generally favour those with university awarded credentials. The probability of those aspiring to study Law, Art, Administration, and Social Sciences securing admission into the university is likely to be lower since the competition for available places is usually stiffer in those areas. Shua'ra (2010) indicates that the competition is fiercest in the Medical Sciences where, for 2009, only 9,343 candidates could secure admission for further studies. Judging by the application figures for 2010 which stood at 209,336, the rejection rate may be as high as 95%. Agriculture and Education applicants fair better, according to Shua'ra who indicates that success rates in those disciplines could be as high as 50%. This means that those disciplines may be easier routes to get into higher education until a large number of candidates

discover the routes. This is because an easier route in the context of the entrance examination into higher education in Nigeria does not translate into an increase in number of places available. A more innovative, effective and sustainable solution to the problem therefore becomes not only desirable, but, necessary.

One of the ways of catering for those in the queue for higher education in Nigeria may be to point them in the direction of alternative routes, a major one being the opportunity a good number of professional bodies offer those with the credentials for admission into formal higher educational institutions to study and write their certification examinations. They can use the diplomas they acquire in the process to secure employment and further educational opportunities. The knowledge and skills they acquire in the process may even provide them the motivation to go into self-employment especially when those professional diplomas are also, generally speaking, licences for private professional practice without which even products of the formal higher educational institutions may not secure jobs with attractive remuneration packages and set up private practice in their chosen occupations. This may have a multiplier effect on the economy and improve the quality of livelihoods in the process. This route may bring the additional benefit of checking the number of young people who take to crime especially the advanced fee fraud commonly referred to in the country as 419 (named after the section of the relevant Nigerian law that makes it a criminal offence). The ethics which those who complete the certification process will subscribe to as a condition for formal admission into membership of relevant professional bodies and the fear of losing their membership should they indulge in professional misconduct may discourage them from indulgence in crime. The information available in Table 2.4.2 suggests that professional bodies already have the legal authority to help; and information provided earlier indicate that they have the structures in place to get the youths who are interested in their programmes to study and get certified for gainful employment and further studies.

TABLE 2.4.2**HIGHLIGHT OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES IN NIGERIA**

S/No.	Name	Year Chartered	HQ	Min. Entry Requirement	HE Available?
1	CIPM	1992	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
2	ICAN	1965	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
3	CIBN	1990	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
4	NIPR	1990	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
5	APCON	1988	Lagos	HND	YES
6	CIPSMN	2007	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
7	NIM	NA	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
8	NIMN	2003	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
9	ICSAN	1991	Lagos	HND	YES
10	CITN	1992	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
11	ICS	1992	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
12	CIIN	NA	Lagos	GCE O'L	YES
13	APBN	Umbrella Body	Lagos	Umbrella Body	Umbrella Body

NA= Not Available, HE= Higher Education, GCE O'L= General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level, HND= Higher National Diploma, HQ= Headquarters

CIPM= Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria

ICAN= Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria

CIBN= Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria

NIPR= Nigerian Institute of Public Relations

APCON= Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria

CIPSMN= Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria

NIM= Nigerian Institute of Management

NIMN= National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria

ICSAN= Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria

CITN= Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria

ICS= Institute of Stockbrokers of Nigeria

CIIN= Chartered Institute of Insurance of Nigeria

APBN= Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria which is the umbrella body that provides a common platform for the professional bodies in Nigeria to deal with issues of common interest.

All the professional bodies highlighted have chartered status, meaning that specific laws of the federal government of Nigeria established them and conferred on them the authority to prescribe the minimum standards of knowledge and skills individuals wishing to practice such professions must possess before they are licenced to practice and to, through research, upgrade those standards from time to time. They publish books, newsletters and journals as instruments that help keep their members abreast of developments in their profession. They also organize workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, and public lectures to enhance their members' ability to cope with new challenges in their professions. They all conduct professional examinations, which is the basic route through which they welcome new entrants into their professions. Some of them operate tuition centres that prepare interested candidates for the examinations they conduct while others accredit independent tuition houses for the provision of such services.

Their certification programmes may come under the definition of open access education which permits individuals who cannot fit into the formal education system to take advantage of an opportunity that comes with the flexibility that recognizes the differences individuals who desire higher education have in terms of ability, time, interest, financial situation, marital status, health, location and beliefs. Such a system may complement the formal system of higher education on a wider scale if the barriers preventing most higher education aspirants from looking in that direction are identified and removed. Promoting this alternative route successfully to higher education aspirants will minimize the pressure on government to expand the higher education system in order to accommodate more candidates and enable public policy makers and implementers to attend to other pressing social needs. It could also potentially help in removing the socio-economic and political

consequences of having a large number of younger people who are not in education, employment or training.

2.4.4. The Obstacles

Most of the professional bodies in Nigeria are not very visible and many of those who are supposed to benefit from their activities have limited awareness about the opportunities and services they offer. It is possible that the problem may be rooted in poor marketing of their services. There is the observation that any marketing effort that does not reflect the peculiar background of the target market is unlikely to achieve appreciable results (Chris, 2013). Most promotional efforts of professional bodies in Nigeria tend to rely on the mass media especially newspapers. Reading culture in Nigeria is very poor and the cover price of newspapers is beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. The situation gets worse when young people aspiring to higher education are among those who should know and understand what professional bodies offer, for example their professional examinations which could be an alternative route to higher education.

Young higher education aspirants in Nigeria also tend to see higher studies in terms of living within the four walls of a formal educational institution especially university. They may also resent the idea of enrolling for professional examinations, which may compel them to stay at home and remain under the close supervision of their parents and guardians thereby denying them the freedom they want now. For the average higher education aspirant, one of the major motivations for seeking opportunity for higher education may be just the new identity of being in a tertiary institution that is easily recognizable by peers and other significant persons in their lives. The opportunity higher education offers its beneficiaries to acquire competences that prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life may not rank as high as the identity objective young people are pursuing. The concern may have to do with what you will tell your friends when they ask you the question: where are you now?

Most higher education aspirants in Nigeria are used to the staff-teaching pedagogical style rather than the student-learning style that the professional certification process will inevitably impose on them if they decide to take the route. Many of them probably acquired their academic credentials through indulgence in examination malpractice which has been identified as a pervasive problem in the Nigerian education system especially secondary schools which most of the higher education aspirants are coming from. They may resist patronage of professional examinations where the chance to indulge in examination

malpractice can be very minimal if not non-existent. Such examinations also tend to require analytical and critical approach to solving problems which only very few secondary schools in Nigeria may be equipping their students with. It could be the case that the fear of learning in a new way and taking actual responsibility for what they eventually accomplish academically and professionally may be discouraging them from giving recognition to this open access that can provide them the key to reach their ultimate goals.

Getting higher education aspirants in Nigeria to utilize the alternative route which professional bodies offer may therefore require presenting a message that explains how this route meets all those needs. The message needs to also show them the evidence that taking this alternative route comes with little or no risk. This is in recognition of the scientific evidence which indicates that people who come from the kind of socio-economic backgrounds many higher education aspirants are associated with seek risk-free solutions and not necessarily cheap offers (HystraHybridStrategisConsulting, 2013).

2.4.5. Summary

This chapter has presented the context of the study and provided an insight into the activities of professional bodies in Nigeria following the recognition that educators and management researchers and writers have paid scant attention to their existence. The argument is that there may be hidden treasures within professional bodies for the resolution of the higher education access crisis in Nigeria. It recognizes that there may be barriers in the way to getting higher education aspirants to utilize this alternative route for the realization of their higher education dreams but is positive that they can buy into it if the right policies and actions are formulated and implemented. The next two chapters present the study's theoretical framework and a review of the main literature that are relevant to the study. It is hoped that the effort will illuminate the path the study will tread.

Chapter 3- Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical basis for the concerns and focus of the study, and highlights theories and concepts that can explain the major issues it addresses. This section is considered relevant since theories help us understand why things are the way they are and indicate the relationships that exist between and among variables (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). Their relevance include the help they offer researchers on decisions that have to do with their research design and the choices they have to make with respect to the instruments they can employ in gathering data (Calhoun et al., 1993).

A good theory enlightens interested persons on data related to any phenomenon and strikes a balance between offering comprehensive explanations of relationships and being simple although the tension inherent in this effort can be challenging and difficult to resolve (Alderfer, 1972). This study is contending with this reality given the interdisciplinary connections its subject matter entails.

Nevertheless, at the heart of its concerns is the observation that the demand for higher education in Nigeria is high, and seems persistent, and that the current attitudes of the higher education aspirants towards available routes of access to what they desire may be one of the barriers that they need to address. This suggests that theories that explain why people place value on capacity improvement and how attitudes can be changed and new ones promoted may be useful to the study.

3.2. Forms of Capital

This study has adopted the forms of capital theory developed by Bourdieu which presents social actors as strategic agents who are in "... pursuit of distinction, profit, power, wealth and..." other instruments that enhance them (Calhoun, 1993). The high demand for higher education in Nigeria may be a reflection of the real and perceived power of education as a tool for the achievement of what people believe to be the good things in life. The effort they put into studying for higher educational credentials may therefore be calculated attempts to secure scarce positions that enable them to obtain competitive advantages. Higher education aspirants in Nigeria may hope to accumulate different forms of capital, which may be mutually reinforcing.

The classical theory of capital, the credit of which goes to Karl Marx presents it as a social relation in which the bourgeoisie derive surplus from investing their means in a process that engages labour for minimal returns that keep them at subsistence level (Lin (2001). Lin, however, notes that the 'neo-capital theory' gives the concept of capital an extended meaning and recognizes that it has varieties that include human capital, cultural capital and social capital. It is Lin's view that the work of Pierre Bourdieu, one of the major scholars on forms of capital can be brought under the classification of neo-capital theory. Bourdieu (Lauder et al., 2006) identified economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital to be the principal forms of capital. The next section examines the various forms of capital, starting with human capital.

3.2.1. Human Capital

Human capital can be defined as "... the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals" (Becker, 2006:292). Fuente and Ciccone (2003:16) have observed that: "theoretical models of human capital and growth are built around the hypothesis... that knowledge and skills embodied in humans directly raise productivity and increase an economy's ability to develop and to adopt new technologies". It is their view that human capital brings both private and public returns. According to these writers, employers who engage high-level human capital tend to reap the benefits in terms of salutary effects on productivity, innovation, competitiveness, and profitability. They note that the rate of returns on tertiary education for the individual can be impressive in some regions including the European community. They note further that fewer working hours and shorter stay in employment tend to affect women's accumulation of human capital adversely with negative effect on their wage levels. This would suggest that individuals and countries with superior human capital would outperform their peers in terms of productivity and consequently earn higher incomes. The realization of this possibility may be at the root of efforts individuals and nations make to enhance their human capital. The understanding may be that enhanced human capital may be a means for the accumulation of the benefits of life.

Lin (2001) observes that Adam Smith conceptualized human capital as having the capacity to upgrade labourers to positions of capitalists who are capable of earning more than they need for subsistence through investment in themselves in the forms of education, training and experience. Lin argues that human capital theory maintains the position that the more individuals invest in themselves by way of efforts made to acquire knowledge and skills

through education and training, the more returns they will get. This line of thought presents workers as people who are in pursuit of self-interest using their free will. This may be an assumption that might not be borne out in some people's experience.

Becker (2006:292) argues that "... human capital is by far the most important form of capital in modern economies" and expresses the belief that "the economic successes of individuals, and also of whole economies, depends on how extensively and effectively people invest in themselves". Becker recommends distance learning as a platform that could enable large numbers of people to improve their human capital efficiently. Acceptance of this recommendation and acting in line with it may be a means to eradicate poverty at a great speed and end the cycle of disadvantage which the absence of human capital tends to impose on poor community members and their children (Halpern, 2005). When distance learning employs information and communication technologies, the results could be exponential rather than linear (Kurzweil, 2016). This could be delivered to the poor and disadvantaged at a cost they can afford (Koller, 2016). The solutions to the problems of the poor may already be available and waiting to be delivered to them (Youn, 2016). In delivering such solutions, policy makers and education practitioners should, however, not ignore the challenges learners in difficult infrastructural settings where access to computers, electricity, and Internet, is limited may face.

Central to the concept of human capital is the assumption by economists that the reward that goes to labour is its marginal product. Thurow (1970), however, observes that employers' perception of human capital possessed by a worker may not be in agreement with what the worker, in reality contributes to the organization's productivity. It is Thurow's belief that what workers earn may not always be a function of the value of their contributions to the employer. He argues that sociological and institutional variables may also be influencers of workers' reward.

People can enhance their human capital using opportunities available at home, at school and at work with positive effects on the positions they can access and the incomes they can earn (Fuente and Ciccone, 2003). As the European Commission has noted, however, human capital can bring non-financial returns which may include better health, long life expectancy not only for the direct beneficiaries but also for their children who tend to do better than their less fortunate peers (Fuente and Ciccone, 2003). The commission indicates that better educated individuals can also be trusted for more efficient learning as they go through life

stages. They generally have superior access to on-the-job training, which can bring them market returns in the form of higher wages and opportunities to climb higher on the organizational ladder or find better jobs. The commission enters the caveat that the effect of human capital that comes through formal education on wages may be overstated since family background and ability (variables relatively difficult to isolate) may be among factors influencing the wage levels of individuals. This is where cultural and social capitals may become critical indicators of the opportunities at the disposal of an individual.

3.2.2. Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (2006) indicates that cultural capital reflects the embodied state of individuals including their values and distinguishing abilities, their objectified state reflecting ability-building elements like books and materials and their institutionalized state such as academic credentials which indicate the competitive advantages they possess. Bourdieu argues that the production of cultural capital is usually a collaborative effort involving the family and the state, which they use educational platforms like schools, to deliver. According to Bourdieu, the acquisition of cultural capital entails investment in terms of time and the willingness to delay gratification. Bourdieu notes that making this investment early in the child's development is critical for optimal results and observes that its postponement tends to increase the amount of resources (including time) required to realize good results. Parents tend to make this effort to deliberately give their children competitive advantage in the race for opportunities in society (Calhoun, 1993).

The need for the building of cultural capital to be done with care cannot be over emphasized. This is because how we are nurtured, a variable provided by the environment aside from our biological make-up "... can incline people to some courses of action rather than others" (Trigg, 2001:184). In effect, what individuals become and accomplish are usually products of choices other people such as parents and managers of the education system including education policy makers have made for them. The quality of those choices may be critical determinants of how well people fare in society. It therefore becomes important that the people who make such choices should do so from positions of knowledge and not ignorance. As Gladwell (2008) has noted, individuals who benefit from high quality choices tend to fare better in life than their less fortunate peers who become laggards in the race of life as a result of the poor decisions and actions others such as their parents took for them. This may account for the children of the middle class tending to out-perform their less

privileged peers. Their parents tend to invest time and other resources deliberately in pursuit of advantages for them (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). This suggests that one's accident of birth may confer advantages including superior academic attainment on one. As Willerman (1979) has observed, high socio-economic status of parents tends to have a positive influence on their offspring's performance academically. Is there a social dimension to capital that can also separate the winners in the race of life from those who struggle to make ends meet? The next section explores that possibility.

3.2.3. Social Capital

Social capital has been defined as consisting "... of resources embedded in social relations and social structure, which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action" (Lin, 2001:24). It reflects "... the capacity for trust and cooperation" (Brown et al., 2001) which may require time to nurture. This would suggest that social capital might be limited in societies where trust and cooperative living is minimal. Individuals who get on well with others and are perceived as trustworthy may therefore be rich in social capital.

Field (2003:43) identifies Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam as being among the scholars who have made major contributions to the development of the theory of social capital and indicates that the concept draws "... attention to the ways in which networks and shared values function as a resource for people and organizations...." Field (2003) notes that social capital theorists present it as having the capacity to generate the bonds, bridges and links that enable members of the network to access resources and cooperation that can give them access to opportunities that may not be available to them otherwise. Field (2003), however, believes that those theorists have to be criticised for being too optimistic about the benefits inherent in social capital and for failing to give sufficient attention to issues of conflict and gender in their analysis. Field further notes that the possibility of deriving maximum benefits from social relations may be dependent on possession of the requisite skills for mining the resources within the network which only those who have had opportunities to acquire them may possess.

Higher education appears to have such opportunities in abundance especially in this era when tertiary institutions are investing time and effort in the development of the employability of their students. The desire to access such benefits may be at the heart of the

drive for higher education. According to Bourdieu's analysis (Lauder et al., 2006), how early parents start their investment in their children's cultural capital may determine how much of such skills the individual may possess in spite of higher education. Both Field (2003) and Halpern (2005) argue that the benefits arising from social capital are available not only to individuals but to entire organizations and economies and include superior economic performance, good health and low crime rates. Halpern maintains that individuals with robust social capital tend to have higher educational aspirations and do better in human capital acquisition. Since social capital tends to have positive effects on the wellbeing of individuals and their communities, and given that educational platforms may provide opportunities for its acquisition, democratisation of access to higher education may be one of the tools for combating poverty and accelerating the development of society.

In summary, those who win the race of life on an enduring basis may be possessors of the right proportions of the various forms of capital including personal capital which manifests as self-efficacy and positive impression (Brown and Hesketh, 2004) and economic capital which provides the financial leverage that can facilitate the acquisition of the other forms of capital (Calhoun et al., 1993). The instrumentality of higher education to their acquisition seems plausible but mere possession of impressive academic credentials may not guarantee the good life most people pursue especially in societies where a myriad of development challenges exist and may constitute obstacles to comfort and happiness.

3.3. Diffusion of Innovations

The work of Rogers (2003) on diffusion of innovations complements the forms of capital highlighted in the foregoing to underpin this study. Professional examinations have attracted low patronage by higher education aspirants in Nigeria in spite of the availability of such examinations in the country for decades and in the face of limited places in the universities, their preferred platforms for enhancement of their human and social capitals. This low patronage may not be unconnected with weak promotion of professional examinations to higher education aspirants in the country.

Rogers explains in the theory of innovations that new ideas, products and services may be adopted slowly or speedily depending on how compatible they are with the cultural backgrounds of the target consumers, their perceived complexity and relative advantage or otherwise and the quality and channels of communication employed in communicating the innovation. According to Rogers (2003), the different categories of adopters of any

innovation do not arrive at the point of adoption at the same time and should be approached in line with their peculiarities if speedy diffusion of an innovation is to be achieved. Rogers identifies those categories to be innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

The poor adoption of professional examinations in Nigeria may be partly explained by this theory. The empirical evidence the study will provide will indicate the extent to which this is true in the case of Nigeria.

3.4. Summary

Theories provide ideas and principles that explain phenomena. They show the relationships that exist among variables and therefore aid understanding of phenomena. The theories that underpin this study identify a variety of capitals and that their acquisition could be deliberately pursued by individuals who seek to improve the quality of their livelihoods and gain competitive advantage in society. The cultural capital that some children gain from their parents can give them competitive advantage in the pursuit for human and social capital acquisition with positive implications for their economic and social wellbeing.

Access to higher education may be enhanced or limited by the capitals at one's disposal. Accessibility to higher education may be hindered in an environment where higher education aspirants are constrained by ignorance and stakeholder influence to insist on a pathway with very limited capacity when other pathways may ease access. This study is examining the extent to which the creation of awareness of professional examinations as a pathway to higher education in Nigeria can encourage aspirants to higher education to enrol for them. Diffusion theory suggests that the use of credible sources and channels that are compatible with how the aspirants consume information may be helpful in this effort. The next chapter will review some literature that can provide helpful ideas for the design, execution and understanding of the study and its results.

Chapter 4- Review of Relevant Literature

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the ideas and opinions from the literature related to this study. This includes concepts and theories as well as practices that indicate the knowledge that is already available in the study's area of interest. It also reveals gaps in knowledge and raises questions some of which will be discussed further in this study.

The chapter starts with an examination of the concept of education and underscores the role that it could play in the empowerment of people and communities and thus serves to justify investment in it. The barriers that may confront those who seek education especially within the study's context are also considered. The underlying argument is that the problem of access to higher education in Nigeria may relate to how stakeholders perceive available routes to higher education. The chapter therefore examines some of the major theories and views of perception. Similarly, the chapter examines the concept of attitude, highlighting how it might affect the willingness of higher education aspirants to consider alternative routes to reaching their higher education goals. An attempt has also been made to highlight what the available literature says about the steps that can be taken to change attitudes that may prevent people from discovering and utilizing opportunities that could help them realize their potential. The last section of this chapter presents both scholars' and practitioners' views regarding profitable approaches to the management of one's career. It is hoped that the ideas thus explored will be reflected in the design of the study and impact positively on its outcome.

4.2. Education for Empowerment

4.2.1. Introduction

The high demand for higher education in Nigeria may not be unconnected with the belief that it has a considerable capacity to help people achieve their potential and find fulfilment in life (Agbo, 2016). The theoretical framework of the study which is discussed in Chapter 3 underscores education's link to the accumulation of cultural, social and economic capital. This would suggest that education is a catalyst that may have multiple effects that can impact positively on people who have access to it as well as other individuals and groups that educators believe they have a duty to serve. Such a belief may result in those who try to access it, but fail to achieve their desire, feeling frustrated. The consequences of such a feeling do not fall within the scope of this study. This section presents some views on the

meanings attached to education and its possible impacts. These areas lie within the scope of the study.

4.2.2. Meaning of Education

Education may be defined as the “... organised and sustained communication designed to bring about learning” (Thompson, 1981:23). This suggests that it involves exchanges aimed at enhancing the ability and value of the receiver. It may start from the cradle and be a life-long experience. At the early stages of people’s lives, education may provide the functional literacy people need to make useful contributions to society and take care of themselves (Abdi and Cleghorn, 2005).

Education is not only an end. It can also be a means to other ends. Mittler (2000) argues that education that is well conceptualized and delivered can equip the beneficiaries with the knowledge and skills that can enable them to live productive lives and realize their potential. This would suggest that when it is poorly provided, it might not produce the desired results. Education that fulfils the purposes it is meant to serve will usually involve diverse contributors who play different but complementary roles in the process of its provision. Such contributors may range from parents who play a largely informal but critical role, to policy makers, teachers and employers who provide the guidelines for its provision and execute it in a formal way to ensure that it achieves defined objectives in line with standards that minimize negative unintended consequences (Thompson, 1981).

The unintended consequences of education may result from the biases and prejudices of education providers which pupils and students may imbibe and manifest in their behaviours to positive or negative effects (Abdi and Cleghorn, 2005). Since young people tend to emulate significant persons in their lives, they may pick up unprofitable traits from teachers and manifest them to their own disadvantage and the disadvantage of the larger society. Education policies may be used to check such unintended consequences of education, which can be detrimental to the wellbeing of the individual and the larger society. Such policies need to be effectively implemented if they are to realize the purposes they are meant to serve. Since society keeps changing, the policies that achieve the best results may be the ones that are regularly updated and are reflective of the peculiar needs and circumstances of the stakeholders and society during particular periods.

Governments tend to intervene in the education system with policies and actions to guarantee societal cohesion and development. They tend to perceive it as a tool for

economic advancement (Aggarwal, 1998). It has in some countries served as "... an instrument for inculcating the state's values and visions" (Hayhoe, 1997). Colonial governments are known to have promoted the values of their home countries in the territories they colonized with implications for the socio-economic and political features of such territories (Abdi and Cleghorn, 2005). Whether the visions and values promoted by the state serves the best interests of members of society both, individually, and collectively therefore may be a subject for debate. Education that helps people develop critical mindedness and openness to new ideas may promote tolerance as an attitude and provide them the self-efficacy and willingness to allow them to express themselves and compete for available opportunities (Inkeles, 1997). It may also stimulate them to question the existing order of things. Not all governments may have the capacity to manage the unintended consequences of attitudes that may include protests against public policies and actions. The governments that willingly accommodate such developments may benefit from the alternative ideas that could emerge from opinions that contradict government positions. The path of humility may instruct public servants to realize that the ideas that can guarantee a good society are not the exclusive preserve of those who occupy exalted public offices and who may be unfamiliar with local conditions. This underscores the argument that education should be environment specific, focusing on the peculiar needs and challenges of the society students come from (Thompson, 1981). Education involves not only the prescribed formal curriculum but also the hidden curriculum that includes the values and norms that hold society together (Abdi and Cleghorn, 2005). Moreover, education occurs not only through the efforts of teachers who serve in the organized school system but also through the efforts of the larger community members including parents and employers who may contribute to the lives of people what the organized school system may not deliver.

4.2.3. The Value of Education

Education delivers dividends both at micro and macro levels and may be indispensable for quality livelihoods, fulfilling careers and the resilience of communities. This view is implicit in the principle of universal primary education, one of the eight millennium development goals (MDGs) which were to be achieved globally by the year 2015 (UNDP, 2016b) and now inscribed in the Sustainable Development Goals (2030). It would appear that the same understanding motivated the Education For All (EFA) goals which were developed in Senegal

in the year 2000 and are now being redefined by stakeholders to emphasize equitable and inclusive access to quality education on a life-long basis for all by the year 2030 (TheWorldWeWant, 2016). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which have a time frame of 15 years and are believed to reflect the voices and needs of the target audience include equitable access to quality education on a lifelong basis (UNDP, 2016c). The SDGs, which aim at a more prosperous and peaceful world, may not be realizable if the education element is not pursued with vigour. It may be helpful to identify the specific benefits education delivers to individuals.

4.2.4. Education Empowers Individuals

Education has the capacity to empower people to influence matters that affect them within the communities they live (Glickman and Servon, 2012). Education may be able to do this through the self-confidence it provides the beneficiaries through the knowledge and skills it delivers. Ignorance and feeling of inadequacy tend to stifle people's capacity to deliver as much as they have potential for (Brown, 2008). As Gilchrist (2004) has noted, empowerment entails enhancing people's capacity to influence decisions that affect them. People who do not participate in the decision making process in their communities because they have not been empowered through education may suffer economic and social disadvantages. Lack of access to education may therefore be a predictor of slip into poverty and the problems associated with it (Halpern, 2005). An effective approach to the eradication of poverty therefore requires commitment to providing access to education to the poor. In light of this, there is opposition to policies that increase the cost of education to the individual especially in low income countries (Godwin et al., 2011).

Hughes et al (2002) provide evidence that supports the position that people's income tends to increase as they improve their academic credential. They also report studies that indicate that education is a major influencer of upward occupational and social mobility. This may explain, as indicated in Chapter 3, why parents who have the means tend to strategically manage the educational element of their children's career in order to place them in positions of competitive advantage for the accumulation of economic and social capital. Children from disadvantaged economic backgrounds tend to improve their economic capital and achieve social mobility when they benefit from higher education (Bates and Riseborough, 1993). This would suggest that education could be an effective tool for reducing inequality in society. The material things we seek to acquire through improved

academic credentials may, however, not reflect the needs of the individual but rather socially induced aspirations (Myers, 2002b). Some of the higher education aspirants who see higher academic credentials as the route to wealth and happiness may learn through experience that they have been mistaken in their belief especially if such credentials do not come with job matching skills. The quest and competition for higher academic credentials seem to have been boosted by the belief that the globalized and knowledge-driven economy of today is intolerant of people without impressive academic credentials (Brown et al (2011). However, the returns on education may be subject to factors that are outside the control of the individual. If the job specific training that can position the individual for high productivity is absent, opportunities for advancement and enhanced earning may be minimized (Thurow, 1970).

The absence of the jobs and income that higher academic credentials seem to promise may keep the affected individuals in perpetual pursuit of even loftier academic goals at great financial and emotional cost to themselves and their families (Brown et al., 2011). Economic elites use their cultural and social capital to give their children advantage in the competition for returns on education. Those who start earlier than others to develop such capital tend to achieve better returns (Lauder et al., 2006). It may therefore be reasonable to believe that although education tends to empower people, what it can achieve may involve a variety of factors some of which may not be within people's control in spite of their best intentions and efforts. As such, those living in low income and socio-politically troubled societies such as Nigeria may face multiple challenges.

4.2.5. Education Empowers Communities

It is a general view that education could potentially provide people with the voice and power to make contributions that improve not only the quality of their livelihoods but also the overall wellbeing of their communities. Wilson (2012) has argued that education is one of the indicators of resilient communities and represents a measure of their social capital which enables them to have control over their destiny. According to Wilson, those who possess both education and material wealth tend to wield significant social capital and political power within their communities. It is Wilson's further observation that communities that rate high on social capital tend to enjoy resilient livelihoods. The larger the number of community members who benefit from higher education, the greater possibility for their

collective social capital to be enhanced. Hoogvelt (1978) argues that the extent of social mobility that occurs in a society is one of the indicators of the depth of development occurring in the community. Education tends to be particularly helpful when women in male dominated societies are provided opportunities for education. Giddens (2002) observes that the educational opportunities that have been provided to women in the developing world has been given credit for much of the economic and political improvements that have been recorded in those regions. This would suggest that societies that discriminate against the girl child in the provision of educational opportunities may be erecting a strong barrier against accelerated development.

Governments perceive education as the separator of the winners from the losers and are implementing policies to reduce obstacles on the way of people who want to acquire it (Osborne, 2013). The understanding seems to be that in the absence of access to quality education to citizens who have the capacity to benefit from it and especially the higher education dimension, a country may become a laggard in socio-economic, and political development as well as in technological advancement. The challenges that can afflict such countries may include pervasive poverty, high inequality, conflict and other development challenges. Such countries may also not be respected in the comity of nations.

One can deduce from the foregoing that education provides both micro and macro benefits by boosting economies through the innovative abilities of its beneficiaries while equipping the individual with the capacity to overcome poverty and develop enviable self-efficacy and image (Segun, 2014). Accessing education may, however, not be stress-free. The path to it may have hurdles for both individuals and their communities.

4.2.6. Barriers to Acquisition of Education

The obstacles in the way of people who desire to have an education may be many and range from lack of higher education places, the high cost of access, absence of essential infrastructure such as electricity and internet access to discriminatory practices that are rooted in culture including religion. All societies are not equal regarding these obstacles and individuals differ in their capacity to navigate their way out of these challenges as they pursue their aspirations.

Nigeria may be one of the countries where most members of the society who desire education encounter many obstacles in their quest for higher education. Segun (2014:18) describes the state of education in Nigeria as "... a story of total neglect and decadence". He

makes the point that the steady growth in the demand for places across all levels of the education system has not been matched with an increase in budgetary allocation to the system. This results in unmet aspirations for many young people in Nigeria who have been socialised into seeing education, especially the university level, as the means to success and high social status. Those who lack access to higher education may resort to disaffection and antisocial behaviour. Enhanced cognitive ability which is one of the affordances of the teenage years (Lickona, 1985) may be channelled to socially disruptive ends when productive engagements such as higher educational pursuits are not available to utilize it. The rising security challenges in the country (UNDP, 2016d) may not be unconnected with the current situation in the country where a large number of young people are not in education, training or employment. It might also, at least in part, account for the pervasive corruption in the education system including examination malpractice that candidates may indulge in in order to gain access to university (Akoni, 2016). As some social scientists (Hughes et al., 2002:141) have observed, “... when a society extols common symbols of success for the entire population, while structurally restricting the access of large numbers of people to the approved means for acquiring these symbols, ... antisocial behaviour ...” may be the consequence.

In order to avoid such behaviours some governments aim at facilitating access to education by removing barriers to access. The United Kingdom has, for example, removed the cap on the number of applicants universities in the country can admit (Osborne, 2013) and has allowed diverse routes through which aspirants can access higher education (UCAS, 2016). In the United States of America, community colleges which offer two year high school education admit about half of the population who graduate from secondary schools and minimizes the frustration people from disadvantaged backgrounds experience as they navigate their way to higher education (Bueschel, 2003). Such colleges that run open courses admit students who come from diverse backgrounds and give them opportunities to study either on a full time or part time basis and can be a gateway to either higher academic pursuits or vocational training and employment.

The situation is significantly different for countries such as Nigeria where young people and their parents experience enormous challenges in the effort to access higher education (ChannelsTV, 2016). Education policy makers in the country acknowledge that poor infrastructural situation, governance inadequacies, poor funding and manpower challenges

are nagging problems in the education system but seem incapacitated in addressing them (Education, 2007).

A significant number of Nigerians travel overseas for higher education. Some young people whose parents have the means also undertake their secondary education abroad. The argument in favour of such decisions is usually based on the perceived low quality of education available within Nigeria. The Nigerian government through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund also patronizes universities in other countries by way of scholarships to Nigerian academics perhaps in tacit acknowledgement that the quality of education offered by the ones it owns leaves much to be desired. The agency was established in 2011 and gets its revenue through the contributions incorporated businesses in Nigeria make to it. That contribution which is statutory is 2% of their assessable profit and is collected by the country's Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) on-behalf of the agency (TETFund, 2016). The huge amount of money foreign education is costing the nation has given rise for concern amongst policy makers (Ikpefan and Adanikin, 2016). The difficult economic challenges the country is currently experiencing have necessitated a need to reassess the situation of sending students to study overseas. The Nigerian government has promised improved attention to education including provision of free meals to primary school pupils (Emejo, 2015) but is budgeting marginally for educational services (Oladokun, 2016).

If the neglect of education in Nigeria that stakeholders have been complaining about persists, parents who can afford the cost may continue to seek quality education for their children in other countries. Even global education leaders appear to have recognized that education that can produce development that can make the world a better place must be of good quality. One of the 17 SDGs is "Quality Education" (UNDP, 2016c). Given the globalized and technologically-driven world we live in today, only functional education can help in the pursuit and realization of the ambitious SDGs which are outlined below:

1. No poverty,
2. Zero Hunger,
3. Good Health and Well-being,
4. Quality Education,
5. Gender Equality,

6. Clean water and sanitation,
7. Affordable and clean energy,
8. Decent work and economic growth,
9. Industry, Innovation and infrastructure,
10. Reduced inequalities,
11. Sustainable cities and communities,
12. Responsible consumption and production,
13. Climate action,
14. Life below water,
15. Life on land,
16. Peace and justice, strong institutions, and
17. Partnerships for the goals.

Countries such as Nigeria are likely to face difficult challenges as they pursue these goals. The education system that should lay the foundation for the pursuit and realization of the other goals does not seem to be benefitting from the right policies (Ayodele-Bello, 2016). Some observers have accused those who regulate the country's university system of corruption (OTOKPA, 2016) and have called for the scrapping of the higher education admissions board in the country in the conviction that the organization has become a liability rather than an asset to the human resource development system in the country (Olabisi, 2016).

Whilst access is one of the major issues in higher education, at primary and secondary school levels, the problem lies more in the quality of education provided than in access. The increased number of pupils at the primary school level following the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999, which is largely free (UBEC, 2016), appears to be inadequately funded. The dropout rate seems to be increasing especially in the North Eastern part of the country where the activities of terrorists have curtailed educational services for some years now. The performance of secondary school pupils in public examinations has also been of concern to stakeholders for some years now and remains without a definite government agenda to remedy the situation (Abah and Adebayo, 2015). If

the concerns of stakeholders reflect the realities at the level of education, it may be logical to argue that graduates of the system may lack the competences they need to find and maintain gainful employment. This may be a critical issue in a country with a high population growth rate. Both dependency ratio and social problems in the country may be rising at a pace that could potentially be burdensome to the country's economy and political stability. A large number of youths who are not assisted by a good quality educational system to develop their potential and channel their energies to productive ends may become liabilities to society rather than assets.

The situation is made worse by the limited capacity of the formal higher education system to accommodate most graduates of the country's secondary school system who have done well in their public examinations and aspire to benefit from higher education. The resources that have been devoted by government and parents to the education of those who do not secure access to higher education may not produce the desired dividends. Such young people might not have reached the threshold in terms of knowledge and skills that can enable them to become productive members of society. The inequality and injustice such a situation may yield do not augur well for the socio-economic and political stability and development of the country.

Virtual learning that can facilitate the democratization of access to education in Nigeria is available only to a small fraction of the population because of high cost of access and the absence of broad band internet access (Amaefule, 2013) and poor electricity supply in most parts of the country. This seems to reflect the observation of Mittler that children from poor homes may not have adequate access to requisite resources in support of their education, poverty being a major hindrance to education and high academic attainment (Mittler, 2000). The regulator of university education in Nigeria has made online studies unattractive to even those who can have access to it by putting a ban on it (Oweh, 2015). This regulator has not indicated what the alternatives are or could be. There seems to be need for the leadership of this agency to demonstrate their understanding of the crucial role of information technology infrastructure in the facilitation of higher education.

The leadership of the higher education admissions board see their mandate as that of an examination service that selects the minority who can benefit from higher education, and not as a career service. The concern of the board has therefore been how to conduct a selection examination that has integrity. This concern led the board to introduce a

computer-based test for the recruitment of students for the country's higher educational institutions for the 2016/2017 academic year. The selection test was conducted in the first quarter of 2016. The exercise attracted scathing criticisms from many stakeholders following a myriad of logistic problems which the board admitted experiencing (Ikpefan, 2016b). Most of the problems were associated with power failure at examination centres and poor performance of the computers used (Olokor and Dumo, 2016).

Nevertheless, the board is insisting that all candidates for its examinations must be subject to the computer-based test. The argument in defence of this position is that the new system will help to minimize malpractices that have been associated with its examinations over the years and therefore restore the confidence of stakeholders in the outcome of these examinations (Ikpefan, 2016c). University administrators in the country had called for the scrapping of the board in 2003 following their loss of confidence in the validity of the board's examination results (Ayodele-Bello, 2016). The universities in the country were, however, permitted with effect from 2004 to conduct their own screening examinations to verify the competence of applicants approaching them for higher education. The screening tests which universities charged fees for were scrapped with effect from June 2, 2016 by the new federal government of the country. The argument in favour of this decision which was announced by the Federal Minister of Education is based on the improvement of the validity of the student recruitment board's examination results (Ikpefan, 2016a). Some stakeholders had indeed complained against the conduct of screening examinations by universities and sought judicial pronouncement against it, arguing that it had become a conduit through which the leadership of universities in the country enrich themselves and benefit their relations at the expense of the poor (ChannelsTelevision, 2016). Scrapping of the screening test might satisfy such stakeholders but may not resolve the issues associated with the computer-based test in a country where many of the candidates may lack competence in the use of computers and where poor infrastructural provisions especially in rural areas may put many candidates at a disadvantage. The equitable and inclusive educational provisions which the SDGs advocate (UNDP, 2016c) do not seem to be of serious concern to education policy makers in the country.

The critical question in the face of all this remains what will be the fate of those who will not secure admission into higher education even if the board were to deliver its examination with integrity. Going by the trend, over 80% of the candidates will not be offered admission because of perceived limited capacity of the higher education system in the country (Okeke,

2016). This study is being conducted to determine whether or not this perceived limited capacity exists in reality. The next section examines the concept of perception. Understanding this concept may be helpful in clarifying the problem of access to higher education in Nigeria. The gap in understanding that exists here may be denying many young people in the country the opportunity to fulfil their dreams with respect to higher education.

4.3. Perception

4.3.1. Introduction

Perception has been recognized as one of the major variables influencing human behaviour and combines with factors such as attitude, learning and motivation to influence the demand for products and services (Egan, 2015). This suggests that the willingness of people to accept ideas, products and services including career options has a lot to do with how they perceive those options. Investments in career management may not yield the desired results if appropriate attention is not paid to perception management. It could be argued that a significant disparity in the perceptions of stakeholders involved in the management of teenagers' careers may limit what can be achieved in terms of young persons' career goals and fulfilment. Career provisions may not deliver the desired results if they are not perceived as valuable and helpful by the target population. As Hochberg (1978:242) has observed, "the qualities of the physical world do not compel us to act in one way or another. The qualities of social perception... have much more of a demand character- that is, they ... are frequently incentives to action. As we see, so we do".

This suggests that optimal utilization of resources in career management would require directing some effort into getting stakeholders to interpret the provisions being made as necessary and useful. This way, career managers can enhance the willingness of all concerned to play helpful roles to guarantee adequate patronage for the provisions made. If the people managing the careers of young persons are not able to help them see the provisions they are making for them in a positive light, the young persons may "... turn out to be casualties of the system" (Raymond, 1985:7) that has probably been instituted to promote their wellbeing. The best results in terms of helping young persons to manage their careers may therefore be achievable if there is what Jones (1979:179) calls stakeholder "congruence" in perception regarding the opportunities they can utilize to facilitate smooth career journeys for themselves. There would appear to be an incongruence in stakeholder perceptions regarding availability of professional examinations as a route to higher education, which may be one of the factors responsible for their low take-up rate in spite of the gap in the demand and supply of the conventional higher education places in the country. The next couple of sections will provide the meaning of perception, highlight its influencers and attempt a road map for its management. This is being done in the hope that the effort can help in illuminating the issues involved in this study.

4.3.2. Meaning of Perception

Kreitner et al (2002:151) have defined perception as "... a cognitive process that enables us to interpret and understand our surroundings". Egan (2015:61) believes that this understanding helps us to "... make sense of the world". The perception process begins with our senses picking up sensations from the environment which get interpreted for meaning (Foxall et al., 1998). The signals calling for the attention of an individual are usually so overwhelming in terms of number that people fail to give all of them attention. They therefore develop shortcuts for choosing what signals to give attention to while ignoring others. One of such shortcuts that people employ to minimize the burden of understanding their world is selectivity by which we choose and attend to some signals and not others (Robbins, 1994). This results in the possibility of two or more people seeing and finding different things in the same object. This suggests that we are "... active processors of information. The world is not merely revealed to us; rather, we play an active role in the creation of our experiences" (Hastorf et al., 1970:5). This is an indication that it is not everything in our environment that attracts our attention. Some things do; others do not. Egan (2015) thus argues that attention precedes perception. It is Egan's position that this selectivity tends to direct individuals' attention to signals that reflect their current worldviews. It is Egan's argument that such background knowledge can obstruct reception of new ideas and make people accept or reject an idea or product based on one of its attributes. This may partly explain why higher education aspirants in Nigeria seem insistent in their pursuit of university degrees. Their current worldview may be obstructing their recognition of alternative routes to higher education that may achieve the credentials and employment opportunities they are seeking faster. This misperception may have put them into what some scholars (Brown et al., 2011:12) have described as "opportunity trap" which

"... forces people to spend more time, effort, and money on activities that may have little intrinsic purpose in an attempt to fulfil one's opportunities. The trap is that if everyone adopts the same tactics, such as getting a bachelor's degree..., no one secures an advantage.

The gregarious nature of human beings makes people to follow the crowd. Such herd mentality might be influenced by the perception and belief that what the majority strives for must be better than what is given attention to by only a minority of people. Empirical evidence indicates that following poor interpretation of situations, the majority may make

poor choices with adverse consequences even when they have good intentions (Myers, 2002a). Efforts put into helping people in such a situation to improve their perceptive ability may therefore be rewarding to the individuals involved and the larger society. Such efforts are likely to benefit from an understanding of the factors that influence perception.

4.3.3. Factors Influencing Perception

Robbins (1994) states that perception is influenced by three major factors, namely, the characteristics of the perceiver, the composition of the target which is the object in focus and the makeup of the situation which includes the context. The information consumers receive tends to shape the perception they have about products and services (Foxall et al., 1998). This means that such information becomes part of the consumers' experience that influences the judgement they make regarding the value of ideas, products and services. For young people, they may receive information about their developmental tasks from a variety of sources including their parents and other family members as well as the school system. This means that a person's life journey including worldview may not be understood until the various factors, individuals and groups impacting on the person's personality and choices have been appreciated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

What individuals see, is therefore largely a function of their background, which reflects their natural endowment such as intelligence and the impact of the environmental factors. For one objective reality, there may be as many perspectives as the number of perceivers available. Stereotypes arising from their individual differences may affect their interpretation of reality. This suggests that how the various higher education routes have been constructed for the higher education aspirants in Nigeria, by significant persons in their lives including their parents and school counsellors, may be a major influencer of how they perceive those routes and their willingness to give consideration to any of them.

To be objective against this background would require exertion of significant mental effort which can help the perceiver appreciate what people's background may not otherwise permit them to see. As Kreitner et al (2002) have pointed out, our different frames of reference can result in our being biased when evaluating matters though we may speak with a high level of conviction which we can go to any length to defend. According to Kreitner et al (2002:163), "... we strive to validate our perceptions of reality, no matter how faulty they may be". Myers (2002b) has made a similar point, indicating that negative stereotypes tend to resist contradictory evidence. According to Myers, people avoid discovering that they did

not know or that they believed in error. Carnegie (1981:175) who identifies with this position asserts that "... people may be totally wrong. But they don't think so". Peck (1990:46-47) argues that some people can put a lot of effort and time into sustaining their ignorance in protection of their self-concept. In Peck's words, what such people do:

... is to ignore the new information. Often this act of ignoring is much more than passive. We may denounce the new information as false, dangerous, heretical, the work of the devil. We may actually crusade against it, and even attempt to manipulate the world so as to make it conform to our view of reality. Rather than try to change the map, an individual may try to destroy the new reality. Sadly, such a person may expend much more energy ultimately in defending an outmoded view of the world than would have been required to revise and correct it in the first place.

This disposition may be an indication of deep emotional attachment to the issues involved. In such circumstances, quality of thinking and openness to change which can enhance the individual may be compromised (Lickona, 1985). Epstein (1993) observes that this resistance to change is traceable to the experiential mind's aversion to rational thinking and its tendency to allow emotions to inhibit objective examination of phenomena. Epstein suggests that the weakness experienced at this level tends to be accounted for by the influence of the unconscious mind formed by years of experiences which the rational mind now finds justifications for. This may lead one to ask if we are always aware of what accounts for what we believe and why we hold certain opinions and not others?

Available evidence indicates that individuals may be primed to see things in a particular way though they may insist that they came to judgement without external influences (Myers, 2002a). Such insistence may be in defence of one's self-esteem which may be a major craving during adolescent years (Lickona, 1985). This suggests that some of the choices adolescents make reflect cues from their peer groups, parents, teachers, counsellors, religious leaders and other members of their social geography. What we know and believe and the actions that are influenced by such beliefs are largely a function of the different layers of influences starting from our families to the larger macro environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, the messages that influence our perceptions may not have equal strength. As Brown (2008:74) has observed, "the messages and stereotypes that are the most powerful are those that we learned from our families of origin". This suggests that what young people expect from their efforts and how they perceive their achievements

and challenges may have a lot to do with the interpretations coming from their parents and siblings (C.R.Snyder, 1994). Encouraging them to interpret missed targets and challenges as opportunities to learn may enhance their willingness to go through challenging processes in the hope that delaying their gratification may be the route to enduring happiness.

Parents encouraging their children along this path may be battling against the contradictory messages that are confronting their children from the mass media which seem to have a predilection for the promotion of instant gratification and with a power young people find difficult to resist (Lickona, 1985). The results of studies have removed doubts about "... the media's significant influence on our sensitivities, perceptions of reality, and behaviours" (Myers, 2002a:77). With the emergence of the internet which exposes young people to diverse groups and messages and across borders, choice of what to believe may have become more daunting than ever. For adolescents who are at a time when they are malleable, contradictory messages that come from people who do not operate in professional capacities may confuse them and lead them to take unprofitable decisions (C.R.Snyder, 1994). This may underscore the need for professional counsellors who have accurate information and work with supportive infrastructure in the school system.

Nigeria seems to be experiencing a major challenge in this area. Many young people complete secondary school in Nigeria without benefitting from professional counselling services (Ogudoro, 2009). The challenges in this respect may be connected with manpower limitations and failure of the relevant agencies to recognize the crucial place of professional counselling in helping young people to manage their careers effectively among other factors. In the face of such recognition challenge, school principals may perceive counsellors as regular teachers and assign them teaching roles that deny them the time to attend to the counselling needs of students. In such circumstances, young people experiencing difficulties managing their developmental tasks including the resolution of their career issues may resort to seeking help from their peers, subject teachers and even religious leaders who may be perceived as prophets who can tell people incontrovertible truths about their careers. Such advisors, apart from lacking relevant skills, may not observe ethical boundaries; and this may carry telling implications for the wellbeing of the recipients. In the words of Kidd(1990:90), in the absence of the right direction, "... people search for their ... home in the wrong places". When the number of people in any society in such circumstances keeps increasing without any apparent effort being made to halt the trend, the consequences in the medium to long term may be hard to predict. If help can be found for such individuals

especially when such help can be offered with minimal sacrifice, it should be given with maximum speed.

Such an awareness might have led some scholars (Kreitner et al., 2002) to recommend that people who take decisions that carry significant implications for society should be sensitized through training to recognize the implications of wrong perception of phenomena for individual and corporate success. They argue that the failure to correct wrong perceptions may give room for self-fulfilling prophecies which may be injurious to the wellbeing of all concerned. They note that if perception is well managed, organizations such as professional bodies can use it to increase their student membership significantly.

4.3.4. Perception Management

People who manage perception may do well to recognize that a good understanding of the source of the opinions and attitudes people have is critical for effectiveness in changing people's views about any phenomenon. Gigerenzer (2007:p206) indicates that:

The dividing line will depend on where our ... feelings have their roots. If they are rooted in the autonomy of the individual, trade-offs are unproblematic unless they do harm to other individuals and violate their rights. Yet if the ... domain is rooted in the family or community, then issues that concern hierarchy, ingroup, and purity are not up for sale.

The lesson in Gigerenzer's argument may be that any effort that aims at promoting a desirable outcome should make provision for the idiosyncrasies of all the parties involved. In the case of higher education aspirants, the parties involved as stakeholders include their parents, subject teachers, siblings, friends, and religious leaders. It has been observed that, as children grow up, they "... learn basic values, perceptions and wants from their family, friends and other culturally specific groups" (Egan, 2015:55). Any communication targeting young people and their influencers should recognize the differences in their media preferences as well as the strengths and weaknesses of both traditional and new media.

It would appear that young people gravitate towards the new media largely because they provide them easy access to information and opportunity for social interaction even though they minimize physical contact. Fill (2013) admits that new media such as internet platforms and mobile phones have the strength of wide reach at a great and affordable speed, although they may not be effective in changing deep seated prejudices. Fill recommends

that traditional media and the new media be used in an integrated form when executing communication campaigns that pursue promotional purposes. This way, the strengths of traditional media such as television, radio and newspaper can compensate for the weaknesses of the new media to produce the desired effects. McQuail (2000) suggests that the disadvantages the poor suffer and the gains they receive when we communicate with them through the print media and broadcast media respectively should not be ignored. McQuail recognizes that in spite of the seeming pervasive use of digital media, people in developing countries still suffer peculiar limitations in their use. Infrastructural deficiencies and low per capita income tend to limit the capacity of people in the developing world to benefit optimally from digitally transmitted messages. Nigeria is one of the countries experiencing such disadvantages (Amaefule, 2013).

This may be an indication that any communication aimed at young people in the country should emphasize face-to-face communication especially when the poor in rural communities are being targeted. Interpersonal communication channel is known to "... be the most effective channel of communication" and this applies even when the target audience are members of an affluent society (Robertson, 1971). Such channels permit change agents the opportunity to elicit the peculiar needs of their target audience and apply appropriate solutions to their problems. When young people in the school system are involved, it becomes very important that people assisting them to solve their problems, which may include career issues, approach them with an open mind and in a confidential one to one interaction. This is to ensure that the prejudices that might have been influenced by information from other stakeholders do not compromise the help they can receive (Raymond, 1985).

Perception managers would therefore do well to adopt a research approach that enables them to understand their target audience in terms of their needs, wants, beliefs and media preferences. Such an understanding should inform communication strategies that can attract congruent perceptions from all stakeholders for products and services meant for young people such as higher education aspirants. Egan (2015) has made a similar case, arguing that integrated marketing communication (IMC) which employs promotional techniques such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, publicity and public relations in a way that makes them mutually reinforcing is an intelligent approach to a communication strategy that can generate the desired perception and consumer patronage. Of significance to this study is Egan's argument for an organized approach to the

communication effort, which, he recommends, should be assigned the Marketing Communications function. Fill (2013:19) informs that “the role of marketing communications is to engage audiences and the tasks are to differentiate, reinforce, inform or persuade audiences to think, feel or behave in particular ways”. Fill advises that a good marketing communication effort should recognize that consumers purchase products and services not only for their functionality and following rational processes but also to meet “hedonic... concerns....” Fill explains that such concerns indicate “... the purchase and use of products and services to fulfil fantasies and to satisfy emotional needs”.

It may be the case that the efforts being made by most secondary school graduates in Nigeria to acquire university degrees are reflective of such needs. This would suggest that communication efforts aimed at getting them to consider alternative routes to higher education must give consideration to such needs if they are to be successful. Given the critical position of parents in the lives of young persons and the role television plays in modelling adult behaviour which children tend to emulate, it is important that any effort aimed at influencing the career choices they make should change the narratives about higher education coming to them from those channels (Strasburger, 1995). It is known that “... a large part of the picture of the world comes through mass communications” (Wright, 1959:101) such as the messages on television. One of the limitations of the mass media, however, is their tendency to deliver information without explaining it to a level that their audience can understand the issues involved (McQuail, 2000). The recognition of this limitation may inform the need to employ role-play when helping young people and other significant persons in their lives to adopt new perspectives and behaviours. This technique has the potential to meet their cognitive and emotional needs for information and behaviours that can enhance the quality of their livelihoods (Raymond (1985). Raymond argues further that role play is able to achieve this because it gives people in need the opportunity to have a taste of the consequences of their behaviours with minimal losses materially and emotionally and the chance to have their choices evaluated in a relatively safe environment for lessons that can result in improved behaviour. If role-play is well deployed, it may help to minimize the sense of risk that tends to discourage people from trying innovative products and services.

This may be particularly critical for the poor. Empirical evidence indicates that the perceived risk in innovations has a strong discouraging effect on their willingness to try new products and services (Hystra, 2013). Rogers (2003) advises change agents to consider giving

prospective consumers the opportunity to try innovative products for free to minimize the perceived risk in such products and services. Rogers also suggests that appropriate communication channels should be employed to give consumers who are quick to embrace innovations the opportunity to share their positive experiences with a new product in order to encourage their peers to adopt such products. Rogers emphasizes that people who, because of personality, and means, are slow in adopting innovations tend to trust their peers' endorsement of a new product more than they believe the claims of the change agents.

This should be particularly instructive for anyone aiming at getting higher education aspirants in low-income countries such as Nigeria to adopt alternative and innovative routes to higher education. In the face of poverty, direct admission into a public university where education is free may be the only perceived route to higher education for higher education aspirants. Alternative routes that carry significant financial implications may be considered unrealistic by such aspirants, even when they are able to understand the benefit of speed they may deliver. The best strategy for effective promotion of innovative products and services may therefore be one that includes elements that remove the perceived risks and demonstrate the superior advantages they offer prospective consumers. Such a strategy may apply to the promotion of innovative routes to higher education in Nigeria. The rate of adoption of innovative routes to higher education in Nigeria may, however, depend on the higher education aspirants' attitude to change. The next section examines the concept of attitude.

4.4. Attitude

4.4.1. Meaning and Formation

Attitude is a predisposition to act in a certain way as a result of the experience we have acquired in the encounter we have with our environment (Wright, 2006). Triandis (1971) argues that attitude has cognitive, affective and behavioural components and explains that the cognitive component helps the individual in categorizing attitude objects and reflects the information and beliefs the person holds regarding the phenomenon. The affective component, according to him, reflects emotions held by the individual about the object, which may be positive or negative. He explains that the behaviour component is the demonstrated response. According to Triandis (1971), the three components do not necessarily function in a linear fashion but rather tend to be iterative and mutually reinforcing. Halloran (1967) underscores the importance of distinguishing the tendency to act in a certain way (attitude) from the action (behaviour) itself and says that this is in realization of the fact that behaviour tends to be a product of a complex set of variables of which attitude is only one. He indicates that attitudes may develop "... in the process of need or want satisfaction and in relation to the individual's group affiliations and to the information to which he is exposed" (p29). Feldman (1985:121-124) while acknowledging the instrumentality of others in the attitudes individuals form states "... that a critical factor affecting the acquisition and maintenance of attitudes relates to the degree to which attitudes are verbally or nonverbally reinforced by others". He also avers that attitude formation can be achieved through conditioning which makes an individual associate one thing with another and develops like or dislike for an object. He notes that "the three components of attitude (affective, cognitive, and behavioural) are ... interrelated and consistent with one another" just as different "... attitudes form interconnections with other attitudes to create organized patterns, rather than standing in isolation from one another". This suggests that a positive or negative attitude held regarding one objective may encourage the development of a similar attitude towards related objects.

Attitude may, however, not predict behaviour accurately sometimes, notes Myers (2002b:93-94). Myers observes that the human tendency to "... discount the situational winds and assume internal propulsion" for the behaviour of people generally results from "fundamental attribution error..." which makes us ignore "... situational constraints..." that can influence people to make choices that contradict their convictions. Brown (2010:78)

identifies with this view and indicates that attitude is only “an orientation or a way of thinking...” which may not result in the behaviour it suggests. It is her conviction that action may be far away from an individual who is a product of a parenting that has not modelled the behaviour one believes to be beneficial and may be favourably disposed to. This underscores the power parents have over their children in terms of their conduct and drives home the point that individuals who lack the capacity to meet their own material needs may make choices that contradict their own convictions and preferences in deference to people who have economic power over them. Parents generally possess such power. How they use it may be a critical determinant of the quality of decisions young people make and how early they succeed. Some of them use such powers to manipulate their children into making career choices that reflect their beliefs about the route to success that is at variance with facts and in neglect of a child’s preferences with negative implications for the child’s long term interest (Sanders, 1997). A recent study revealed that parents tend to encourage their children to study courses they consider prestigious with little or no consideration for the aptitudes and interests of their children (Reynolds, 2014). The power the other social groups the individual belongs to such as one’s peer group wields is also a major influencer of the attitude an individual forms (Halloran, 1967). This is particularly so when people are in their adolescent years when as Erwin (1998:78) observes, “the benefits that accrue to the individual as a result of being part of a group can produce powerful pressures to conform to group norms”.

Response to other people’s influence may, however, observe cultural differences as Myers (2002b:234) has noted. According to Myers, “compared to people in individualistic countries, those in collectivist countries are more responsive to others’ influence”. The difference between individualistic and collectivist cultures lies in the extent to which people consider the interests and reactions of others especially family or fellow community members when taking decisions. People from collectivist cultures are generally more concerned about such interests and reactions than people from individualistic cultures (Robbins, 1994).

Young people in Nigeria, coming from a collectivist culture may be liable to heavy parental influence in their career decisions and may, therefore, ignore options they know could speed up their career progression in the effort to avoid being castigated by parents and other members of their social geography. As Hughes et al (2002:437) have noted, “simply because a trait is functionally superior does not necessarily ensure that individuals will adopt it. Much depends on the network of relationships that tie people together in patterns of meaningful

communication....” This may suggest that the availability of professional examination as a route to higher education does not guarantee that it will be utilized by aspirants to higher education in Nigeria. The contradictory information and pressures coming from significant persons in the lives of the aspirants like school counsellors and the aspirants’ parents may be emphasising routes other than professional examinations. As some scholars (Hughes et al., 2002:437) have observed, the adoption of a product or opportunity is “... a people process and hence is expedited or hindered by the social environment”. The point needs to be made, however, that individual differences exist in attitudes even when people are exposed to the same groups. Personality differences may account for why one person lacks an attitude other group members possess (Halloran, 1967). Teenagers also tend to become more independent minded as they grow older and possibly realize that they can no longer afford the cost of conformity (Erwin, 1998). This suggests that human beings including adolescents are not mere objects who are pushed around by social structures but individuals who act as agents in their own affairs (Elder-Vass, 2010), making choices that may carry negative or positive consequences for them or both.

4.4.2. Resistance to Change and How to manage it

Human nature appears to like certainty and security even when change is profitable. People can expend a lot of energy in the effort to prevent change even when it is inevitable (Chodron, 2003). Some individuals are, however, more welcoming of change than others. A major separator of people in terms of their willingness to embrace change is their mind-set. Dweck (2012), relying on empirical evidence, has argued that parenting largely determines whether an individual develops what she calls “growth” and “fixed” mindsets in her book, *Mindset*. It is Dweck’s position that people with growth mindset tend to welcome change for they generally see opportunities to learn and get better in it whereas those with a fixed mindset tend to resist change out of a commitment to avert any development that can result in loss of reputation or material things for them. Resisting the inevitable may be a short-cut to long term agony since those who accept the inevitability of change and embrace it may prepare better for it and take advantage of what it brings while those who resist it may squander their resources fighting a battle they may not win and incurring both physical and psychological costs in the process.

Teenagers are generally not as set in their ways as people in mid-life and can therefore embrace new ideas with ease if they are made to understand the positive outcomes that can

result from attitudinal change and the relevant information is provided by role models they trust (Kreitner et al., 2002). However, the group one belongs to tends to influence one's attitude (Mullins, 1996). This is particularly so for teenagers who are generally given to group loyalty and have the tendency to place a lot of weight on the opinions of their group members (Sanders, 1997). This would suggest that an effective change programme is likely to benefit from an effort directed at influencing the beliefs held by members of the group especially if they are teenagers. Overall, a successful change programme may be dependent on the extent to which the change agent understands the factors underlying the attitude in focus and demonstrates the benefits of change including the need for it and the losses that may be associated with failure to change (Mullins, 1996). This is critical because the needs people desire to meet tend to determine the attitudes they form meaning that attitudes cannot be divorced from motives which Craib (1992) has described as the "actor's 'wants'". Halloran (1967:86) argues in favour of attitudinal change agents investing time and other resources into appreciating the needs and motives that nourish attitudes. It is Halloran's belief that "change is likely to take place when the old attitude ceases to fulfil its function and therefore no longer gives satisfaction to the related need state". This suggests that higher education aspirants in Nigeria would benefit from being helped to realize that the time to consider alternative routes to higher education has come since the current crisis in access to higher education in Nigeria is unlikely to abate in the nearest future in the face of high population growth rate of the country and the myriad of development challenges governments at various levels in the country are currently contending with. Those who have managed to get into higher education in the country are not having the best of times given poor state of infrastructure in the sector, observes Segun (2014).

It could be argued that efforts aimed at getting the young people in Nigeria to make new choices and do things differently should be made in the understanding that cognitive change does not automatically result in behavioural change. As Myers (2002b), Wright (2006) and Epstein (1993) have observed, individuals can indulge in cognitive deceit, manipulating the facts they have and inventing arguments to sustain current beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in order to avoid discovering that they have been wrong in the choices they have made. Halloran (1967:91) who has made a similar observation states that "one of the main characteristics of human thought, behaviour and action is a tendency towards consistency". He notes that people tend to invoke arguments to defend their choices and find unsavoury information about what they find hard to accept. He explains further that this is so because

people tend to guard against dissonance which "... is... a psychologically uncomfortable state which the individual will seek to reduce and which will also motivate him (or her) to avoid situations and information which are perceived as being likely to increase his discomfort" (Halloran, 1967:100-101). In effect, human beings have a big challenge dropping a perception they have formed largely because environmental influences like parenting and communication from counsellors and other significant persons in the school setting can make the experiential mind to develop unconscious bias against steps that may be beneficial (Epstein, 1993). Helping them to make new choices and do things differently may therefore require communicating with them in such a way that they can realize the harm in continuing to tread an unrewarding route. This might be why the mass media, which may not be able to reach the experiential mind, may lack the capacity to convince young people in Nigeria of the need to consider alternative routes to higher education unless they are used in concert with other communication platforms. Halloran (1967:88) has the conviction that they "... are not as powerful as personal and direct experience in changing attitude" but can be useful in dethroning unfounded assumptions that have nourished existing beliefs and actions that have proved incapable of meeting the needs of the individual. It is Halloran's belief that information provision working in isolation of change in other conditions accounting for attitude may not result in attitude change.

Epstein (1993:248) argued, "... to know something intellectually is not necessarily to know it experientially". He notes that the experiential mind learns slowly because of the strong hold past experiences have on it as contrasted with the rational mind which learns faster, relying on evidence but may not achieve much in terms of change in attitude and behaviour because of the cooperation it needs from the experiential mind to achieve a shift in behaviour. Myers (2002b) agrees that people may not behave in line with their attitudes which situational factors can explain. It is his observation that people can make choices that negate what they know can serve their best interest. It may therefore be possible that higher education aspirants in Nigeria may be insisting on particular routes to higher education in spite of knowledge of alternatives that may cost them less in terms of time and effort. The factors preventing them from considering alternative routes to higher education may include cost, preferences of parents and the opinions of their peers. It has long been known (Triandis, 1971:101) that "much of..." the information that influences attitude "... is acquired from other people".

This suggests that social elements may be very potent and affect the rate of diffusion of discoveries like the availability of professional examinations as alternative route to higher education. Achieving the behaviour change that will make young people adopt professional examinations as an effective alternative route to higher education will, therefore require a strategic behaviour change intervention that is informed by a good understanding of the beliefs the young people and individuals who influence their career decisions have about professional examinations. A good understanding of the diffusion continuum (Rogers, 2003) will be very helpful to professionals in pursuit of a more favourable attitude to professional examinations by young people. Such understanding will enable the change agents to appreciate the knowledge level of the target audience and their influencers regarding professional examinations and start the change effort by devoting available resources to the recruitment of innovators and early adopters who can then influence other people who need the platform to adopt it. This may demand a combination of skills if early success is to be guaranteed.

Weinreich (2015) advises professionals involved in this change effort to invest in learning through formal and other self-development approaches that should concentrate on knowledge of the behavioural sciences and marketing, and skills in research, project management and advocacy as well as the acquisition of soft skills that can help them interact successfully with all the stakeholders. Such a capacity can enable the design and execution of a communication programme that can fill the knowledge gaps in terms of the place of professional certification in career development. Hannon (2015) suggests a “Profound Communications for Engagement” model that recognizes the indispensable place of the application of diffusion theory in the effective management of behaviour change programmes as shown in Figure 4.1:



Figure 4.1

Source: Hannon's Engagement Model (2015)

According to Hannon, the use of this model would ensure that the communication programme reflects the peculiar backgrounds of the target audience in terms of knowledge, beliefs and perceptions and adopt communication messages, techniques and channels that are most acceptable to the target audience. Hannon advises the use of data collected in the course of monitoring of such a programme to determine the extent to which set change objectives are being realised. This is an indication that programme evaluation is critical for an efficient and effective change management programme. The results of such an effort helps in the modification of communication approaches in reflection of shifts in knowledge and feelings of the target audience towards the products and ideas being promoted so that the best use of budgeted resources can be attained.

Efficiency in the management of an attitudinal change programme may be best guaranteed when the manager of change is conscious of the different forms of attitudinal change which Triandis (1971:160) has identified to include "compliance", "identification", and "internalization". Triandis explains that compliance is change that may not come with convictions but only embraced to gain a reward or avoid punishment while identification reflects change that is embraced to enable the individual have an association with the

advocate of the change as a result of the advocate's attractiveness. Internalization, according to him indicates change that is informed by the conviction that the content of the behaviour advocated for is intrinsically beneficial and tends to apply when the new behaviour is compatible with the individual's value system. He argues that a credible advocate of attitudinal change is more likely to achieve internalized change than an advocate who lacks credibility. The counsel in all of this may be that advocates of attitudinal change should endeavour to ensure that change programmes are perceived to be meaningful by the target audience and realistic in terms of time frame and the demands it will make on the supposed beneficiaries. As Wright (2006) has observed, diminishing financial capacity and the availability of more affordable alternatives may truncate an individual's genuine desire to patronize an offering.

It may therefore be a possibility that the cost of preparing for and writing professional examinations may be one of the factors discouraging some higher education aspirants from considering it as an alternative route to higher education. This is plausible for youths in a country with per capita income that is under \$4,000 (Bank, 2015) and ranking 152 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2015). Public universities in Nigeria are funded by the governments that established them with the federal ones being largely tuition free which may partly account for the high demand for them compared to the demand for state owned and private universities which charge higher tuition fees. Professional bodies fund their activities primarily through the subscriptions and fees members pay for services they receive. Their examinations are not subsidized, resulting in fees some people who may be interested in the programmes, may not afford. This situation may be affecting the attitude of some higher education aspirants towards such programmes adversely. Some others may not be treading this route because they are uncertain of its capacity to deliver the good life they believe higher education offers or because they believe it is a more demanding route in terms of effort. Higher education aspirants and their parents tend to choose the easy and guaranteed path to higher education even when it will cost them more in the short run. Reynolds (2014) discovered in a recent study that many Chinese young people undertaking A' level programmes in some colleges in the United Kingdom switched to university foundation programmes which they considered a guaranteed route to a university degree. Even though change that focuses on the long term interests of the individual tends to deliver a more fulfilled life in the long run (Dweck, 2012), human nature seems to be

oriented to schedule pleasure before pain, a disposition that tends to make human experiences more painful (Brown, 2010).

An effective manager of attitudinal change should therefore have a good understanding of the profile of the target audience and tailor the message, strategy and tactics to be used in line with such an understanding. Variables of particular relevance may include knowledge of those who influence the target audience, their income level, their objectives and interests, beliefs, values and perceptions. With a favourable attitude to learning and change, higher education aspirants in Nigeria may be able to take advantage of innovative routes to addressing their career concerns and make realistic choices when the need arises. The next section highlights some issues involved in career management.

4.5. Career Management During Adolescence

4.5.1. Introduction

Having a career is an essential element of human experience (Gysbers and Moore, 1981) and has to be deliberately managed if the best results are to be achieved (Greenhouse et al., 2000). Proactive management of one's career is even more critical for adolescents who have to prepare for the responsibilities of adulthood for which, in turn, they have to acquire the necessary competences. The higher education aspirants who are the focus in this study are in their adolescent years. Given that people at this stage in life may fail to disclose their problems to significant persons in their lives, it becomes important that "they ... have access to educational opportunities in contexts that are supportive, that prepare them for the roles of adult life, and in which there are resources to help them realize their potential" (Cowie and Wallace, 2000:5). It is within this context that this section will discuss the meaning of having a career in relation to adolescents and the management of their development towards this stage in their lives.

4.5.2. Profile of Adolescents

There are various views on the definition of adolescence. Whilst some scholars see adolescence from the perspective of the age of the persons involved, others hold the view that the concept should be seen from the perspective of the life cycle with emphasis placed on the physical, mental, moral, social and psychological characteristics of the people involved. Moshman (1999) believes that an adolescent is a teenager, meaning that adolescents are young people who are within the age bracket of 10 to 19 years. Mitchell (1974), on the other hand, identifies with the view that adolescence begins at the age of ten

and its early stage stretching up to the age of sixteen. Laufer (1975) argues that the minimum age for the onset of adolescence is thirteen with the upper limit being the age of twenty one.

Jaffe (1998) considers puberty as the marker of adolescence and thinks that “equating the onset of adolescence with puberty is appealing because physical growth and maturation are universal and relatively easy to observe and measure”. Jaffe, however, calls for caution with respect to the age at which adolescence ends. This, according to Jaffe is because adolescence is a period when the individual should achieve some milestones physically, mentally, emotionally and socially and that some people who realize the physical dimensions of adolescence in terms of growth and sexual maturation may not necessarily meet the cognitive, emotional and social indices of adolescence at the same time. According to Moshman (1999), the adolescent has grown out of childhood but is not yet an adult. Moshman has the conviction that this situation of being neither in childhood nor in adulthood has psychological implications for adolescents. Head (1997) indicates that the average adolescent has reached the age of puberty and is in school preparing to secure employment. Successful transition to gainful employment that enables the individual to become financially independent of the parents and get married should mark the end of adolescence (Noller and Callan, 1991) .

Since people become employed at different ages, usually depending on a variety of variables including social class and cultural practices, people may transit to adulthood at different ages in different societies. Families and societies experiencing serious economic challenges may therefore have young people who experience prolonged adolescence or, conversely, they may enter the adult world earlier if they have to start working at an earlier age to contribute to family income. Those who have had accidents in their childhood or teenage years that make them dependent on others throughout their lives may be similarly affected. Even adolescents who are experiencing minimal obstacles in their maturation may still grapple with challenges that apply to people at this stage in the human life cycle.

McGuinness (1998:51-52) observes that the challenges adolescents generally grapple with include:

- *a feeling that they are falling short of standards and expectations;*
- *an uncertainty or fear about future choices;*
- *a feeling of being fragmented, not a whole person, not knowing what to do;*

- *a feeling of dependence and simultaneously a desire to be autonomous;*
- *being unwilling to set limits, yet knowing they must be set;*
- *uncertainty about employment, adulthood;*
- *uncertainty about sex roles;*
- *difficulty in making and sustaining significant relationships;*
- *feeling overwhelmed by the range of emotions that emerge out of consciousness;*
- *problems in accepting responsibility (being over- or under-responsive).*

McGuinness makes the point that making decisions and choices regarding higher education and employment are among the stress-inducing tasks that adolescents face. In the face of their desire to meet the expectations of significant persons in their lives, which sometimes may be conflicting, it is understandable why this challenge may generate anxiety for them. The burden becomes more daunting in an education system such as Nigeria's where career and counselling services are poorly provided and even none existent in some schools where adolescents are supposed to be prepared for tasks ahead of them (Ogudoro, 2009).

Notwithstanding the limitations of their environment, they have to compete with their peers when they transit to the world of work, an environment that is becoming more and more globalized and where effective self-management has become a critical life skill (Greenhouse et al., 2000).

One of the conditions that can help adolescents in such environments may be for all stakeholders to collaborate to develop and implement strategies to provide them with the skills and values they need to make smooth transitions. Parents and teachers who are among the significant persons in the lives of adolescents can jointly develop and execute programmes that can provide the stimulation young people need to develop a positive self-concept and make the best use of learning resources. By providing a harmonious home in which adolescents can live, parents would be making a major contribution to their healthy development. Such homes become secure bases from which adolescents can function as they confront their development tasks. Evidence exists to the effect that young people who operate from such homes find the socio-economic and psychological support they need to resist negative peer pressures. Such secure bases appear critical for adolescents who are missing their academic targets. One of targets may be the desire to secure admission into a preferred higher educational institution when they finish secondary school. Some of their missed targets may be traceable to lack of adequate and accurate career information or other factors which may be beyond their control. Having adults who tolerate their mistakes

that are borne out of ignorance can make a huge difference in what they grow up to become (Lickona, 1985).

The next section will attempt a definition of the concept of career and highlight the elements inherent in its management including career influencers. The understanding that will result from that may be helpful to stakeholders who have to work with adolescents as they navigate their careers.

4.5.3. Career Management

Greenhouse et al (2000:9) define career as “... as the pattern of work-related experiences that span the course of a person’s life” and argue that:

Work-related experiences are broadly construed to include (1) objective events or situations such as job positions, job duties or activities, and work-related decisions; and (2) subjective interpretations of work-related events such as work aspirations, expectations, values, needs, and feelings about particular work experiences.

This suggests that experience has to be work related to be part of a career. This may appear to include educational and training engagements that are geared towards securing and holding a job but exclude aspects that prepare the individual to discharge social tasks such as being married and parenting. Separating work from non-work experiences may be a difficult, if not impossible task. Non-work experiences may influence people’s career and vice versa. This may account for the reason that some scholars (Gysbers and Moore, 1981:56) believe that the development of people’s career should include even non-work experiences since “... individuals are always in process of becoming” with all their experiences combining in an intricate way to define their career. In this context, even family life and other experiences that do not appear to be work related will come under the definition of one’s career. This enlarges the elements that constitute career and increases the importance we should attach to it thereby necessitating its careful management to achieve effectiveness in educational, work, and leisure activities and involving collaboration of all the stakeholders in one’s life such as parents, teachers, counsellors and other community members (Gysbers and Moore, 1981). It is their view that people will achieve the best results if the provision of guidance services is considered as important as the teaching of academic subjects. People who benefit from such a balanced development may find their life journey satisfying since they are likely to find and get involved in endeavours they enjoy and possess the skills to navigate the challenges they may meet along the way.

This holistic understanding of career is shared by Kumar (2007:15) who considers it realistic and superior to:

definitions that narrowly equate 'career' with the terms job, vocation, profession or occupation- i.e. paid employment. Career is now increasingly being viewed very broadly as a 'lifelong and life-wide career' in which paid work may be central, but is just one of many roles played out in the course of an individual's progress through life.

Greenhouse et al (2000:15) appear to be in agreement with this position as they argue that "... career decisions must take into account the satisfaction of work, family and personal needs". They argue further that "... career management in the 21st century will require new insights and strategies to manage not only one's career but one's overall life as well". They therefore see career management as encompassing all efforts made by an individual to develop and implement a strategy to get fulfilling results from work and other aspects of life. It is their view that the elements of career management include exploration to develop self and environment awareness, the setting of goals that reflect the individual's talents, interests, values and life-style, and the development and implementation of a strategy that can help the individual to utilize available resources optimally in pursuit of set goals. It is their advice that flexibility and adjustment of goals and strategies as informed by regular appraisal and feedback should be considered indispensable when managing careers. Since some decisions on career are taken even before the individual gets into the world of work, it would appear that people tend to come under some external influences with respect to the career choices they make.

Epstein (1993) agrees and observes that parents tend to exert over bearing influence on their children's career many of whom do so in the hope that their children can make up for their own failed career aspirations. Epstein calls attention to the possibility of this tendency resulting in resentment by the affected children against their parents, which may not augur well for their general well-being later in life. Some of the things such children lose include independent mindedness and constructive thinking which is critical for the utilization of one's potential. In the face of this, people from such backgrounds may pay excessive attention to their weaknesses rather than concentrating on developing their talents and building on their strengths. Such persons may lack career fulfilment (Ogudoro, 2005).

The extent to which parents and other family members including siblings are objective when discussing career issues with young persons becomes critical when one considers how much success they can achieve with regard to their careers. This is more so when one realizes that the family occupies the top rank regarding influencers of major life courses and fundamental beliefs of adolescents although peer pressure can make them dress, talk and get entertained in particular ways (Hughes et al., 2002). One may wonder why individuals pay so much attention to how their choices are perceived by people in their social circles. The answer as Dibb et al (2006:86) see it, may reside in the fact that the satisfaction a consumer derives from any product or service "... depends not only on the quality of the functional performance of the ... product, but also on numerous psychological and social forces". This awareness should not lead one into concluding that economic factors do not impact significantly on career decisions.

The size of the discretionary income and the cost implications of utilizing a given career route compared to other routes should also be considered major factors influencing the route an individual chooses for higher education. This is because higher education tends to be among the things people purchase with their discretionary income which Dibb et al (2006:82-85) have defined as the "... income that is available for spending and saving after an individual has purchased the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter...". They observe that in a low income economy, "... consumers are more concerned about the functional value of products..." and advise producers of goods and services to focus their marketing research "... on determining what product functions buyers want and then make sure that these functions become part of..." what is offered to consumers. They counsel further that in such circumstances, "promotional efforts should emphasize value and utility". The reality young people face today is that not all of them will be winners in the competition for the jobs that offer the financial and social rewards most of them seem to be pursuing (Brown et al., 2011). This may underscore the need for them to evaluate their career options carefully and ensure that the choices they make are rational and evidence-based.

4.5.4. Factors Influencing Career Success

Although a multitude of factors may account for career success, what usually separates the outliers from the crowd who are not winners is the richness of their environment in terms of cultural capital. Bourdieu captures this as the informal education parents tend to give their children in the effort to boost their personal capital and give them competitive advantage in

society (Brown et al., 2001). The careers of such children tend to be deliberately engineered by their parents to give them competitive advantage, notes Gladwell (2008:205). According to Gladwell, the type of parenting one receives and other circumstances of one's upbringing influence how much one can accomplish in life. It is therefore Gladwell's conviction "... that success arises out of the steady accumulation of advantages".

The extent to which the personality of people matches their career choice also may be a predictor of how well they take advantage of opportunities and fare in their chosen field (Robbins, 1994). A person with a social personality who enters a career requiring an investigative outlook may therefore, not excel in it. Even if there are material accomplishments to show for the effort being put into such a career, the subject may lack job satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Myers (1995) provides evidence that indicate that the best output tend to come from individuals who develop their personality types which may range from intuitive, thinking, feeling to sensing and make a deliberate effort to minimize the liabilities that are inherent in them. The counsel for people making career decisions may therefore be for them to first verify their personalities and settle for a compatible endeavour. It is reasonable to argue that professional help where available should be utilised.

Focusing on using the platform of one's job to make a positive difference in the lives of people is one of the critical keys to career success (Grenny (2015). It is Grenny's view that those who deliberately seek to impress through their jobs tend to generate stress for themselves while pursuing such goals. This agrees with the research findings of Dweck (2012) which underscored the need for those who desire success and enduring happiness to focus on doing jobs they enjoy and not the ones that are winning and competition oriented.

It may be particularly important that teachers and school counsellors do their jobs with passion in order to inspire young people in their care. There is evidence that shows that dramatic academic performance can be attained by students who are taught and guided by exemplary teachers and counsellors (McGuinness, 1998). In this regard, investing in teacher training and provision of effective counselling service may be one of the routes to helping adolescents achieve balanced development that will position them well for fulfilling careers. Teachers and counsellors who are technically competent and inspiring may, by their conduct, inspire adolescents to demonstrate resourcefulness and become primary agents that can provide the solutions that confront them and their peers (Cowie and Wallace,

2000). Effective study skills, computer and internet literacy should be among the abilities that good teachers and counsellors can help adolescents acquire if they are to demonstrate resourcefulness in the management of their own careers. With such skills, they can engage in self-directed learning especially in societies where the school system is under-resourced.

Parents can also play a major role in helping adolescents explore their internal and external environments and develop realistic strategies for taking advantage of opportunities open to them. They can achieve this by providing their children conducive learning environments and supervising their work to ensure that they demonstrate responsibility in handling their academic assignments and the general use of time (Fry, 1997). Empirical evidence indicates that students who are compelled by their parents to invest more than the minimum time prescribed by the school system and engage them in regular conversations on their academic work tend to outperform their peers (Gladwell, 2008). Parents' involvement in managing their children's academic development should, however, be done with wisdom and moderation since overzealousness in this direction can be counter-productive and even result in avoidable frictions in parent-child relationship (Myers, 2002b).

One of the major ways that parents can help their children prepare for the world of work may be for them to model diligence, constructive thinking, responsibility, good interpersonal relations, and positive mindedness for their children. Empirical evidence confirms that hopeful individuals tend to be people who were brought up by hopeful people (C.R.Snyder, 1994). Such parents tend to model positive mindedness in the way they solve the problems of life confronting their families. Children also tend to imbibe their parents' values regarding money and how they manage their relationships (Twist, 2003). It is important then to emphasize that emotional and social intelligence which enable people to get the best out of their relationships have become essential tools in the career management kit (Goleman, 2007). How people measure on intelligence quotient scales may not be as critical as the social skills they possess and deploy in networking events and the resolution of interpersonal frictions. Such abilities which make a huge difference in how successful people can be in the management of their careers, can be acquired through training and practice (Carnegie, 1981). Such abilities could give adolescents competitive edge in the management of their careers. With such abilities, they can nominate themselves for opportunities and draw resources from their social networks in pursuit of good academic grades and membership of groups that can facilitate the realization of the other goals they seek which may include opportunities for internship and volunteer work. The skills and values they acquire from such

exposure may give them competitive advantages when they seek employment opportunities later. This has become crucial in a fast changing and globalized business environment where the knowledge base of a degree programme is now of less importance to employers. Transferable skills and personal qualities that enable workers to navigate difficult circumstances successfully and work well with others in a diverse work setting have become more critical which is one of the reasons why university education that presents opportunities for people to meet this need may be considered a unique and indispensable developmental experience (McMillan and Weyers, 2013). But educational institutions do not have equal capacities to deliver such skills and values to their students.

The secondary and post-secondary institutions that pay adequate attention to the hierarchy of educational objectives which Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues recommended as a measure of effectiveness of an education system (McMillan and Weyers, 2013) are likely to help their students develop such abilities more than those that do not recognize or pay lip service to them. They identified such objectives to include the delivery of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Whereas secondary schools tend to focus on helping students acquire relevant knowledge, and understand as well as apply such knowledge, universities tend to make deliberate efforts to deliver the ability to analyse, synthesize and evaluate situations to their students (McMillan and Weyers, 2011). Individuals who desire to acquire such higher level abilities as part of their career development strategies may see the need to insist on university education. Could the desire to acquire such abilities be among the reasons why higher education aspirants in Nigeria tend to insist on university education even when other platforms for higher education offer more places? The results of this study may provide an answer. It may, however, be possible that other platforms for higher education such as professional bodies may have the capacity to deliver such abilities especially if they collaborate with universities and other education agencies to generate a synergy that can help higher education aspirants pursue and achieve those abilities for successful careers.

It may be reasonable to conclude that, regarding career success, there may not be only one route to its realization (Greenhouse et al., 2000). Individuals seeking it may discover ultimately that the way to get to it is to recognize their strengths and opportunities and utilize realistic strategies to navigate their environments in a fashion that guarantees them optimal benefits that include self-fulfilment. Open mindedness, flexibility and the willingness to take advantage of innovative ideas in career management may be particularly relevant to

young people in countries where places in conventional higher educational institutions are very limited. As stated earlier, Nigeria is one of such countries. The challenge here as empirical evidence indicates, is that those who have the greatest need for innovation tend to be the ones who resist it the most (Rogers, 2003).

Well-packaged and executed innovations tend, however, to find converts (Weinreich, 2015). Adopting a well-thought-out strategy for career management may be the only way to avoid failure to secure gainful employment that utilizes the individual's full potential (Bolles, 1980). Even seemingly limited opportunities for higher education which young people in the developing world including Nigeria face, may not stop determined individuals from experiencing fulfilling careers. As Giddens (2006) has observed, individuals can serve as the principal agents that can lift themselves out of disadvantaged circumstances and tread the path to their personal goals successfully. Giddens (2006:356), however admits that notwithstanding what individuals can do for themselves through human agency to escape difficult circumstances, "social policy can play an important role in maximizing the action potential of disadvantaged individuals and communities".

This thesis examines the argument that public education agencies and professional bodies in Nigeria could, by promoting professional examinations to higher education aspirants in the country, demonstrate the wisdom in this counsel. The adolescents who are at the micro level of the focus of this thesis should be helped to understand the import of McAdam's (2014:21-23) assertion that "... all of us need to be open to how best to manage our own careers if we are to fulfil our own ambitions against a backdrop of continuing worldwide economic uncertainty" which requires that we "... regularly recalibrate personal expectations against what is possible". Being in their adolescence years, they have reached the formal operational stage in their mental development (Moshman, 1999) and have therefore attained the cognitive ability to make useful contributions towards the formulation and realization of their own realistic career strategies. Since they are sandwiched between childhood and adulthood and still developing their own self-concept, they may be "... highly susceptible to social pressures and still contending with their own developmental immaturities" (Lickona, 1985:191). They therefore need to be guided by significant adult persons in their lives with the right expertise to make the right choices.

4.5.5. Summary

The education of an individual begins from cradle and may stretch to the end of life for people committed to life-long learning. The education of an individual is usually a responsibility shouldered by different layers of society including the family, the school system and corporate organizations. It may therefore take place both formally and informally and can bring benefits that empower not only the individual both also the communities to which the individual belongs. Even countries may recognize and use it as a competitive tool in the digitalized and globalized world of today.

Societies are not equal in terms of the access and quality of education they give to their citizens. Barriers that stand in the way of access to education include poor funding, and impoverished infrastructure, which may have dimensions of poor internet access and unreliable supply of electricity. People desiring access to higher education in Nigeria seem to have the added challenge of limited pathways which improved career advice in schools can help address.

Successful management of one's career seems to depend on the lens with which one looks at available opportunities and one's favourable attitude towards learning and change. Societal influences coming from significant persons in the life of individuals may make them form attitudes and perceive some career options unfavourably which can result in their ignoring opportunities that may be beneficial to their careers. Helping young people to evaluate the opportunities at their disposal objectively and try out new and unfamiliar options, which may be career enhancing, may grant them early success.

This appears critical in the globalized environment of today where employers are making new demands on their employees and where competition for available opportunities for higher education and fulfilling careers are getting increasingly stiff. Those who win in this race for career success may have to modify their worldviews and employ new lenses so that they can see opportunities in uncommon places and take advantage of them with the right attitude. The lessons the foregoing have provided will form part of the principles and strategies this study will employ in the effort to resolve the problem it has set out to address. The field investigations will explore the extent to which the issues that have been highlighted here apply to the higher education aspirants who will participate in the study. The extent to which they are aware of the opportunities professional bodies provide for access to higher education, the strategies they are adopting for higher education, and how

professional bodies promote their programmes to higher education aspirants are among the questions the study will be seeking to answer. The study will also seek to know the opinions of some education policy makers on the crisis in access to higher education as well as the extent to which school counsellors promote professional examinations to higher education aspirants.

The next chapter outlines the methodology that was adopted in conducting this study.

Chapter 5- Methodology

5.1. Introduction

Knowledge and beliefs that are not arrived at methodically tend to have inherent weaknesses that can result in avoidable costs. It is against this background that sources of knowledge such as common-sense, which is informed by our personal experiences and the experiences of people we know, and intuition which relies on hunches we receive from within ourselves may be untrustworthy (Ruane, 2005). This study hoped to generate knowledge that can be trusted and, therefore, followed a systematic procedure that enabled it to deploy appropriate techniques that provided answers to its questions. Methodology in the context of research underscores the world view that governs the conduct of an investigation and specifies the strategies and steps that will be followed in resolving the study problem. Factors influencing methodological preferences include resources available to the researcher including time and manpower in terms of skills as well as standards of the relevant institution and the orientation of the researcher (Blaxter et al., 2010).

This chapter outlines the philosophical underpinnings of the study including its methodological approach and discusses the strategy it adopted in search of those answers. The chapter will also identify the relevant population of the study and give background information regarding the sample from which relevant data were collected. It will additionally specify the instruments that were employed for data collection including the rationale for the choices. It will address the ethical issues that arose in the course of the investigation and the steps taken to overcome them.

5.2. Study Paradigm

An efficient and effective search for knowledge should be guided by a given paradigm which will determine the choices that will be made. Dietze(2001) has argued that the choice of paradigm arises from practice that is considered successful by practitioners. He stresses that it helps to explain relevant phenomena while providing the theories and templates that guide inquiry in the relevant area. It is his conviction that it does not have to answer all the questions being asked but advances knowledge in the area using laws, theories, models and instruments. According to Dietze (2001) a good paradigm will possess the characteristics of coherence and precision and permit room for enquiries that can result in new understandings.

A helpful study paradigm states the understanding of reality adopted as well as the study's orientation regarding how we can arrive at reality and its orientation towards either developing knowledge quantitatively or qualitatively.

5.2.1. Ontology

Ontology reflects our conception of reality and influences the research questions we ask (Bryman, 2012). A good starting point for individuals on a research journey is the determination of their view regarding reality. The clarification of this helps researchers to determine the approach and methods they can employ in their search for knowledge (Mason, 1996).

Bryman (2012) has observed that social reality may be perceived as existing independent of human activities, a stance referred to as objectivism. Alternatively, it can also be seen as the outcome of the activities of human actors and be in a continual process of change. This is a constructionist position. Objectivism is the ontological position that views reality as an external fact that exists independent of the activities of human beings. According to Crotty (1998:5), objectivism is the philosophical "... view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience...". This means that things remain realities even if we are ignorant of them. We may come to the awakening that they exist through research which reveals only that which has been there. In other words, ignorance of a fact does not preclude its existence. That a thing was discovered today does not mean that it has not always been in existence.

Bryman (2012) defines constructionism as the ontological stance which takes the position that reality cannot be separated from the interactions human actors have with their environment. What we perceive as reality is usually a product of the encounters humans have with their environment. Reality, which is continually being constructed, is not external to the actors in the environment. Mason (1996) wonders whether social reality can be separated from the people involved in it. It is Hult's (1996) conviction that researchers' backgrounds cannot be neatly separated from the study they are conducting. It is this scholar's belief that although researchers have a professional duty to put their biases in check, their experiences may become part of the resources that facilitate their investigation. Such experiences can help them to appreciate what is happening at the site of their study and enhance their understanding of the issues involved. Constructionism should therefore

be understood as the ontological position that objective reality is a fallacy for it does not exist. The truth we know is the one we establish through the interactions we are involved in as we engage our world. The reality we perceive is therefore the outcome of constructions done by actors in our environment, which are usually reflections of the backgrounds of those actors. Crotty (1998) who makes this point says that the reality we see is influenced by the socialization we receive as we are brought up. This suggests that there may be as many realities as there are people with different backgrounds in terms of how they have been brought up.

The opportunities people perceive are the ones society through the socialization process has permitted them to see. Information-rich societies are therefore likely to present their members with more empowering opportunities. The limited opportunities Nigerian students have to interact with information-rich professional career counsellors may partly account for the higher education access crisis in the country.

The average Nigerian child seems to have been socialized into believing that higher education that leads to graduate status begins and ends with university education which you access through a matriculation examination. The alternative routes, which include studying for and writing the examinations of professional bodies are not promoted within the secondary school system. Higher education aspirants in the country seem not to recognize those alternative routes. It may therefore be necessary for new constructions to be made that will present professional examinations as good alternatives that will enable them achieve their higher education objectives. A collaboration of all the stake-holders in this construction will be necessary to ensure credibility. As Trigg (2001:221) has observed, "our reasoning is not so much the outcome of our own efforts, as a reflection, even if unintended, of our own historical situation". Higher education aspirants in Nigeria have adopted some strategies in the effort to gain access to higher educational institutions and excluded others probably because of their narrow definition of the concept of higher education. They have therefore narrowly conceptualized the reality of higher education with negative implications for the strategies they adopt in their search for it. This study therefore adopted constructionism as its ontological stance. The complementary epistemology it adopted is discussed in the next section.

5.2.2. Epistemology

Whereas ontology is concerned with the question regarding the nature of reality, epistemology focuses on what is knowledge and how we arrive at that knowledge (Hughes and Sharrock, 1999). Mason (1996) sees it as an explanatory system regarding knowledge and the process that should be followed in arriving at it and making social reality known. According to Mason, this tends to derive from a researcher's ontological position and largely influences their methodological choices.

For Bryman (2012), epistemology is concerned with the approaches we adopt to study and understand the realities of our world. He explains that it is interested in whether we should adopt an approach that separates researchers from the phenomenon of interest so that they can objectively appreciate what exists or the one that makes them conscious of the complex nature of social reality and the possibility of its construction being ongoing. He identifies two major epistemological positions namely Positivism and Interpretivism. Although Bryman counsels against seeing positivism as a synonym for scientific enquiry, he observes that it demands methodological rigour. According to him, Positivists insist on value-free investigations and accept claims about the existence of phenomena only if the reality can be perceived by the senses. The absence of this nullifies any claims to knowledge. It is his understanding that Interpretivism as an epistemology requires that we appreciate that the social reality we study is generated by humans who are not just bystanders, but rather participants in the creation of social reality. It is his belief that social reality is best appreciated if we try to understand the actors rather than just explain them. The subjects researchers study are involved in the creation of the knowledge that results from the effort. They are not mere objects that are discovered.

Interpretivism adheres to the view that we see the social world with the lens of culture which has a historical location (Blaxter et al., 2010). This epistemological stance has its roots in constructivist ontology and therefore espouses the view that the reality we see is what society constructs for us. In effect, reality changes with the passage of time and change in the people who compose society. The different approaches associated with Interpretivism include Symbolic Interactionism, Hermeneutics, and Phenomenology. Whereas symbolic interactionism argues that the nature of our interactions with others influences the meanings we derive (Crotty, 1998), hermeneutics presents the view that the reality we know is constructed in language thereby making language the creator of the world we know which

may not be the only 'world' (Trigg, 2001). Phenomenology encourages investment in reflection which can produce a new and profitable perception of reality even when there is no change in the material world (Crotty, 1998).

As indicated earlier, at the other end of the epistemological continuum is positivism which insists that the only way we can know anything is through a scientific enquiry that is value-free (Trigg, 2001) and replicable, using largely quantitative tools (Silverman, 2010). A complete application of this theory was not realistic for this study for both the researcher and the subjects who were at the centre of it are social beings who are unlikely to be value-free. Therefore, this study was interpretivist in orientation although the researcher took precautions against values that could have corrupted the data collected and borrowed, as necessary, compatible tools from positivism. This way, the researcher was able to interact with the study subjects to appreciate the understandings and feelings that influenced their career strategies. Such understandings and feelings might have resulted from constructions of routes to higher education which significant persons in their lives might have shaped and influenced. This did not prevent the researcher from taking into consideration possible objective facts about the backgrounds of the study subjects. Those objective facts such as gender, age and academic level enhanced the researcher's confidence to extrapolate from the findings of the study to the larger population. The study adopted a pragmatic approach to data collection within an overarching constructionist/interpretivist research paradigm. The researcher believes that this has enhanced the study's capacity to contribute to the resolution of the problem it studied and improve the quality of livelihoods of individuals who might benefit from the implementation of its recommendations.

The methodological choices that have been informed by the awareness arising from the foregoing will be outlined and discussed in subsequent sections.

5.3. Methodological Approach

The knowledge that follows an investigation might be as varied as the number of approaches we adopt to seek appreciation of reality (Blaxter et al., 2010). This means that what we can know about anything depends largely on the mechanisms we put in place. In effect, discoveries reflect the orientations and strategies the seekers of knowledge have and employ with respect to procedures, methods and instruments.

Bryman (2012:35-36) has observed that a methodological approach outlines a research strategy and reflects an investigator's "... general orientation to the conduct of social

research". The two approaches that stand out according to Bryman are quantitative and qualitative strategies. Bryman explains that a quantitative approach adopts an objectivist ontology and a positivist epistemology, meaning that it employs "... the practices and norms of the natural scientific model...." He argues further that a quantitative approach is largely deductive in that it tends to take a linear approach, which involves arriving at conclusions through the use of quantifiable data to test hypothesis. It is his view that a qualitative approach on the other hand, adopts investigation tools that generate data that may not be put in numerical terms but which present the realities constructed by humans as social actors who attach meanings to their experiences. It employs tools that give such actors the opportunity to interpret their experiences. Whereas a quantitative research approach invests essentially in testing theories, which is why it is generally deductive, a qualitative approach tends to be inductive, meaning that it uses the results of its investigation to build theory.

Birley and Moreland (1998) identify with the foregoing views. They observe that whereas the search for reality may be conducted in a variety of ways, quantitative and qualitative approaches remain the two major paradigms. They note that Positivists tend to use quantitative approaches while the constructivists tend to employ qualitative tools. Kellehear (1993) clarifies the orientations of the two paradigms. According to Kellehear, quantitative research emphasises the testing of theories through empiricism using tools that are not tainted by values in the effort to discover objective reality, which is external to the actors involved. It thrives on logical explanation of phenomena and is rooted in rational verification of cause and effect of variables. He posits the view that qualitative research admits that the social world is complex and best understood when the researcher gives the study subjects the space to tell their peculiar stories which may be continually changing. The belief that there is an objective world that can be isolated through scientific study, is not embraced by qualitative researchers. They do not believe that the design of the world can be separated from its interpretation. The two are intertwined. Those who experience the world are also intricately involved in its construction. Their world cannot be understood if they are not given the opportunity to tell their stories. Social reality reflects "... human meanings unconsciously inherited by people in the course of their life and socialisation" (Kellehear, 1993:28).

Holliday (2002:1-2) observes that "... a major binding feature of qualitative research is its opposition to positivism, the philosophical basis for quantitative research". Holliday,

however, has counsel for qualitative researchers. It is his advice that they should engage in bracketing which will prevent their past experiences and biases from interfering with their investigation. He says it is a good practice for them to also engage in reflections while conducting investigations and reflect their feelings and actions in their research reports. It is his assertion that this documents the researcher's "... personal struggle to make sense of complex human situations within which the researcher... often becomes implicated" (Holliday, 2002:10). This is a way to promote transparency and help consumers of their report to put their findings in proper contexts. He believes it is important that the qualitative researcher demonstrates "... how the overall strategy is appropriate to the social setting and the researcher-subject relationship within it" (Holliday, 2002:9).

In making choice of a methodological approach, researchers should consider a variety of factors. The research question, the background of the study subjects and the resources at their disposal should be key influencers of their methodological choices (Bryman, 2012). Vaus (2001) and Newell (1993) made similar observations when they expressed the view that factors influencing the methods employed by a researcher include the nature of the data being sought including the extent of their sensitivity, the distance between sample elements, and the resource capacity of the researcher including the project duration. Such considerations are important since the methodology adopted tends to determine the data collection methods that will be employed (Birley and Moreland, 1998) which carry cost implications.

What has become clear from the foregoing is that the two methodological approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Neither may provide all the answers to the study's questions. This study wants to find out not only the strategies higher education aspirants in Nigeria are proposing to adopt for access to higher education but also the influences that make them favour some strategies and not the others. Whereas choices may be amenable to quantitative tools, the drivers of those choices may be best discovered when qualitative tools, which provide opportunity for reflections, are employed. The study is seeking both the facts about higher education aspirants and their strategies for access to higher education as well as the perceptions and emotions that sit beneath those facts including their origins. Whereas quantitative tools can help in establishing numerical data of interest to the study at minimum cost, qualitative tools can help the study probe into the attitudes that are behind such quantifiable facts. The essential task of the study is the discovery of what sits at the inner recesses of higher education aspirants that encourages them along one route and not

the others. Qualitative methods were therefore at the heart of the study's methodological approach. The overall approach of the study for data collection was, however, pragmatic. The researcher used helpful ideas from both approaches in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness. Whereas the quantitative tools employed revealed frequencies regarding the backgrounds of the study subjects including their common tendencies, the qualitative tools revealed data that explain the numerical data. The breadth that the quantitative tools provided through the relatively larger number of subjects that they enabled the study to reach, was complemented by the depth that qualitative tools availed the study. What worked best in the field was what the study settled for. This researcher was mindful of the generally high cost implications of employing qualitative methodology especially as it relates to time needed to deploy the data collection methods and analyse their revelations. This researcher spent about seven months cumulatively in the field deploying the data collection tools and analysing the data that resulted from their deployment. The researcher had invested enormous time in the acquisition of relevant skills through the opportunity the Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) provided and did so prior to his embarking on data collection. Those provisions mitigated those challenges that tend to be associated with qualitative studies.

5.4. Research Design

Although qualitative researchers tend to have an orientation that promotes flexibility in how they conduct their investigations, starting with a research design may give them the advantage of order, organisation, and efficiency (Mason, 1996) all of which can make the findings stand the test of time. What a research design provides is the most realistic organization that defines the setting and structures within which researchers will interact with their study subjects in the effort to generate the data that can help resolve the study questions. Given its function, a research design should be informed not only by the research question but also by the resources at the disposal of the researcher including time (Sandars and Pinhey, 1983).

Bryman (Bryman, 2012) identifies alternative research designs to include experimental design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design and case study. Experimental designs require control groups and the manipulation of the independent variable in the effort to verify its impact on the dependent variable. This should ideally be done under controlled conditions, which is the reason that it is usually a difficult design to deploy in the social

sciences where ethical considerations may rule it out. Budget constraints and the absence of the requisite skills for its use may also preclude its adoption. Cross-sectional designs give room for the study of different cases and settings simultaneously with a view to verifying if the variables under investigation have any relationship and the extent to which patterns exist in the cases under investigation. Longitudinal design permits the researcher to study the same group at two or more different times in order to see if there are changes in the variables under investigation. It is Bryman's (2012:63) view that "... a longitudinal design can allow some insight into the time order of variables and therefore may be more able to allow causal inferences to be made". It is Bryman's observation that it is generally not feasible for most social researchers given the time and resource implications. It is even more challenging for a doctoral researcher who has to collect data from Nigeria, a country that lacks the socio-economic and institutional structures that are indispensable for follow-up of study subjects. It is, however, acceptable to avoid longitudinal studies if a researcher's focus is on the current attitudes of study subjects (Sandars and Pinhey, 1983) which is the case in this study that is verifying the attitude of higher education aspirants in Nigeria to professional examinations.

5.5. Case Study

A case study usually involves a focused examination with a single unit studied at a detailed level. Bryman (2012) who made this observation indicates that the case involved may be selected because it has characteristics that reflect what you may find in the group to which it belongs. It is his view that a case study research design may be amenable to both quantitative and qualitative instruments depending on the research questions that have been put forward for resolution and the resources at the disposal of the researcher. According to Bryman, it is possible to have a longitudinal case study in which case the unit of analysis is revisited over time to check if there are changes with respect to the variables under investigation. He indicates that it is possible to have multiple-case study which may arise from the need to accommodate a broad spectrum of categories within the population under investigation. This raises the need to investigate into the attitudes of higher education aspirants from diverse social classes to professional examinations as alternative routes to higher education.

Blaxter et al. (2010) identify with the foregoing description of what a case study is. They emphasise that such a research effort focuses on a unit or multiple units for detailed

examination which can produce results that may carry implications for the wider population to which it applies. It is their view that if the case chosen for study can be said to be representative of the population to which it applies, generalizability of the results is enhanced. They argue that case study may be an inevitable choice for small scale researchers because of resource constraints and that it is largely inductive in approach and has the potential to produce rich data that can illuminate social reality. Hult (1996:9) agrees with this observation and makes the point that case study is one of the subjective research designs that can "... reveal important information about how people think and feel" which made it relevant to this investigation.

The rich data case study tends to provide seems to stand out as one of the major reasons why researchers and other scholars recommend it. Birley and Moreland (1998) who observe that case study tends to be individual, group or organisation specific, for example, stress that case study probes deeply into the subjects' backgrounds in order to understand their world. This seeming strength may become a limitation since analysis of the data it produces may be laborious (Blaxter et al., 2010). Bryman (Bryman, 2012) observes another major challenge with it. According to Bryman, issues bordering on external validity, which refers to the extrapolation of the study results to the wider population that the case is drawn from tend to arise with case study especially when the case studied is not typical of the population from which it was taken. The solution for this is for researchers to ensure that the case and the study subjects selected to constitute their sample meet criteria relevant to the resolution of the research question. The 'case' in this study is the knowledge and strategies that final year students in four secondary schools in Lagos State are aware of and utilize in relation to accessing Higher Education.

The four schools are secondary schools offering both junior and senior secondary levels of the Nigerian education system and all had Senior Secondary 3 class, the last stage of the country's secondary school system. By the country's 6-3-3-4 system of education as explained in Chapter 2, the next higher level of education after secondary school is higher education. The largest cohort of higher education aspirants in the country, tend to come from this class. As explained later in Chapter 5.6, the four schools largely represent the diverse backgrounds higher education aspirants in Nigeria may come from.

The strengths of case study, which include efficiency and the opportunity it affords the research to collect rich data made it attractive to this researcher. Given the largely

interpretivist orientation of this study, it was important that a research design that would provide rich data was adopted. Case study was also to be a natural choice for this researcher since resource constraints could not permit the adoption of alternatives that come with prohibitive costs that an individual doctoral researcher could not afford. The challenges that are associated with a case study research design which include the possibility of experiencing difficulty in accessing a representative case were noted. As already noted, the researcher took advantage of his social capital and professional communication skills in negotiating access to the institutions that participated in the study. He started negotiating for access to those institutions early in his doctoral programme. The leadership of most of the institutions that participated in the study were asked for access through official correspondence which the researcher executed in the first year of his doctoral programme. The relevant officers in the institutions therefore had enough time to obtain the necessary approvals before the researcher's study instruments were deployed in the second year of his doctoral programme. A deliberate effort was made to take precautions against conditions that could introduce difficult validity issues into the study. The case study institutions were selected purposively and in a way that accommodated students from diverse social classes, gender and school ownership. Some of the schools are operated by the government and are run by public education agencies while the others are run by private sector operators. The conditions that have been put in place in the study to guarantee the good quality of its outcome have been outlined under the section titled 'Trustworthiness of the Study'.

This researcher recognizes that higher education aspirants may or may not be in the formal education system. Some people achieve senior secondary school certificate through independent study. This may be connected with the lack of access to secondary school as a result of peculiar family circumstances including financial constraints, lack of parental support or the challenging health situation of a family member. In Nigeria, most of such people sit for the senior secondary certificate examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Examinations for such candidates are usually conducted in the last two months of every year (November-December). Some of the candidates are individuals who could not achieve the minimum qualifications for entry to higher education while in the formal secondary school system. If they are successful, they can use this qualification as a basis to seek admission into a higher educational institution. The largest cohort of higher education aspirants is, however, the graduating class in secondary school in the relevant year. They are in senior secondary school 3 and tend to conclude their senior

secondary school examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO in the month of June of the relevant year, hoping to get into higher education in the month of October of the same year if they are successful.

It is this group of higher education aspirants that the study focused on since they are easier to locate for research purposes. A large number of them attend secondary schools in Lagos State, one of the 36 states of the federal republic of Nigeria. It is the nation's commercial nerve centre and a cosmopolitan environment. This is largely traceable to the fact that it served as the country's capital from 1914 to 1992 when the capital was moved to Abuja which is more central in terms of geographical location. The diverse tribes of the country are well represented there. Three federal government colleges ('unity schools') and a mix of private and public secondary schools run by private school operators and the Lagos State Government are available in the state.

As indicated in Chapter 2.2 of this thesis, education is on the concurrent legislative list of the country meaning that both the federal and state governments participate in the making of relevant laws and supervision of relevant institutions. Most of the public secondary schools are, however, operated and supervised by state governments. The Federal government is the operator of 'Unity Secondary Schools', which recruits students from across the country on quota basis and are meant to provide a public space for young Nigerians to interact and forge a common identity for the country's unity and development. Each of the 36 states of the country hosts at least one of such schools. Students are recruited into such schools through a competitive selection examination. They are generally better staffed and equipped than most public secondary schools in Nigeria which makes the competition to secure admission into them stiff. The students tend to come from middle class families that can afford the kind of preparation through premium private primary schools that enables candidates to succeed in the entrance examination. Lagos state hosts three of such schools, including the two oldest ones (which are single sex schools), and one that is coeducational.

The private sector has, however, become a major provider of secondary school education especially in the urban areas where they can find parents who can pick up the generally higher bills that are involved. Lagos state has the highest concentration of such schools given its peculiar status especially in terms of higher income level of parents and the availability of the relevant manpower and infrastructure for running secondary schools. How good and adequate such resources are for quality secondary school education is beyond the scope of

this study. Although several schools were used in the study, it is important to clarify that the 'case' being studied in this research is the knowledge that young people have of the role that professional bodies can play in facilitating access to Higher Education. The significance of this is that it relates to the main research question. The sample taken for the study is discussed in the next section.

5.6. Study Population and Sample

A sample is normally taken from the population that is relevant to a study. Bryman (2012:187) defines population as "... the universe of units from which the sample is to be selected" and presents sample as "the segment of the population that is selected for investigation". It is important that a researcher has a clear understanding of the study's unit of analysis if accurate definition of his population and sample is to be guaranteed. Ruane (2005:100) defines unit of analysis as "... the level of social life that is the planned focus of a study". Ruane believes that apart from collectives like groups and formal organisations, the individual may be a unit of analysis. It is Ruane's view that you can verify your unit of analysis from the research questions you are seeking answers for and the variables you desire to measure. Ruane suggests that knowing your unit of analysis makes you conscious of the need to avoid crossing boundaries when reaching conclusions and advises in favour of clear definition of population and sampling frames which help the researcher to arrive at results that have integrity. It is her conviction that "a sampling frame refers to an exhaustive listing of all the elements that make up a research population" (Ruane, 2005:110).

The use of samples is usually necessitated by efficiency consideration and the determination to achieve research objectives in spite of funding, manpower and time constraints (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). Lavan (1985) thinks that the necessity for sampling goes beyond resource consideration. According to her, sampling may be informed not only by the need for researchers to operate within their means but also by the realisation that "once you get above a certain proportion, your chances of accuracy are not improved much" (p.73).

Blaxter et al. (2010) identify probability and non-probability as the two broad categories of sampling strategies. According to them, the former gives every population element equal chance of being selected and includes simple random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster sampling. The latter does not give population elements equal chance of being selected and includes strategies like purposive sampling, convenience

sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling which applies when the researcher builds “... up a sample through informants” (Blaxter et al., 2010:170). Probability sampling methods tend to produce results that rate high on validity but the non-probability sampling methods may be necessitated by resource constraints (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995) and have the capacity to produce results that can be trusted if the population is largely homogeneous.

The combined population of higher education aspirants in the four secondary schools that participated in the study is 716 (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1**PROFILE OF HIGHER EDUCATION ASPIRANTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY**

S/No.	Variable	Data				
1	Name of Secondary School (coded)	ESS	MSS	SSS	PSS	ALL
2	Population of Final Year Students (Higher Education Aspirants)	20	106	174	416	716
3	Number of Study Participants (Focus Group Discussion)	6	6	3	7	22
4	Number of Study Participants (Questionnaire)	20	63	63	67	213
5	Age Range	15-18	14-17	13-19	14-17	13-19
6	Mean Age	16.25	15.17	16.39	15.07	15.59
7	Educational Level	SS3	SS3	SS3	SS3	SS3
8	Percentage who are Female	65	61	65	100	75
9	Percentage who are Male	35	39	35	0	25

Key

ESS= Excel Secondary School

MSS= Middle Class Secondary School

SSS= State Secondary School

PSS= Plural Secondary School

The schools and the higher education aspirants who participated in this study were chosen purposively to guarantee that the data to be collected would come from subjects who had stakes in the subject of the study and could provide data that could answer the study's questions. A deliberate effort was made to include both boys and girls in the schools that were coeducational and this applied not only in questionnaire administration but also in focus group discussions. The higher education aspirants who participated in the study were also drawn from both private and public secondary schools. This was done to ensure that the data that would be collected would reflect the diverse backgrounds of the students in the Nigerian school system. Probability sampling methods could not be employed in the study because of the huge resource implications including time demands they tend to carry (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995) which both the researcher and the study participants could not

afford. Both had time limits to respect with respect to project plans and academic schedules. The bureaucracy within which the schools operated also did not permit access to data on study subjects which would have been needed for the processes probability sampling methods usually demand.

Item 4 of Table 4.1 reflects the distribution of the sample. The sample taken was 30% of the population of higher education aspirants in the four schools with all the higher education aspirants in the school that had the least population (Excel Secondary School) participating with respect to response to the questionnaire administered. The largest number of participants (67) was drawn from Plural Secondary School which also had the highest number of higher education aspirants (416). It was also the only single sex school that participated in the study and accounts for the larger number of female participants in the study. This is one of the 'Unity Secondary Schools' in the country and therefore had students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The researcher did not succeed within the time available for the study in getting the boys-only secondary school in the state to participate in the study. Their participation was in the study plan in the attempt to achieve a balance but the leadership of the school did not provide a favourable response before the researcher was due for the fieldwork. The responses from the boys in the other schools and the overall response of the study participants as documented in Chapter 6 of this thesis do not, however, suggest that the school's participation would have resulted in a significant difference in the outcome of the study.

The average age of the study participants was 16 years. The youngest participant was 13 years old while the oldest participant was 19 years old. By the relevant education policy in Nigeria, graduation age from secondary school should be 18 years. Children are expected to enter the 6-3-3-4 system of education in the country at the age of 6 and spend 6 years in primary school. They are supposed to spend 3 years in Junior secondary school and transit to tertiary education after spending another 3 years in Senior secondary school. Many parents do not respect this prescription of the country's education policy and tend to prefer their children finishing secondary school earlier than prescribed by the policy.

The motives behind this preference are beyond the scope of this study but may be interesting if unravelled. One can, however, observe from the data in Table 5.1 (see item 6) that middle class parents have a greater tendency to indulge in this more than lower socio-economic class parents. Both Middle class secondary school and Plural Secondary School are

middle class schools. The average age of the study participants drawn from those schools is lower than the average age of the higher education aspirants drawn from Excel Secondary School and State Secondary School. The difference in average age between students from the two classes of students is just above one year in favour of those from the lower socio-economic class. Whether the school is public or private does not seem to have made any difference here. Each socio-economic class has both private and public secondary school as a participating institution. One can therefore surmise that starting school earlier than prescribed by public education policy may relate to the socio-economic background of the students. The average age of the higher education aspirants who participated in the study seems to reflect what one might find in most other secondary schools in Nigeria thereby making the outcome of the study what might be indicative of what might apply across the country. The participating schools are further defined later in this section. The individuals in the group, however, remained the unit of analysis in this study. This was because of the realization that students may adopt different strategies for accessing higher education even when they attend the same secondary school. Responses that were common with study subjects from particular schools or cut across all the schools were, however, noted during data analysis and documented accordingly.

All counsellors of the four participating schools were also study subjects. The rationale for involving them was the understanding that they were usually involved in issues that are connected with entrance examinations to higher educational institutions and to some extent, the strategies the higher education aspirants in their schools adopt. They had stories that illuminated the paths of the study. Approvals for the school counsellors to participate in the study were sought and obtained from the proprietors of the schools where they were serving. In the case of public schools, the Ministry of Education was the approving authority. The school principal of Excel Secondary School (a lower socio-economic class school) served as the counsellor of the school and granted this researcher interview. He admitted that he was not a professional counsellor. The school counsellors enthusiastically participated in the study and facilitated the participation of the higher education aspirants. They found the subject of the research interesting and seemed to have picked up some useful information from the process.

The registrars of the professional bodies that provide the alternative route to higher education, which the study investigated, also participated as study subjects. They were 9 in number. They had information including statistics and stories that helped the investigation

given the strategic positions they occupied in those bodies. Their participation was solicited for through official correspondence. They were quite cooperative. Some of them had Personal Assistants who arranged the meetings that enabled the researcher to collect relevant data. Most of them expressed interest in the outcome of the investigation.

The registrar of one of the universities in Lagos gave this researcher an appointment for interview but had to delegate the Head of Human Resources Department (HRD) of the University to provide the data the researcher asked for. This was necessitated by the crowded schedule the Registrar had on the day of the appointment. The HRD of the University was quite cooperative. The officer not only granted this researcher interview at short notice but also provided the statistics the researcher asked for. The demand for university education in Nigeria outstrips any other form or level of higher education. The statistics and insight that came from this university was quite enlightening and probably, critical for a good understanding of the issues the study investigated into (see Chapter 6). This institution is the major supplier of public higher education places in Lagos where all the higher education aspirants participating in the study were drawn from.

The registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC) occupy top positions in the higher education system in Nigeria and were strategically placed to help with data that could enrich the findings of the study. JAMB is the recruiter of students for the formal higher educational institutions in Nigeria. NUC is the regulator of the university system in the country. This researcher hoped to involve the two highest ranking officers of the two bodies as interviewees. Neither of them made commitments in terms of time for the interview. One of the heads of departments in JAMB facilitated the collection of data regarding the demand and supply of higher education places in Nigeria. The interaction was conducted on telephone and via emails.

The Registrar of one of the bodies conducting public examinations for candidates graduating from secondary schools also participated as an interviewee and provided data that gave an indication of current and future demand for higher education in Nigeria. The data obtained from the officer have illuminated the study problem the more. Those who aspire to higher education in Nigeria are usually required to present the Senior School Certificate which this body awards as a prerequisite for admission no matter their performance in the entrance examination conducted by JAMB.

A common condition given by school proprietors for their schools to participate in the study was that all the activities connected with the study involving their staff and students had to take place within their school premises. The researcher obliged them. They provided the necessary space and time for the study. They gave this condition to guarantee the safety of their staff and students who had to participate in the study and to observe relevant policies. This researcher retained the right and responsibility to execute the study in line with the study plan. The field-work was therefore relatively smooth. Given the number of institutions participating in the study, any one of them withdrawing consent to participate was unlikely to jeopardize the successful conduct of the study. This researcher had thought of such worst case scenarios and had a contingency plan that included alternative institutions that could be used to replace those that drop out. Table 5.2 presents a summary of the sample that was taken for the study.

TABLE 5. 2
SUMMARY OF STUDY SAMPLE

S/NO.	STATUS OF STUDY SUBJECT	SAMPLE SIZE
1	STUDENT	213
2	SCHOOL COUNSELLOR	4
3	PROFESSIONAL BODY REGISTRAR	9
4	UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR	1
5	PUBLIC EXAMINATION BOARD REGISTRAR	1
6	JOINT ADMISSIONS AND MATRICULATION BOARD STAFF	1

This researcher selected the four secondary schools in Lagos State as cases for study within the overall framework of the 'case' being young aspirant students of higher education. As indicated earlier in this chapter, they were purposively selected to guarantee that the higher education aspirants we would find in those schools, would to a large extent, exemplify what you can find across the country. This choice was influenced by the need to achieve efficiency in data collection without compromising the need to involve in the study only individuals and institutions that could provide data that would help in finding answers to the study's questions.

Table 5.3 presents the profile of the schools. As the table reveals, ownership and gender are two of the variables that have informed the choice of the cases. Federal and State governments participate in secondary school ownership and management in Nigeria. Some secondary schools are owned by private sector operators. Most secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria are coeducational while a few are single sex schools. The cases selected reflect this diversity. The schools are also located in different parts of the State, which reveal differences in the socio-economic class the students come from. One of the schools is a full boarding school while two of the schools are day schools. One of the schools has both boarding and day arrangements.

TABLE 5.3**SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE ADOPTED FOR CASE STUDY**

S/NO.	School	Type	Operator
1	Plural Secondary School (PSS)	Single Sex (Girls only)	Federal Government
2	State Secondary School (SSS)	Coeducation	State Government
3	Middle Class Secondary School (MSS)	Coeducation	Private
4	Excel Secondary School (ESS)	Coeducation	Private

Plural Secondary School (PSS) was established about a century ago by the colonial authorities in Nigeria. It is one of the secondary schools operated by the federal government and generally elitist although admission into it is open to all Nigerian children who can meet the entrance cut-off point for the states they originate from. Top public servants and the middle class in Nigeria account for a large fraction of parents whose children attend school there. As indicated earlier, they are the ones who are able to fund their children to attend the kind of primary schools that can prepare them for success in the entrance examination into the school. The regulatory authorities, however, ensure that all the states of the federation are represented in the student population. It is one of the 'Unity secondary schools' in the country meant to give young people from diverse tribes of the country the public space to interact and forge a common vision for national unity and development. It is a girls' only school and located in central Lagos. It is an all boarding school. A significant proportion of Nigeria's female political and business elite are products of the school. Its social status is, however, gradually diminishing in the face of poor funding and the emergence of western style private secondary schools, which now serve the children of the country's top political elite and captains of industry.

The State Secondary School (SSS) is one of the regular secondary schools operated by the Lagos State Government. It caters essentially for the local community that is coterminous with its physical location. It is coeducational and a day school. Most of the students come from working class families or have parents who are self-employed in the informal sector.

The Middle Class Secondary School (MSS) is a private secondary school operated by a female entrepreneur. It is located in Ikeja, the state capital. It draws students from the middle-class community. Most of their students attended middle-class private primary schools which enabled them to meet the minimum entrance examination score to get admitted into the school. The tuition fee is not affordable by the average income earner in Nigeria. It is coeducational and has both day and boarding students. It is about 20 years old.

Excel Secondary School (ESS) is a private secondary school situated in a part of Lagos with high population density. The income level of parents who live within the *Grace* (not real name) community where the school is located is generally low and most of them are yet to benefit from higher education. An informal discussion this researcher had with the proprietor of the school revealed that even though the school's tuition fee is less than 5% of the tuition fee of another private school in the study sample, most of the parents have difficulty meeting their financial obligations to the school. The students' scholastic, cultural and financial capital is therefore at a disadvantaged level. The school is coeducational. The next section identifies the methods and techniques that were employed to collect data from the study participants.

5.7. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

5.7.1. Introduction

This section provides information on the variety of methods that were employed in this study and the bases for their selection. Methods refer to the tools that can be employed for data collection (Blaxter et al., 2010). They reflect instruments deployed by researchers in search of answers to their research questions. As Holliday (2002:8) has observed, "decisions about research instruments are made in gradual response to the nature of the social setting being investigated as its nature is revealed". Holliday indicates that this is more so when the methodological approach is qualitative where the culture is learning oriented. Some other scholars, however, express the view that the research questions you are asking and the resources at your disposal are major influencers of the methods you can choose (Blaxter et al., 2010:85). It is their view that the synergy that can result from employing two or more instruments in the same study may be pursued by a researcher. According to them, such a combination can be referred to as "triangulation". It is their belief that in such a circumstance, the weaknesses of one method can be compensated for by the strengths of

the other complementary methods employed. They further argue that combining methods may also constitute an inherent contingency provision that can address unanticipated problems as the study progresses.

Combining data collection methods may be necessitated by the realization that the context within which data are obtained can make a difference in what is revealed. Focus group discussion can for example provide qualitative data that can explain the quantitative data obtained through questionnaire (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). The same tool can, however, produce different knowledge depending on whether we are using it under a quantitative or qualitative paradigm. Interview is one of such tools (Blaxter et al., 2010). This suggests that a qualitative researcher who employs one data collection instrument and excludes all others may not get all the perspectives to the issues under investigation. Different methods tend to provide complementary revelations regarding the issue being investigated (Keats, 2000). Baker and Hinton (Baker and Hinton, 1999) have expressed similar views. Pasch and Walton (2014) recommend the mixing of methods when greater value can be derived from "... embedding a human element into otherwise numeric reporting" (p18).

Bryman (2012:41) identifies with the foregoing observations and makes the point that the best result in social research is achieved when investigators strike a balance between "... the ideal and the feasible". This underscores the value of flexibility in the execution of a research project especially with the realization that most researchers tend to meet challenges in the field which only the creative and innovative application of available resources can resolve (Geddes, 2010). The concept of triangulation and how it can help researchers to enhance the quality of research outcomes is dealt with more extensively in section (Chapter) 5.9.2.

This researcher noted the foregoing and allowed his skill set and the other resources at his disposal as well as his methodological approach and the critical need to have his research questions answered determine the data collection tools that were employed in this study. The study subjects from whom data were collected were diverse in age, position, role, power possessed, gender, life cycle stage, settings and concerns. The researcher believed that all would carry implications in terms of the data collection instruments that they may best respond to. What appeared inescapable was that they all had stories to tell through language that may not be uniform especially in terms of style and sophistication. A mixture of methods was likely to serve this researcher's purpose best. The researcher therefore adopted triangulation as his data collection strategy. Questionnaire, Interview, Focus Group

Discussion, and Document Analysis were employed as methods for collection of data in this study. This strategy has been used successfully in a similar study (Bueschel, 2003). In the following sections, the researcher outlines the bases for his selection of each method and the conditions under which they were administered.

5.7.2. INTERVIEW

Interview can be defined as an interactive situation that is usually meant by the initiators who generally direct the process, to elicit answers to their questions from the respondent in pursuit of an objective (Keats, 2000). The interviewer's objective may be to gain an insight into the peculiar experiences of the respondent (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999).

A researcher may therefore employ this tool to gain an understanding of the reasons behind the positions respondents take on issues of interest to the researcher, says Keats (2000).

Keats counsels that the interviewer should have the responsibility of managing the process to keep it on track and ensure that the purpose of the interview is realized. It is Keat's view that **interview schedule** which should be produced along with a **response sheet** is ideally needed to ensure consistency while making provision for individual differences. Newell (1993) notes the difference between an interview schedule and an **interview guide**.

According to Newell, questions in the former are posed in a predetermined order while in the latter, the order of questioning can be flexibly executed by the interviewer. Newell maintains that interview guide applies more to **focused interviews** than other varieties of interview. Bechhoffer and Patterson (2000:66) explain that focused interviews tend to be structured and are employed to gather data on what may be considered "... a very difficult topic ..." from stakeholders in the relevant issue after studying published information on it.

Bouma (2000) identifies **unstructured interviewing** which involves indepth interviewing as another variety and indicates that this tends to employ open-ended questions to elicit the beliefs and attitudes of respondents towards the issue under investigation with the possibility of respondents revealing their opinions and feelings through story telling. This type is nonstandardized, meaning that it can be flexibly applied to research on sensitive and complex subjects (Fielding, 1993). Briggs (1986) identifies with this explanation. Interviews of this kind rest on the philosophy that human beings are mysteries that are best understood through open, and trusting interactions that provide the interviewees the perceived safe environments to tell their stories (Chirban, 1996). Davies (2007) shares this view. Davies recommends that premium is placed on high level of organization on the part of

the interviewer and suggests that the interviewee is given the opportunity to freely respond in a comfortable and non-threatening environment. According to Davies, the interviewee should be made to feel like being involved in a conversation.

Fielding (1993) contrasts the unstructured format with the **structured** format where all the respondents are made to respond to the same questions which are presented in the same order (on a schedule). Fielding admits that a **semi-structured** format can also be used in which case the interviewer may demonstrate flexibility if the context changes.

Interview as a data gathering tool requires some traits on the part of the interviewer if optimal result is to be achieved with it. Douglas (1985) agrees and expresses the view that one of such traits is the ability to listen patiently and actively. Dingwall (1997) who does not think that interview is a mere conversation insists that effective interviewers are purposeful and would normally direct the interaction in a way that enables them to find answers to their questions. According to Dingwall, interview is a social reality in which the data produced result from the dynamics of the interaction including the impact the interviewer makes on the interviewee. Dingwall argues that the interviewee's assumptions regarding what would be considered an appropriate response is part of those dynamics. This suggests that the interviewers who are committed to objectivity must watch the cues they give through their language including bodily signals. This is to minimize how much of the knowledge produced that may be traceable to what the interviewers constructed.

Although interview, when properly employed can produce the data that can illuminate a case (Vaus, 2001), its peculiar challenges should not be glossed over. Apart from the huge demand it makes on the researcher's resources including time especially when it is of the unstructured variety (Mason, 1996), it may not be easy to recruit interviewees. Bowler (1997:68) believes that this challenge may be traceable to the lack of understanding of research processes on the part of "... potential informants". The response rate of interview, however, tends to be high once consent to participate in the interaction has been obtained, Keats (2000) posits. Keats prescribes accurate recording of the data emerging from interview as one of the crucial conditions for proper analysis of its results. She thinks that training the interviewer is a major way to guarantee that this instrument will be properly employed.

This researcher noted the foregoing features of interview and was convinced that it would be very useful for eliciting some of the data required to answer this study's questions. This decision was consistent with the interpretivist epistemology of the study. It was therefore

employed to collect data from the registrars of the professional bodies as well as the school counsellors and the education policy makers in Nigeria who participated in the study. It gave them ample room to reflect on the issues involved and perhaps, produced responses the researcher might not have got otherwise but which proved illuminating in the study. As the interview schedules reveal (see Appendices 1, 2, 5, and 7), the interviews were semi-structured. This hopefully provided the structure that promoted objectivity and consistency in the study without ignoring contextual differences. The decision in favour of semi-structured interviews was deliberately made to achieve consistency and creativity in the investigation, qualities that have been identified as some of the characteristics of a qualitative study that is trustworthy (Flick, 2007).

The relevant skills the researcher had acquired through the Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) and other self-development platforms he benefited from helped to minimize interviewer effect (Fielding, 1993) in the study (which could corrupt data collected by a researcher) and guaranteed the achievement of the best result possible. 15 interviews were conducted in the course of this study. The interviewees were the 9 registrars of the professional bodies that participated in the study, a management level employee of a university, the four school counsellors, and the head of a public examination board. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees. Most of them were high profile executives who had the office space that was conducive for the interaction and unwilling to grant interviews outside of their offices on grounds of time constraint. The school owners who granted this researcher access for data collection also insisted that all the research activities involving their staff and students must be executed on their school premises to guarantee their safety and security, which they see as responsibilities they had towards them.

The researcher used an interview schedule (see Appendices 1, 2, 5, and 7) for each of the interviews conducted. Audio recorder was employed to document the interviews. The researcher complemented this with field notes recorded in his diary. Most of the interviews were conducted with minimum interruptions ostensibly because the interactions were conducted in line with the appointments the interviewees gave the researcher. Conducting the interviews was, however, time consuming. Apart from the time it took the researcher to conduct them, they were much more demanding in terms of the time required to transcribe and analyse them. The consolation the researcher has is that the revelations thus yielded might not have been possible otherwise.

5.7.3. Question Types

Open-ended questions are in common use among qualitative researchers who tend to employ them as tools for eliciting the opinions and attitudes of their study subjects to issues of interest to them (Bouma, 2000). Briggs (1986) explains that in open-ended questions, the study subject responds to a non-structured question that usually does not come with a set of alternative answers to choose from. He posits that the study subjects are at liberty to address the issue raised by the researcher from any perspective they like. According to Briggs, this is not the case with **closed-ended** questions where the respondents are presented a set of options to choose from. Briggs observes that such questions are generally less time consuming than the open-ended questions.

Newell (1993) identifies with this assessment and explains that closed-ended questions save time not only for the researcher but also for the respondent. Newell notes, however, that their highly structured nature may not permit the generation of data beyond the assumptions being tested by the researchers but which may be helpful in understanding some of the study issues. Newell contrasts them with open-ended questions which, according to her are unstructured and therefore allow the respondents to answer as they wish. She expresses the conviction that open-ended questions tend to produce richer data but may be more cost intensive both in terms of skill requirement and time demanded thereby precluding them from being amenable to a large sample size. Kvale (1996:133-135) identifies other types of question which include "**introducing questions**", "**follow-up questions**", "**probing questions**", "**specifying questions**", "**direct questions**", "**indirect questions**", "**structuring questions**", and "**interpreting questions**". Their details are outside the scope of this study.

The questions to avoid include **leading questions** which suggest answers to respondents, **double-barrelled questions** which present multiple questions that can confuse the respondent, and **hypothetical questions** which require study subjects to react to imaginary worlds they have not experienced since they tend to jeopardize objectivity (Newell, 1993). No matter the option adopted, question construction should reflect the knowledge level and language ability of the study subjects and be as unbiased, clear, short and simple as possible (Vaus, 1996). What has emerged from available literature suggests that the responsibility to select a study sample carefully rests on the researcher. This is because no matter the tool employed or the type of question adopted, the respondents' background including their

experience should be such that enables them to understand the question and answer it without inhibitions like taboos that can prevent them from revealing what they know (Casley and Lury, 1987). The design of this study is such that those principles have been given careful consideration and adopted with necessary modifications demanded by its context. A cursory look at the study's instruments (which are included as appendices- 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, and 10) will reveal that both **structured** and **unstructured** questions were employed as the contexts demanded. This was done to ensure that the strengths of some questions will mitigate the weaknesses of the others and reflect triangulation as a data collection strategy. This effort paid off. The structured questions elicited relevant data efficiently and hedged against the possibility of study subjects providing irrelevant data that could not address the study's questions. The semi structured and the open-ended questions employed in the study enabled the study subjects to reveal their relevant experiences, attitudes and insights that the study could not have collected otherwise. Available opinion on this kind of combination indicates that this is a good practice (Vaus, 1996). Similar care was taken when analysing the data that resulted from the deployment of the study's instruments.

5.7.4. Focus Group Discussion

Baker and Hinton (1999:79) believe that focus group can be used to represent "... any group-based research activity that is grounded in regular interaction among the participants such that it becomes a social and political forum in its own right". They further indicate that such a group may be involved in focused discussions and structured exercises among other activities. This suggests that focus groups are usually deliberately created to serve a defined purpose.

That purpose for researchers is usually to enable them to understand the attitudes of their study subjects towards subjects of interest to them. This tends to be achieved through the data elicited through a discussion moderated by the researcher or any other member of the researcher's team. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999:36) have expressed the conviction that "focus groups can facilitate the exploration of mutual experiences and identities ..." of young people. They observe that focus group discussions have been conducted in classrooms among other settings and argue that diversity should be a necessary condition to be met when constituting focus groups. It is their view that the size and number of participants that is considered appropriate should be a function of resources available including time and the question the study is addressing. A maximum of four participants has, however, been

recommended for focus group discussions if the interaction is to produce beneficial insights (Zaltman, 2003). This does not appear to be a consensus opinion.

The focus group discussions conducted in this study involved some higher education aspirants who had earlier responded to the questionnaires administered in their schools. This effort was meant to give them opportunity to explore the issues of interest to the study in a socially facilitated setting to enrich the data available for analysis. The data collected through this medium made the data available through the questionnaires administered more understandable and threw more light on the study subjects' attitudes towards the subject matter of the study.

A focus group discussion, if not effectively conducted, may not reflect the diversity of opinions and attitudes of group members. This is because in such discussions, it is possible for some members' views to be influenced by the opinions of the outspoken members and time constraint may limit the extent to which individual members are able to express their opinions on the issues raised (Keats, 2000). The voices of members from relatively low social status may be muted in such groups. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999:36) who made this observation argue that this may be a critical problem "... particularly when working with captive populations where research participants have on-going social relations which may be compromised by public disclosure". There is, however, the view that the social setting of group discussion can encourage the reticent study subject to volunteer information although how well the different views are captured will be dependent on the quality of the recording technology employed and the skill deployed in its use (Fielding, 1993). Zaltman (2003) acknowledges that focus group discussion may be cost-effective per study subject engaged but advises researchers against glossing over the fact that it seldom provides deep insights because of the limited time available to individual participants to make their contributions. Recruiting focus group members may also be a very trying endeavour because of prejudices that may be rooted in misunderstanding of the researcher's objectives (Bowler, 1997).

Using focus group discussion successfully would therefore require demonstration of relevant skills. This researcher acquired such skills through his many years of moderating group discussions and the University of Reading's Researcher Development Programme (RRDP), which he benefitted from. The deployment of this tool provided the higher education aspirants who participated in the study the platform to reflect on their aspirations and provide information on the motivations behind their relevant choices and concerns. The

interpretivist epistemology of the study made this tool one of the compelling options for data collection. It was, however, deployed with meticulous attention to the ethical issues that could arise when study participants have to do reflections within group settings. Certain conditions were outlined to guarantee that the best result possible was obtained from the use of this tool (see Appendix 9). Those conditions included clarification of the purpose of the interaction by the researcher before discussions started and giving assurances of confidentiality. The researcher also explained that he was not seeking particular answers but rather the true knowledge and feelings of the respondents. Volunteers from among the questionnaire respondents in each participating school were involved in the focus group discussion. The largest group had 7 participants while the smallest group had 3 participants (see item 3 of Table 5.1). The focus group discussions in the other two schools had 6 participants each which was the number the researcher had intended to engage for each of the discussions. The seventh participant in the largest group pleaded passionately to be given the opportunity to participate. The discussions were held about 20 minutes after the administration of the questionnaires in each of the schools except in State Secondary School where the discussion was held about one week after the questionnaires were administered on the higher education aspirants in the school who participated in the study. Time constraint accounted for this. The students of the school had a busy schedule on the day the questionnaire was administered, which interfered with the time available for a follow-up discussion on the same day.

Only three of those who responded to the questionnaire were available on the day the researcher returned to the school for the focus group discussion. Those who participated in the discussion from the school, were recruited on the basis of their availability. That sample was therefore a convenient one but in some sense, purposive because the researcher ensured that only those who had responded to the questionnaire were recruited for participation in the focus group discussion. This guaranteed their familiarity with the issues in focus and promoted the efficient use of available time for the interaction. Two of the participants were among the prefects of the school from the graduating class. One of them was the Head Boy of the school. By the researcher's judgement, that discussion was as engaging as the ones conducted in the other schools. The case in favour of small size focus groups which Zaltman (2003) has made may, after all, have merit. The participants in the other schools were, however, as engaging as these ones were. Being volunteers, their enthusiasm may not be difficult to understand. It is the researcher's hope that their

comments which were passionately made have made a very a useful contribution to the understanding of the issues this study addressed. Ethical considerations prevented the researcher from engaging higher education aspirants in a discussion they were reluctant to participate in.

5.7.5. Questionnaire

Questionnaires involve respondents giving answers to written questions and can be requested to add comments that explain the basis of the responses they give (Keats, 2000). Vaus (2001) notes that a questionnaire may be **self-completed** meaning that the researcher does not have to be present for it to be completed. Vaus notes further that the researcher may, however, choose to adopt a **face-to-face** or **telephone** approach in which case the filling in of the responses given by the study subjects becomes the researcher's responsibility. It is face-to-face when the researcher personally hands over the questionnaire to the respondent and requests that it be completed. Newell (1993) notes that the alternative mode of delivering the questionnaire is by post and underscores one of the major differences between a **postal survey** and a **telephone survey**. According to Newell, the former may cover a wider population but with low response rate and without the respondent getting the opportunity to have difficult questions clarified by the researcher. The latter can overcome that challenge but may not reach those who do not have access to telephone, Newell submits. Self-completion questionnaire assumes that the study respondents are literate. This is not always the case but is true for this study. The higher education aspirants who participated in the study possessed the requisite document literacy to understand the demands of the questionnaire and complete it. Most of the examinations they have written since their primary school days have been presented to them as question papers which they had to respond to and in English Language, the language used in the questionnaire. They had to pass those examinations to progress to their present educational level. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999:5) have observed that "... questionnaires are appropriate for obtaining quantitative information and explaining how many people 'hold' a certain (predefined) 'opinion'". This was the role this data collection method played in this study. It was used to determine the propensities of higher education aspirants participating in the study on matters pertaining to choice of routes to higher education and the elements that influenced such preferences. This helped to minimize the cost implications of conducting the study while getting sufficient data to answer the study's questions. As Bechhoffer and Paterson (2000:75) have observed, the use of questionnaires especially when they are

structured can save time and guarantee that study subjects respond to the same questions. According to them, this method is "... ideal for asking about factual matters". Some of the questions this study intended to answer including awareness regarding relevance of professional examinations border on facts that the questionnaire employed elicited at a cost this researcher could afford. The questionnaire employed in this study which was largely structured made it possible for data to be collected from 213 higher education aspirants, a number the researcher could not have achieved if he employed only interview and focus group discussion. The increase in sample size facilitated by the questionnaire increased the variety of opinion and attitude elicited by the study as well as the issues it addressed. This complemented the data collected through interviews and focus group discussion and enhanced the breadth of insight on the issues investigated into which have been analysed and discussed in Chapter 6.

This researcher noted the fact that questionnaire, not being interactional, cannot probe an unanticipated answer and the inclusion of many open-ended questions in it in the effort to overcome this may increase the demand made on the respondent's time thereby increasing the probability for a low response rate (Zaltman, 2003). The researcher also noted the counsel from Bechhoffer and Paterson (2000) on the need to ensure that the questions posed to the respondents are unambiguous if the potentials of questionnaire are to be optimized. The observation of Bowler (1997) to the effect that mail questionnaires generally have low return rates with the possibility that prospective respondents may turn them down if the topic is sensitive was equally noted. The questions the study posed in the questionnaires may not be considered sensitive (see Appendix 10). Most of the issues reflected in those questions could be subjects of open discussions without any feeling of invasion of one's privacy.

The administration was done on higher education aspirants during their normal school hours and within their school premises. Necessary permissions to conduct the study in the selected schools were solicited for and obtained from the relevant authorities. As indicated earlier, for the public schools, the permissions were granted by the Ministry of Education, and the school principals. The permissions from the private schools were obtained from the proprietors on the recommendation of the school principals. Favourable responses were obtained from them. The response rate with respect to this instrument was high. Of the 261

questionnaires administered, 253 were returned out of which 213 were found fit for analysis. The incidence of unreturned questionnaires occurred in only one school, the State Secondary School (SSS) which coincidentally was the school where the researcher experienced logistical issues that accounted for his inability to conduct the focus group discussion on the same day the questionnaire was administered. Although school discipline is outside the scope of this study, the young taxi driver who drove this researcher to the school was not impressed with the level of discipline in the school. He told this researcher that he would not want his children to attend such a school. He was single and without children as at the time of this study. He also provided transportation for the fieldwork this researcher did in two of the other three schools and was speaking in comparative terms. He was most impressed with the level of organization the Middle Class Secondary School (MSS), a private secondary school demonstrated.

The impressive return rate of the questionnaires could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were administered on a captive audience. All the questionnaire respondents were attending regular full-time programmes in secondary schools and completed the questionnaires on school days and in their regular places of study. This may appear to carry implications for the trustworthiness of the findings especially with respect to voluntary participation. This is unlikely to be the case. The questionnaires (see Appendix 10) used in the study were anonymously completed. This assured the respondents that they were not running any risk by completing them.

The introduction to the questionnaire also indicated that they could "... withdraw from participation at any time without any negative consequence." It is the belief of this researcher that this assurance contributed to the impressive response rate recorded and encouraged the respondents to complete the questionnaire truthfully. Bouma and Atkinson (1995) agree with this thinking when they assert that one of the major ways of procuring honest responses when using questionnaires is to let respondents complete them anonymously. They advise that numbers can be assigned to study respondents. This researcher acted in line with this advice because of the need to match study subjects' responses for accurate analysis.

The questionnaire employed in the study was administered before and after providing the higher education respondents participating in the study with a three page career information document that presented professional examinations as one of the routes to higher education (see Appendix 11). The study subjects completed the questionnaire enthusiastically. Many of them asked the researcher to let them retain the career information document with some of them seeking further information from the researcher after submitting their completed questionnaires. Overall, training, adequate resourcing that can guarantee attractive presentation of questionnaires, good introduction and careful planning and execution can improve outcomes in questionnaire administration. The researcher worked in line with those principles and does not consider the turnout of events here a surprise. He anticipated a positive outcome. The cooperation received from the leadership of the schools especially the school counsellors was also a possible contributor to the positive outcome recorded. Most of them were available in line with the appointments agreed upon with the researcher.

5.7.6. Document Analysis

It was necessary for the study to establish the extent of higher education access problem in Nigeria as well as the take-up rate of professional examinations by higher education aspirants. The principal organizations that have those records and the data this study required from them are:

1. Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)
-demand and supply of higher education places.
2. The University offering the largest number of higher education places in Lagos, Nigeria.
-demand and supply of higher education places.
3. Professional Bodies in Nigeria offering higher education opportunities.
-rate of student enrolment.

This researcher requested those organizations to supply the needed data (see Appendices 3, 4, 6, and 8). Success in this required effective deployment of negotiation skills especially as it concerned JAMB, and the university recruiting the largest number of higher education aspirants in Lagos, Nigeria which are public service institutions that follow bureaucratic procedures to attend to matters like this. The data received through this tool do not

constitute the fountain from which answers to the study questions were received. They were only meant to enrich the discussion that followed the data collection effort. The discussion of the data collected, which is available in Chapter 6, indeed drew considerable strength from the data collected from those institutions. One of the professional bodies did not provide this researcher the body's student enrolment figures. The explanation offered was that of data protection. The registrar of the body granted interview during which clues were provided regarding enrolment trends. The rest 8 provided the data requested and their representatives (for most of them, Registrars) granted interviews that complemented the numerical data. The interviews they granted provided the data that addressed the relevant study questions.

Notwithstanding the challenges that may be associated with document analysis, scholars (Macdonald and Tipton, 1993:188) admit that the examination of documents for research purposes "... remains ... an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation...". They argue, however, that although documents are usually presented as objective statements of facts, they are generally socially constructed. What is included or excluded in a document reflects accepted norms at the time of producing the document which may change, they submit. They describe documents as "... things that we can read and which relate to some aspects of the social world". It is their view that such things may be products of both public and private institutions or individuals and may not be intended for public consumption (which may be the line of thinking of the professional body that did not provide the data solicited for). They advise interpreters of documents produced by others to be mindful of the unexpressed intentions of the producers which might have influenced the information they decided to document and what they did not preserve. According to them, documents of interest to a researcher may include **public records** like statistics on economic and social issues produced and stored by public servants, the **media** like newspapers, **private papers** like biographies, and **visual documents** like photographs all of which should be interpreted with the social context of their production in mind. One may wonder whether document analysis was needed in this kind of study.

Mason (1996) argued for their relevance, indicating that documents have become some of the very helpful sources of data to a qualitative researcher and some of them can be generated specifically for the researcher by study subjects. This position reflects one of the study's lines of action. The professional bodies and the relevant public education agencies that participated in the study were requested to provide statistics on their enrolment figures

and the discrepancy between demand and supply of higher education places in Nigeria. The data collected have illuminated the study problem including the challenges of higher education access in Nigeria as well as the possibility of untapped potential for the resolution of higher education access crisis in the country. This kind of effort has been described as good practice by Kellehear (1993). Kellehear maintains that public records can be examined by others who are interested in the subject and provide cheap data for an individual researcher who may not have the means to engage in the very expensive endeavour of collecting the kind of data available. In effect, this served the best interest of a self-sponsored student researcher. The unobtrusive nature of the collection process where the data provided could not be accessed otherwise made this tool attractive.

Caution should, however, be exercised when deploying document analysis especially when archival records are involved. This is because when archival documents are involved, we may have to contend with authenticity and interpretation issues although we can minimize such problems by triangulating our methods including data sources (Kellehear, 1993). This was anticipated and partly explains triangulation as the study's data collection strategy. The advice of Macdonald and Tipton (1993) was also well received by the study. According to them, the way to minimize errors when using documents in research is to ensure that they are authentic, credible, representative and meaningful. This means that documents that appear to have been manipulated for undeclared purposes that may be pursuing the author's masked and selfish ends, are unrepresentative of the documents in their category and lacking in meaningfulness should not be worth the researcher's consideration. The quality of questions a researcher poses to study subjects and how those questions are ordered may be critical for study outcomes (Newell, 1993). As the data presented in Chapter 6 and the discussion that followed them reveal, the inclusion of this tool in the study's data collection strategy delivered good dividends. The levels of demand and supply of conventional higher education places in Nigeria and the extent of patronage of professional examinations conducted in the country made available through documentary evidence (see details in chapter 6) indicate that the study is addressing one of the major problems facing the Nigerian education system. Such data could not have been provided reliably by the study subjects through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions, relying on their memories and residual knowledge. The data the tool revealed have therefore, been found meaningful and illuminating. Their absence might have detracted from the quality of the

results of this study. The next section provides insight into how the data collected were analysed.

5.8. Data Analysis

Although this study employed mixed methods of data collection, it was largely a qualitative investigation given its epistemological orientation which is interpretivist. The diversity of research instruments deployed in the study aimed at data triangulation (see below) to guarantee the richness of the data that was collected which in turn illuminated the issues of interest to the study and provided answers to the questions posed by the study. Qualitative approach to data analysis was therefore employed in the study. It has been acknowledged that although quantification may be revealing when analysing data emerging from qualitative instruments like focus group discussion, qualitative analysis may be adequate (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). The researcher isolated the themes that emerged from the responses of the respondents who granted interviews and participated in focus group discussions. The researcher made a similar effort when analysing the qualitative data higher education aspirants who participated in the study provided in the questionnaires they completed. Some of the qualitative data which resulted from the open-ended question in the questionnaire administered were amenable to quantification and were handled accordingly. The motivation for seeking higher education was a major issue where certain themes had high incidence and were captured numerically and explained with other qualitative data. The details are available in Chapter 6 where the data collected during the study have been analysed and discussed.

The data resulting from the structured questions in the questionnaire administered, have, however, been presented in numerical form using frequency tables that reveal the central tendencies of the higher education aspirants who participated in the study. Most of the data coming through this tool have been communicated in percentage form that revealed relative frequencies.

The variables which were used for measurement in the study and the responses of the study participants were coded (see Appendix 12) prior to the conversion of their frequencies to percentages. The variables which the codes refer to were derived from the issues the study probed into in line with the research questions. They cover issues such as the alternative routes to higher education in Nigeria, the strategies higher education aspirants were considering for access to higher education, and the extent to which they were aware of the

availability of professional examinations as a route to higher education. They also cover the factors that influence the strategies they are adopting for access to higher education and the motives behind their interest in higher education.

During the analysis, the preferences of the higher education aspirants were assigned weights that ranged from 6 (most preferred) to 1 (least preferred). Six alternatives were involved. The number of respondents who selected an option was multiplied by the weight assigned the option. The relative weights of the options were eventually compared and the options ranked accordingly. Where the study sought to know the degrees of influence different factors had on the respondents' career strategy (see Appendix 10-Questionnaire), weights ranging from 0 (No Influence) to 3 (Great Influence) were assigned to those degrees (see Appendix 12 for the ranges).

The use of pictorial representations where appropriate seems to facilitate a good understanding of the study's findings and have given the thesis enhanced aesthetic value. This is consistent with the pragmatic orientation of the study, deployed within an overarching constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. In the next section, this report will outline the conditions that were put in place to guarantee the soundness of the outcomes of this study.

5.9. 1. Trustworthiness of the Study

Flick (2007:62-66) posits that quality and trustworthiness in the context of qualitative research indicate "... soundness of the research as a whole" including the care exercised in deploying individual methods employed in the search for knowledge. It is Flick's view that researchers can promote quality in the research effort at three levels namely the design level, the execution level, and dissemination level. Those levels therefore present qualitative researchers with the criteria for measuring the soundness of their research effort. This contrasts with the use of validity and reliability for measuring soundness of research effort in quantitative studies.

Flick argues that the design level has 'indication', 'adequacy', and 'openness for diversity' as important criteria to be met. The indication criterion is met when a thoughtful consideration of the issues involved in the study, the questions to be answered and the peculiarities of the population and the current state of knowledge in the area as well as applicable methods suggest that qualitative approach is appropriate for the study. Adequacy criterion is met when the researchers deploying the methods are able to use them appropriately, normally

because they have, through training and experience acquired the requisite skills for achieving this. Openness for diversity is satisfied when the different kinds of experience study subjects and scholars may have on the study of the study are anticipated and captured. At the execution level, the criteria to be met include 'rigour and creativity', and 'consistency and flexibility'. A rigorous and creative execution of a study requires that the researcher respects the outline plan for the enquiry so that the study questions can be answered without failing to explore opportunities that come up for insights beyond the declared interests of the study. A consistent and flexible execution of the study requires that the researcher strikes a balance between using chosen tools uniformly and modifying how they are used to reflect divergence in the characteristics of the study subjects.

At dissemination level, qualitative studies should be transparent meaning that their processes are reported with openness, and feedback sought from study subjects and informed scholars on the subject of the study through follow-up efforts and presentations as well as publications which can elicit constructive criticism which result in improvement in the research strategy being employed. Soundness in qualitative research also requires 'audiencing the presentations' according to Flick. This demands that the researcher reports the study findings in a diversity of formats and styles to ensure that the various stakeholders are provided information on the research outcome in line with their preferred communication style and media.

This study was carefully designed to accommodate the quality criteria identified by Flick for a trustworthy qualitative study. The conscious and implicit attitudes of the study subjects towards professional examinations may be best revealed when qualitative tools are employed. This realization indicated that the qualitative approach the study adopted was a sensible option. The researcher had undergone the requisite training for the use of interviews, and focus group discussions and communicated with the stakeholders in the study. Most of the skills were acquired through the Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP), supervision and mentoring by an experienced qualitative researcher, participation in international Summer Schools for emerging researchers organized in Trondheim, Norway in 2014, in Sheffield, England in 2015 and Linz, Austria in 2016 by European Educational Research Association (EERA), participation in a symposium organized in London in 2014 by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), participation in the biannual social research festival organized by the Economic and Social Research Council at the University of Oxford in England in 2014. The Emerging Researcher's Summer schools

organized by the Environment and Sustainability Research group of EERA in Cambridge, England in 2016 and the Nordic Centre of Excellence, JustEd in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2016 which the researcher participated in honed his research and communication skills. The personal reading which he did voraciously and the online courses he participated in (on FutureLearn and TED.com) during his doctoral programme made similar impact on his research and communication skills. This researcher presented the study plan at some of those development events especially the Summer Schools and received feedbacks from trainers of social researchers and peers which informed some of the decisions that were made in the study including the size of the sample for the study.

The project was also reviewed following the procedures of the University of Reading Research Ethics Committee and was given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The instruments for the study including the interview and the focus group discussions had inbuilt schedules that were meant to guarantee consistency in their application while making provisions that will enable the study take advantage of serendipitous opportunities. The study had a plan that accommodated giving feedback to the stakeholders and doing so in the language and through media that will promote understanding and appropriation of its findings and recommendations. This researcher took field notes and kept record of how the study developed to ensure accurate, comprehensive and transparent reporting of the research efforts and findings. What has been achieved in this respect was, however, subject to the limits imposed on the study by available resources and latitude including finance, time and word limit for the thesis. The researcher is keen on impact. As he has explained in Chapter 7, he undertook this project in the strong conviction that it would provide the opportunity to help his country solve a major development problem and remains committed to disseminating its results as widely as possible and in the language the various stakeholders (many of whom have indicated interest in its outcome) will understand. Triangulation of methods of inquiry as explained in the next section was adopted in this study to mitigate the imperfections of the individual methods employed and this was to further guarantee quality in the study.

5.9.2. Triangulation

Given the pragmatic orientation of the study, triangulation became a logical mechanism for verifying data collected in the course of the study. Macdonald and Tipton (1993) explain that triangulation obtains when the researcher employs diverse but complementary methods in

the effort to address given research questions in the same research project. They note that there are diverse kinds of triangulation with the major ones being data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Investigator and data triangulations, according to them, require that different researchers collect data about the subject matter at different times and locations while methodological triangulation demands that more than one method is employed in the collection of data. Theory triangulation involves the use of a variety of orientations in the determination and categorization of the data to be collected and analysed. This being a doctoral study undertaken by a self-funding student, investigator triangulation was considered unrealistic but the other dimensions of triangulation were adopted to the extent that available resources permitted. Combining data collection methods in a study enhances what can be discovered about the issues under investigation using the perspectives of the study subjects and the researcher (Bouma, 2000). Since individual methods have their strengths and weaknesses, the way to achieve breadth and depth and reach conclusions we can have confidence in is to embrace triangulation, Zaltman (2003:73-74) argues. It is Zaltman's observation that "... human thought and behaviour are too complex for any one method to capture fully" but admits of the possibility that different methods employed may yield similar results. It is his belief that when different methods produce the same revelations, confidence in the resultant conclusions is enhanced. Is triangulation a road that is paved with gold and devoid of challenges? The decision to employ diverse methods in research should not be taken lightly because of the tendency for triangulation to make huge financial, skill and time demands on the researcher (Mason, 1996). This researcher admits, given his field experience that mixed methods of inquiry can be quite demanding in terms of the time and other resources they require. The researcher's professional management skills which he developed through training and over two decades of management experience and rich social network in Lagos Nigeria, the location of the study were quite helpful. Those skills and social networks helped in securing appointments and in managing the data collection process effectively. The next section provides information on the challenges the study anticipated and the efforts that were put into resolving the ones that arose in the course of the study.

5.10. Pilot Study

The instruments employed in this study for data collection were tested for efficacy before they were deployed. This was achieved through a pilot study. As Sanders and Pinhey (1983) have observed, pilot study is deployed to test research tools in order to refine them to a level that they can be consistent and produce the desired results. A pilot study is therefore generally needed to ensure that study instruments have been well constructed and will produce the data required other things being equal (Keats, 2000). Doing it before the actual study can enhance the quality of outcome since it will give the researcher the opportunity to use a relatively small group but similar to the sample elements to test his instruments and fill up any observed gaps (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). This kind of effort is also critical for the trustworthiness of research outcomes when the methodological approach chosen is qualitative (Flick, 2007).

The interview instrument was tested with one of the registrars of the professional bodies in Nigeria and one of the school counsellors in Lagos state where all the school counsellors in the sample have been drawn from. Both the registrar of a professional body and the school counsellor the researcher tested the interview instruments on possessed academic and professional qualifications similar to what applied to the elements in the sample. The applicable academic qualification was a first degree in the case of the professional body registrar and a Master's Degree in the case of the school counsellor. All the three school counsellors who participated in the study had Master's degree in Counselling.

The researcher had those understandings being a trained counsellor and member of some of the professional bodies himself. He took what he knew about the context of the study into consideration in designing the pilot study. The data collected from both the registrar and school counsellor who participated in the pilot study were integrated into the data collected for the study. The pilot study was largely smooth and the data they provided were considered relevant and consequently adopted for analysis. Only the first audio recording (with the registrar of one of the professional bodies) had a volume problem which was rectified with an audio booster software. The lessons learned from that experience was fed into the plans for subsequent recordings and interactions. The overall outcome turned out to be pleasant.

Senior secondary school students of one of the secondary schools in Lagos state were participants in a pilot to test the questionnaire and the focus group discussions the

researcher intended to employ for the aspect of the study that involved the higher education aspirants. They were in the graduating class of their secondary school. They all confirmed that they were aspiring to benefit from higher education. The quality of teachers and students in schools in Lagos State did not have a significant variability. The state government's policies on education especially with respect to staffing, governance, infrastructure and teaching and learning are generally uniformly applied across the state. What works well in one school in the state is likely to work well in the schools that are within the sample. The language ability of students in the school was comparable to the language ability of students in the other schools that participated in the study. As with the registrar and school counsellor, the questionnaire administration in the school and the focus group discussion conducted there had no hitches except for the audio recording which had low volume but was boosted to a good level for transcription with a software application. The data that emerged from those pilot studies to which the researcher applied the same level of professional attitude as in the ones conducted later have been considered relevant and integrated into the data analysed in the study. In the next section, the ethical principles that were given consideration in this investigation will be underscored.

5.11. Ethical Considerations

Keats (2000:28) who has defined ethics as the "... moral principles accepted by ..." the culture within which researchers conduct their investigation has observed that they cover issues like the need to be honest in communications with respondents, guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, and protection of data collected. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) have expressed similar views. They consider informed consent and debriefing which gives the researcher the opportunity to acquaint the study participants with the outcome of the investigation as critical and helpful. It is also their view that misinformation by some group participants that may be injurious to other group participants should be corrected by the researcher.

Other scholars such as Marshall and Rossman (2011:44) argue that ethical considerations should place emphasis on "... respect for persons, beneficence, and justice..." especially the distributive dimension in which case the research is used to promote equity and fairness within society. According to them, research should be conducted in a way that protects participants from harm while giving them the liberty to opt out if the information provided by the researcher convinces them to that effect. Vaus (2001) identifies with those views and

adds that confidential handling of the information provided by the respondents is also a critical consideration. Vaus, however, observes “... that ethical principles can often conflict with one another and ... ethical issues can certainly compete with methodological and practical principles” (Vaus, 2001:247). Striking a balance between respect for ethics and the generation of valid knowledge that is of public good becomes the tight rope researchers must walk.

Bouma (2000) notes that studies involving humans generally require ethical approval by an ethics committee of the institution to which the researcher belongs. Bouma reckons that such committees tend to insist on compliance with certain principles which include informed consent on the part of study subjects, competence of the researcher and the supervisor, and adequate provision for the safety of the participants. Bouma notes further that such committees also require that the investigation be conducted transparently and the study subjects given the liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. University of Reading under whose auspices this doctoral researcher conducted this study have made such prescriptions which this researcher did his best to respect. He applied to the Institute of Education’s Ethics Committee for approval of the study and had all the instruments employed for data collection in the study reviewed and approved before they were deployed. The researcher ensured that informed consent of the study participants was obtained before the instruments were administered on them. Pseudo names have been used in the documentation of the data collected in the effort to protect the identity of the institutions and individuals who provided the researcher data. The researcher has also stored the data collected in a cupboard that is not accessible to others.

The researcher, however, recognized that ethical guidelines designed for the United Kingdom context may be the minimum conditions to be met in Nigeria, the context of the study where political, cultural and economic imperatives impose additional burdens on researchers. A female Moslem student may not sit beside a male student who is a co-participant in a focus group discussion. The researcher being a Nigerian who is very familiar with the socio-economic and political environment of the country having schooled and worked there for over three decades respected relevant cultures and navigated the research field successfully. The next section clarifies the researcher’s positionality.

5.12. Researcher's Positionality

This researcher is a Nigerian, the context of the study. He was born in Minna, a city in Northern Nigeria but attended primary and secondary school in South Eastern Nigeria, his native region. He received his undergraduate education in Guidance and Counselling and Political Science at the University of Calabar, South-South Nigeria. Most of his adult life has been lived in Lagos, Nigeria's former capital located in South Western Nigeria.

His first experience of professional bodies in Nigeria was with The Chartered Institute of Personnel of Nigeria that offered a professional diploma programme in Human Resources Management he enrolled for about three decades ago. He is now a Fellow of that Institute and belongs to several others both within and outside Nigeria including the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Marketing, United Kingdom, and the Nigerian Institute of Management. His academic training is also diverse and includes a Master's degree programme in Business Management with focus on Human Resources Management. He undertook that training in the Business School of a University in Nigeria. This he complemented with another Master's degree programme in Communication for Innovation and Development which he did at the University of Reading, the host of his doctoral research. He was in the employ of Nigeria's electricity corporation for ten years and went into private business as a professional trainer and counsellor.

His career as a trainer and counsellor as well as his academic and professional training both within and outside Nigeria exposed him to the challenges young people in Nigeria encounter as they try to navigate their way through higher education and the possibility of other pathways to their career goals. This project is a response to that exposure. Being a Nigerian researching on a Nigerian problem, he realizes that he is an insider, having observed Nigeria's higher education system for over two decades. As a researcher, he is, however, an outsider. The training he has received in the course of his doctoral programme has sensitized him to the need to wear a neutral lens while carrying out investigations. He worked hard while on this project to respect the ethics of professional research. He, however, admits that his professional and social network assisted him significantly in gaining access to the sites where he conducted his investigations. It is his hope that time will prove that the effort he put into this project has been worthwhile.

Table 5.4 presents a synopsis of the study's philosophical and methodological choices.

Table 5. 4**Synopsis of Philosophical and Methodological Choices**

S/No	Methodological Dimension	Choice(s) Made
1	Ontology	Constructionism
2	Epistemology	Interpretivism
3	Methodological Approach	Qualitative
4	Research Design	Case Study
5	Population	Higher Education Aspirants (HEAs) in 4 secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, their school counsellors, Registrars of 9 professional bodies, a university in Lagos, Nigeria, Nigeria's Higher Education Admissions Board, and Head of a National Senior School Certificate examination board
6	Sample	213 higher education aspirants, 4 School Counsellors, Registrars of 9 Professional Bodies, and 1 university in Nigeria, higher education admissions board, and Head of National Office of the Senior School Certificate examination board
7	Data Collection Methods	Mixed Method- Questionnaire, Interview, Focus Group Discussion, & Document Analysis
8	Data Analysis	Qualitative and Measures of Central Tendency
9	Ethical Consideration	Ethical Approval obtained before field work
10	Pilot Study	1 secondary school, 1 school counsellor & 1 professional body registrar

The data collected following the methodology outlined in the foregoing have been analysed and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 -Data Analysis and Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the analysis and discussion of the data collected for the study. This includes the data from questionnaires and focus groups with students as well as interviews conducted with other stakeholders including school counsellors, representatives of the relevant examination boards and professional bodies.

The data aim to address the study's major research question:

To what extent does awareness of the opportunity that professional bodies provide for higher education encourage higher education aspirants in Nigeria to include professional examinations in their strategy to access higher education?

The data also aim at addressing the study's sub- questions:

- VIII. What are the routes available to higher education aspirants in Nigeria?
- IX. What routes to higher education do higher education aspirants in Nigeria choose for the purpose of accessing higher education?
- X. How do higher education aspirants in Nigeria determine the route they choose for access to higher education?
- XI. To what extent are higher education aspirants in Nigeria aware that professional examinations are available as an alternative route to higher education?
- XII. To what extent is information on professional examinations as an alternative route to higher education provided to higher education aspirants in Nigeria by their school counsellors?
- XIII. To what extent do professional bodies in Nigeria promote their examinations to higher education aspirants as an alternative route to higher education?
- XIV. What are the views of policy makers in Nigeria regarding the problem of access to higher education experienced by young people in the country?

The data analysis and discussion will be guided by these research questions and will integrate the quantitative and qualitative data. The higher education aspirants in focus here are at a life cycle stage where several influences impact on the choices they will make in their journey towards employment in adulthood. Of these, their socialization into believing that access to higher education is an important and necessary route to follow plays a major

role in decision-making regarding their future careers (Brown et al., 2001). Such influences can make their navigation to fulfilling careers an enjoyable journey, or constitute an obstacle as they search for rewarding routes to their aspirations (Goleman, 2007).

6.2. Routes to Higher Education in Nigeria

The institutions listed on Table 6.1 are among the higher educational institutions currently available in Nigeria.

Table 6.1

Types of Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria

S/No	Type of Higher Education	Certificate Awarded	Ownership	Number in Existence
1	University	Degree	Federal	41
2	University	Degree	State	40
3	University	Degree	Private	61
			Sub-Total	142
4	Polytechnic	ND/HND	Federal Govt.	25
5	Polytechnic	ND/HND	State Govt.	40
6	Polytechnic	ND/HND	Private	30
			Sub-Total	95
7	Monotechnic	ND/HND	Federal Govt.	23
8	Monotechnic	ND/HND	State Govt.	2
9	Monotechnic	ND/HND	Private	2
			Sub-total	27
10	College of Agriculture	ND/HND	Federal Govt.	17
11	College of Agriculture	ND/HND	State Govt.	19
			Sub-Total	36
12	College of Health Technology	ND/HND	Federal Govt.	9
13	College of Health Technology	ND/HND	State Govt.	40
14	College of Health Technology	ND/HND	Private	1
			Sub-Total	50
15	College of Education	NCE	Federal Govt.	22
16	College of Education	NCE	State Govt.	47
17	College of Education	NCE	Private	14

			Sub-Total	83
18	Professional Body	Professional Diploma	Relevant Practitioners	12
			Sub-Total	12
			Grand Total	445

KEY

ND = National Diploma

HND = Higher National Diploma

NCE = National Certificate of Education

Source: Researcher's Analysis of data from National Universities Commission

(<http://nuc.edu.ng/> - Accessed 25/10/15), National Board for Technical Education

(<http://www.nbte.gov.ng/institutions.html> -Accessed 25/10/15), and National Council for

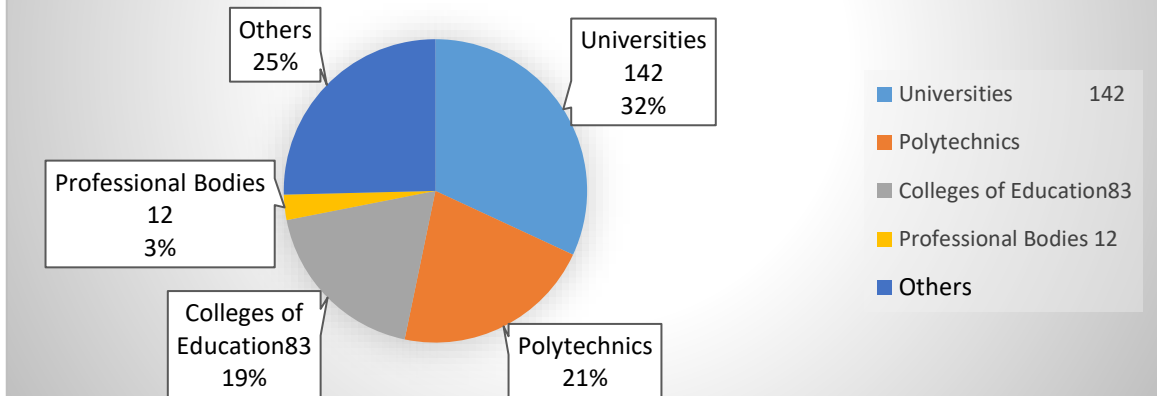
Colleges of Education (<http://www.ncceonline.edu.ng/aboutus.php> - Accessed 25/10/15),

2015.

The data provided in Table 6.1 indicate that both the federal and state governments in the country are involved in the provision of higher educational institutions, as education is an item on the concurrent legislative list of the country's constitution. This provision makes it possible for both levels of government to make laws on education and operate educational institutions. Primary schools are, however, operated by state governments in collaboration with local governments. The laws and policies made by the federal government on education, however, overrule the former in the event of a clash between a federal and a state law. Table 6.1 also shows that the private sector is a significant participant in the provision of higher education in the country. The increasing participation of private operators in the provision of higher education in Nigeria to a large extent has been motivated by the need to increase available higher education places in the country in the face of major development challenges facing the country and the limited resources available to address them.

Figure 6.1 presents a picture of the number of higher educational institutions available in Nigeria including their distribution in terms of the type of higher education they provide.

Figure 6.1
Distribution of Higher Educational Institutions Available in Nigeria Which are 445 in Number



Source: Researcher's Analysis of data from National Universities Commission (<http://nuc.edu.ng/>- Accessed 25/10/15), National Board for Technical Education (<http://www.nbte.gov.ng/institutions.html> -Accessed 25/10/15), and National Council for Colleges of Education (<http://www.ncceonline.edu.ng/aboutus.php> - Accessed 25/10/15), 2015.

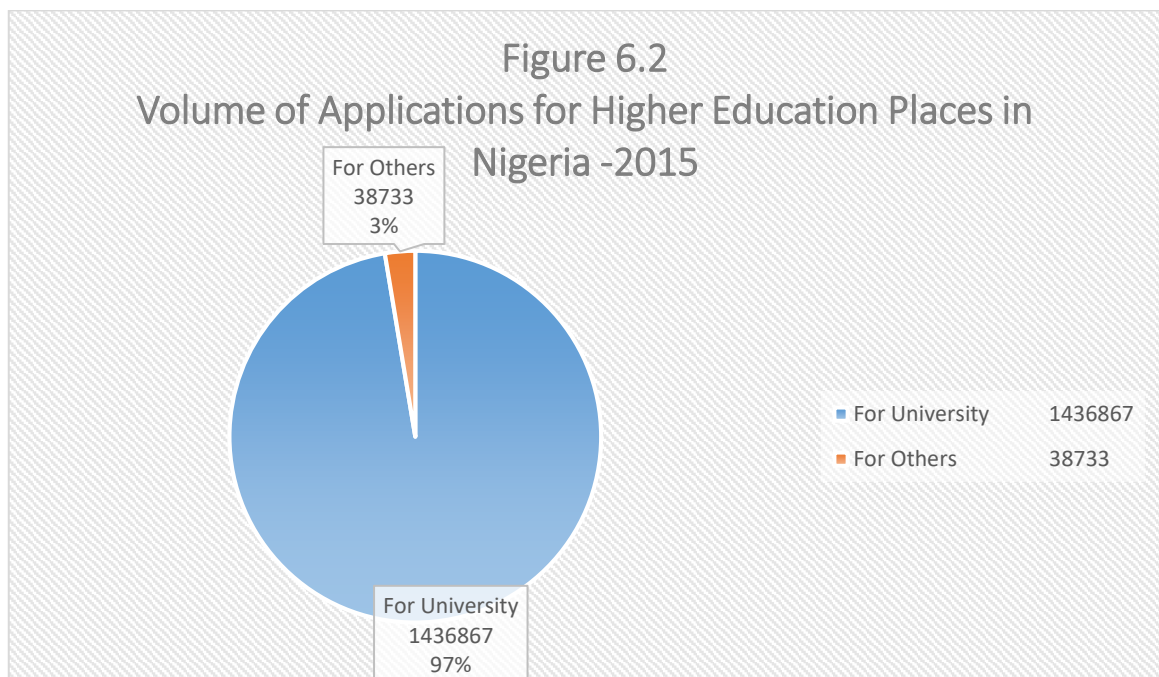
As stated in Chapter 2 all the accredited higher educational institutions in Nigeria awarding Degrees, National Diplomas (ND), Higher National Diplomas (HND) and National Certificate of Education (NCE) are required by law to recruit students through a national matriculation examination conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). This means that 17 out of the 18 categories of higher educational institutions in Nigeria are accessed through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination conducted by JAMB. Until recently, JAMB conducted the University Matriculation Examination (UME) for candidates seeking admission into universities and the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (PCE) entrance examination for candidates seeking admission into polytechnics and colleges of education in the country.

The merging of the two examinations was necessitated by the low patronage of the PCE. Most aspirants to higher education in the country sought to realize their ambition through UME and generally ignored the PCE examination. This was an indication that they preferred direct university education to any other form of higher education. Entry for the unified

examination requires candidates to choose one university, one polytechnic and one college of education in their order of preference.

Has the introduction of a unified matriculation examination in the country encouraged more candidates to opt for other forms of higher education such as polytechnics and colleges of education meant for the training of teachers?

Available evidence (Fatunmole, 2015) does not provide an affirmative answer. Of the 1,475,600 candidates who sat for the 2015 UTME, now a computer-based test, 1,436,867 (representing 97%) of the candidates indicated university as their preferred choice (see Figure 6.2). This is in spite of the unutilized places the polytechnics and colleges of education have that the candidates are aware of and the stiff competition for the very limited places in the universities. The polytechnic in most demand by candidates for the 2015 UTME had 2,157 applicants while the university that was highest in demand by the candidates had 105,032 applicants (Fatunmole, 2015).



Source: (Fatunmole, 2015:2)

To minimize the wastage of available places in the polytechnics and colleges of education, the government applies a discriminatory cut-off mark in favour of candidates for polytechnics and colleges of education. For the year 2015, candidates who opted for polytechnics and colleges of education could secure admission with only 150 out of a total of

400 marks. Those aspiring to go to university needed a minimum of 180 to get shortlisted by their universities of choice for the next stage in the selection process known as 'Post UTME', an examination that is conducted by the universities that the candidates aspire to be admitted to (Fatunmole, 2015). This examination was introduced by universities following their complaint that the UTME lacked validity, and was letting candidates who did not have the ability to benefit from university education, into the system as a result of the poor conduct of UTME by JAMB. Although malpractices have indeed been associated with public examinations in Nigeria over the years (Edet, 2013), it might also be that recruiting the brightest candidates available may not be the only motive driving the leadership of universities in Nigeria to insist on Post UTME. The results of an earlier study had suggested the possibility of corruption in the higher education admission process in Nigeria (Willot, 2011). An official of one of the professional bodies who granted this researcher interview expressed doubts about the purpose for which university administrators in Nigeria introduced Post-UTME. The official whose further remarks are made reference to later in this thesis claimed that privileged university administrators used the opportunity of Post-UTME to give undue advantages to their relatives and friends in the higher education admission process.

Achieving an increase in their internally generated revenue (IGR), which the government directly and indirectly encourages them to pursue in the face of a declining economic situation in the country, may be one of their motives (the candidates pay the universities to sit for the Post UTME examination.) The desire to control the student recruitment process to favour their relatives and friends, as stated above, may be another. Making illicit money through the sale of some of the available higher education places in their institutions may be yet another motive driving the Post UME.

Have these measures made any appreciable positive impact on the higher education access challenge in Nigeria?

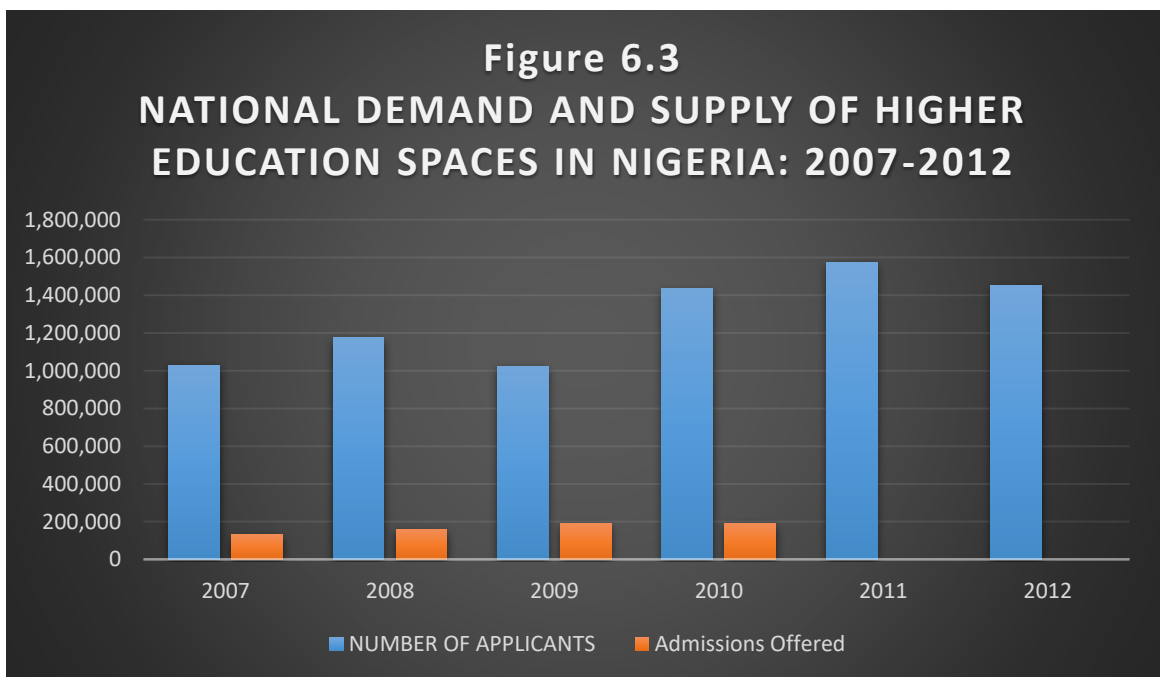
The data emerging from this study (see Table 6.2) do not provide a positive answer. For the years 2007-2010, the national admission rate was not above 15%. This is illustrated in Figures 6.3 and 6.4.

Table 6.2

**National Demand and Supply of Higher Education Places in Nigeria
2007-2012**

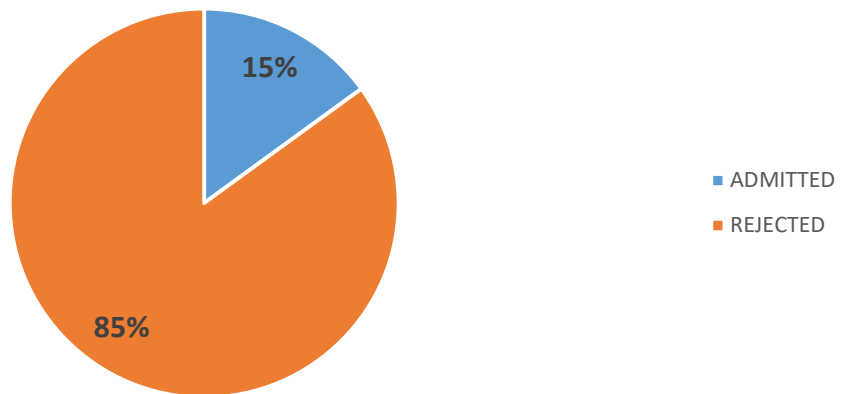
S/N	YEAR	Total number of Applicants	Admissions Offered	% Offered Admission
3	2012	1,452,873	Data not available	Not Applicable
4	2011	1,575,522	Data not available	Not Applicable
5	2010	1,433,268	192,255	13.41
6	2009	1,023,630	190,868	18.64
7	2008	1,174,935	159,170	13.54
8	2007	1,029,510	132,201	12.84

Average percentage Admitted for years 2007-2010: 14.60%
Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by JAMB, 2015



Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by JAMB, 2015

Figure 6.4
NATIONAL AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS TO
HIGHER EDUCATION ADMITTED AND REJECTED- 2007-2010



Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by JAMB, 2015

Figure 6.4 illustrates that the average applicant rejection rate for the years (2007-2010) was 85% with the volume of entries in the subsequent years (2011 and 2012) still showing an appreciable increase.

The picture becomes more worrisome when the universities that are in greater demand by higher education aspirants are in focus. The data in Table 6.3 and in Figures 6.5 and 6.6 were made available to this researcher by one of these universities.

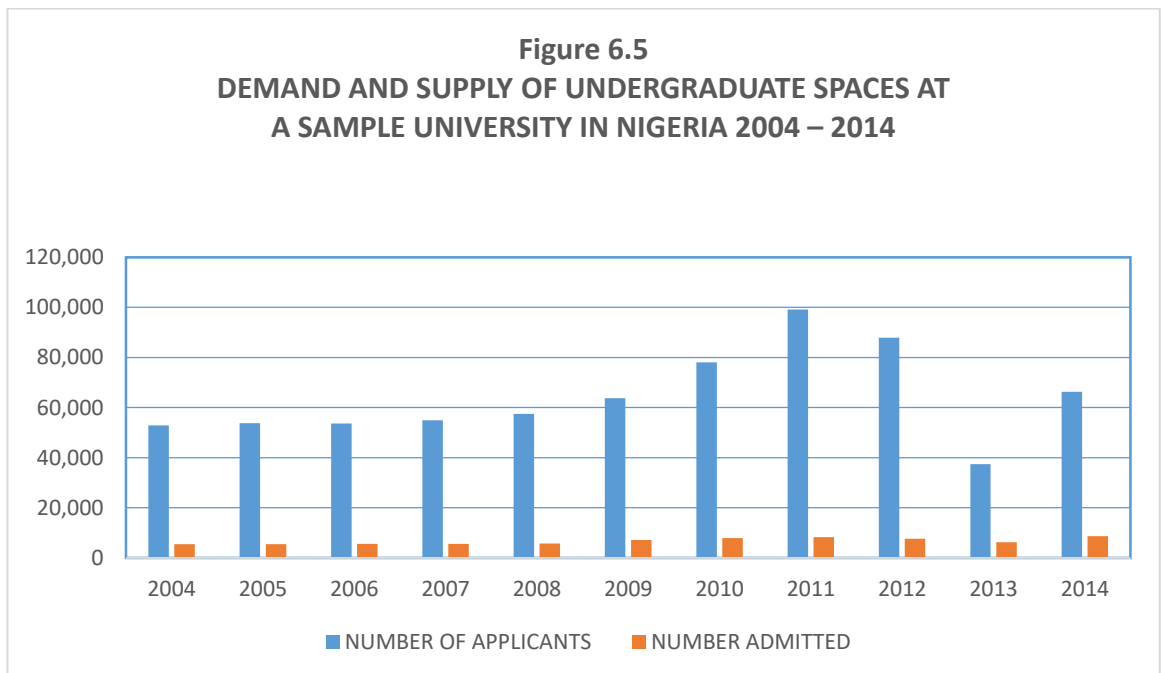
Table 6.3

**DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF UNDERGRADUATE SPACES AT
A SAMPLE UNIVERSITY IN NIGERIA 2004 – 2014**

S/N	YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER OF THOSE ADMITTED	% Admitted
1	2014	66,247	8,601	12.98
2	2013	37,469	6,258	16.70
3	2012	87,887	7,665	8.72
4	2011	99,195	8,223	8.28
5	2010	78,091	7,853	10.05
6	2009	63,698	7,156	11.23
7	2008	57,492	5,769	10.03
8	2007	54,878	5,532	10.08
9	2006	53,592	5,538	10.33
10	2005	53,820	5,529	10.27
11	2004	52,864	5,516	10.43

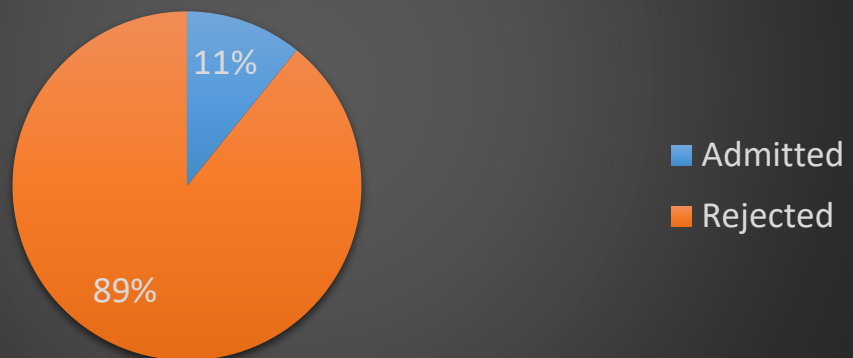
Admissions- Range: 8.28% (in 2011) - 16.70% (in 2013) Average: 10.82%

Source: Researcher’s Analysis of data supplied by a sample university, 2015



Source: Researcher’s Analysis of data supplied by a sample university, 2015

Figure 6.6
Average % OF HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICANTS
ADMITTED AND REJECTED by
a Sample University in Nigeria- 2004-2014



Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by a sample university, 2015

The volume of applications and admissions figures for the years 2004-2014 summarised in Figure 6.6 show a very significant mismatch. For every one applicant admitted during those years, about 9 applicants were rejected. The rejection rate for the sample university is also higher than the national average which was 85% (see Figure 6.4) compared to 89% in Figure 6.6. This raises the question of what factors could account for the higher volume of admission applications received by this university annually.

A senior official of this university interviewed explained that they are in higher demand because of their location in a commercial and "metropolitan capital" and the relative stable academic programme that they have operated over the years. In his words:

Many parents are based here and will not want their children to go elsewhere. Facilities are not on ground (available) to cope with the demand for example, accommodation limitation.

This preference for his institution he said, gives parents who live in the city easy access to their children for supervision and adequate welfare and security now that children are entering university at younger ages, especially in a country where security has been compromised by the terrorist activities of religious extremists for some years now. The head of one of the public education agencies in the interview made a similar observation:

Those finishing secondary school appear under-aged. Their parents falsify their ages. This is not good for children. They are not mentally equipped to cope with the challenges of higher education.

Most of the universities in the country are also known to be prone to industrial action by both academic and non-academic staff resulting in truncated academic calendars and elongated duration of academic programmes. The respondent from the sample university described his institution as being:

... a bit stable in terms of crisis

which according to him results in the student recruitment exercise being:

... always a tug of war here to get a place.

He remarked further that they cannot offer more admissions

... than what the facilities can cope with

and disclosed that they had 35, 000 students competing for 8, 500 bed spaces. According to this respondent:

The Minister of Education and House of Representatives Committee on Education have been here and have been told of these constraints -poor funding, limited training opportunities for staff. Some staff on scholarship abroad are not getting adequate funds for their programmes. Some of them now work abroad which lengthens the duration of their programmes. Sponsors want contract as condition for help even when they are alumni.... Poor research. Advanced countries are better... Which university is Nigeria's richest man investing in? Political leadership can improve the situation.

The fact remains that the pursuit for the very limited places in universities that are less prone to these problems does not deal with the overall disequilibrium in the demand and supply of higher education places in Nigeria. It is likely that it makes the experiences of the aspirants more difficult.

Are there indications that things will get better for higher education aspirants in Nigeria in terms of the rejection rate of applicants to universities in the near future?

The graduation rate from secondary schools in the country does not provide any basis for optimism. As Table 6.4 and Figure 6.7 demonstrate, the growth rate of graduation from

secondary schools in the country is about 7% and the numbers are large (approaching two million).

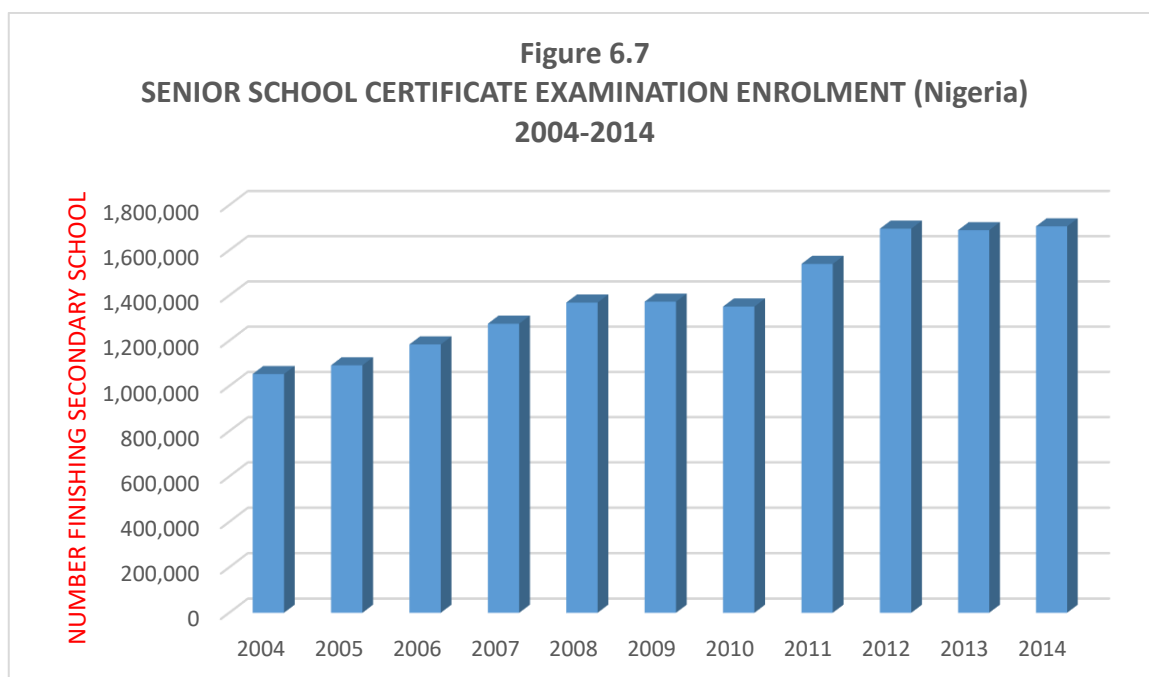
Table 6.4

ENROLMENT LEVELS FOR NIGERIAN CANDIDATES WHO WROTE THE SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION (THE PUBLIC EXAMINATION FOR STUDENTS FINISHING SECONDARY SCHOOL IN WEST AFRICA)- 2004-2014

S/N	YEAR	May/June	% Increase/Decrease	Nov/Dec	Total
1	2014	1,705,976	0.99	253,596	1,959,572
2	2013	1,689,188	-0.39	308,217	1,997,405
3	2012	1,695,878	10.10	413,313	2,109,191
4	2011	1,540,237	13.95	404,863	1,945,100
5	2010	1,351,567	-1.56	324,998	1,676,565
6	2009	1,373,009	0.28	342,446	1,715,455
7	2008	1,369,170	7.32	372,673	1,741,843
8	2007	1,275,683	7.72	379,209	1,654,892
9	2006	1,184,224	10.82	423,519	1,607,743
10	2005	1,091,739	3.67	401,942	1,493,681
11	2004	1,053,030		517,193	1,570,223

Range (May/June): 1,053,030 (in 2004) - 1,705,976 (in 2014)

Range (Nov/Dec): 253,596 (in 2014) - 517,193 (in 2004) AVERAGE RATE OF INCREASE: 6.85%. Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by an examination board for candidates graduating from secondary school, 2015



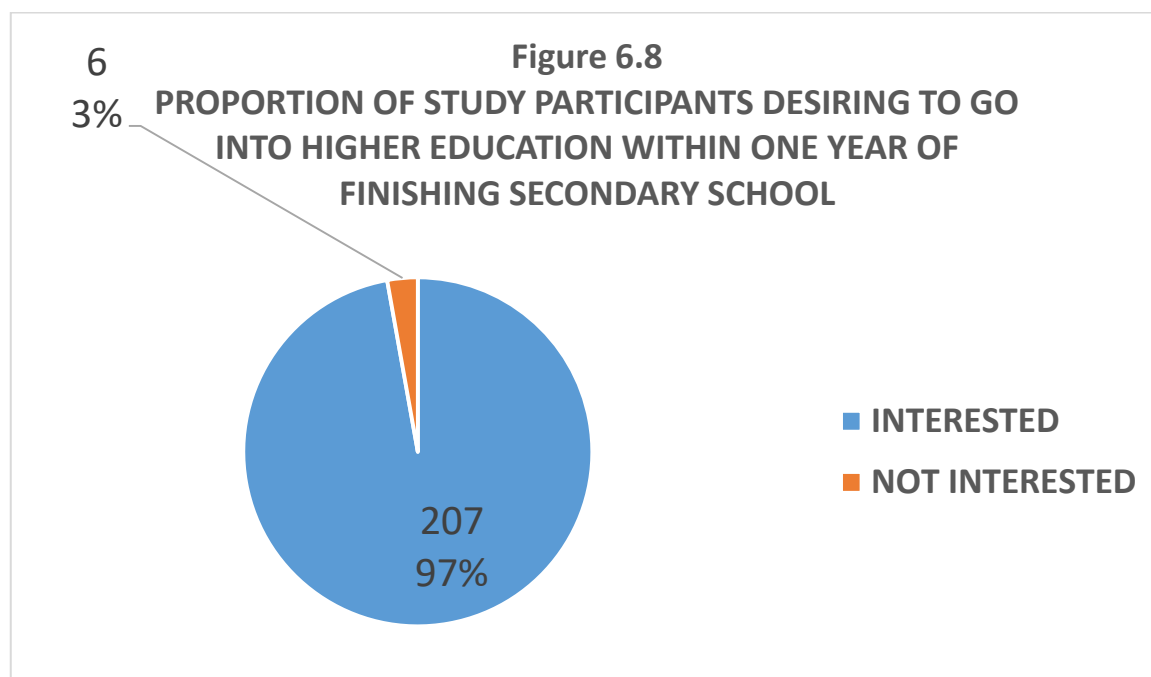
Source: Researcher's Analysis of data supplied by an examination board for candidates graduating from secondary school, 2015

Following the free 'Universal Basic Education' (UBE) introduced in the country a decade and half ago, primary school enrolment has also continued to grow and has remained one of the few areas where the government has performed well in education (Foundation, 2015).

Furthermore, the high population growth rate of Nigeria does not seem to provide hope that access to higher education in the country will get any easier in the near future. This relates to the fact that Nigeria has fewer than 150 universities (see Table 6.1) serving a population of about 190 million people. As a recent report (UNDESA, 2015) indicates, Nigeria is one of the countries that will make Africa double its youth population within 30 years and is likely to overtake Asia in youth population within 65 years. The report points out that a growing youth population could only be an asset if it is empowered through quality education that most can access among other critical factors such as health care. In the absence of these conditions, many social problems may prevail in affected countries. The new federal administration in Nigeria identifies with this position and has promised that the government will address the relevant challenges (Emejo, 2015). However, access to higher education does not appear to be one of those challenges that the new government, which assumed power on May 29, 2015 intends to address. The colleges of education upgraded to university status by the last government in the attempt to mitigate the challenges youths face in this area have been reverted to their former status by the current government.

Is difficulty with access discouraging those finishing secondary school from aspiring to higher education?

The data generated by this study do not suggest that this would seem to be the case. Virtually all the participants in this study (who are final year students in secondary school) expressed interest in accessing higher education. Of the 213 respondents, 207 of them desire to access higher education within one year of finishing secondary school as is evident in Figure 6.8.



Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

This would seem to suggest that they want higher education now, not later. Employers' demand for high skills, universities' investment in employability for their students, and the deliberate strategy of the elites to give their children advantage in society through superior skills and academic credentials as well as rich networks may be among the factors promoting young people's interest in higher education (Brown et al., 2001; Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Bourdieu, 2006; Halpern, 2005). Students from low-income homes are no exceptions. From the opinions that these students expressed during the focus group discussions, some of them appear more desperate for higher education than children from middle class backgrounds, even though they expressed concerns about access to higher education including how to fund it:

The cost of education is high, school fees, I'm thinking of how my parents will pay my school fees; our parents are worried about how to get the money to train us,

They see it as the only means of lifting their families out of poverty and, according to them, make them proud. Higher education means:

to study more about what I want to be in life, achieving your dream, learn more, meet other people. This is the best way for you to become what you want to become. You need to work hard.

Their parents who are aware of the financial challenge seem to be the only moderators of this ambition as their words suggest:

My father said I should be patient a bit, when he finds money, I can go for higher education.

Same with me.

'Being useful to family and friends and making them proud' was ranked second by subjects from Excel Secondary School (ESS), a lower economic class private school who responded to the questionnaires and participated in the focus group discussions administered by this researcher. That trailed behind 'the desire to be successful' as the motivation fuelling their desire to access higher education as soon as possible. The six of them who participated in the focus group discussion were passionate about contributing to the elimination of poverty from their communities. They expressed the desire to use the gains of higher education to:

save people's lives, develop medical technologies, create job opportunities for people around me, become an entrepreneur because of my parents (I don't want them to suffer), improve Nigeria, the earth... and help my parents...for them to reap what they have laboured for.

The researcher did not notice such a passion from the students in the middle class schools who described higher education as an indispensable tool for success in a fiercely competitive and technologically advancing world. One of them asserted during the focus group discussion that:

if you don't go through higher education, you are not going anywhere.

It would seem that the students from lower economic class shared their parents' view regarding the need for education as a way out of poverty. It does seem also, however, that parents who have the means are raising the bar by sponsoring their children's education in overseas countries which lower economic class parents would not be able to afford. This seems to be a deliberate strategy by such parents to give their children competitive

advantage in the race of life (Reynolds, 2014), in a world where inequality is rising (Giddens, 2002).

Table 6.5 presents additional themes that emerged from the open-ended question the researcher posed in the questionnaire regarding the respondents' motivation for desiring to access higher education.

Table 6.5

MOTIVES BEHIND STUDY PARTICIPANTS' INTEREST IN HIGHER EDUCATION

S/No.	Motive	Frequency (Before Career Information)	Rank	Frequency (After Career Information)	Rank
1	Desire to be successful	172	1	157	1
2	Desire to Learn More	71	2	66	2
3	Desire to Impact Positively on Society	21	3	26	4
4	Desire to make Family and Friends proud	20	4	19	3
5	Higher Education is a Necessity	14	5	5	5
6	Desire to Make a Unique Contribution and be Different from Others	3	6	2	6
7	Desire to be like Mates	1	7	1	7

Being useful to family and friends and making them proud is ranked 2 by study participants from Excel Secondary School (Lower economic class private school)

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Table 6.5 reveals changes in the opinions of some of the respondents after reading through the Career Information Sheet made available to them by this researcher (see Appendix 11). Whereas the frequency of the "Desire to Impact Positively on Society" as a motive for seeking higher education increased by about a quarter, the frequency of "Higher Education is a Necessity" declined by 64%. Other routes to higher education that the Career Information Sheet provided to them and the discussion among themselves which their participation in the study would have provoked might have led them to realize that the way to enduring happiness is to help others find their own happiness

(Goleman, 2007) and that success may have many roads that lead to it. One of the participants in the focus group discussion conducted in Middle Class Secondary School (MSS), a middle class private school was unequivocal in stating that one could become successful without higher education.

According to this participant:

there are plenty people who have made it without going through higher education.

The other five participants who had all expressed interest in moving on to higher education within one year of finishing secondary school said that that might have been possible in the researcher's generation who are used to simple and unattractive technology than the ones they now use. One of them made the point that in their generation where, according to her, advanced technology had become a currency with which you buy success, higher education had become indispensable. In a reference to this researcher she said:

The car your generation drives is pako (a local parlance for inferior), ours is correct and advanced, even though your car was stronger.

Although "Desire to be Successful" and "Desire to Learn More" remained the respondents' top two motives for aspiring to higher education, both motives showed slight declines as revealed in Table 6.5. The researcher observed this change only after the field study had been completed. The data available do not account for this change thereby making it a subject for further research which the researcher's limited doctoral research time frame cannot permit. Available literature, however, suggests that the skill demands of most jobs today do not call for the level of emphasis governments, employers and other stakeholders seem to be placing on high skills and higher education (Brown and Hesketh, 2004).

The students in the study, however, generally believed that the routes they were considering for access to higher education were the routes their parents and society expected of them and probably were the easy way out. Reynolds' study confirms that higher education seekers tend to patronize what they consider to be the fastest and most convenient paths to the realization of their ambitions (Reynolds, 2014).

What are the routes the higher education aspirants who participated in this study are hoping to consider?

The questionnaire used in the study sought an answer to this question. The respondents were 213 in total from the four sample secondary schools and in their final year in secondary school (see Chapter 5). Table 6.6 presents their responses, which reveal that about 8 out of every 10 of them identified the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) as a route to higher education.

Table 6.6

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Total Number of Questionnaire Respondents: 213

It is a Route to Higher Education	Frequency of Yes	Relative Frequency (%)	Rank
JAMB UTME	165	77	1
Study Abroad	135	63	2
A' Level Examination	123	58	3
Professional Examination	108	51	4
Open University	92	43	5
ONLINE STUDY	86	40	6

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Only 23% of them did not recognize it as a route to higher education (see Table 6.6). This refers to the national entrance examination for candidates who aspire to higher education in Nigeria and is conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), which, as is stated in Chapter 2, is the only body mandated by law to do so.¹ Some of the candidates for UTME are already in polytechnics or colleges of education and are seeking to cross over to university. This perhaps (at least in part) contributes to the stiffness of the competition since such candidates are likely to compete from a position of advantage, writing the matriculation examination with greater knowledge and general cognitive ability.

What made university education so popular at the expense of the other platforms for higher education in Nigeria?

The answer to this question should be contemplated in the face of the obvious large capacities that a good number of the other higher educational institutions in the country have (see Table 6.1) which most of the higher educational aspirants are currently unwilling to embrace. Professional bodies in the country accept every applicant who meets the

¹ As also mentioned earlier, the board used to have two separate examinations annually: one for aspirants to universities in the country and another for aspirants to polytechnics and colleges of education in the country. It decided a few years ago to subject all aspirants to higher education to the same examination following the low numbers for the Polytechnics and colleges of education entrance examination.

minimum academic requirement for admission, which, for most of them, is the Senior Secondary School Certificate, the same academic credential required by universities in the country for admission into undergraduate programmes. Even some of the other higher educational institutions that are affiliated to universities are no exceptions with regard to low patronage. 15 universities in Nigeria at the time of this study were involved in such affiliations and have 55 colleges of education, seminaries and theological institutions affiliated to them. This arrangement enables students in the affiliated institutions to graduate with degrees and other certificates awarded by the universities to which their institutions are affiliated. Most professional bodies in Nigeria who offer opportunities for professional certification that could lead to the eventual acquisition of university degrees suffer the same low patronage. This can be seen in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7

Number of Student Members of Some Professional Bodies in Nigeria

As at January, 2015

S/No	Name of Professional Body	No. of Students	R.F. (%)	C.F. (%)
1	Super Professional Body	305,290	78.35	78.35
2	Average Professional Body	63,786	16.37	94.72
3	Fair Professional Body	15,094	3.87	98.59
4	SOS1 Professional Body	2,870	0.73	99.32
5	SOS2 Professional Body	2,300	0.59	99.91
6	SOS3 Professional Body	278	0.07	99.98
	Total	389,618		

Source: Researcher's Analysis of data provided by professional bodies, 2015

As can be seen in Table 6.7, Super professional body, is the most patronized professional body in Nigeria in terms of student enrolment. It, however, has only 34% of its student population with Senior School Certificate as their highest academic attainment. They are the ones who start the Institute's professional programme from the "Accounting Technicians Scheme". They are in the minority here in spite of the reasonable annual subscription the

Institute charges them (see Table 6.8) (Two thousand Naira is the equivalent of less than seven British pounds as at the time of writing this thesis). Candidates enrolling on a Higher National Diploma or University degree start the Institute's programme as "Professional Students".

Table 6.8

Super Professional Body

Student Membership Position as at 23/01/15

S/N	CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP	NUMBER	Relative Frequency (%)	Annual Subscription (Naira)
1	ATSWA ⁺ Students	104,635	34	2,000
2	Professional Students	200,655	66	4,000
	Total	305,290	100	

ATSWA⁺- Accounting Technicians Scheme of West Africa written by candidates enrolling with Senior School Certificate.

Source: Data provided by Super Professional Body, 2015

This may be a confirmation that most people in Nigeria wishing to become professional practitioners of any profession still prefer to start with a tertiary institution certificate. All the professional bodies that participated in this study would appear to have reconciled themselves to this reality and have made provisions for student membership applicants who are already tertiary institution graduates to get exempted from some levels of their examinations and follow a shorter route to professional certification. The registrar of one of the professional bodies who granted this researcher an interview used the following words to refer to this arrangement:

*After you have gone to university you may be given some exemptions. You write exams on ethics. It's a kind of finishing school. This is to crown your profession. We encourage people who may not have the opportunity to go to **tertiary institutions** to study with tuition houses and write our exams and they will become at par with those who went to **university**.*

It does seem that this respondent is interpreting "tertiary institution" as "university".

Could lack of awareness resulting from poor career advice be one of the factors preventing higher education aspirants from utilising professional examinations as alternative route to higher education or this interpretation of higher education as university is at the root of the problem?

The focus group discussions and interviews involving some of the study participants revealed that the major stakeholders in Nigeria have constructed higher education as university not just in terms of certificates obtained but also in terms of where you study for the certificate. Those study participants included higher education aspirants, their school counsellors, registrars of professional bodies, and officials of some public education agencies. Employment practices in the country would appear to be a major influencer of this perception. Both public and private sector employers tend to promote their graduate-level job vacancies to only university graduates. Not to put their children, schools and students at a disadvantage, both parents and school counsellors tend to encourage higher education aspirants to seek only full-time university education. Even part-time and online university studies have been largely discredited by the National Universities commission, the regulator of university education in Nigeria (Oweh, 2015). A combination of these factors would appear to have influenced higher education aspirants, their parents and school counsellors to insist on direct access to university education. One of the counsellors in one of the public schools that participated in the study told this researcher that the mandate the leadership of the school has is to:

... produce students that move to university education or a tertiary institution

without explaining the meaning of “tertiary institution”. The counsellor, however, did say that

we order (them to go) to university

and

we produce students that will be undergraduates. We don't produce students that go for professional examinations....

This comment seems to suggest that this counsellor's understanding of the concept of undergraduate is limited to people studying for a first degree at university and does not include those benefitting from higher education through any other arrangement. Students of the school may be getting this message and forming opinions accordingly regarding what is higher education. This counsellor admitted not having adequate information regarding professional bodies. According to this participant, the target set for the school by the government did not include pointing the students in the direction of professional bodies. The comments of some students of this counsellor's school who participated in the focus

group discussion reflected the counsellor's disposition towards direct university education. These comments included:

JAMB is compulsory. There is no alternative to JAMB. The university life is critical and the most important part of your university life is year one. You will do different stupid things you will live to remember.

The researcher wanted to know what the stupid things were and was told that one discovers them when one gets there. One of them used her relationship with her sister to illustrate:

I know that in JSS1 (Junior Secondary School 1), I used to do some things I now laugh at. Like I tell my sister I did worse than you are doing. I liked more sweets than you. In professional exams, your aim is just to pass the exam and go for your masters forgetting other aspects of your life. In professional examination, it's let me just read, let me just pass. In the university they wrap up everything for you.

This perception of university education as an indispensable next step in their life journey would seem to make them approach the compulsory entrance examination in Nigeria for university education with a high level of anxiety. The following comment made in the same focus group discussion demonstrates this:

JAMB fever, everybody has it. It's one big hurdle, one big mountain...afraid of failure and repetition of JAMB exam. Some of our seniors are going to write JAMB with us, and it is frustrating for them, they are tired of writing but they just have to write. Some children don't have the zeal to go to school but their parents want them to go to school. I know of somebody who studied medicine, finished, gave the father the certificate and went back to study music.

This insistence on university education applied to participants from the four schools involved in the study including those from the lower economic class private school (ESS). Six of them who participated in the focus group discussion had this to say in response to the question: How do you intend to secure admission to the institution you are aspiring to get into? Will you write some exams? How else?

Hard work, I want to do professional exams after my JAMB. I will do JAMB. I will do JAMB. I will write JAMB and then write professional exams. When I'm through with university, I will write professional exams.

The registrars of the professional bodies and public education agencies who granted interviews to this researcher demonstrated awareness of this understanding of higher education in Nigeria and young people's insistence on university education which they considered to be unfortunate. One of the Registrars observed that those who complete his Institute's professional programme:

start at 300 level when they finish our program meaning that they do two years to complete their degree. But they prefer it the other way round now- go to university before coming to write professional examinations.

He further indicated that successful candidates of their programme are eligible to:

go to do master's... not first degree in the UK for example in Corporate Governance.

The registrar of a different professional body stated that:

Our professional qualification is above a first degree.

One of the leaders of another professional body made similar observations. In his words:

*People prefer to go through **tertiary institutions** before coming to us. In Nigeria everybody wants to be a **university graduate**. In the past when people finish secondary school, some go to university while others pursue other endeavours and eventually come out successful. I don't know how we have managed our economy for everybody to think that they must go to university. The colleges of education are collapsing because of poor enrolment; today JAMB compels people to go to colleges of education. People do not even want to go to polytechnics. Our system discriminates in favour of university graduates. There is controversy over unequal treatment of Higher National Diploma (HND) and university degree holders. Holders of HND now have to go for university degrees. Higher education aspirants having seen this scenario will not want to go to polytechnics. I don't know of any society where everybody is a **graduate**. If we can afford it, it is beautiful for everyone to be a **graduate** but not as a human right, not everybody is endowed to go to university. Our universities today are overcrowded with classrooms having 150 students or more where the maximum should be 60. With rigorous admission process, many of the 150 will not qualify to be in the university. Universities now have Post-UTME which, however, is a process that enables the people who run the system to admit their preferred candidates although it was meant to be a quality control mechanism. There has never been a time when we had high patronage for our certificate programme which was the entry point for those with school certificate. At the first stage of the program you might have a sizable number but many of them drop out after that stage. National Diploma holders secure admission in the university or polytechnics and abandon this one. Doing our programme was a stop-gap for them.*

The registrar of another professional body summed up this challenge in the following words:

in this part of the world they lay more emphasis on university education.

The respondent whose board examines graduates of secondary schools in Nigeria for the Senior School Certificate, the minimum academic credential for higher education in the country expressed concern about this state of affairs. In his words:

Universities lack carrying capacity for this volume.... a general misconception about the national policy on education. The policy does not envisage every child that enters the primary school will end up a university professor. There should be a sieving after Junior Secondary³. Depending on the aptitude of students, some should go to technical school. What we have, however, is that everybody wants to go to university. Parents want their children to be engineers, doctors, nurse and lawyer even when they don't have the aptitude for such disciplines resulting in large enrollment for JAMB UTME to find their way to any university they can. Very few people want to be teachers. Public perception of some professions reflects parent's ignorance about success in life. They think only people in those professions can be successful. Recognition of achievement in other professions like carpentry, teaching are looked down upon- social problem. Football is resulting in success now. The excellent candidates in our exams are hardly even recognized. The awards we give do not come with significant rewards. We give only a few thousand naira when we as an examination board recognize them. They are not celebrated. What we value as a people has accounted for some of these problems- social malaise, societal misperception, wrong values. Our values have been distorted. Check what we look out for in our elections- politicians don't have values- lack of people of conviction. We have celebrated criminals in public office. Children emulate what they see, following wrong examples of the elders. Old people are like dry fish. Changing this perception will not be easy. Human ego is a very stubborn one. We need to educate and re-orientate people. Children will take a cue. You can be successful without becoming a professor. We have to take our destiny in our hands by training our children the right way.

Accessing higher education by attending a private university and writing an advanced level examination as well as study abroad were options that the study participants from the middle class private secondary school were more open to when compared to their counterparts from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. This was also the case with participants from the middle class secondary school who strongly voted for the UTME as the route to higher education even though they recognized the other routes shown in Table 6.6. The students from the middle class private school who participated in the focus group discussion showed interest in two of the private universities nearest to their school as well

as in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Advanced Level Examination in preparation for study in the United States of America and United Kingdom.

Affordability and socialization including peer group influence may be the dominant factors accounting for the differences observed here. As indicated earlier, respondents from the lower economic class private secondary school during a focus group discussion, expressed concerns about how their higher education will be financed. They stated that:

The cost of education is high, school fees, I'm thinking of how my parents will pay my school fees. Our parents are worried about how to get the money to train us. I want to work before going for higher education. Same with me.

The counsellor at the middle class private school indicated that foreign and local universities promote their institutions to the students of the school. This was not mentioned to this researcher by the counsellors in the lower economic class public and private secondary schools. The counsellor in the middle class public secondary school confirmed that representatives of foreign higher educational institutions promote their schools to students of the school but suggested that the success of their students in UTME was one of their measures of effectiveness as a privileged public secondary school. Professional examinations, the Open University and online study were identified by a significant fraction of the study respondents as routes to higher education as Table 5.6 shows but most of them informed this researcher that accessing the university through UTME was their main aim. The respondents from the lower economic class secondary school in a focus group discussion expressed interest in writing professional examinations relevant to their interests and demonstrated a better understanding of how it works compared to their counterparts from the other three secondary schools. This, according to them, would be a contingency option if they were not successful in UTME which all of them who participated in the focus group discussion also indicated interest in writing. This researcher probed to find out what accounted for the difference and discovered that some of the teachers in the school promoted professional examinations during their classes. The proprietor of the school holds a professional diploma. This was known to both the students and their teachers. The principal of the school acknowledged that:

I am desiring to participate in it myself; I got to know through my proprietor who did a professional exam in Public Relations recently. I used to drive him to the school. Aside from that we have not really been exposed to professional exams before now. I am a Technologist.

One of the students from this school who participated in the focus group discussion stated that:

the principal has discussed professional exams with us before. It was discussed in our Senior Secondary². It was discussed by our Counsellor. Our proprietor plays the role of Counsellor.

This researcher did not observe that level of awareness and enthusiasm among the respondents in the other secondary schools. This may be suggestive of the place of sensitization and role-modelling in getting higher education aspirants to consider alternative routes to higher education since the route most of them compete for seems to lack the capacity to expand in the near future to accommodate most of them.

It has been argued that the quality assurance agency for universities in the country appear more interested in getting the universities that are already in existence to upgrade their infrastructure and service delivery rather than expansion of the system (Samuel, 2015). The agency is actively campaigning against online studies as a means of earning degrees and frowns at part-time studies for courses such as Nursing and Laboratory Technology as well as cross-border part-time studies no matter how reputable the institution offering the programme may be (Oweh, 2015). The agency also appears to be uncomfortable with the quality of education that the country's Open University is providing and has withheld accreditation for most of its courses. This situation may be discouraging higher education seekers in the country from patronizing the institution which has fared poorly in terms of graduation rate (NAN, 2014). The agency that has the responsibility to conduct matriculation examination for those desiring to access the higher educational institutions in the country is focusing on how to improve its reputation through the conduct of examinations that meet the expectations of the stakeholders in terms of the validity of the results (Fatunmole, 2015). The agency's efforts to achieve this seem to be relying on the use of technology that can reduce malpractices associated with its examinations to the barest minimum. Observers

consider this a commendable project but worry about the logistics of it and the obvious disadvantages that candidates from rural communities may suffer (Thisday, 2015). A senior education policy maker in the country recently hinted at the possibility of adopting both the computer-based test and the pen and paper test in future examinations (DailyPost, 2016). According to this official, this is to cater for the interest of candidates who are not computer literate.

These concerns seem to ignore the high rejection rate of higher education applicants in Nigeria, which may be one of the factors promoting examination malpractices in the country. Most of the stakeholders may be looking at the problem through a tainted lens that may be obstructing their identification and promotion of alternative higher education opportunities in the country. There may be a problem with the current perception stakeholders have of this challenge. A revision of this perception may be a major way forward for the country with respect to provision of increased access to higher education. As has been observed (Peck, 1990), unrealistic world-views can result in needless suffering when people cling to them. In the words of Peck (1990:45):

The more clearly we see the reality of the world, the better equipped we are to deal with the world. The less clearly we see the reality of the world- the more our minds are befuddled by falsehood, misperceptions and illusions- the less able we will be to determine correct courses of action and make wise decisions. Our view of reality is like a map with which to negotiate the terrain of life. If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know where we are, and if we have decided where we want to go, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we generally will be lost.

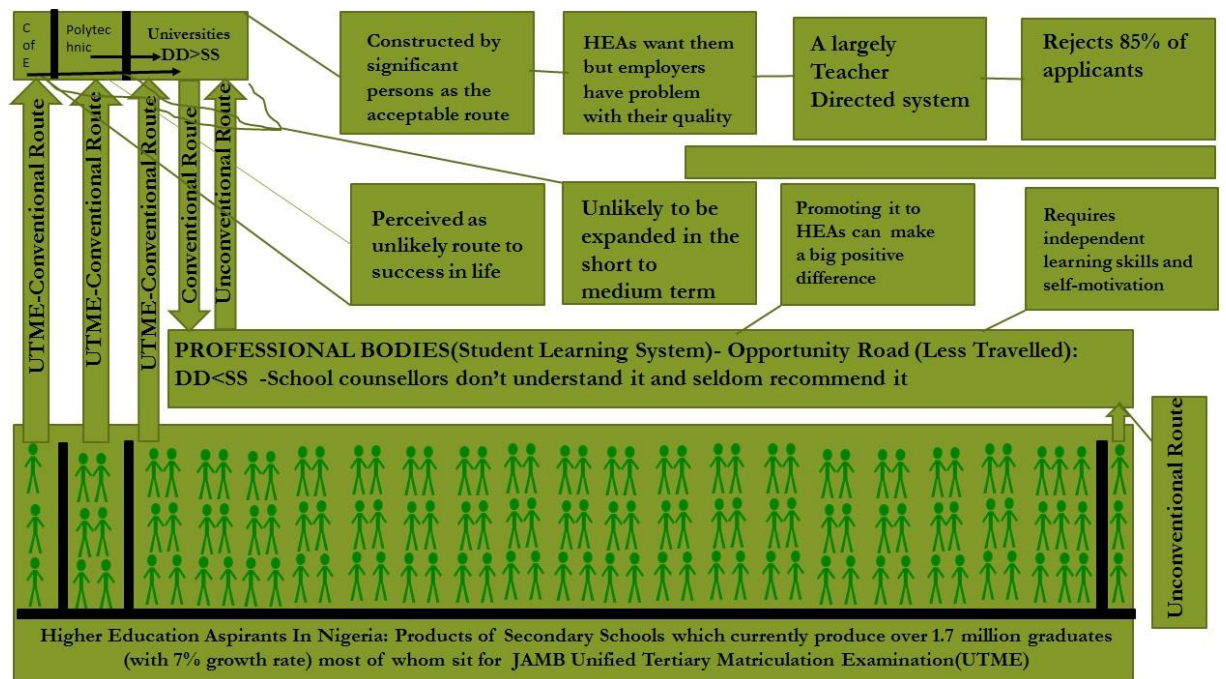
Since most higher education aspirants in Nigeria are in their teenage years, a period in the human life cycle when people are generally impressionable (Kreitner et al., 2002); they may be helped to revise the map with which they are searching for opportunities that would enable them to realise their higher education ambitions. Research indicates that a professionally packaged communication that reaches them through the authority figures in their lives may be of much help (Rogers, 2003). However, what strategies are they currently adopting to realise their aspirations in the face of these obstacles? The next section will attempt answers based on the data the study generated.

6.3 Career Strategies of Higher Education Aspirants in Nigeria

A variety of routes exist for access to higher education in Nigeria. As the arrows in Figure 6.9 suggest, these routes include professional bodies, which through their professional examinations, provide opportunities for their students to earn professional diplomas which even universities running relevant programmes accept as the equivalent of first degree and can use as the basis for admission into relevant postgraduate programmes.

Figure 6.9

Nuances of Higher Education Access in Nigeria



Source: Researcher’s Analysis of data provided by study respondents, 2015

As has been elaborated in other sections of this chapter, Figure 6.9 shows that the conventional route to higher education in Nigeria offers three alternatives all of which are accessible through success in UTME. The illustration here shows that universities are much more popular with higher education aspirants than polytechnics and colleges of education. Their popularity as the figure illustrates, has been influenced largely by the direct and indirect messages higher education aspirants receive from significant persons in their lives including parents, teachers, school counsellors and paradoxically, even employers who

complain of the poor quality of the graduates being produced by the Nigerian university system.

The Nigerian university system is part of the larger Nigerian education system which is mainly teacher-directed and less inclined to learner-centred education that can produce the kind of human capital employers would be happy to employ. The conventional higher education system in the country is unlikely to expand in the short to medium term as a result of resource constraints which the 2016 Federal Education budgetary provisions suggest (Oche, 2016). The unconventional route that professional bodies provide seems to offer opportunities many of those who may not be accommodated by the conventional system can take advantage of to realize their higher education ambitions. The professional examination system is elastic and can accommodate as many candidates as possess the minimum entry requirement for most of the examinations, which is the same Senior School Certificate (SSC) that the conventional system demands. This alternative will, however require those enrolling in it to possess independent learning skills and self-motivation which most of these candidates seem to lack currently.

The data provided by this study reveal that some graduates of professional bodies who desire a first degree from the university can enrol for top-up programmes to enable them achieve their academic ambition.

The registrar of one of the professional bodies told this researcher that:

Our diploma by any standard is the equivalent of a first degree. Some universities take it for Masters, Lagos State University takes it, Olabisi Onabanjo University takes it....

An official of another professional body who granted this researcher interview made similar remarks about his own professional body. He said:

We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ogun State University where they spend two years to get a degree. In Obafemi Awolowo University, with your Accounting Technician Scheme certificate (ATS- our junior professional examination), you start from 200 level. Most universities in Nigeria accept our finals for post graduate studies e.g. MBA.

While explaining a related issue to this researcher, the registrar of a different professional body disclosed that:

I am also a chartered accountant and I know that some people use their ATS for direct entry admission into the university. Some of them are chartered stockbrokers today; they didn't have to write JAMB.

Another registrar said:

Some of our products have gone abroad and used their certificates for further studies. We have an IT Assembly, a lady came from UK last year and even wants her institution to learn from us.

This researcher was provided similar information by officials of three other professional bodies. From one, this researcher heard that:

Our products start at 300 level when they finish our programme meaning that they do two years to complete their degree.

From another, the researcher heard that:

We have a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD)/Master's programme at the University of PortHarcourt, Ladoka Akintola University, and almost all the universities in the north as well as University of Glamorgan in the United Kingdom.

The other said that:

Those who became members of the institute and qualified without a first degree are admitted by universities for about one and a half years and get a first degree. Our Certificate in banking programme admits those with only school certificate who might have tried to secure admission through JAMB but didn't succeed.

According to this respondent, candidates prepare for the examinations of his professional body at:

Training Schools run by banks but accredited by us. There are also accredited tuition centres where people can study in the evenings or weekends.

Most other registrars made similar disclosures regarding how candidates prepare for their examinations. One of the registrars interviewed stated that:

We have MOUs with some universities e.g. Babcock University so their products leave university with two certificates- academic and professional. We examine them internally in two courses and that qualifies them for our membership if they pass.

Another registrar said that:

There is a linkage programme meaning that there is a Memorandum of Understanding between us and 27 tertiary institutions that gives undergraduates of those institutions membership of the institute right from 100 level and are monitored by us meaning that they write only 3 courses on graduation to become chartered. In some schools, students can graduate with both their degrees and our professional certification.

He added that there is an:

Academy route for graduates with non-banking degrees or those who studied in institutions that are not accredited.

Such graduates, according to him, are granted substantial exemptions and can generally complete the institute's professional programme and get licenced to practice the profession within a shorter period. All the other professional bodies that participated in this study have similar provisions.

This opportunity seems to be producing unintended consequences. With the exception of one of the professional bodies, all other professional bodies whose registrars granted an interview to this researcher complained of low enrolment for their examinations by secondary school graduates.

In formulating their strategy for access to higher education including the professional element, the evidence this study has thus far provided indicates that direct university admission is the popular route. A registrar of one of the professional bodies observed that:

... people just feel that they have to go to university....

His counterpart in another professional body told this researcher that:

We are going to be writing off about 30 million naira (foreign exchange rate at the time was about 200 naira to one British Pound) of books produced for foundation level students (those who start with Senior School Certificate), which have not been picked up because of low patronage. That's a legacy problem for us now, we never imagined people won't be writing exams at that level.

Yet another complained that even though they welcome applicants with Senior School Certificate (secondary school graduates):

... they don't come. All professional bodies are affected.

A senior official of another professional body confirmed this state of affairs in terms of the strategies young people are adopting for access to higher education but seemed to have an explanation for the situation. In his words:

People prefer to go through tertiary institutions before coming to us. Our system discriminates in favour of university graduates. Higher education aspirants having seen this scenario will not want to go to polytechnics.

Indeed, polytechnics, and colleges of education, as is the case with the professional bodies in the country, are shunned by most higher education aspirants in the country. Figure 6.9 reflects this poor take up of the places provided by these institutions for higher education. As Figure 6.2 shows, 97% of higher education applicants for the year 2015 who applied through JAMB for places indicated universities as their preferred options. According to the data, fewer than two out of every ten of them will be accepted (see Table 6.2). Notwithstanding this situation, some candidates for the 2016 JAMB UTME who participated in one of this study's focus group discussions asserted that:

JAMB is compulsory. There is no alternative to JAMB. University is the main thing. You want to talk when your friends are talking of their experiences in the university, nobody wants to go to polytechnic. Some people will consider professional exams depending on the kind of parents they have. The university life is critical....

This insistence is in spite of the anxiety they expressed in the course of the discussion to the effect that there is:

JAMB (UTME) fever, everybody has it. It's one big hurdle, one big mountain. We are afraid of failure and repetition of JAMB (UTME) exam.

The data in Table 6.9 show how 213 higher education aspirants who responded in a questionnaire confirm this focus.

Table 6.9

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' RANKING OF THEIR PREFERRED ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Route	Score (%)	Rank
Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination⁺	82	1
Study Abroad	79	2
GCE Advanced Level Examination	68	3
Professional Examination	58	4
Open University	51	5
Online Study	42	6

+The public examination written by higher education aspirants who are competing for the undergraduate places in the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria.

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Their top preferred routes to higher education are platforms that require full time studies in the university. As Figure 6.2 has already revealed, although JAMB UTME can give access to colleges of Education and Polytechnics, which are alternative higher education platforms, higher education aspirants in Nigeria shun them and insist on university. The data so far presented provide a fair idea of the reasoning that could be motivating this insistence.

Further illumination may be helpful. One of the questions this study sought answers for is:

How do higher education aspirants in Nigeria determine the route they choose for access to higher education?

In other words what goes into their calculations of what serves their best interest and what are the influences on the choices they make? The data already presented suggest that the perceived discrimination against graduates of institutions other than university is a dominant factor as is higher education aspirants' desire to meet societal expectations especially those of their peers. Striving to conform to peer expectations can be a compelling motivator of action during adolescence (Lickona, 1985). Table 6.10, however, shows that there may be some other salient factors.

Table 6.10

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDY PARTICIPANTS' CHOICE OF ROUTE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Factor	Score (%)	Rank
Ease of Passing Relevant Entrance Exam	85	1
Cost	63	2
Need to study Away from Home	62	3
Need to Study From Home	48	4
Need to Study Where Friends Are	37	5
Comments of People Around Them	37	6

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Higher education aspirants in Nigeria would appear to perceive professional examinations as difficult. The professional bodies themselves seem to also project that image for their examinations. Most of the registrars of the professional bodies who participated in this study stressed the importance they attach to the integrity of their examinations and seem to be coming to the conclusion that the current products of secondary schools in Nigeria lack the intellectual capacity to write such examinations successfully. They generally blame systemic flaws including poor quality of public education in the country for the situation. One of them made the point that:

Professional exams demand a lot; school certificate holders may struggle to pass the exams.

According to this respondent, the inability of secondary school graduates to pass public examinations with ease:

... cannot be discussed in isolation of our value system. There is need for national reorientation. You can imagine the damage corruption has done to our system. Take the example of common entrance exams; you will have 500 candidates but get there and find 5000 people in the environment. Each candidate has father, mother, brother and sister coming along.

A senior official of another professional body made similar remarks about the quality of their examinations and the challenge facing the public education system in Nigeria. He asserted that:

The process of our examination is not compromised in any way. This compares with academic programmes in Nigeria where people may procure certificates without competences to match them. What we are offering is not necessarily a certificate but knowledge of our profession. People don't come here to get certificate at the "due time". You get it when you earn it. There are many people teaching courses they don't know in the university.

He further disclosed that the professional body he works for has stopped admitting young people who have Senior School Certificate as their highest academic attainment for their examinations. In his words:

Higher National Diploma (HND) is now the minimum qualification for admission into the diploma program. Before, school certificate holders were accepted for the diploma program, the Council at some point believed that those coming with school certificate were not doing as well as expected. Practitioners have to be academically and intellectually equipped for practice. They perceived that those who started the program with school certificate were not coping as well as their counterparts from tertiary institutions. Coincidentally the enrolment at the level of school certificate holders was very low.

This professional body is not alone in this change. Officials of another professional body in an interview disclosed that:

Professional diploma entry qualification is now the National Diploma. We used to accept Senior School Certificate (SSC) but when we started seeking accreditation for our diploma we upgraded to National Diploma. This doesn't preclude us from considering SSC in future. We have a committee developing a product that will accommodate such people especially those in business without formal education.

Of the nine professional bodies that participated in this study, however, only two have stopped accepting those who have Senior School Certificate as their highest academic attainment for their professional diploma programmes. One of the seven bodies still accepting them is actively promoting their examinations to this category of people and has

many more students than all the other professional bodies combined. It accounts for about 8 out of every 10 students enrolled with the nine professional bodies that participated in this study (see Tables 6.7, and 6.8). The officials of most of the other professional bodies interviewed made reference to this professional body's high profile in Nigeria including the respect both employers and academic institutions have for them. The issue of poor intellectual capacity of secondary school graduates was not raised by any of them. This would suggest that there might be some things that they are doing which the other professional bodies are not and could learn to do. Some of these will be highlighted later in this discussion.

It needs to be acknowledged, however, that higher education aspirants in Nigeria do indeed seem to perceive writing professional examinations as an endeavour that is all work without fun and probably meant for tertiary institution graduates and undergraduates. One of the respondents in a focus group discussion indicated that candidates for professional examinations tend to be so focused on passing their examinations and earning professional credentials that they ignore their social life.

Similar comments were made in a different focus group discussion involving higher education aspirants in a middle class school with privileged infrastructure:

The exams are difficult. Most exams are difficult nowadays.

Some expressed concern about the core individual subjects they are offering:

We all have worries. Physics and Chemistry are not the easiest subjects. I just worry. I suspect something may go wrong. One may fail exam.

This would seem to suggest that their current educational experience has not been pleasurable and that there may be pedagogical concerns in the Nigerian education system that may have to be addressed if the phobia for examinations among young people in the country is to be mitigated. This researcher heard the following complaint during one of the focus group discussions:

Some old girls and counsellors come to mentor us. They think they are mentoring us but they are not, they talk academics, academics, read, read, read. Assignments, notes; we don't have weekends again, we even study on Saturdays. You could run mad if you keep responding to their pressures. They should give us some time for ourselves. We have this problem "downloading" our notes when we have the text

books- word for word. When we complain they don't listen, if they can add one more day to the week, they will do it. Sometimes there is no water (all boarding school); we wake up by 3 am. During classes some of us sleep.

One of them who had an opportunity to attend a promotional seminar by one of the professional bodies disclosed that:

I went because I wanted to help my brother with information; he is already in the university. It wasn't about myself.

Based on these statements, it could be argued that the idea of queuing up for direct access to university, even when the evidence indicates that it may be a frustrating experience, may be a case of young people sticking to the safety of the known in spite of the challenges associated with it. As it has been observed, there tends to be a "... conflict between the safety of the known and the adventure of the unknown. It is easy to stick with what you know, however unsatisfying..." (Webb et al., 1994:p183). Since professional bodies grant substantial exemptions to graduates of tertiary institutions, it may also be the calculation of secondary school graduates that the way to minimize the stress they perceive could come from preparing for professional examination, may be to finish university education before seeking professional certification. Similar thinking may also be influencing their reluctance to seek admission into polytechnics and colleges of education. Since they perceive that everyone who wants to be successful should be a university graduate (see Table 6.5), the way to minimize the number of years it will take for one to accomplish this, is probably to insist on direct admission to the university. The other routes may appear complicated to them and time consuming. Products that appear complex tend to attract low patronage no matter how innovative and helpful they may be (Rogers, 2003). Could there be some other factors influencing their insistence on direct university admission especially in comparison with professional examinations?

The data in Table 6.10 suggest that the financial implications of the options available for higher education carry substantial weight for the subjects in this study. This should not be surprising since Nigeria is a low-income country. The information in Table 6.10 also indicate that the desire to stay away from parents' close supervision may also be a push factor in their preference for programmes that will make them leave home. This is not surprising as the "... desire to be autonomous" (McGuiness, 1998:51) is known to be one of the features of adolescence. Enrolling for professional examinations may imply that they have to study

from home and continue to experience the strong influence of their parents in their career. The data resulting from this study indicate clearly that parents of the study participants are the top influencers of their career decisions (see Table 6.11).

Table 6.11

STUDY PARTICIPANTS’ IDENTIFIED INFLUENCERS OF THEIR CAREER DECISIONS

S/No	Career Influencers	Score (%)	Rank
1	Parents	88	1
2	Internet	73	2
3	Subject Teachers	62	3
4	Siblings	62	4
5	Religious Leaders	61	5
6	School Counsellors	59	6
7	Newspaper	50	7
8	Friends	50	8
9	Television	47	9
10	School Principal	46	10
11	Radio	36	11

Source: Researcher’s Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Brown (2008:74-75) relying on empirical evidence, recognized the great influence parents can have on their children. In Brown’s words:

Sometimes, teachers, clergy and other important adults in our lives may have helped to shape our thinking; however, parents and caregivers are by far the most influential. Family messages die hard. And many times, they’re very insidious. The messages become part of the fabric of our families. Until we can recognize and understand why and how they influence our lives, we just keep living by them and passing them down to the next generation.

Similar observations have been made by some practitioners (Webb et al., 1994:164) who serve children. According to them, parental influence if not moderated can inhibit young persons’ ability to realize their full potential. In their words:

Subtly, even subconsciously, parents tend to over-invest in their... child, prizing his achievements so highly that their own egos become attached to the child's accomplishments. They may see the child as satisfying their own hopes and dreams.

As Table 6.11 shows, the career strategies of higher education aspirants may be a product of a variety of influences including the Internet which as this study reveals, has become very strong and next to parents in terms of influence. Young people may not even be conscious of the bases for the decisions they take. Sometimes they may take responsibility for their decisions whereas all these influences may be subtly pushing them. As Myers (2002a:77) observed, "... often we don't know why we do what we do". The lesson in this is that:

We may like to think that we're individuals living out our own unique truth, but more often we're scripts written collectively by society, family, church, job, friends and traditions. Sometimes our life becomes a matter of simply playing the various roles for which we've been scripted... playing them out perfectly, in the right sequence, in full costume and mask (Kidd, 1990:56).

This featured in virtually all the focus group discussions in which some higher education aspirants in the participating schools contributed ideas. In one of the discussions the study participants (in the middle class public school) made the following comments in response to the question on how they arrived at the decision regarding what discipline to study and how they will access the institution that will offer the programme:

From within, my mum begged me not to study Neurosurgery but I still want something related to surgery to see all the things we talk about in biology.

Friends, teachers. I wanted to go for law but my brothers said I should not go because of my life (safety and security). I am the first girl.

I have a friend whose parents pushed her into science. She doesn't know what she wants to do. She's still very confused. She is very intelligent but doesn't have a clear idea of what she wants. She doesn't know what type of Engineering she wants to study.

I'm not saying I really know what I want to study but anything that has to do with helping people. I'm not really an open person, when I'm ready I'll sort it out.

In the lower economic class private school and in response to the same question, the following comments were made:

My decision; my parents, my friends, teachers, everybody around me. My parents matter to me most especially my mum.

In the middle class private school, some of the participants said:

Mechanical engineering– I have been opening and coupling things since childhood. I have a flair for Engineering. Mass Communication- I love watching Television.

My family wants to have a second lawyer but I don't want to study law. They read a lot and there is no money in it. Money is very important.

My dad is into communication consultancy.

Covenant university- my mum's idea.

Babcock University because I don't want to be free, I know my self- I watch movies and see horrible things.

University of Ibadan.

BYU in USA- little doubt from my family- the university allows age 17 and above.

London metropolitan university if I am studying abroad. MY mum wants to keep an eye on me but I'm not a baby. I intend to get scholarship abroad.

I will write UTME.

I will write A' level.

I will write IGCSE.

The influences impacting on the career decisions of higher education aspirants in Nigeria, many of which may not be providing them accurate information, may be responsible for the perceived scarcity of higher education spaces in the country. Twist (Twist, 2003:47) argues that:

Scarcity is a lie. Independent of any system of assumptions, opinions, and beliefs from which we view the world as a place where we are in constant danger of having our needs unmet.

Twist (2003) argues that most of the time, the problem of scarcity can be addressed by an objective re-examination of what we have within. Wearing a different lens, we may find what we could not find with the old and discarded lens. For example, the difficult

experiences that young people go through in Nigeria as they try to benefit from higher education may be mitigated by an effective counselling service. In the absence of guidance and support, young people may not fulfil their potential (Cowie and Wallace, 2000). The lack of awareness that seems to surround the opportunities that professional bodies provide for access to higher education may not be unconnected with the quality of counselling service available in schools and the effort that professional bodies put into promoting themselves to higher education aspirants. In the next section, the discussion draws on the study's data to examine these issues.

6.4 Extent of Higher Education Aspirants' Awareness of Professional Bodies in Nigeria

To what extent are higher education aspirants in Nigeria aware that professional examinations are available as an alternative route to higher education?

This is one of the questions this study set out to provide answers for. Answers were sought from the higher education aspirants through both questionnaires and focus group discussions involving the study participants. The respondents were required to "mark X in the appropriate box to indicate which of the following is a route through which a senior school certificate holder can get to higher education" (see Appendix 10)

Table 6.12

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Total Number of Questionnaire Respondents: 213

It is a Route to Higher Education	Frequency of Yes	% of Total	Rank
JAMB UTME	165	77	1
Study Abroad	135	63	2
GCE A' Level Examination	123	58	3
Professional Examination	108	51	4
Open University	92	43	5
ONLINE STUDY	86	40	6

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Table 6.12 indicates that about half of the respondents identified professional examination as a route to higher education. It ranks number four among the six items presented them and enjoyed higher recognition than the Open University and Online Study. JAMB UTME which is a direct university route in Nigeria occupies the top rank, with Study Abroad, and GCE A' Level Examination also performing better than Professional Examination. To check for consistency in the respondents' answers, one of the questions required them to "mark X in the appropriate box to indicate which of the following **is not** a route through which a senior school certificate holder can get to higher education" (see Appendix 10). Table 6.13 provides a picture that is similar to the data in Table 6.12 in terms of the respondents' awareness of the routes to higher education.

Table 6.13

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' NONACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Total Number of Questionnaire Respondents: 213

It is <i>Not</i> a Route to Higher Education	Frequency of Yes	% of Total	Rank
ONLINE STUDY	73	34	1
Professional Examination	54	25	2
Open University	50	23	3
Study Abroad	36	17	4
JAMB UTME	31	15	5
A' Level Examination	27	13	6

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

The top three routes in Table 6.12 are the last three routes in Figure 6.13. Online study that has the lowest rank in Table 6.12 occupies the top rank in Table 6.13. The JAMB UTME route that appears to be popular with the study participants did not seem to be well understood by all the study participants. This may seem counter intuitive. One of the participants in a focus group discussion made the following comment:

I don't know how to go about writing JAMB and Post JAMB. I'm trying to understand things about catchment area. I'm concerned about the financial aspect; higher education is not like secondary school.

This may partly explain why some of the respondents did not acknowledge it as a route to higher education. The respondents who are committed to studying abroad because their parents can afford it might have also been influenced by that to disregard JAMB UTME as a route to higher education

Table 6.13 also reveals that one quarter of the respondents did not acknowledge Professional Examination as a route to higher education. According to the data in Table 6.12, one would expect about half of the respondents to indicate that Professional Examination is not a route to higher education, not just one quarter of them. The lack of understanding of how secondary school graduates can access higher education through this route may be partly responsible. The data that the focus group discussions, involving some of the higher education aspirants provided, point in this direction. Some of the participants made comments to the effect that:

I know about piloting but don't know about the professional bodies in Nigeria.

I know about the accounting professional body; most others, no.

I didn't really know anything about them.

I didn't know

I don't know much about it.

I really don't understand these professional examinations.

The one I know of very well is the accounting professional body.

Sounds good but I do not know how to go about it. I will consider it if I know how to go about it.

No, our counsellor has never provided information.

Their school counsellors did not seem to be better informed on professional examinations than them. None of the three full-time school counsellors interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of professional examinations as a route to higher education. It would appear that some of them perceive it as a postgraduate programme which recent graduates from secondary schools are not allowed to enrol for. One of them told this researcher that:

To me, I think it is after first degree. Professional training is to add to your academic training. I'm not aware that young people can start professional exams with O' level. I don't encourage my students to go that way.

In response to the question: Do your students think that they can have anything to do with professional bodies at this stage of their career development?, this counsellor stated:

I don't think they are thinking of professional bodies now. They don't talk about it. Some of them are, however, talking about the accounting professional body. But they rarely talk about professional exams.

This interviewee made the following closing remarks:

Many people are not aware of professional exams, that's the truth. It's only after people have gone to university that they become aware of this.

This interviewee's counterpart in another school revealed that:

I know of ICAN (Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria), COREN for engineers, insurance whatever. As a teacher, I know of our own now- Teachers' Registration Council. The problem we have in Nigeria is that we don't know and some of us don't want to know. When JAMB jams them they will now start researching. Will the professional bodies take them as they finish secondary school at 15, 16 years? There is degree mentality in Nigeria, it must be university. It must be University of Lagos. This is why people will do JAMB three times. We don't have enough universities except now that private universities are coming up. Some people will say polytechnic, God forbid.

This respondent volunteered the following information when this researcher asked for any further information that the respondent considered relevant to the subject of the study:

Many of them will have their Senior School Certificate but will not pass JAMB. Everybody is looking for a white-collar job. If you haven't gone to university, you are not educated. Anyhow you must get there. Even if you are packing shit (faeces) in the street you must be a graduate to pack that shit. Degree holders are favoured in employment. Some leave polytechnic after one year and go to university.

One of the counsellors seemed to have a fair idea of the professional examination system although she demonstrated understanding of only how the United Kingdom Professional Accounting body conducts its programmes. In the counsellor's words:

We have equipped them (students of the school) – given them avenues by which they can reach them (professional bodies). Tuition houses can prepare them for such exams as ACCA and other accounting exams. We have given them information. The tuition houses give them information on cost etcetera. My son is doing that now. He is

an accountant. He is now going in to do his professional. There is apprenticeship scheme. I am telling you the one I know.

The revelation that the counsellor's son is an Accountant seems to suggest that he is already a university graduate and undertaking the professional examination programme as a postgraduate course. In a focus group discussion, some respondents from the school where this counsellor works made comments such as:

I don't know much about it.

I didn't know, sounds good but I do not know how to go about it. I will consider it if I know how to go about it.

No, our counsellor has never provided information.

One of them revealed benefitting from a seminar organized outside their school by *Super professional body*. The respondent described the experience as follows:

Super Professional Body has invited some of us to a seminar outside our school where they talked about the benefits of their exams. Not up to 15% of SS3 students were selected to participate; most of them prefects. I am happy I went. They gave us drinks and souvenirs. I discovered when I came back that people didn't know about it. So I educated them.

The counsellor of the school was probably trying to make a good impression, being a public servant in a state school where workers are generally disallowed from speaking to outsiders about their work. The process of obtaining permission to include the school where this counsellor works in this study was the most bureaucratic of all the institutions involved. This counsellor did not appear to have an office where professional counselling service could be offered students of the school. She attended to this researcher either under a tree, the Vice Principal's office, in a classroom or in another colleague's office. In answer to the question:

Do you think you have enough time and other resources to access and provide adequate career information to the students in your school?, the counsellor's answer was:

No, no; there are challenges. I am supposed to have some equipment. No recorder for information that can help me to help the kids.

This counsellor serves a student population of 761 with 174 in the graduating class. The counsellor has no assistant. When asked about the state of counselling in Nigeria, this counsellor said:

Unity schools (Federal Government Secondary schools) is it when it comes to counselling.

Indeed, one of such schools that participated in this study had six counsellors who did counselling full time and had no teaching roles. They, however, had more students to serve. The school had 416 students in the graduating class. The Head of counselling in the school who granted this researcher interviewed indicated that their student population was over two thousand. She could not provide the precise number because of the discouraging bureaucratic procedure involved in obtaining such data. With respect to their functions, she said:

In unity schools, counsellors don't teach. We are 6 but one is retiring this year- 5 now. We are meant to be everywhere- academic issues, vocational issues; students must be properly guided. Career issues, social issues, we help the weak ones.

She was, however, among the interviewees who demonstrated poor understanding of how the professional examination system works and the one who among other comments said that:

The problem we have in Nigeria is that we don't know and some of us don't want to know.

Their counterpart in a middle class private school admitted that there was significant room for improvement in counselling in Nigeria. In the counsellor's words:

Counselling is not yet developed in Nigeria. We are two counsellors here; my colleague teaches one subject. Both of us studied counselling. I have a master's degree; she has a first degree. In years past people didn't know about counselling. Some schools still don't have counsellors. The understanding of counselling is not much. Most schools have counsellors now but some don't have freedom to do their job. We have Counselling Association of Nigeria. I joined this school in 1997. My principal didn't know how important counselling was until they employed me. They look at counselling from afar in Nigeria. Not much time is available for interaction with the children because of their timetable. Some parents used to come here to confront me on the counsel I give to their children. They insist on some subjects, contrary to my advice. When they insist, I allow but they eventually discover I was right.

The school where this counsellor serves has a student population of 799 with 106 of them in the graduating class. As this counsellor indicated, they are two who play counselling roles in the school with the assistant also teaching a subject.

Is information on professional examinations as alternative route to higher education provided higher education aspirants in Nigeria by school counsellors?

This was one of the questions this study set out to answer. The data so far provided do not suggest that in the schools studied significant help is reaching higher education aspirants from their school counsellors. Both the students and the counsellors have confirmed that the situation on this at the time of this study left much to be desired.

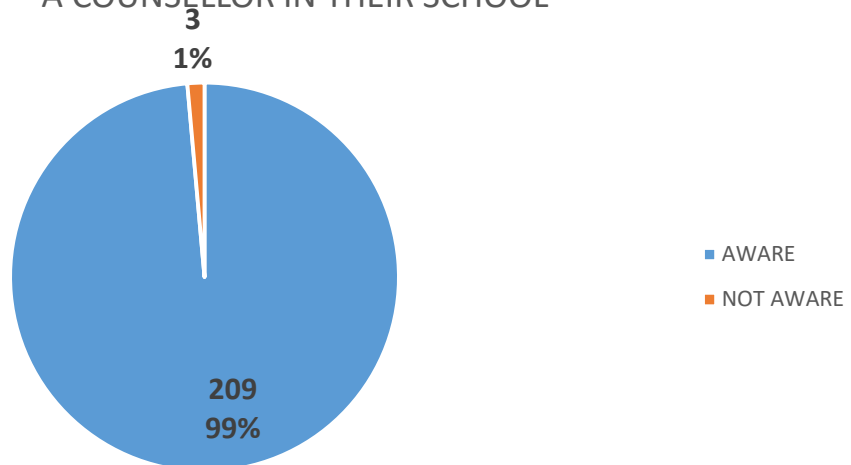
The lower economic class private school that participated in the study was the only exception. Even though they did not have a professional counsellor, most student respondents from the school demonstrated awareness of the professional examination system. As observed earlier in this discussion, the experience the proprietor of the school has had with one of the professional bodies seems to have impacted positively on the awareness level of the students. Some of the higher education aspirants from this school who participated in a focus group discussion this researcher conducted in the school revealed that:

*The principal has discussed professional exams with us before.
It was discussed in our Senior Secondary 2.
It was discussed by our Counsellor; our proprietor plays the role of Counsellor.*

Of the study's 213 questionnaire respondents, only 20 were from this school and they were all members of the graduating class.

The limited awareness of professional examinations in most of the schools studied might not have anything to do with whether or not the higher education aspirants knew that their school had counsellors. Figure 6.10 indicates that almost all of the respondents knew that their schools had counsellors.

Figure 6.10
STUDY PARTICIPANTS AWARENESS OF THE AVAILABILITY OF
A COUNSELLOR IN THEIR SCHOOL



Source: Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

As the results of a previous study (Ogudoro, 2009) have suggested, the quality of counselling service available to higher education aspirants may be an issue that needs to be examined by relevant education agencies in Nigeria. It may be impossible to exaggerate the value of professional counselling service in the school system. This is especially so in environments where people face serious economic challenges (Jones, 1979). As Hough (2014:14) has observed, "... the counselling relationship is a special form of communication..." involving two or more people in need and managed by professionals who use their listening and other relevant skills to ensure that their clients interpret their circumstances and opportunities in ways that promote their wellbeing. Hough further argues that what makes professional counselling very helpful is the probability that other significant persons in the lives of people including parents and teachers may not, as a result of lack of skill, provide the enabling environment for individuals to explore their situations and develop effective strategies for resolving the problems confronting them.

Professional counselling tends to fill that gap in the lives of young people by helping them to understand the opportunities that are available to them in the systems within which they function. It is, however, important that people who have the responsibility to provide counselling service in the school system possess the skills that can enable them to provide the help young people may need to manage their career, social, physical, and emotional challenges well. The right infrastructure for effective deployment of the counselling service

should also be provided and the service promoted to students so that they understand that it is there to help them. Regular communication audit may be helpful in the school system to guarantee that students understand the purposes the various services within the system are meant to deliver. As Raymond (1985:5-6) has observed, “if pupils do not construe what the school is offering them in the manner in which it was intended, then the school is failing to communicate with its consumers, and pupils could well turn out to be casualties of the system”. The incongruence in perception of the counselling service between one of the counsellors who granted this researcher interview and some students of the school where the counsellor is currently serving may not encourage students to utilize the service. People who offer services that carry significant social implications should realise that “in ... consumer behaviour, perceptions are reality...” (Foxall et al., 1998:p63).

The focus group discussion that was conducted in another school also revealed that the counselling service was not popular with students of the school. This was one of the “Unity Schools” which one of the study’s respondents suggested had good counselling systems in Nigeria. Most of the higher education aspirants from the school who participated in the focus group discussion were critical of the quality of relationship they had with the counselling service in the school. It may be helpful for counsellors to realise that good intentions alone are not adequate for effective service promotion. The contact they make with students should be of a quality that can present them as friendly and helpful. One aspect of their conduct may influence the perception students have of the entire service. It is now known that:

“... perceptions about contacts (type, frequency and so on) often vary significantly from actual attributes, and are often subject to a halo effect. This effect has a sliding scale – the better a consumer’s relationship with you, the more positive his or her perception of each contact” (Stone et al., 2000:p31).

The difference in the age of the counsellors interviewed and the students they have been employed to serve may carry implications for the willingness of the students to approach them for help. Taking account of the counsellors’ academic credentials and work experience, that difference is likely to be significant. They all had a minimum of Master’s degree. Their work experience ranged from 19 to 25 years. Refresher training on adolescents counselling and communication may help to minimize the negative implications this age difference may carry for the counsellor-counselled relationship. Such training can help them understand the

critical place of perception management in getting people to accept ideas, products and services. Consumers are concerned not only about the functionality of what they are being offered but also about several other variables including the perceived statement the product or service may make on the consumer's intellectual and problem solving ability as well as social status (Hochberg, 1978). This would suggest that consumers' preferences are influenced not only by the practical problems what they buy can solve but also by what they consider their association with a product can tell of their competence. This concern for how one is perceived and the relevance of what one consumes for one's image may be at its peak during adolescence when social approval especially from peers tends to be a major factor (Lickona, 1985). The confessions of the counsellors interviewed in this study regarding the limited knowledge they had of professional examinations should be of interest to people who design training programmes for counsellors in Nigeria.

It could be argued that although such training should be championed by the employers of school counsellors, other stakeholders such as professional bodies who have services the counsellors can promote to young people could also influence the course content. Through this, they can ensure that school counsellors are well informed on how professional examinations can serve as alternative route to higher education in Nigeria. It might be within their means to organize seminars and workshops as well as symposia where their relevance to the career journeys of young people is explained. Higher education aspirants in schools where there are no professional counsellors may be in an even more difficult situation. The lower economic class secondary school that participated in this study had no professional counsellor. The school principal interviewed used the following words to confirm this:

I am... the principal of this school, I administer the day to day running of the school, both academically and administratively. I play the role of counsellor. We don't have a counsellor.

He had in response to a different question called this researcher's attention to the kind of training he had received. According to him:

I am a Technologist.

The knowledge that students of the school had about professional examinations seemed to have happened by chance. According to the school principal:

I got to know through my proprietor who did a professional exam in Public Relations recently. I used to drive him to the school. Aside from that, we have not really been exposed to professional exams before now.

Students of the school who participated in the focus group discussion corroborated the school principal's revelations by their comments but did not seem to be sure of who played the role of counsellor in the school; that is, the proprietor or the school principal. They made comments such as:

The principal has discussed professional exams with us before. It was discussed in our Senior Secondary 2. It was discussed by our Counsellor. Our proprietor plays the role of Counsellor.

The other aspects of their lives that demand professional counselling may be suffering. One of the professional counsellors told this researcher that their job encompassed:

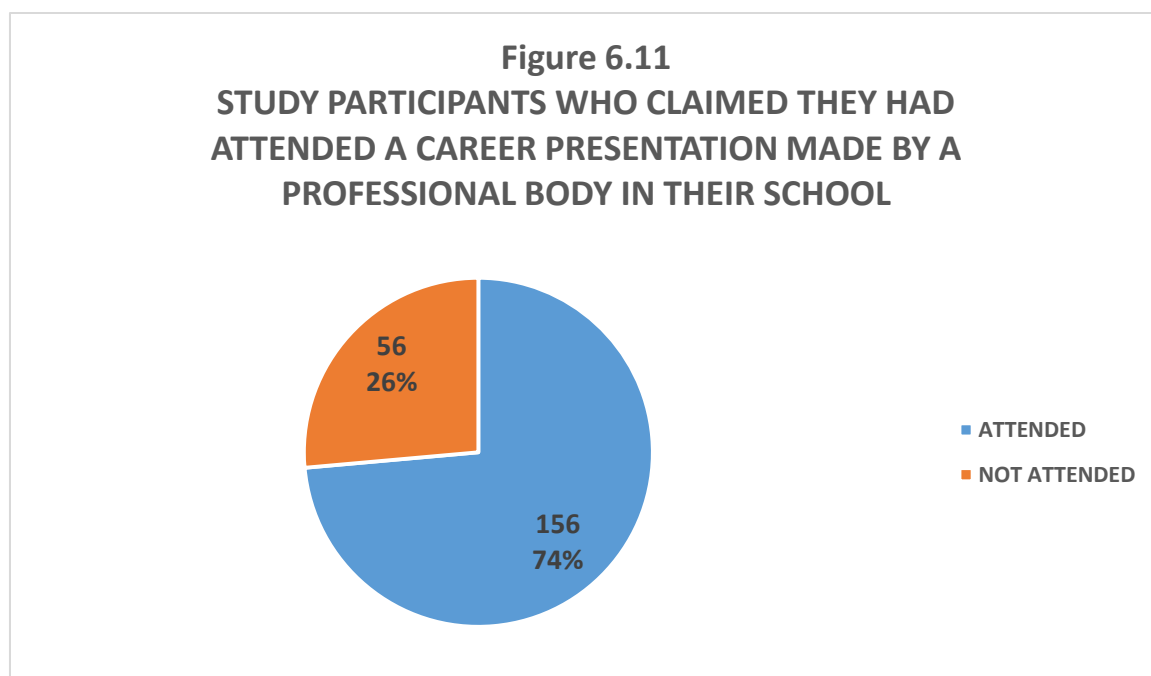
Education (academics), psychological, referral, vocational, orientation, placement.

It is uncertain how much help the students of the lower socioeconomic class private school are receiving in those areas in the absence of a professional guidance and counselling service. One also wonders the extent to which they can realize the dreams motivating their interest in higher education in the absence of a professional counselling service. As reported earlier in this thesis, those who participated in the focus group discussion had indicated their conviction in the instrumentality of higher education to successful career journeys. This contrasts with the reported reality that the majority of people in Europe and North America with such convictions in recent years do not seem to be experiencing fulfilment of their dreams (Brown et al., 2011). The situation in Nigeria, this study's case country may not be better. The case of those starting from a position of disadvantage may be even worse. As Hamblin (1993:200) has noted "counselling skills related to the vocational field will be concerned with practical activities which encourage self-knowledge and informed decision-making". Having knowledge of professional examinations as a route to higher education may be helpful but putting it in the context of a career strategy may still require professional counselling.

School counsellors may not be able to promote what they do not understand and their employers may lack the means to put them through relevant training. If they do not understand the professional examination system, it may not be logical to expect higher

education aspirants who pass through the schools where they serve, to appreciate how writing professional examinations can be a useful element of their career strategies. It could therefore be argued that professional bodies in Nigeria need to improve the direct promotion of their services to higher education aspirants. Consumer awareness and understanding can be improved through deliberate promotion (Stone et al., 2000). The use of Public Relations, Sales Promotion, and Advertising techniques among others in pursuit of such objectives have been suggested by Fill (2013).

The data provided by this study indicate that most of the professional bodies in Nigeria have performed poorly in this regard. As Figure 6.11 reveals, more than 7 out of every 10 respondents to this study's questionnaire informed this researcher that they had not benefitted from any career presentation made by a professional body in their school.



Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

The situation may be worse than Figure 6.11 presents. The respondents to this study's questionnaire seemed to have difficulty distinguishing between the individual practitioners who spoke at the events their schools organized and the professional bodies such speakers probably belong to. The interviews with some of the counsellors and the focus group discussions involving some higher education aspirants, revealed that most of the career seminars the respondents attended in their schools were addressed by individual professionals who discussed their career experiences at special events of those schools but not as representatives of professional bodies.

One of the questions this researcher posed to the school counsellors who participated in the study was:

Do professional bodies come here to educate your students on what they do including the exams they conduct? In response, one of the counsellors said:

No, though we once invited one of them and they came as a group. It should be encouraged for students should not waste time when such opportunities exist.

The response this researcher got from another counsellor was:

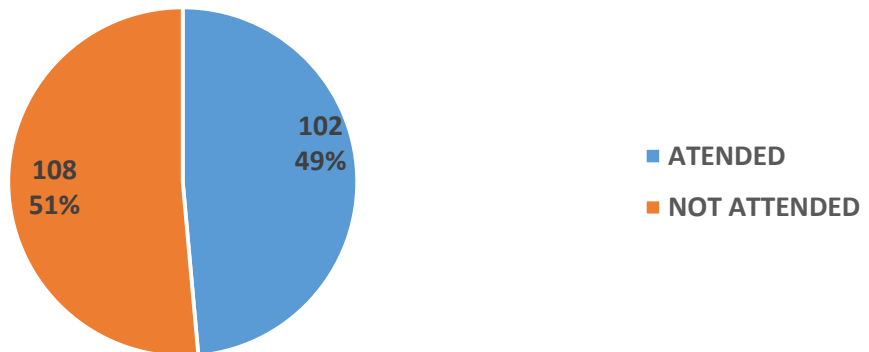
No, we have only people who come to tell the students to write foreign exams.

The counsellor in the state public school did not seem to have different experience although she did not think professional bodies should be blamed for not visiting schools to promote their examinations. In her words:

*No, **Super Professional body** organized seminar somewhere and invited us. It is cumbersome for them to go from school to school.*

A student in this counsellor's school had intimated this researcher of that development during a focus group discussion. This student was quoted earlier in this discussion as having enjoyed the refreshment and souvenir provided at the talk. She had confirmed that most participants from her school were prefects and were in the minority in terms of population of the graduating class. They were also among the top performers in the class in terms of academic achievement. This seems to reflect society's tendency to give more opportunities to people already in positions of advantage (Gladwell, 2008). By the student's testimony, she briefed some of her school-mates regarding the information she got from the seminar. This, she had to do when she discovered that her mates who were not nominated for the seminar were ignorant of the information she had collected from the talk. About half of the higher education aspirants who responded to this study's questionnaire indicated that they had attended similar talks (see Figure 6.12).

Figure 6.12
STUDY PARTICIPANTS WHO CLAIMED THEY HAD
ATTENDED A CAREER PRESENTATION (OUTSIDE THEIR
SCHOOL) MADE BY A PROFESSIONAL BODY



Source: Data provided by study respondents, 2015

This researcher could not verify whether the respondents in this case confused presentations made by individual practitioners with career talks presented by professional bodies as promotional efforts of their organizations. As indicated earlier, this researcher became aware of this confusion during the focus group discussions. This was not anticipated. That this was revealed in the focus group discussion may be indicative of the wisdom in triangulation as a data collection strategy. In this instance, the study questionnaire's inability to interrogate the respondents deeply was compensated for by the qualitative data that emerged from the focus group discussions and the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Super Professional Body had prominent mention across the interviews and focus group discussions conducted during the study. Registrars of most of the professional bodies interviewed used them as reference point in terms of recognition, membership size and growth rate as well as financial capacity. This researcher heard the following comments from different Registrars of professional bodies:

What we do is like what Super Professional body does.

Super Professional Body is awash with cash because of large student population.

For our professional examinations, quality has not diminished; Super Professional Body is in a similar situation. I don't think there are any exams that can compare to

the quality of our examinations and the examinations of the Super Professional Body. That's one of the greatest strengths of the top Professional bodies in Nigeria.

We are relevant. This is in the area of standards. Super Professional Body is doing very well and other institutes.

*Our products will deliver better than university graduates; just perception problem. **Average Professional Body** is luckier because it's specific. The same applies to the **Super Professional Body**. Holders of their professional credential are promoted automatically. They are luckier.*

This was also the professional body mentioned the most by the school counsellors and higher education aspirants who participated in the study. As highlighted earlier, 6 professional bodies that provided this researcher student membership data collectively had 389,618 students. **Super Professional Body** had 305,290 students, representing about 8 out of every 10 of that number. They appeared more visible than the other professional bodies in the country. Although the comparative effectiveness of professional bodies in Nigeria in pursuing their mandates lies outside the scope of this study, the data collected in the course of this study suggest that this professional body is doing more work in terms of stakeholder engagement than every other professional body that participated in the study. This raises the question whether all their achievements can be attributed to luck as the Registrar of a different professional body who participated in this study had suggested.

Super Professional Body has a unit that focuses on students' affairs. Two managers run the unit; they are assisted by several other staff. These managers were directed by the Registrar of the Institute to grant this researcher interview, which was conducted in a conference hall at the headquarters annex of the institute, a purpose-built facility. This was the most pleasing experience this researcher had in terms of physical space for interviewer-interviewee(s) interaction. The two managers were joined by an academic with a doctorate degree from one of the most prominent universities in Nigeria. This academic's participation in the study was also on the directive of the Institute's Registrar. The academic was on sabbatical leave at the institute. The academic's post at the institute during this period was Head of Research. This academic indicated in the course of the group interview that the

experience he had gathered at the institute had equipped him for better performance on his return to academia. In his words:

The world now is about professionalism although nothing good comes easy. The setting in the university is purely academic. The setting at Super Professional Body is different. When I go back to the classroom I will inject what I have learnt from here. When I go back I will invite some people as guest lecturers. This professional body has done us a world of good by allowing me to come here. I didn't carry myself as a professor when I came here. The two sides must interact.

The interviewees who spoke on behalf of this institute considered the institute and the members reputable and respectable. According to them:

As an accountant you can function in any discipline. As an accountant there are various opportunities. Being an accountant opens the door. You can also be on your own. The training covers all areas. We give our students case studies to proffer solutions. Chartered accountants are captains of industries. Some are governors. The next governor of Lagos State is likely to be a chartered accountant, a member of the institute (the candidate did win the election and is the current Governor of the State). Sometimes they make a lot of difference. We regulate the accounting profession, determine standards, and review it to meet best global practice. This body is a member of international federation of accountants. We train members to keep them up to date. We educate them on new regulations. After university, you still have to come to this professional body because of the quantum of knowledge you need. We have over 40 district societies including in the UK and USA. People outside Nigeria see the presentations and quality of work we do. Cameroon has enlisted our services for accounting exams. World Bank is sponsoring us in some respect because we play a leadership role in Africa.

What strategies has this professional body adopted to promote their examinations to young people?

The interviewees responded with the following comments:

The institute started a programme last year titled "catch them young". We go to sensitize secondary school students on our programmes. It's like a seminar. We bring experienced chartered accountants to talk to them about their lives. A lot of students are coming on board. We started this programme in February, 2014. Before now people didn't know enough about us. The district societies help us. There is still room for improvement. There are a lot of people who still do not know about this opportunity. We still have to do more publicity. Best students in different disciplines

get scholarships to write our examinations. We do quiz competitions in secondary schools and give awards. This is to encourage them that professionalism is the way to go. There is no environment that will not need professionals. Some young people avoid our examinations because they are afraid of the rigor. There is need for balance- academic and professional.

Their observation about why some young people avoid their examination reflects one of the findings of this study as presented in Table 6.10. **“Ease of Passing Relevant Entrance Exam”** was top on a list of factors influencing the career strategies of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study. This ranked higher than cost and across all the participating schools including the lower economic class private secondary school. As observed elsewhere in this chapter, phobia for examinations seems to be a major issue in the Nigerian education system. Successful promotion of professional examinations to higher education aspirants may require finding a way to enhance their self-efficacy and self-concept. Hamblin (1993:19) maintains that “... self-concept can be seen as our attitude to ourselves which incorporates more or less accurate evaluations”. The teaching and learning practice currently in place in the Nigerian education system may be too teacher-directed to help students acquire the independent learning skills successful writing of professional examinations may demand.

The officials of professional bodies interviewed emphasized the high standard and integrity of their examinations and indicated that they work hard to guarantee them. One of them whose complaint about the poor quality of secondary school graduates in Nigeria has already been documented in this thesis asserted that the diploma of his professional body was awarded to deserving individuals who had worked hard and acquired appropriate level of skill. He compared their disposition to the practice in Nigerian universities where, according to him, individuals could be awarded certificates they did not merit.

Most of the officials of professional bodies who granted this researcher interview underscored the critical place of ethics in their programmes and practice and indicated that they had tribunals that punished members who engaged in unethical conduct. A Registrar of another professional body among other comments told this researcher that:

Professionalism is the way to go even though we are not yet giving it the right premium. If Ethics are observed in this country, corruption and all the vices will disappear. If today I have the opportunity to rule this country, that’s one thing I will do. The day the body says you can’t just practice, you lose your daily bread. You must

live above board. A professional- any professional understands why he must practice ethically. It brings about a good society. If government promotes professionalism, there will be consequences and impunity will disappear. We have laws and policies but they are not implemented. Professionalism will fix that. We just need to put in place institutions that will guarantee that our laws are implemented. For laws, this country is highly endowed. Again I want to emphasize if this country will give professionalism its rightful place in the scheme of things most of our vices will disappear.

Although the phobia for examinations may be discouraging some young people from enrolling for professional examinations, the lack of knowledge and understanding regarding how this may be a route to higher education remains a possible hindrance to increase in patronage of such examinations in Nigeria. The comments of both the counsellors and higher education aspirants who participated in this study suggest that there is significant room for improvement in terms of promotion of such examinations. According to the study's data the experience of Super Professional Body provided thus far suggest that the adoption of the promotional strategies they are using by other professional bodies may see a significant improvement in the growth of student membership of those professional bodies. As already documented, this researcher heard from the officials of the Super Professional Body interviewed that their student population is larger now than it was before they embarked on the promotional campaign that they discussed with this researcher. Their examinations are reputed to be one of the toughest professional examinations in Nigeria. Their student population has continued to increase in spite of this. Their relatively high visibility and the reward candidates get from writing their examinations successfully may be among the factors drawing some higher education aspirants in their direction. The data suggest that of all the professional bodies that participated in this study, they are the only ones with the conviction that promoting their examinations to secondary school students would encourage them to enrol for the examinations. As already indicated, the body is funding a unit that promotes their examinations to young people. Members of that unit seem to be putting significant effort into using interpersonal channels of communication to reach this segment of the society.

Some other professional bodies are beginning to take some steps to promote their programmes to young people. Some of them are, however, targeting young people who are

already in tertiary institutions. As indicated earlier in this chapter most of the professional bodies that participated in this study have memoranda of understanding (MoU) with various universities in Nigeria to enable students of those schools to get awarded professional certifications alongside their tertiary institution degrees and diplomas. The registrar of one of the professional bodies used the following words to confirm this arrangement as it applies to his institute:

There is a linkage programme meaning that there is an MoU (27 tertiary institutions) that gives undergraduates membership of the institute right from 100 level and are monitored by us meaning that they write only 3 courses on graduation to become chartered. In some schools, students can graduate with both their degrees and our professional certification.

These young people remain in the minority in Nigeria given the large numbers of higher education aspirants whose applications for places in the conventional higher educational institutions are rejected annually. As indicated in Table 6.2, the national rejection rate of applications for higher education in the country currently stands at 85%. One of the professional bodies is investing effort into using the mass media to create awareness about their programmes. The registrar of this professional body stated that:

We go to radio stations to have programmes in the last 2, 3 years. People phone in and we provide information. We are working with an organization to do a Television programme that will run for 13 weeks at a stretch so that people can know more about our profession. We are looking for sponsors.

This profession may have some similarities with the profession Super Professional Body regulates especially in terms of the broad range of skills candidates are expected to acquire while studying for the professional examinations. The registrar of this professional body indicated that:

Ours is a total profession. We provide broad knowledge; a whole lot of things that make you a total person. Universities teach theories. We teach practicals. I did two years in the University for Master's degree, it doesn't compare with what we do here. We go deep.

This registrar, however, used the following words to complain about the low patronage of their examinations:

We have fewer than 200 out of almost 4000 registered students writing our exams.

However, the focus on the use of the mass media such as radio and television for the promotion of the institute's programmes may be problematic. The data this study has produced would suggest that they are not reaching their target audience. Television and radio are among the three least influencers of the career decisions of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study. They ranked Television and radio 9 and 11 respectively on a list of 11 factors that influence their career decisions (see Table 6.11). Internet ranked number 2 on the list but ranked higher than all other media on the list of factors influencing their career decisions. We are living in the era of smart phones which young people seem to use a lot. Even the higher education aspirants in the lower economic class secondary school who participated in the focus group discussion this researcher conducted confirmed that they all have phones, which they use to browse the internet for information they need for their assignments. They indicated that they use cyber cafes as an alternative sometimes.

A switch from the traditional mass media to new media for the purpose of promoting professional examinations may yield better dividends. Fill (2013:646) has indicated that the new media are "better at prompting customer action" and that the traditional mass media are "less effective for calling to action...."

This registrar also informed this researcher that:

We have collaborative arrangements with universities for example Covenant University and Babcock University, Ife and Bells Universities so that when their products are coming out they have two certificates.

This registrar indicated that the newly established "Young Persons Unit" of his institute manages those arrangements among other functions.

Professional bodies that are emphasizing such arrangements may produce unintended consequences. Higher education aspirants in Nigeria may be getting the signal that going through higher education in a conventional tertiary institution is a stress-free route to obtaining professional certifications. This is likely to be so in a country where the revelations in this study indicate that the easiest route to acquiring academic credentials may be the most popular route for higher education aspirants (see Table 6.10). Even this registrar seems

to be familiar with this disposition of young people in Nigeria but he does not seem to be discerning the right message from it. According to him:

They don't want to write exams. They take the easier route of using their degree and 5 years' experience to get associate membership of our institute.

The registrar of a different professional body confirmed that they have also established a unit with responsibility to promote their programmes to young people. According to him:

*WE now have a 'catch them young' drive. **We have started from tertiary institutions.***

Super Professional Body may be in a position to help other professional bodies use their young persons' units to achieve significant student membership growth rate. Whereas their young persons' unit is targeting higher education aspirants in secondary schools and achieving the desired results, other profession bodies are targeting higher education students probably on the assumption that such people will appreciate their programmes better. The evidence that this study has provided would seem to suggest that Super Professional Body's strategy is a more helpful strategy for growing student membership and promoting professional examinations to higher education aspirants.

Whereas other professional bodies are making it easy for higher education students to acquire professional certifications, Super Professional Body is making it easy for those who write their examinations to acquire higher education credentials such as university degrees. The officials of the institute in the interview stated that:

There is an Association of accounting bodies in West Africa, there is now an accounting technicians scheme West Africa (our junior examination which is where secondary school graduates start from). All candidates in West Africa respond to the same questions with the exception of taxation which is made to reflect the laws of the countries individual candidates come from. This body plays leadership role in West Africa. This is an offshoot of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African Countries). Products of our Accounting Technicians Scheme (ATS) continue their education in the university. Products of ASWA (Accounting Technicians Scheme of West Africa) do better than university graduates in our higher examinations. We have a MoU with Ogun State University where they spend 2 years to get a degree. In OAU (Obafemi Awolowo University), with your ATS you start from 200 level. Most universities in Nigeria accept our finals (the award given to those who pass the last

stage of the institute's examinations) for postgraduate studies for example MBA (Master of Business Administration).

This professional body seems to have, by such opportunities demonstrated to higher education aspirants that their examinations hold good promises for them. Going by the interview comments of the officials of the institute, this professional body makes a deliberate effort to get higher education aspirants to appreciate the value of their professional credentials. At seminar events they explain the opportunities they offer and use role models for credibility. This researcher was told that:

We bring experienced chartered accountants to talk to them about their lives.

This body also seems to have put in place arrangements that enable candidates to get guidance and training in preparation for the examinations. This researcher was informed by those officials that:

We are not a training institute. We are a professional body. However, we have accredited tuition houses.

This arrangement would seem to be critical in Nigeria, a country where, as the data in this study have revealed, students tend to have phobia for examinations. Young people in the country may be avoiding examination failure which has been identified as one of the causes of depression during adolescence (Murray and Keane, 1997). This phobia, as has already been documented in this study may have more to do with the teacher-directed learning that seems to pervade the education system in Nigeria and less to do with adolescents' lack of desire to learn. The "desire to learn more" ranked number 2 on a list of 7 motives influencing the desire of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study to seek opportunities to benefit from higher education (see Table 6.5). These motives were elicited through an open-ended question posed to the higher education aspirants who responded to the questionnaire used in this study. The motives were not included in the questionnaire. Their aversion to independent study may be due to a lack of relevant skills rather than a lack of interest in learning and improved competence. Their reluctance to enrol for professional examinations may not be traceable to aversion to ethical conduct. The "desire to impact positively on society" ranked number 3 on a list of 7 motives influencing their desire to seek higher education. Only the desire for personal success and the desire for personal improvement in terms of self-efficacy ranked higher than this.

The opportunity to study in tuition houses may also satisfy the desire young people seem to have to study away from home. Lack of interest in professional examinations may be partly influenced by the possible belief that such a career strategy would compel them to study at home and without opportunity to meet their social needs, build career-enhancing networks, assert their independence, and demonstrate their creativity. These are needs that adolescents consider to be important (Head, 1997) which is in line with the fact that adolescence is a period when people generally come to cognitive maturity (Moshman, 1999). Table 6.10 shows that higher education aspirants who participated in this study ranked the “need to study away from home” number 3 on a list of 6 factors influencing their choice of route to higher education. They ranked it higher than even the “need to study where friends are” and the “need to study from home”. The desire for independence seems to apply also to adolescents in other cultures and not a peculiar craving of teenagers in Nigeria. This desire for independence may bring good dividends if harnessed especially in the era of globalization where workers compete for jobs on a global stage and at a time when rapid economic changes and job losses make interpersonal and self-management skills necessary tools for career success (Greenhouse et al., 2000). A similar case can be made for young people wishing to study away from home. The realization of such a desire may enable them to find the conducive environment to study, a condition that has been identified as instrumental to the achievement of good academic results (Fry, 1997). Employers are also increasingly placing a high premium on transferable skills and personal qualities of prospective employees and bothering less about the knowledge content of the academic programmes they have undergone (McMillan and Weyers, 2013). The opportunity to study away from home and manage their own affairs may offer young people the chance to develop the other aspects of their lives. Accurate definition of career should include all aspects of the life of an individual (Gysbers and Moore, 1981). Adolescence being a time when people attain cognitive maturity (Moshman, 1999), young people may benefit from exerting their mental energies optimally. As in other situations in life, balance is required here. It is important that people helping adolescents to manage their life careers ensure that there is balance between giving them the independence they seek and the exercise of control over what they do with their time and other resources.

Super Professional Body seems to be reflecting the foregoing elements in the way they are engaging young people in Nigeria. They appear to have a marketing communication strategy that is giving them an advantage in the competition for the attention of higher education

aspirants in the country. The data this study has generated would suggest that the body has been strategically positioned to achieve the kind of profile they now have in the Nigerian society especially as it affects the attention of young people. Fill (2013:147) has stated that positioning involves “the process of market analysis and evaluation leading to planned strategies designed to meet prescribed and measurable goals....” It is Fill’s observation “... that this enables finite resources to be used more efficiently as they are directed towards markets that hold, potentially, greater value than other markets”.

It might therefore be the case that the strategies that the other professional bodies that participated in this study are using to promote their programmes to young people in Nigeria lack the capacity to produce the results they want. The data that have been presented in this study so far would suggest that they have not provided enough incentives to encourage many higher education aspirants in Nigeria to enrol for their examinations. They are employing traditional mass media to reach them instead of the new media and interpersonal channels that are now known to achieve superior results when audiences such as this are involved. Whereas tertiary academic institutions in Nigeria offering accounting programmes seek accreditation of their programmes by Super Professional Body and cherish it when they obtain it, the other professional bodies are investing in memoranda of understanding that grant products of tertiary institutions their professional certifications with little effort. The academic on sabbatical leave at Super Professional Body at the time officials of the institute granted this researcher interview said that:

In my department (in the university) we have accreditation from both NUC (National Universities Commission) and this professional body. After university, you still have to come to this professional body because of the quantum of knowledge you need.

The professional body, from the data already provided in this report enjoys relatively high visibility in the Nigerian economy and according to one of its officials:

... is looking into top-up opportunities in foreign universities for our products.

A registrar of one of the other professional bodies acknowledged that:

Holders of Super Professional Body’s professional certification are promoted automatically by their employers.

He, however, attributed this kind of recognition they enjoy to luck and believes that their student membership will grow exponentially if the relevant government agency (Ministry of

Establishment) implements the graduate-level salary scale that the Ministry of Education has approved for candidates who complete their professional examinations successfully. In the registrar's words:

Federal Ministry of Establishment recognition is very critical. A boom will come with that.

Some of his counterparts in other professional bodies made similar complaints. The officials of Super Professional Body interviewed did not make any such complaint. They generally expressed confidence in the instrumentality of their qualifications to the success of individuals.

The mandate they have in terms of the law that established the body is similar to the mandates the law has imposed on the other professional bodies that participated in this study. Like Super Professional Body, the other professional bodies confirmed that the laws setting them up required them to set standards for their professions and upgrade them as they deem necessary. Practising their professions without licences granted by them is illegal in Nigeria. Products of tertiary institutions who do not possess their certifications are not permitted by the relevant laws to present themselves to anyone as practitioners of those professions in the country. All the registrars of the professional bodies interviewed spoke along the same lines in terms of their mandates. They used the following words to make the confirmations:

Basically we regulate the practice of Human Resources Management, setting the standards, checking and reviewing the standards and ensuring that people live up to those standards.

Regulate the accounting profession, determine standard, reviewing it to meet best global practice.

To regulate Information Technology (IT) practice in Nigeria in terms of controlling to avoid quackery, to determine the skills and knowledge of those who practice IT and keep record of those who are qualified to practice the profession.

We are authorized by law to train stock brokers in Nigeria. We have the mandate to set the minimum standards for those stock brokers who wish to trade in the Nigerian stock exchange. We set the exam. Anybody who wishes to practice in Nigeria has to pass the institute's exam

To train chartered secretaries for the society. We belong to the international community, started in 1891 in the UK. Nigeria took over in 2011. We took over to emphasise Nigerian laws, regulations and practices.

Dual mandate-professional institute, and like any other professional institute has the mandate to develop the practice of advertising in Nigeria, creating educational platform for the development of advertising practitioners including Continuous Professional Development (CPD). To be able to continuously improve their knowledge and their skills to keep the industry up to date on global standards. Has a regulatory mandate- regulate the standard of the practice of advertising and that entails determining what is appropriate standard of advertising communication and to ensure the standard is enforced.

We are empowered to set standards in this area. We work with National Universities Commission (NUC). We are leading management generally in Nigeria. To regulate and control the practice of management in Nigeria in all its aspects and ramifications, determine what standard of knowledge and skill is to be attained by those seeking to practice management in Nigeria and to raise these standards from time to time. Those who pass the relevant examination set by the institute are accepted to become members. We have our own exams, we also assess and accredit the curriculum of tertiary institutions offering management courses.

To enhance Professional banking education, to develop banking education at the topmost level and add value to the profession at all levels. We have the ambition to be the global reference point for professionalism and ethics in the banking and finance industry through top leadership and capacity building. Accreditation, certification, CPD, best practices, all through career progression for anybody who desires to take banking as a profession. Strengthen the internal capacity of those people. We relate with all relevant institutions for example, universities, Nigerian Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), banks including mortgage banks. Banks will be like fishes outside water if they don't belong to this institute. All banks including Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) are members of this body and they are to cause their staff to register with the institute. That's the requirement of the act establishing the institute.

The purpose is to cater for the professional set of students who are to take examination leading to professional marketing certifications. Regulate and control the practice of marketing in Nigeria. Education, controlling the profession, setting standards.

It would appear that these professional bodies suffer little or no limitations in terms of the power that the relevant Nigerian laws have conferred on them to regulate their professions. Such powers seem to allow them to make their professional examinations one of the routes through which higher education aspirants in the country can realize their dreams.

To what extent do professional bodies in Nigeria promote their examinations to higher education aspirants as alternative route to higher education?

This is one of the questions this study set out to answer. The evidence the study has produced indicates that, taken as a whole, such efforts have not been robust. Most of the efforts do not seem to go wide and deep. The mass media that some of them are employing to reach higher education aspirants in the country do not seem to be appropriate especially when they are not being complemented with effective use of new media and interpersonal channels. Some of the efforts they are making or failing to make seem to have been influenced by wrong assumptions. There seems to be the belief among the leadership of most of the professional bodies that participated in this study that higher education aspirants in Nigeria are averse to hard work and are unwilling to consider alternative routes to realize their career goals. The experience of the shining star among them, Super Professional Body does not seem to support those assumptions. Super Professional Body's experience has been given generous attention in this study for the purpose of possibly suggesting a model the other professional bodies can emulate. The evidence provided in this study suggest that their promotional strategies are relatively better than what all others in this study are doing in this regard. The size of their student membership recommends their promotional strategies strongly.

Most of the officials of the other professional bodies interviewed admitted that they had not promoted their programmes adequately to higher education aspirants in Nigeria but expressed their intention to make more efforts in this direction. Their remarks included:

No special unit for young people here. The marketing unit sells all our programmes.

There is need for us to do enlightenment. We need a lot of reorientation at the secondary school level to let them know the alternatives available.

A lot more promotion can still be done.

A number of issues- awareness, an average person leaving secondary school in Nigeria believes that he has to go to polytechnics or university. That's the next level and that's the information they have. We went through it ourselves. When we were leaving secondary school there was no other information we had. If they have information that there are alternatives, I believe they will use it. The awareness level is still quite low- we recognise that as a weakness. The institute is not as popular as Super Professional Body. We are working on awareness creation – we go to National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) camps and universities. We recognize there are a lot of young Nigerians who need opportunities and this programme will have positive impact not only on the capital market but on the larger economy as a whole. This year we are pushing out information a lot – we have what we call mobilizers. 5 companies to mobilize students, tuition houses and those organizations that have regular interface with young Nigerians in universities, we hope to have 10 of such mobilizers.

We have a fault not exposing young people to what we do. It's a bit difficult. Association of Professional Bodies in Nigeria used to organise exhibition involving professional bodies. We are not doing that anymore. Because of population, we can use Information Technology to drive awareness. Publicity these days is cost intensive. We are operating within cost constraints

It's possible that many of them are not aware of our certificate programme.

We will sensitize them when we finish developing our new programme- those coming out of school.

We had a breakfast meeting recently involving stake holders because we want to sensitize them regarding this programme.

They know but we can still do more for them to know.

With respect to the reasons why young people who just finished secondary school may not want to enroll for our exams, that's a function of many factors- parents tend to remote control their children in terms of what they have to study. Second is ignorance on the path of the child who may not know that he can after his professional exams go and study any other course in the university. I studied agriculture then did this banking professional programme and benefited from the linkage programme this professional body has with one of the universities. I am a PhD student now. University of Ibadan allows our products to do Master's degree. We have affiliation overseas- Chartered banker MBA. The third factor is finance. This programme is not free. Another is the current state of education- how do you remunerate professionalism? They need to get professionals properly recognized. Educational platform must give well-recognized and publicized status to professionalism.

It is not impossible that there may be some other factors contributing to the better results Super Professional Body is achieving in student membership size and growth rate. There may be factors beyond the control of the other professional bodies. The registrar of one of them, for example indicated that:

Happenings in the capital market affect patronage of our programmes. When the market is booming we experience upsurge in the demand for our programmes. Over the years we have had ups and downs in terms of enrolment.

This could provide the basis of another study to be conducted. For this study, one may wonder whether getting higher education aspirants in Nigeria to understand the mechanism of professional examinations can encourage more of them to enrol for such examinations. The next section will provide data that may give an indication of what the possibilities may be.

6.5 Implications of Higher Education Aspirants' Awareness of Professional Examinations for Their Career Strategies

To check if improved understanding of the mechanism of professional examinations by higher education aspirants in Nigeria could increase their take up rate of such examinations, this study asked:

Does awareness of the opportunity professional bodies provide for higher education encourage higher education aspirants in Nigeria to include professional examinations in their strategy to access higher education?

In the effort to obtain an answer to the question, this researcher provided the higher education aspirants who participated in the study a three-page career information document (see Appendix 11) which explained how JAMB UTME, General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A' Level), and Professional Examinations work as routes to higher education. This effort was preceded and followed by the higher education aspirants' response to the questionnaire used for the study (see Appendix 10). They responded to the same questions before and after reading the career information document. Tables 6.14 - 6.16 contain the data that emerged from the analyses of the pre and post career information questionnaires.

Table 6.14

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

It is a Route to Higher Education	Frequency of Yes (Before Career Information)	Rank	Frequency of Yes (After Career Information)	Rank	% increase or Decrease in Frequency of Yes
JAMB UTME	165	1	151	1	-8
Study Abroad	135	2	140	2	+4
A' Level Examination	123	3	136	3	+11
Professional Examination	108	4	106	4	-2
Open University	92	5	75	6	-18
ONLINE STUDY	86	6	78	5	-9

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

One of the questions required them to identify from a list of 6 items what they considered to be the routes to higher education (see Appendix 10). The data in Table 6.14 indicates that there was no significant change in the responses of the study participants with respect to professional examinations after they had read the career information document. This route to higher education ranked number 4 both before and after the respondents read the career

information document and with only 2 per cent decline in frequency in their post-career information responses. The Open University lost significant recognition in the post career information responses. Online study also suffered a significant loss. The career information document had no information on those two routes. JAMB UTME, the common route to higher education in Nigeria also suffered a considerable loss. GCE A' Level examination gained significant recognition in the post career information responses of the study participants. The career information provided to the respondents explained how these two routes work (see Appendix 11). It could be that some of the respondents considered the conventional route dispensable after becoming aware of other options. This would suggest that some of the higher education aspirants who participated in the study were open to change and could consider alternative routes to higher education. The recognition gain in favour of GCE A' level may be partly explained by the one-year reduction in the duration of higher education it could confer on aspirants and its instrumentality to directly access university education, the form of higher education this study has identified to be the most popular with higher education aspirants in Nigeria.

The recognition losses against the Open University and Online Study may be attributable to the perceived difficulty students who settle for those options may face in a country where independent learning facilities may not be available, and at a time the regulatory body for universities has withheld accreditation for most of the courses run by the National Open University of Nigeria and is actively campaigning against online programmes in the country (Oweh, 2015). Such higher education options may compromise the desire of most young people who participated in this study to do their higher education away from home. Open University and Online Studies do not require students to be involved in face-to-face study arrangements that would make them leave home.

The data in Table 6.15 shows the positive and negative changes that occurred with respect to the respondents' belief that the listed platforms were not routes to higher education.

Table 6.15

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' NONACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

It is <i>Not</i> a Route to Higher Education	Frequency of Yes (Before Career Information)	Rank	Frequency of Yes (After Career Information)	Rank	% increase or Decrease in Frequency of Yes
ONLINE STUDY	73	1	63	1	-14
Professional Examination	54	2	33	3	-39
Open University	50	3	55	2	+10
Study Abroad	36	4	32	4	-11
JAMB UTME	31	5	20	5	-35
A' Level Examination	27	6	17	6	-37

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

The data presented in Table 6.15 indicate that the number of respondents failing to recognize professional examination as a route to higher education declined by 39%. From the number 2 position it occupied before the career information was provided, it moved to the number 3 position. This meant that significantly fewer respondents agreed with the position that professional examination was not a route to higher education. When the data in Tables 6.14 and 6.15 are examined closely, one could come to the view that although the career information provided to the respondents had enabled some of them to know that it would be wrong to argue that professional examination was not a route to higher education, that realization did not result in a supporting vote for it. One of the higher education aspirants who responded to the questionnaire and thereafter participated in a focus group discussion made the following comment in the course of the discussion:

I didn't know, sounds good but I do not know how to go about it. I will consider it if I know how to go about it.

This comment was in response to this researcher's probing to know whether the study participants would consider including professional examinations in their strategy for higher

education. This was after this participant had responded to the questionnaire that was administered along with the career information document that contained explanation about professional examinations. There is a possibility that the information on this route which they had to read within about 15 minutes was not adequate for many of them to understand it at a level that they could develop a favourable attitude towards it. Many of them at the end of the questionnaire administration asked for further clarification on how it works. A significant number of them requested to retain the career information document. The perceived complexity of the route may be limiting its take-up rate. Aside from the seeming negative attitude of the National Universities Commission (NUC) towards Open University and Online Studies, a similar challenge may explain why their take-up rate is low in Nigeria. Many of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study asked this researcher to explain how these systems of higher education work. Tables 6.14 and 6.15 suggest some inconsistencies in the attitude of the study respondents towards those routes to higher education.

It might be the case that the respondents would accept them when they believe that they understand how they work and reject them if they receive information that contradicts what they believe about them. Empirical evidence confirms that innovations that are perceived to be complex tend to suffer slow rate of adoption even when they are very beneficial and may be rejected even after they have been adopted (Rogers, 2003). This complexity may be perceived rather than real but “in... consumer behaviour, perceptions are reality...” (Foxall et al., 1998:63). Perception is also known to be among the major influencers of human behaviour (Hochberg, 1978). It can, however, be shaped in pursuit of favourable attitudes towards offerings including ideas, products and services (Stone et al., 2000). To achieve this, appropriate communication channels would be required. According to the experience of Super Professional Body which participated in this study and the comments of Fill (2013), the use of interpersonal channels of communication that can help people understand perceived complex ideas should be considered indispensable for the promotion of professional examinations to young people in Nigeria.

Some of the registrars of the professional bodies that participated in this study acknowledged that better promotional strategies would achieve improved awareness and take-up of their programmes. Some of these comments have already been documented (earlier) in this chapter. This researcher’s interaction with the school counsellors who participated in this study may be indicative of the effect that interpersonal communication

channels can have on the promotion of professional examinations in Nigeria. One of them acknowledged that:

Many people are not aware of professional exams; that's the truth.

She told this researcher of her interest in including information on such examinations in her career service. The counsellor also invited this researcher to be her school's guest lecturer during their annual "Talent Hunt". This researcher could not honour the invitation because of his other research commitments. The other counsellors also indicated interest in encouraging their students to include professional examinations in their higher education strategy.

Table 6.16

PROPORTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS CONSIDERING VARIOUS ROUTES FOR ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education Route	% Considering It (Before Career Information)			% Considering it (After Career Information)			% Change (in Yes)
	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	
JAMB UTME	6	4	90	5	7	87	-3
STUDY ABROAD	10	22	68	12	20	69	+1
GCE A' LEVEL EXAMINATION	26	22	52	15	25	60	+8
PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION	38	21	41	33	18	49	+8
OPEN UNIVERSITY	45	20	35	53	20	27	-8
ONLINE STUDY	56	23	21	51	25	24	+3

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Questionnaire data provided by study respondents, 2015

Table 6.16 shows that the career information provided to the higher education aspirants who responded to the study questionnaire seems to have influenced some of them to modify their strategy for seeking higher education. Both GCE A' Level examination and professional examination gained considerable acceptance after the respondents read career information on them. Information discernible from innovation and adoption theories and

research (Rogers, 2003) would suggest that an 8% increase in the number of those who develop a favourable attitude towards a product immediately after a promotional effort is indicative of the good result that could be achieved with sustained promotional effort. This result was achieved with only a career information document as a promotional tool. If integrated promotional tools are employed, the adoption rate in Nigeria for professional examinations may be more encouraging. Rogers (2003) observes that the size of the market that embraces a new idea, product or service when it is newly introduced tends to be 2.5% and researchers refer to this category of adopters as innovators. Rogers argues that over time and with sustained promotion that uses opinion leaders and interpersonal communication well, other categories of consumers including early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards will adopt the product, other factors being equal. Rogers further observes that the absence of clarity regarding an idea may be a major hindrance to its adoption. This challenge seems to be afflicting the diffusion of professional examinations as a route to higher education in Nigeria. Table 6.16 shows that JAMB UTME, which seems to be the route that higher education aspirants in Nigeria understand well, occupies the top rank in terms of the routes they are considering for higher education. It also has few 'undecideds' unlike the other routes that have significant number of respondents as 'undecideds'. These respondents may develop favourable attitudes towards these routes to higher education if they are helped to understand them and perceive them well.

The information this study has provided so far indicates that getting higher education aspirants to develop favourable attitudes towards professional examinations and similar opportunities would require targeting some of the promotional efforts at significant persons in the lives of higher education aspirants in Nigeria. These persons would include their parents, subject teachers, siblings, friends, media practitioners, employers, education policy makers, school administrators, school counsellors and even religious leaders. This thesis has also documented ideas that indicate that adolescents are at a stage in their life cycle when they are malleable. This would suggest that they may be willing to consider new ideas, products and services they perceive as capable of helping them to undertake their career journeys with pleasure. One may wonder:

What are the views of policy makers in Nigeria regarding the problem of access to higher education experienced by young people in the country?

This study's data provide a clue to this question. Some of them who in the interview blamed the problem on a culture that induces most secondary school graduates in Nigeria to believe that higher education is a necessary end they have to pursue and attain. They also blamed the reward system in Nigeria, which discriminates in favour of university graduates, thereby encouraging most young people to insist on university education even when they may not possess the intellectual capacity and aptitude to benefit from the type of education that universities offer. They see professional examinations as presenting a promise for a relatively easy access to higher education for those who truly need it, depending on their potential. The counsel they gave was for higher education aspirants and the significant persons in their lives including their parents to be open minded when considering opportunities for young persons' higher education.

The Head of the body that conducts the Senior School Certificate Examination, the public examination for people finishing secondary school, which enables them to obtain the minimum academic credential for higher education in Nigeria stated that:

Our education system should be entrepreneurial. The whole educational system should be reviewed. The road we have chosen will not lead us to our destination.

In response to one of the researcher's questions, this officer identified multiple dimensions of the problems he considered to be afflicting the Nigerian education system and young persons' access to higher education. According to him:

Professional examinations is a good idea. My daughter is now writing professional exams after her university degree. Those finishing secondary school appear under aged. Their parents falsify their ages. This is not good for children. They are not mentally equipped to cope with the challenges of higher education. A lot of teachers are not well informed. Free education is contributing to the problem. Children are not well taught. Libraries are not equipped, so candidates fail our exams. Distraction from the media are contributing. They don't read... no electricity. Parents don't have time for their children- a circle of evil. The integrity of our exams remains. It's not our job to train the candidates. Malpractice has pervaded every aspect of our national life.

The challenges this officer identified appear to afflict all levels of the education system in Nigeria including the tertiary level to which higher education aspirants who are in focus in this study seek admission (Oladokun, 2016). The challenges seem to be among the major factors inducing high labour turnover at that level. Seemingly, not much is changing in spite of the complaints of some stakeholders (Azania, 2016); and this is in the face of increasing demand for higher education in the country.

A member of the management team of one of the universities in the state where this study was conducted traced the difficulty young people in Nigeria encounter as they try to access higher education to a systemic flaw. In the official's words:

One institution cannot deal with the problem. It is structural.

The data that this study has produced would appear to be in agreement with his assertion. There may not be an easy way out of this challenge but a collaborative effort of stakeholders including policy makers, school administrators, school counsellors, teachers, parents and the higher education aspirants themselves may produce an implementable agenda. Some of the challenges may be rooted in culture, unrealistic aspirations and expectations as well as resistance to change. A realistic way forward may be found if the stakeholders rely on evidence for the options they want to consider. It is this researcher's hope that this study's findings and recommendations will be utilized by them to make access to higher education in Nigeria much easier than it is currently. These findings and recommendations will be the focus of the next chapter.

6.6. Summary of chapter

The data provided in this study confirms that access to higher education in Nigeria is quite problematic. Minimum of 8 out of every 10 applicants for places in the country's conventional higher education system get turned down annually. Given the about two million people graduating from the country's secondary schools annually, access to higher education in Nigeria may get more challenging in the future. This high rejection rate of higher education applications in the country has a lot to do with the candidates' insistence on university education and rejection of other forms of higher education including polytechnic, college of education, and professional examinations offered by professional bodies in the country. Professional bodies in the country would appear to have an elastic capacity to admit as many candidates as meet the minimum academic requirement for enrolment in their programmes which is the same Senior School Certificate (SSC) that the conventional higher educational institutions in the country ask for. Those bodies run open programmes that permit flexible studies but which require independent learning skills and self-motivation.

A combination of factors would appear to account for this situation. Significant persons in the lives of higher education aspirants in Nigeria including their parents, employers, counsellors and teachers seem to have constructed higher education to mean university education which has also been presented to them as a reliable route to success in life. The desire of the higher education aspirants to study away from home to minimize parental control and the desire to secure higher education without writing difficult examinations also seem to be among the factors promoting university education especially the public variety which their parents can afford and which they can access through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

How professional examinations can lead to higher education seemed unclear to most higher education aspirants who participated in this study. Their school counsellors were similarly affected. Professional examinations did not seem to be well promoted in Nigeria. The data provided by this study seem to suggest that if the school counsellors, higher education aspirants, their parents and other significant persons in their lives are helped to understand how professional examinations can lead to higher education, enrolment levels for such examinations in Nigeria may increase.

Chapter 7- Summary of Findings and Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings and conclusions of this study including the steps that stakeholders can take to minimize the challenges the higher education aspirants who participated in the study seem to be facing as they manage their careers. It is hoped that these findings will advance the frontiers of knowledge with regards to the role professional bodies can play in providing access to higher education in Nigeria and the conditions that can facilitate the utilization of the opportunities they provide for access to higher education.

7.1. Findings

The findings have been organized into 4 sections. These sections reflect the state of access to higher education in Nigeria as at the time of this study, the career dispositions of the study subjects and the relevant roles of professional bodies in Nigeria as well as the factors that account for the low patronage of professional bodies in Nigeria by higher education aspirants. The findings address the research questions.

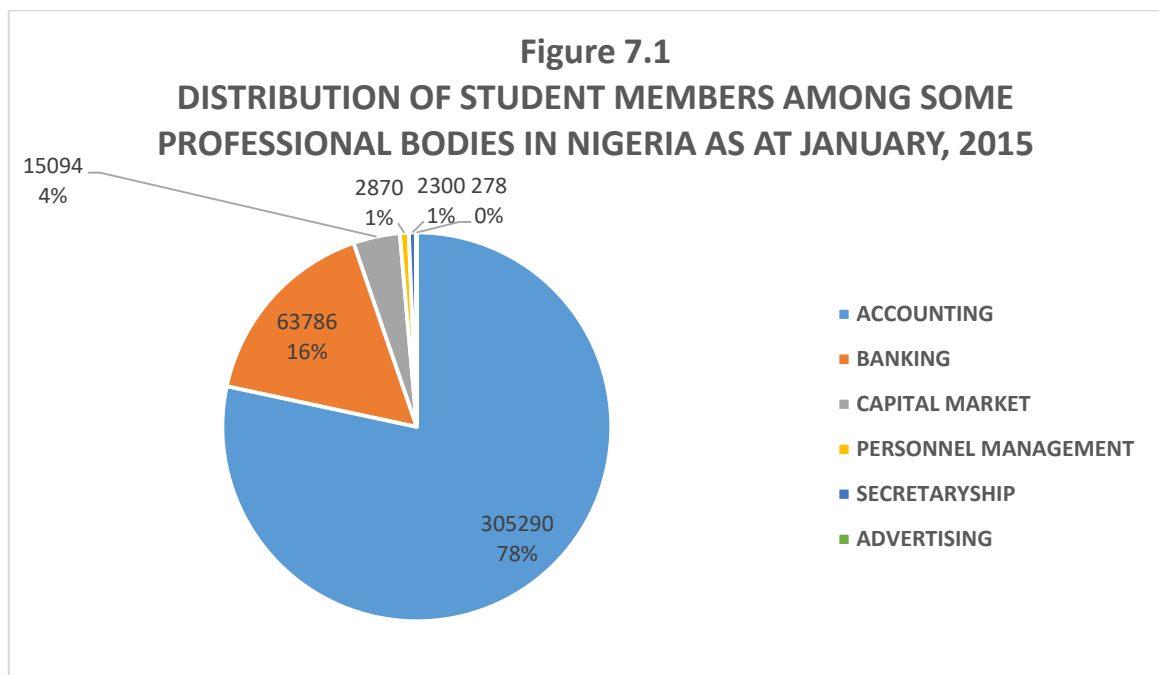
7.1.1. Demand and Supply of Higher Education Places in Nigeria

Most of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study expressed their interest in entering higher education. The proportion of them who desire to proceed to higher education within one year of finishing secondary school is 97% (see Figure 6.8). They perceive higher education as a potent instrument for enhanced learning and the achievement of success in life (see Table 6.5). They seem to share this interest in higher education with people of comparable ages in most other parts of the world although available evidence seems to suggest that higher education is not delivering as much as people who aspire to have it believe it can deliver (Brown et al., 2011).

However, the study shows that there is, a disequilibrium between the demand and supply of conventional higher education places in Nigeria (see Table 6.2, and Figures 6.3, and 6.4). The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is the compulsory entrance examination higher education aspirants in Nigeria sit for. The examination is the gateway to Colleges of Education that award National Certificate of Education (NCE), Polytechnics that award National Diplomas (ND) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), and Universities that award degree credentials. Colleges of education which focus on the training of teachers for primary schools in the

country and polytechnics that focus on technology education appear unpopular among higher education aspirants in Nigeria. A minimum of 9 out of every 10 candidates for UTME seeks direct admission into the university and not the alternative forms of higher education (see Figure 6.2). Given the limited places in these conventional forms of higher education in Nigeria, applicant rejection rate is 85% (see Figure 6.4). Securing access to higher education appears to be one of the major concerns of the study participants. In the absence of any change in access routes to higher education in Nigeria, the country's annual secondary school graduation rate, which, at the time of this study, was about two million (see Table 6.4), is likely to increase the stiffness of the competition for available conventional higher education places.

Some colleges of education and institutes are affiliated to universities that moderate some of their programmes and award degrees to people who successfully participate in them. This arrangement does not, however, seem to be common knowledge among higher education aspirants in Nigeria. The role of professional bodies in Nigeria in facilitating access to higher education seems to be similarly affected. Their role did not seem to be well understood by many of the higher education aspirants and school counsellors who participated in this study. This lack of understanding may be one of the factors accountable for the low patronage of professional examinations in Nigeria.



Source: Researcher's Analysis of data provided by some professional bodies, 2015

Only one of the professional bodies studied seems to be attracting the patronage of higher education aspirants in the country (see Table 6.7 and Figure 7.1 which presents a graphical picture of the data). The oldest university in the state where this study was conducted has a higher applicant rejection rate for aspirants desiring to study in the institution compared to the national average in the country (see Table 6.3, and Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The cosmopolitan nature of the state where it is located and relative stability of their academic calendar may be among the factors that could explain this difference. The foregoing findings have provided answers to three of the study's questions:

- I. What are the routes available to higher education in Nigeria?
- II. What routes to higher education do higher education aspirants in Nigeria choose for the purpose of accessing higher education?
- III. To what extent are higher education aspirants in Nigeria aware that professional examinations are available as an alternative route to higher education?

Study abroad appears to be a popular choice among the higher education aspirants studied (see Table 6.9). This popularity seems to be partly a product of the perceived declining quality of higher education in Nigeria, and instability of academic calendars of tertiary institutions in the country (DailyTrust, 2016) as well as the limited places for higher education in the country. Nigeria's Senate are worried about the financial cost of foreign education to the country and are taking steps to minimize it (Ikpefan and Adanikin, 2016). At the same time, Online Study, and Open University appear unpopular among the higher education aspirants studied. Their lack of understanding of how these systems of education work and the aversion of the National Universities Commission (NUC) to these systems of education may partly account for this unpopularity.

Education policy makers in Nigeria appear to be focusing on how to achieve a merit-based, equitable and fair distribution of conventional higher education places in the country (DailyPost, 2016). Little or no government effort seems to be put into minimizing the disequilibrium between the demand and supply of higher education places in the country.

Parents and the Internet appear to be major influencers of the career decisions of the higher education aspirants studied (see Table 5.11). The traditional mass media such as radio and television do not appear to be as influential in the career decisions of the higher education

aspirants in the study as the leaders of some professional bodies who participated in this study seem to have assumed.

7.1.2. Factors Accounting for Higher Education Aspirants' Insistence on Direct University Admission

The data produced by this study indicate that diverse significant persons in the lives of the higher education aspirants studied have constructed university education as one of the reliable routes to enduring success. These significant persons include parents, school counsellors, and prospective employers who create this impression by the way that they communicate the requirements for the jobs they advertise. Employers tend to demand the credentials that universities award more than the credentials awarded by the other forms of higher education. This is in the face of claims that the quality of university education in Nigeria leaves much to be desired (OTOKPA, 2016).

Other people in the social geography of the young persons studied such as their siblings, subject teachers, and religious leaders also seem to have encouraged them to believe that university education is critical for their success in life. The mainstream media seem to be communicating similar messages to them.

The study, however, revealed that "ease of passing relevant entrance examination" is the top ranking factor influencing the route to higher education that the aspirants studied choose. The next two major factors influencing their choice of route to higher education are cost and the opportunity to study away from home. This desire to leave home seems to reflect the tendency for people in their teenage years to seek independence (Lickona, 1985) having gained cognitive maturity (Moshman, 1999). The apparent phobia that they have for examinations may be partly accounted for by the teacher-directed teaching style that appears to be one of the common features of the Nigeria education system.

The study also revealed that university admission through UTME seems to be relatively easy to understand for the higher education aspirants studied. The calculation seems to be that success in UTME more or less guarantees one a university degree. This contrasts with other routes of access to higher education such as GCE Advanced Level and Professional examinations, which, the higher education aspirants who participated in this study, did not seem to believe, offer such guarantees. They seem to perceive those alternative routes as

being more demanding in terms of the effort they have to put into academic work. Those findings have provided answer to the question:

How do higher education aspirants in Nigeria determine the route they choose for access to higher education?

The next section will focus on the findings of the study that illuminate the operations of professional bodies in Nigeria. These findings are likely to constitute a good foundation for the development of strategies aimed at promoting professional examinations to higher education aspirants in Nigeria.

7.1.3. The Mandate of Professional Bodies in Nigeria and their Activities that are Relevant to the Study

The 9 professional bodies studied were established by specific Nigerian laws with the mandate to set standards for the relevant professions. The professional bodies studied cover professions such as Advertising, Banking, Information Technology, Accountancy, Personnel Management, Management, Marketing, Capital Market, and Secretaryship. Their mandate includes regularly upgrading the standards and regulating the practice of those professions.

Their roles and activities include accreditation of tertiary institutions in Nigeria offering relevant courses especially universities and polytechnics and provision of advice to such institutions and other relevant agencies on how to upgrade relevant standards and quality. Those activities also include the conduct of professional examinations and award of professional credentials for certification of those who are qualified to practice relevant professions. According to the laws establishing them, people who practice the relevant professions without licences issued by the regulatory body are deemed to be quacks and violators of relevant laws. The study revealed that the professional diplomas some of them award are considered as the equivalents of first degrees by some universities both within and outside Nigeria and accepted for postgraduate studies or top-up programmes undertaken by their graduates who desire first degree. Some of the professional bodies studied have linkage programmes for mutual recognition of certificates awarded by them and some tertiary institutions. This arrangement enables the benefitting tertiary institutions, especially universities, to have their programmes accredited by the relevant professional

bodies. Such accreditation gives students from the relevant departments the opportunity to graduate with professional certifications in addition to their degrees.

The professional bodies studied also offer continuous professional development (CPD) to members and non-members through platforms such as workshops, seminars, lectures, conferences and symposia. Some of the professional bodies studied are affiliated to relevant international organizations and collaborate with their counterparts in other countries to promote the common interests of their members. The officials of those professional bodies tend to represent the relevant professions on relevant public boards, commissions and agencies and engage in advocacy in promotion of the interests of members.

The activities of the professional bodies studied are funded through subscriptions, levies, donations, sponsorships, and fees. Some of them receive subventions, which are annual contributions to their finances by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Most of the officials of the professional bodies that participated in this study acknowledged that attracting higher education aspirants to register for their professional examinations was one of their major challenges. The next section documents the findings of the study that may explain these challenges and which may assist in finding solutions to them.

7.1.4. Factors That Account for Low Patronage of Professional Examinations

Low patronage of professional bodies may be traceable to diverse factors. Some of them may be connected with how the professional bodies relate with their internal and external publics while others may be traceable to the conduct of individuals and institutions that the professional bodies may lack the power to control.

Many of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study and their school counsellors demonstrated gaps in knowledge and understanding of the professional examinations system. The counsellors in the schools seldom promoted professional examinations. Some of them believed professional examinations were postgraduate programmes and not meant for higher education aspirants. These findings provide further answer to one of the study's questions which was:

To what extent are higher education aspirants in Nigeria aware that professional examinations are available as an alternative route to higher education?

They also provide answers to another question the study sought answers for which was:

Is information on professional examinations as alternative route to higher education provided higher education aspirants in Nigeria by school counsellors?

Most of the professional bodies studied also seldom promoted their professional examinations directly to higher education aspirants. Most of their promotional efforts focused on attracting the patronage of students in tertiary institutions such as universities and polytechnics. This seems to have reinforced the belief of some members of the Nigerian society that professional examinations are not accessible to higher education aspirants. This is in spite of the fact that most of the professional bodies studied have as their minimum admission requirement, the Senior School Certificate awarded to those who finish secondary school successfully. The participation of tertiary institution students in the professional certification process may also be enhancing the attractiveness of such institutions. They also would have employability advantage even when they compete with those who possess only professional certifications without academic credentials.

Employment practices in Nigeria tend to make possession of professional certifications a secondary and not compulsory criterion for employment. This may be further enhancing the value of academic credentials that they tend to make a compulsory criterion for employment. This may partly explain why JAMB UTME was the top ranking route to higher education for the aspirants who participated in this study (see Table 6.9). These findings have provided answer to one of the study's questions which was:

To what extent do professional bodies in Nigeria promote their examinations to higher education aspirants as alternative route to higher education?

Candidates who sit for professional examinations pay fees to do so. Those who register with tuition houses in preparation for such examinations also pay for such services. Tertiary institutions run by the Federal Government of Nigeria are tuition-free. As Nigeria is a low income country, parents who cannot afford the cost of their children writing professional

examinations may encourage them to strive for tuition-free higher education provided by public tertiary institutions. Cost ranked second on a list of 6 items influencing the study participants' choice of route to higher education (see Table 6.10).

It is also one of the findings of this study that professional examinations appear to be perceived by higher education aspirants as difficult examinations to write. Some leaders of professional bodies who participated in this study conveyed such impressions. The teacher-directed style of teaching which seems to be the common approach to teaching in the Nigerian education system might not have equipped the higher education aspirants who participated in this study with the self-efficacy that may be necessary for independent learning which successful participation in professional examinations may require. The desire of the higher education aspirants studied to leave home after secondary school in pursuit of independence may also be discouraging them from enrolling for professional examinations which may necessitate their having to study from home (see Table 6.10).

It is one of the study's findings that promoting professional examinations directly to higher education aspirants (in secondary schools) may enhance their understanding of how the system works and facilitate their development of favourable attitudes towards such examinations. The responses of some of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study and the achievements of Super Professional Body (SPD) in terms of growing student population would seem to suggest this (see Table 6.15 and 6.16 as well as Figure 7.1). The study revealed that traditional mass media which some of the professional bodies studied have adopted for the promotion of their programmes to higher education aspirants may not deliver the desired results if used in isolation of interpersonal channels of communication. As Table 6.11 reveals, the Internet is the top ranking medium through which the higher education aspirants studied get information that influence their career decisions. This finding is in line with Fill's (2013) position. These findings have provided answer to one of the study's questions which was:

Does awareness of the opportunity professional bodies provide for higher education encourage higher education aspirants in Nigeria to include professional examinations in their strategy to access higher education?

Some of the universities the higher education aspirants studied want to attend do not yet accept professional diplomas for top-up programmes which some of them may be happy to take advantage of. The postgraduate programmes that a good number of the universities accept professional diplomas for do not seem to be what most of the higher education aspirants understand and want. Many employers in the country also seem to insist on employing only people who have followed a linear academic progression that delivers a first degree after secondary school and before postgraduate qualification. Revelations to this effect came from most of the school counsellors and registrars of professional bodies who participated in this study.

The policy makers who participated in this study would appear to have respect for professional qualifications but do not seem to believe that higher education aspirants in Nigeria would be enthusiastic to write the relevant examinations because of the high intellectual demands of such programmes which secondary schools in the country have not prepared them for. They were critical of the declining quality of education in the country and trace the problem to a materialist culture that does not place premium on hard-work, integrity and delayed gratification. They advocate a cultural reorientation that starts with good parental role modelling. What education policy makers think about professional examinations as a route to higher education was one of the issues of interest to this study. Their responses presented in the foregoing seem to have provided a clue. In light of their responses and the other findings of the study, the next section will put forward some recommendations which may enhance the capacity of professional bodies in Nigeria to facilitate access to higher education for young people in the country.

7.2. Recommendations

The recommendations put forward here have been informed by the data this study provided through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The data were provided by some stakeholders including some higher education aspirants of both gender and of diverse socio-economic background, school counsellors, university administrators, education policy makers, and registrars of 9 professional bodies in Nigeria. The recommendations informed by the data that the stakeholders provided and the evidence and ideas emerging from the scholars whose works have been reviewed in this study may be worthy of serious consideration by all concerned especially as access to higher

education has remained one of the major challenges facing the Nigerian education system (DailyPost, 2016).

1. The data of this study suggest that there is a need for leadership of professional bodies in Nigeria to discard the assumptions that have discouraged most of them from promoting their examinations directly to higher education aspirants (in secondary schools). Without a conviction that higher education aspirants may be willing to include their examinations in their career development strategies, they may not do the best they are capable of doing with regard to the promotional efforts being advocated in the study. Much can be achieved by people who take decisions and actions on the basis of evidence; and much can be missed by people who cling to beliefs that have been contradicted by evidence (Peck, 1990).
2. Professional bodies in Nigeria could establish and run research units that have professional capacity and infrastructure for the production of data that can inform their management decisions and actions. Staff who head such units should possess advanced research skills and have such skills regularly updated through continuous professional development. Other staff of the unit also need to have the relevant academic and professional credentials and their skills and knowledge should be continually developed on the job. They should have opportunities to network with their counterparts in comparable institutes both within and outside Nigeria. To retain their services, it is important that their conditions of service are made attractive and their research output utilized.
3. Professional bodies that have not established a Young People's Unit should do so with the aim to promote their professional examinations directly to higher education aspirants (in secondary schools). They should use the platforms of seminars (career talks), symposia, workshops, debates, essay competitions, public lectures, and other relevant techniques to provide them the appropriate information about professional examinations, emphasizing the benefits, the challenges and how to overcome them. People who speak at such events should be well informed on the activities of the professional body and possess communication skills necessary for successful interaction with young people. Accomplished professionals in their area of specialism should

be in the teams that make such presentations. They will represent the evidence that can convince young people that signing up for professional examinations and working hard to pass the examinations will bring good dividends. Things that are demonstrated and simple (to understand) tend to be quickly adopted (Rogers, 2003). Messages meant for the promotion of the examinations should emphasize the time saving element of their features and the fact that the law demands the licences that only professional bodies offer. The messages should also emphasize that professional bodies determine the standards in their fields of practice and regulate the activities of practitioners including the accreditation of relevant courses in tertiary institutions. Chapter 7.1.3 provides information on this.

4. Professional bodies in Nigeria could periodically organize exhibitions where they put on display the output of professionals in their various areas and use the platform to educate young people on the procedures for becoming professional members of their organizations. Such exhibitions should be managed by professional event managers to guarantee that positive impressions will be made. The exhibitions should be intensively promoted to young people and their parents. Attendance should be free to encourage people from low-income families to attend.
5. Professional bodies should make provision for free seminars and workshops to help school counsellors understand the professional examination system. It is unlikely that they will promote a system that they do not understand. The data this study has produced suggest that they are unlikely to refuse cooperation in this regard. Awards should be given to school counsellors who achieve outstanding results in terms of the understanding that their students have about professional examinations and the attitudes they demonstrate towards these.
6. School administrators would need to be similarly educated. This is to ensure that they allocate adequate time for relevant career activities.
7. Multi-media channels of communication should be adopted in promoting professional examinations to young people. Using the traditional mass media such as radio and television exclusively when targeting young people may

result in wasted resources. Internet platforms like social media should be generously adopted to reach them with career messages.

8. Tuition facilities that prepare candidates for the examinations should be established in places where they do not exist. Staffing and infrastructure levels in these tuition facilities should be comparable to what conventional tertiary institutions offer. It will even be better if they are superior to what the conventional institutions offer. Hostel accommodation should be provided within the tuition facilities and social activities permitted and encouraged. This is to cater for the social element of the lives of young people, which they may not want to sacrifice in pursuit of professional credentials. Living on the campus of the tuition houses may satisfy young persons' desire to gain independence from their parents. The provision of such facilities may demand large expenditure. The effort should, however, be seen as an investment for which returns may be potentially high. Such returns may come in diverse forms including increased financial strength, reputational capital and improved contribution to the provision of the human resources Nigeria needs to address her development needs. The possibility of using massive open online courses (MOOC) as platforms that provide free resources that candidates can use to prepare for professional examinations should also be explored. The flexibility such courses offer and their affordability could permit higher education aspirants of diverse backgrounds to take advantage of the opportunities that professional bodies offer for higher education.
9. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Establishment working in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education would need to evaluate the diplomas awarded by professional bodies and accept them as basis for graduate level employment and career advancement.
10. It is important that the Federal Ministry of Education act through relevant education agencies in Nigeria such as the National Universities Commission to encourage tertiary institutions in the country that are yet to make provision for top-up and postgraduate programmes that graduates of professional programmes can undertake to do so. Universities in other countries can also be approached for such arrangements. This is to increase opportunities for

further studies available to holders of professional diplomas since the conventional tertiary institutions available in Nigeria may not have adequate capacity to accommodate all the graduates of professional programmes who may want to pursue higher studies in their areas of interest. This would also cater for the diverse interests that may exist.

11. Nigeria's parliament might consider enacting a law that will formally bring professional bodies under the definition of higher education and require employers to accord the credentials they award recognition for employment purposes.
12. It is important that employers appoint staff on the basis of merit in terms of the ability to perform the duties specified in the job specification. Their vacancy announcements should encourage both professional and academic certificate holders to apply. The selection process should favour only candidates with clearly defined competencies.
13. A deliberate effort should be made by professional bodies and relevant government agencies to educate parents on how professional bodies can facilitate access to higher education. The other influencers of young people's career decisions such as subject teachers, journalists and religious leaders should similarly be informed. It may be difficult for young people who lack financial independence to adopt innovative routes to higher education if significant persons in their lives do not provide encouragement.
14. Relevant education agencies in Nigeria need to invest in retraining teachers in the country's education system to adopt learner-centred approaches to teaching. This can help products of the system cope with professional examinations, which tend to demand self-motivation and independent-learning skills. This may enhance their self-efficacy and minimize the examination phobia that seems to be one of the factors discouraging young people from enrolling for professional examinations. This may also be an opportunity to reform the entire education system in Nigeria to make it more learner-focused and oriented towards dealing with the peculiar challenges facing the Nigerian society.
15. It is important that the counselling profession be given enhanced status in the Nigerian education system. The training and infrastructure provided for

school counsellors should reflect the needs of all the stakeholders whom they have a responsibility to help. It may be necessary to use a new parliamentary legislation to achieve this. The United Kingdom's government which is promoting multiple pathways to higher education offers an example of a policy that Nigeria could borrow from (Arnstein, 2016). Information on alternative pathways to higher education including how professional examinations can facilitate access to higher education should be included in the curriculum for counsellors' training and education.

16. Professional bodies should enable their individual members and affiliate organizations to give awards to outstanding secondary school graduates and offer them fee-free professional examinations.
17. Professional bodies in Nigeria should join relevant international organizations and benchmark their counterparts in other countries who have good management models they can emulate. This is to also improve networking opportunities for their members, increase their visibility and make them more attractive for member retention and to encourage young people to join them.
18. Professional bodies in Nigeria need to consider learning from the experience of Super Professional Body (SPB). They appear to be doing relatively well especially in terms of student recruitment. They may be willing to share their good practices with other professional bodies if approached.
19. In their relationship with higher education aspirants, professional bodies in Nigeria should avoid the flaws universities in Nigeria are criticized for. Their students should be treated as important stakeholders whose needs should dictate their decisions and actions. What higher education aspirants lack may be the motivation to study and pass professional examinations. They may not lack the cognitive capacity to cope with the intellectual demands of professional examinations. If they perceive professional examinations as having the capacity to meet their needs, they might be happy to sign up for them.
20. Above all, higher education aspirants should demonstrate the flexibility it takes to make a successful career by considering alternative routes to the achievement of their career goals when their preferred options have become unrealistic. The successful management of their careers is ultimately, their

responsibility (Greenhouse et al., 2000). This should not detract from the need for other stakeholders especially relevant government agencies such as the Federal Ministry of Education and JAMB to re-examine current higher education provisions in Nigeria and implement innovative and realistic strategies for enhancing access to higher education in the country. The belief and insistence that current arrangements are the best possible may amount to defence of a conviction that has been contradicted by evidence (Galef, 2016). People who achieve optimal results for themselves and their societies tend to demonstrate a growth mind-set that enables them to adopt new ways of solving problems when evidence supports them (Dweck, 2012).

The findings and recommendations that have emerged from this study seem to have advanced the frontiers of knowledge with respect to access to higher education in Nigeria and the role professional bodies can play in facilitating it. The next section outlines some areas where the study has pushed back the boundaries of knowledge and which may justify the resources and effort that have been put into its conduct.

7.3. The Study's Contribution to Knowledge

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first time that a study focussed on access to Higher Education from the viewpoint of key stakeholders in Nigeria has been conducted. This is a highly topical issue in the country at the moment and it is hoped that the findings of this study will be able to contribute to policy discussion

The following contributions this study has made to knowledge have not been arranged in order of importance. The context of their discussion and use as well as the particular stakeholders who may benefit from their application will determine the value that can be imposed on them. The value of the contributions is likely to increase as the level of analysis moves from the micro level where the individual higher education aspirant is to the macro level where education policy makers and administrators in Nigeria are.

- A. Access to higher education in Nigeria is generally problematic and may carry implications for equity and justice in the country. Higher education applicants' rejection rate has been revealed by this study to be 85% (see Figure 6.4) and may get worse as a result of high secondary school graduate rate which is now about 2 million (see Table 6.4).

University education is the preferred form of higher education in Nigeria, a country where polytechnics and colleges of education including those that are affiliated to universities are unpopular among higher education aspirants (see Figure 6.2). The drive for human and social capital gains through university education which has become a major feature of the European, American and Asian socio-economic landscapes (Brown et al., 2011) appears to apply also to Nigeria. In line with the observations of Bourdieu (Calhoun et al., 1993), this study has shown that children from economically and socially advantaged backgrounds are likely to navigate their way to higher education with greater ease than their less fortunate peers in the Nigerian context.

- B. Education policy makers in Nigeria seem to be focusing their efforts on the realization of a merit-based and equitable distribution of conventional higher education places. Little or no effort seems to be directed towards using career advice to create awareness among higher education aspirants regarding alternative routes to higher education especially as it concerns the opportunities professional bodies in the country provide for higher education. Career management based on adequate information which scholars (Greenhouse et al., 2000) recommend does not seem to be a common practice in the Nigerian education system.
- C. The poor patronage of professional examinations in Nigeria may be traceable to factors such as lack of knowledge and understanding of how the system works on the part of higher education aspirants, and the perceived complexity of professional examinations, their relative high cost and lack of provision for the social needs of young people. This appears consistent with evidence (Rogers, 2003) which confirms

that ideas, products and services that are perceived by consumers to be complex, expensive and incompatible with their values tend to suffer from low adoption rate.

- D. The effort most of the professional bodies studied have put into promoting their examinations to higher education aspirants in Nigeria seems poor and the media they are employing for this not evidence-based. Promoting the examinations directly to higher education aspirants in secondary schools using interpersonal communication channels and internet-based media may enhance the take-up rate of professional examinations by higher education aspirants in Nigeria. It is now known that marketing communication practitioners who use traditional media exclusively when promoting ideas, products and services to young people may have only little result to show for their efforts (Fill, 2013).
- E. The memoranda of understanding which some of the professional bodies studied have signed with some of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria may be adding to the value higher education aspirants attach to university education. Empirical evidence indicates that higher education aspirants and their parents tend to settle for career routes that give them the advantages of speed and convenience (Reynolds, 2014). Avoidance of difficult paths even when they promise the best results is a common human failing (Peck, 1990).
- F. Examination phobia seems to be a major affliction of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study which may suggest a re-examination of relevant teaching and learning policies and practices in the Nigerian education system.
- G. Going by the positive reactions the presentation of this study's results has attracted at the conferences the researcher has attended, they seem to have good potential for considerable impact on access to higher education in Nigeria and other countries with similar challenges. This researcher may not be able to estimate accurately the decisions of the study subjects that have already been affected by the reflections they have done following their participation in the study.

The study's value goes beyond the contributions it can potentially make to improved education policy and practice in Nigeria to include some ideas researchers who undertake similar endeavours in the future can utilize for efficiency and effectiveness in project management. The next section identifies some of these areas.

7.4. Study's Contribution to Research

The experience this researcher had while conducting this study suggests that:

1. Social networks can be very helpful when doing research that involves registrars of professional bodies in Nigeria, elites who have Personal Assistants and Secretaries, gatekeepers who may impose bureaucracy on the communication process. This researcher utilized some members of his social networks to secure appointments for interviews.
2. Investigations involving professional bodies in Nigeria, public education agencies, and secondary schools require plenty of time for negotiation of participation and appointments because of the bureaucracy that is inherent in the system. Good communication skills and social intelligence that can enable the researcher to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of people (Goleman, 1995) should be considered some of the critical success elements for effectiveness in the conduct of investigations of this nature. The study subjects should be helped to perceive the possible direct and indirect benefits of their participation for themselves, their organizations and the larger society. This should be done within the boundaries of research ethics. If their involvement lets them speak about subjects of interest to them and on matters they have expertise, they may give more time and help than the researcher may ask for. It is therefore critical that the researcher masters the skills for the use of the relevant data collection tools.
3. The **Reading University Researcher Development Programme (RRDP)** courses are very helpful. This researcher attended more than 60 of those sessions in the course of this study many of which focused on self-management. The awareness and skills such sessions provide can be very helpful when the researcher meets adverse conditions. Such awareness and skills helped this researcher significantly when he experienced an unanticipated significant change in his personal circumstances including the financial dimension. The personal lessons the researcher has learned in the course of the study are highlighted in the next section.

7.5. What the Researcher has learned

This researcher may have to write a book if he has to capture adequately the lessons of his doctoral research journey, which he has found very fulfilling. The following are only highlights and their order does not reflect any relative value:

1. Flexibility in the management of projects reflecting the realities the researcher faces. This researcher obtained approval from the University of Reading's Graduate School for a two-month suspension of his doctoral programme when he experienced a difficult change in his financial and family circumstances. The lessons the researcher learned on how to live on a lean budget while this project lasted are invaluable and are likely to serve him well in his future endeavours.
2. Renegotiation when circumstances change.
3. Professional elites in Nigeria may be interested in solving the country's development problems but may lack the knowledge and skills for resolving them. Application of motivational, attitudinal change and diffusion of innovation principles as enunciated by scholars such as Goleman (2007), Myers (2002b), and Rogers (2003) may produce the desired results.
4. The resources that the **European Educational Research Association (EERA)** provides through the annual **Emerging Researchers Summer School (ERSS)** are helpful. This researcher participated in the summer schools they organized in each of the three years of his doctoral research. The knowledge, skills, values and confidence he acquired through those summer schools although at some financial cost, helped in this research journey.
5. Research is interesting when supervision accommodates the researcher's peculiar circumstances while insisting on standards.
6. Those who seek help tend to get it. The patronage of services offered by the wider University of Reading Student Services can be helpful to doctoral researchers. It may be helpful to deliberately promote such services to doctoral researchers in the University.
7. The researcher's intrinsic motivation for doctoral research may be critical for success. The pursuit of a doctoral credential for its own sake may not be sufficient motivation for its successful completion.

8. Life can offer more to people who ask for what they need and are willing to accept rejection which this researcher has discovered does not diminish the individual who is focused on his/her goal and willing to make sacrifices to realize it. More opportunities may be available to people who tread uncommon paths. On reflection, it is this researcher's wish that he had asked for more from everyone he is associated with from the beginning of this project but is happy with what he has accomplished. Resilience is a priceless virtue.

There may be more to learn regarding the role that professional bodies in Nigeria can play in facilitating access to higher education. The time, word, and financial limitations of doctoral research have not permitted this investigator to deliver more than is contained in this thesis. The next section will discuss some areas this researcher considers relevant to the issues raised in this thesis and which may be beneficial to stakeholders for further research.

7.6. Areas for Further Research

It is likely to be helpful if studies can be conducted for the purposes of illuminating the following areas that this investigation could not examine in depth:

1. The factors that may account for interest or lack of interest of higher education aspirants in Nigeria in other routes to higher education such as Online Study, Open University, General Certificate of Education Advanced Level examination, and Study Abroad. The learning that will follow such knowledge may help managers of those routes to higher education do their jobs more efficiently and effectively.
2. How and why the various stakeholders influence the career decisions of higher education aspirants in Nigeria. The outcome of such an investigation may be useful to change agents who are interested in efficient and effective approaches to the promotion of innovative approaches to higher education.
3. What accounts for the seeming phobia that students in the Nigerian education system have regarding examinations? Finding answer(s) to such a question may be critical for education reforms that can minimize the problem of access to higher education.
4. The macro variables (which the other professional bodies may not be able to control) that may partly explain the achievements of Super Professional Body (SPB). The outcome of such an investigation may help stakeholders especially governments at

various levels in the country to take more informed decisions and actions on how to improve young persons' access to higher education

5. The competencies of graduates of professional bodies as contrasted with comparable competencies of graduates of conventional tertiary institutions. The results of such a study may help Human Resources practitioners to make informed selection decisions and carry implications for how academic and professional programmes are perceived.
6. Replication of this study in other countries and comparing the results that will emerge from developing and developed countries and identifying the factors that may account for any differences.
7. Evaluation of the training, competencies, and conditions of service of Nigerian school counsellors with a view to improving the quality of service they render to higher education aspirants.

This researcher hopes that studies are conducted before long to address the 7 issues identified. The next section outlines some of the limitations of this study.

7.7. Limitations of the Study

It is not impossible that the following factors might carry implications for how much any one can extrapolate from the results of this study:

1. Case Study and Sample size- The number of institutions and higher education aspirants and other stakeholders who participated in this study could have been improved upon if the researcher had more time, human, and financial resources. Of the approximate 2 million young people who graduate from secondary schools in Nigeria annually, only 213 of them participated in this study. It may be reasonable to believe that those higher education aspirants who could not share their ideas and experiences with this researcher may have interesting and useful stories to tell. The stories this study could not elicit on grounds of time, manpower and financial constraints might have enhanced its findings. A similar point can be made for the professional bodies, counsellors, parents and other stakeholders whose ideas this study could not elicit. Higher education aspirants from diverse backgrounds and from four secondary schools were purposively chosen to participate in this study to minimize the implications of small sample size for the results achievable. This provision may not invalidate the need for caution with respect to representativeness

of the sample taken and extrapolation of the findings of the study to other settings (Birley and Moreland, 1998).

2. The findings of this study are largely about the attitudes of the study subjects to alternative routes to higher education in Nigeria. Although attitude may be one of the predictors of behaviour, situational factors can sometimes influence behaviour in a direction that is not in consonance with attitude (Myers, 2002b). A longitudinal study may provide data that can indicate the extent to which the attitudes revealed by this study have resulted in behaviour.
3. What this researcher as an established education practitioner in Nigeria knows about the country's education system and its larger economy might have influenced the conduct of the study in ways that may not be obvious. The researcher, however, hopes that such knowledge has worked to the advantage of the study. He has conducted this study for impact, not just for a doctoral credential and did his best to obtain (evidence-based) results that can help his country resolve a problem he considers a major impediment to development. His research methodology and results have been well received at the conferences he has had the opportunity to participate in. It is hoped that the limitations identified above will not diminish the faith stakeholders have in the outcome of this study. The data presented in this thesis have been provided by a significant fraction of the registrars of professional bodies in Nigeria and school counsellors who possess the experience and credentials that may be comparable to what applies to certified counsellors in the Nigerian school system. The average age of the higher education aspirants who participated in this study is also comparable to the average age of higher education aspirants in Nigeria, a country where the education policy requires young people to finish secondary school at the age of 18 years.

This researcher notes finally that the complaints, protests and controversies that were associated with JAMB's conduct of the 2016 UTME (Okoeki, 2016) and the Federal Ministry of Education's response to them (Ikpefan, 2016a) suggest that this study has addressed one of the major problems afflicting many individuals and families in Nigeria. Its results and recommendations may provide comfort to them if taken seriously and implemented. Scrapping of Post-UTME which the country's Minister of Education announced on June 2, 2016 seems to have swept the demand and supply disequilibrium that is at the root of the higher education access challenge in the country under the carpet. The problem may not be

wished away. The information contained in this thesis may be pointing in the direction of one of the major ways to navigate the country out of the challenge.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Schedule (For School Counsellor)

Thanks for accepting to grant me this interview where we will discuss some career issues affecting the higher education aspirants in your school. The tape recorder I have here is to help me record our interaction accurately for proper analysis. The data you provide me will be treated strictly in line with the information sheet I provided you. So your anonymity and confidential handling of the data I collect from you are guaranteed in line with the approval received from the University of Reading's Research Ethics Committee.

- 1) Please mention the kinds of task you are involved in here on a typical day
- 2) Does your official role include classroom teaching of an examination subject?
- 3) Who do you consider to be the major influencers of the higher education access choices made by students in your school? Probe: Why is this so?
- 4) Which route to higher education do your students patronize the most?
- 5) What do you think your students believe professional bodies do?
- 6) Do your students think that they can have anything to do with professional bodies at this stage of their career development? Probe if yes: What could that be?
- 7) What do you think are the conditions an individual needs to meet before a typical professional body will register him/her for their examinations? Prompt: provide accurate information if response is inaccurate including (i) the fact that most professional bodies in Nigeria accept senior school certificate as minimum academic requirement for student admission, (ii) the acceptance of professional certificates for direct access to higher education and (iii) the requirement that those who aspire to practice most of the professions they regulate have to first be members of those professional bodies. Do you think the average school counsellor is aware of those possibilities?

- 8) Is writing of relevant professional examinations usually among the routes patronized by students in your school? Probe if yes: Which professional examinations?
- 9) What do you think about professional exams as a route to higher education?
- 10) Do you know why many young people in Nigeria have difficulty accessing higher education?
- 11) What do you think about the state of career service available to higher education aspirants?
- 12) Do you think you have enough time and other resources to access and provide adequate career information to the students in your school?
- 13) Do professional bodies (like Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, Chartered Institute of Bankers etc.) come here to educate your students on what they do including the exams they conduct? Probe for specifics if yes, asking for the information they provide.
- 14) (Ask if this is not currently the case) Are you likely to include information on professional bodies and their examinations in the career information you provide your students from now onwards?
- 15) What is your academic background if you do not mind?
- 16) For how long have you held this position here?
- 17) How many years of total counselling experience do you have?
- 18) Are there other counsellors in this school? Probe: for numbers if yes
- 19) What is the student population of this school?
- 20) Is there anything you would like to add before we conclude this interaction?

Many thanks for your time. I would like to confirm that you will not be identified with the views you have expressed in this interview. I can send you a summary of the study report when it is ready if you would like to have it and give me your email address.

Appendix 2- Interview Schedule (For Registrar of Professional Body)

- Interview to be conducted in the Registrar's office

Thanks for accepting to grant me this interview where we will discuss some career issues affecting the higher education aspirants in Nigeria. The tape recorder I have here is to help me record our interaction accurately for proper analysis. The data you provide me will be

treated strictly in line with the information sheet I provided you. So your anonymity and confidential handling of the data I collect from you are guaranteed in line with the approval received from the University of Reading's Research Ethics Committee.

- 1) If you do not mind, please explain the purpose for which this organization was established
- 2) Is there any difference between the training you offer and what tertiary academic institutions offer their students? Prompt: is there any difference between academic and professional training? What kinds of people deliver your training? What kinds of people attend such programmes and why? Are non-tertiary graduates barred from participation?
- 3) Is there any relationship between the training you do and the services tertiary academic institutions offer their students?
- 4) What is the current distribution of your membership across the various grades of membership you have?
- 5) What do you consider to be the objective you are pursuing with the curriculum for your professional examinations? Prompt: What are the modules candidates are examined on?
- 6) What is the minimum qualification candidates are required to meet for admission to write your professional examinations? Probe: What informed this?
- 7) Do you think that the average young person in secondary school knows that this is the case?
- 8) How do the young people in secondary school learn of your professional examinations?
- 9) To what extent would you say you are satisfied with how much secondary school students know about your programmes? Prompt: Do you think they know as much as they should know about your programmes?
- 10) Can the situation be improved upon? Prompt: How
- 11) Is it possible there may be reasons why young people who just finished secondary school may not want to enrol for your exams? Prompt: What could they be?
- 12) Are there benefits a young person who just finished secondary school could derive from writing your examinations?
- 13) Do you think they know about those benefits? Probe if answer is not in the affirmative: Why is that they do not know?

- 14) What effect do you think improved awareness of your examinations among secondary school students can have on your relationship with them?
- 15) Is there a unit of your organization that promotes your programmes to secondary school students? Probe if yes: What is the name?
- 16) Are professional bodies in Nigeria relevant to the resolution of higher education access problem young people face in Nigeria? Probe: How?
- 17) Are there further comments you would like to make regarding the issues we have discussed?
- 18) What is your position in this organization?
- 19) How long have you been in this position?

Many thanks for your time. I would like to confirm that you will not be identified with the views you have expressed in this interview. When would you suggest I come in to pick up the completed data sheet?

Appendix 3- Professional Bodies Membership Data Sheet
PROFESSIONAL BODY MEMBERSHIP/ENROLLMENT POSITION AS AT.....
Name of Professional Body:

S/N	CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP	NUMBER	Annual Subscription Payable (Naira)	Remarks
1	Student Members			
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
	Total as at:			

Appendix 4- National Demand and Supply of Higher Education Spaces in Nigeria

2004-2014 (to be supplied by JAMB from their Records)

S/N	YEAR	Total number of Applicants	Admissions Offered
1	2014		
2	2013		
3	2012		
4	2011		
5	2010		
6	2009		
7	2008		
8	2007		
9	2006		
10	2005		
11	2004		

**Appendix 5- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
FOR UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR**

1. Have you always found it easy to recruit candidates for the various courses you offer?
2. To what extent would you say there is a difference in the demand for university education in Nigeria and the demand for the programmes offered by polytechnics and colleges of education?
3. What accounts for that difference?
4. Is it possible for holders of certificates awarded by Professional Bodies to secure admission into this university on the basis of such certification?
5. Any examples in terms of courses where this is possible?
6. To what extent do you think higher education aspirants in Nigeria are aware of this?
7. To what extent do you think Professional Bodies in Nigeria promote the exams they conduct and the programmes they offer?
8. Judging from your experience, how much career counselling do you think higher education aspirants in Nigeria receive from the counsellors in the secondary schools they attend?
9. What counsel do you have for higher education aspirants who are having difficulty accessing higher education?
10. Do you see the situation in terms of access to higher education in Nigeria getting better or worse? Please explain
11. Do you have an idea regarding why some courses are more in demand than others?
12. Many thanks for your time. When do you suggest I come to pick up the data on the demand and supply of undergraduate programmes in this institution?

Appendix 6- DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF UNDERGRADUATE SPACES 2004 – 2014

(To be supplied by a sample university from their records)

S/N	YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER OF THOSE ADMITTED
1	2014		
2	2013		
3	2012		
4	2011		
5	2010		
6	2009		
7	2008		
8	2007		
9	2006		
10	2005		
11	2004		

**Appendix 7- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
FOR HEAD OF NATIONAL OFFICE of an examination board**

1. What is the mandate of WAEC?
2. What would you say are the pleasures and challenges of running the WAEC National Office in Nigeria?
3. What are your observations regarding the rate of enrolment for the Senior School Certificate Examination that you conduct?
4. What could be the implications of this rate of enrolment for the demand for higher education in Nigeria?
5. Do you think adequate provisions are being made to provide enough higher education spaces for Nigerians given the current enrolment figures for the examination you conduct?
6. What would you recommend as the way forward regarding giving more Nigerians access to higher education?
7. What do you think about using the platform of professional bodies to give more Nigerians access to higher education?
8. Is there any other idea you would like to share with me on access to higher education in Nigeria?
9. Many thanks for your time.

I would like to confirm that you will not be identified with the views you have expressed in this interview. When would you suggest I come in to pick up the completed data sheet?

**Appendix 8- SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION ENROLLMENT (Nigeria)
2004-2014 (to be generated by WAEC from their records)**

S/N	YEAR	May/June	November/December
1	2014		
2	2013		
3	2012		
4	2011		
5	2010		
6	2009		
7	2008		
8	2007		
9	2006		
10	2005		
11	2004		

Appendix 9- Focus Group Setting and Discussion Schedule

Focus Group Discussion (Involving 6 senior secondary school iii students from each participating school) - To be conducted in an office/classroom provided by the school.

The Setting and Conditions:

- Refreshment items (fruits, water and sweets) at the centre of the table
- Tape recorder at the centre of the table (its use to be explained by the researcher)
- Participants to wear name tags to facilitate interaction during the discussion
- Participants to sit at a round table
- Three research assistants (trained by the researcher) will be involved for logistics including management of recording equipment
- Information Sheets will be provided and Consent forms administered
- Short questionnaire asking for relevant bio data will be administered- Class, Age, and Gender
- The discussion will last an hour
- The researcher will moderate
- Thank you gifts (books) to be given to each participant at the end of the discussion and before departure from the discussion venue

Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Thanks for accepting to participate in this discussion where we will discuss some career issues affecting the higher education aspirants in Nigeria. The tape recorder I have here is to help me record our interaction accurately for proper analysis. The data you provide me will be treated strictly in line with the Information Sheet I provided you. So your anonymity and confidential handling of the data I collect from you are guaranteed in line with the approval received from the University of Reading's Research Ethics Committee. Your parents and school authorities won't be told about the views you express here. So:

- Speak your mind, just as you feel, the truth that you know
- Respect the views of the other participants although you are not required to agree with them

-I am not expecting any particular answer; just what you know and how you feel

The other people we have in this room are my research assistants who are to help me manage this venue and the equipment I am employing. They are not participating in the discussion and know that the views you express here are to be handled confidentially.

Feel free to take any of the refreshment items we have here at any time during the discussion.

- 1) Let us meet everyone. Let us know your name and class
- 2) Who among you has made up his or her mind to go for higher education after your studies in this school?
- 3) Do you have an idea of what you want to study and what would that be?
- 4) What is your understanding of higher education? Prompt: What does it mean to you and why do you want to experience it?
- 5) Where would you study your course of interest? Prompt: Which institution and perhaps, country? Why?
- 6) How did you arrive at this decision? Prompt: Strictly your decision or some people contributed? Who can help us with why this is the case?
- 7) How do you intend to secure admission to the institution you are aspiring to get into? Prompt: Will you write some exams; how else?
- 8) Do you have any worries about how you will get into higher education and what could they be?
- 9) How many of you knew about professional bodies before I talked about them the other day and what was it you knew about them?
- 10) What do you think about their exams now? Probe: Would you want to write any of those examinations and why?
- 11) Does your school counsellor provide you information on professional exams? Probe depending on participants' response; finding out how they receive career information: seminars, flyers, one on one counselling?
- 12) Apart from the information I provided you the other day, how else have you received information about professional bodies? Prompt: Do they come here to speak to you or some other people talk to you about them?

- 13) Write on the paper you have the various options you will consider with respect to higher education- start with your number one and what you consider to be your best option and end with your last option (least preferred)
- 14) Are there some things anyone would want to say about the issues we have discussed before we conclude?

Thanks for your contributions. I confirm that you will not be identified with the opinions you have expressed in this discussion. The book you will get from my assistants is to thank you for your contributions during our discussion. It's my hope that the ideas you will get from it will inspire you to attain great heights in life. Bye and do enjoy the rest of your studies in this school.

Appendix 10

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

I am a Doctoral Researcher at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom. My study involves research into how young people in Nigeria aspiring to benefit from higher education go about pursuing that objective. This questionnaire is one of the tools I am using to get information that can help me reach conclusions in the study. The information I get in the process of the research might help all the parties concerned understand the issues involved and inform the relevant decisions they might want to take in the future.

You have been selected to participate in the study because you are within the age bracket of those who aspire to higher education and at the level of education with the largest number of those aspiring to higher education. Your opinion is therefore considered relevant to the understanding of the issues involved.

I will therefore be grateful if you are able to complete this questionnaire, return it to me and wait to hear the information I will provide you on related career issues. Your participation is purely voluntary. You are not required to indicate your name on this questionnaire. This is to guarantee that your name is not identified with the opinions you will express which will be handled confidentially. This questionnaire has been reviewed and approved by the University of Reading's Research Ethics Committee to ensure that no negative consequence comes to you as a result of your participation in the study. You can withdraw from participation at any time without any negative consequence. Further information on this study can be obtained from:

This researcher is not seeking any particular opinion. Feel free to express your opinion and how you feel about the issues raised in this questionnaire provided you are indicating the truth that you know. Thanks for your help.

1. Please mark X in the appropriate box to indicate which of the following **is a route** through which a senior school certificate holder can get to higher education?

Study abroad Open University

Professional examination A' level Examination

JAMB UTME Online Study

None of the above All of the above

2. Please mark X in the appropriate box to indicate which of the following **is not a route** through which a senior school certificate holder can get to higher education?

Study abroad Open University

Professional examination A' level Examination

JAMB UTME Online Study

None of the above All of the above

3. Please mark X in the appropriate box to indicate whether or not you are considering any of the following for the purpose of getting to higher education?

Study abroad Yes No Not Sure

Open University Yes No Not Sure

Professional examination Yes No Not Sure

A' level Examination Yes No Not Sure

JAMB UTME Yes No Not Sure

Online Study Yes No Not Sure

Other (please specify) -----

4. Does your school have a Counsellor? Yes No

5. Have you ever attended a programme in your school where a professional body made a presentation on the opportunities they have for senior school certificate holders?

Yes No

6. Have you ever attended a programme outside your school where a professional body made a presentation on the opportunities they have for senior school certificate holders?

Yes No

In this section A= Great Influence

B= Moderate Influence

C=Small Influence

D= No Influence

7. Now fill in the following boxes (using any of letters A-D) to indicate the weight of the influence the corresponding persons/media will have on your choice of how to further your education (after secondary school):

Television	<input type="text"/>	School Principal	<input type="text"/>	Friend (s)	<input type="text"/>
My Subject Teacher	<input type="text"/>	Religious Leader	<input type="text"/>	Sibling	<input type="text"/>
Internet	<input type="text"/>	Radio	<input type="text"/>	Parent	<input type="text"/>
School Counsellor	<input type="text"/>	Newspaper	<input type="text"/>		

Other (Please specify) -----

In this section A= Great Extent

B= Moderate Extent

C= Minimal Extent

D= No Influence

8. Using any of letters A-D, indicate in the appropriate box the extent to which the following will influence your choice of route to higher education:

Ease of passing the exam	<input type="text"/>	Cost	<input type="text"/>
Where my friends are	<input type="text"/>	Study from home	<input type="text"/>
Comments of people around you	<input type="text"/>	Study away from home	<input type="text"/>

Other (please specify) -----

9. Are you aspiring to get into higher education within one year of finishing your senior school certificate exam? Yes No

10. In this section, using figures **1, 2, 3, 4, 5,** and **6** rank order the following options to indicate in the corresponding boxes your preferred route to higher education where **1** is the best route through which you can achieve your objective and **6** is the least realistic route through which you can achieve your objective:

Study abroad

Open University

Professional examination

A' level Examination

JAMB UTME

Online Study

Your Gender: Female Male Class ----- Age -----years old.

11. Why do you want to have access to higher education? Use this space to answer that question and provide any other information you think might be relevant to the subject of this questionnaire:

Thanks for your time. Please return this questionnaire immediately to the researcher.

Appendix 11
CAREER INFORMATION SHEET

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

UNIVERSAL TERTIARY MATRICULATION EXAMINATION (UTME)

This is an entrance examination which candidates aspiring to be admitted into the first year of Bachelor's Degree, National Diploma and National Certificate of Education Programmes in Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education sit for. It is conducted once in a year. The cut-off marks for admission into Universities are generally higher than the cut-off marks for admission into Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. Success rate for admission into the University through UTME is about 10%. This means that about 9 out of every 10 candidates who seek admission into the university through it are unlikely to succeed. So over one million candidates who write the exam annually fail to achieve their aim of getting into the university for higher education. The pass rate is generally higher for those who seek admission into polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education through UTME although the competition for admission into the polytechnics in highest demand like Yaba College of Technology remains high.

General Certificate of Education Advance Level (GCE A' Level)

This examination is conducted by the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom (UK). It can be written in Nigeria. Candidates for this examination tend to study for about two (2) years after their secondary education before they write it. If you obtain good grades in about three relevant subjects in this examination, you will have no need for UTME. The University of your choice will offer you a direct entry admission (starting at 200 level – 2nd year) for the course they believe your grades have qualified you for. Only a few schools in Nigeria offer tuition for this examination but any candidate who obtains the required grades in senior school certificate and can afford the cost of preparing for and entering for this examination is allowed to sit for it.

Professional Examinations

These are examinations conducted by Professional Bodies (*see the attached for a list of some of them*) to determine those who are qualified to practice the professions they regulate. The examinations are usually in stages. Candidates who pass the last stage of the examination are normally given licenses to practice the relevant profession. People who practice the relevant

professions without such licenses are usually considered as amateurs and may be denied certain levels of employment for lack of license to practice. Applicants who possess up to five (5) relevant credits in their senior school certificate (SSC) are usually admitted to write such examinations. This means that there are no entrance examinations which you have to sit for to be admitted to do such programmes. You can study at your own pace and for most of the professional bodies. You can complete the entire professional programme within three years if you do not fail any stage. Some of the professional programmes can be completed within a shorter period. Those who pass the final stage of such examinations are awarded certificates that are also licenses to practice the relevant profession. The examinations are open to all interested persons including senior school certificate holders as well as undergraduates and graduates of tertiary institutions who may need such certificates to complement their academic credentials in pursuit of choice employment. Candidates who start such programmes with Senior School Certificate and complete them may apply successfully to universities for post graduate programmes; for example, Master's Degree. Some of such successful candidates may prefer relevant **top-up programmes** in the University to enable them earn a first degree (within a year or two) before proceeding to the Master's level. For the avoidance of doubt most professional programmes can be done alongside academic programmes in tertiary institutions especially by candidates who are studious. This means that studying for professional examinations does not prevent you from including other options in your strategy to access higher education. The preparation for professional examinations may enhance your ability to pass other examinations that can give you access to higher education. You get a certificate for every stage of a professional examination you pass. Most people who pass all the stages of a professional examination successfully consider it a major achievement. You can prepare for and write a professional examination while in paid or self-employment especially if you can manage your time well.

Ask the Researcher to clarify any information in this paper that you do not understand. Return the paper to him if you have understood the information this paper contains and complete the questionnaire he will give you.

**SOME PROFESSIONAL BODIES WHO ACCEPT SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (SSC) HOLDERS
FOR THEIR EXAMINATIONS**

1. Nigerian Institute of Management
2. Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria
3. National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria
4. Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria
5. Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria
6. Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria
7. Nigerian Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management
8. Nigerian Institute of Public Relations
9. Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers
10. Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria

Appendix 12

Codes for Data Analysis

Career Option	Weight (Code)
1	6
2	5
3	4
4	3
5	2
6	1
Degree of Influence	Weight (Code)
Great Extent	3
Moderate Extent	2
Minimal Extent	1
No Influence	0
Theme	Code
Successful Career	1
Making Family and Friends Proud	2
To make a Difference	3
To learn More	4
To Help Society	5
To be Like Mates	6
Higher Education is a Necessity	7