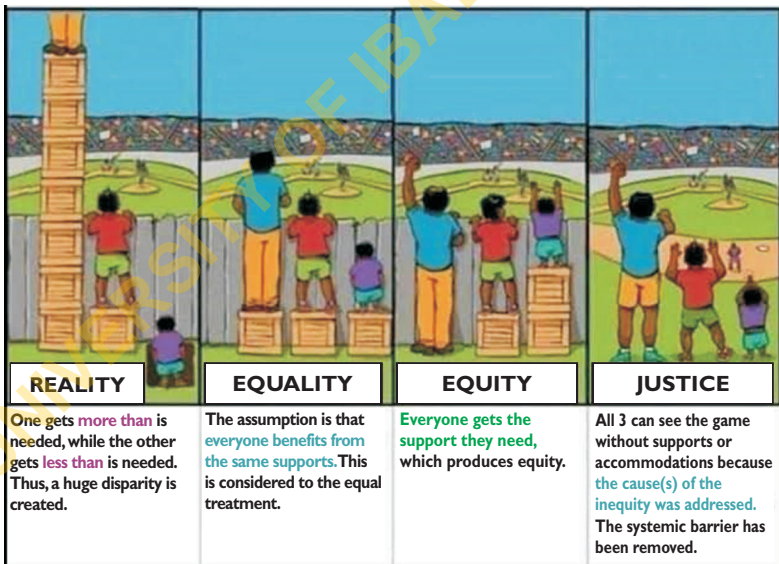


Policy Brief on

Educationally-Less-Developed-States as a Criterion for Selecting Undergraduate Admission Candidates into Nigerian Federal Universities



Abel Idowu Olayinka

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The Postgraduate College,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
Website: <http://www.pgcollege.ui.edu.ng>

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Published by:

The Postgraduate College, University of Ibadan,

Ibadan, Nigeria

Website: <http://www.pgcollege.ui.edu.ng>

First Published 2025

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ISBN: 978-978-775-812-0 (Online)

978-978-775-813-7 (Print)

Printed by:

Artsmostfare Prints

E-mail: artsmostfareprints@yahoo.com

Abstract

Interrogating data published by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) over the period 2017 to 2023 we present quantitative, verifiable and objective assessment of addressing the question of equity and justice in the adoption of Educationally-Less-Developed-States (ELDS) as a criterion for the selection of candidates for admission into undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Federal Universities.

Some of the 23 states on the current list of ELDS, in particular Kwara and Kogi, have posted excellent results and are now in the First Quartile justifying that they ought to be taken off the list. The same applies to Nasarawa which is in the Second Quartile. On the other hand, Lagos and the Federal Capital Territory are in the Fourth Quartile and if the ELDS is to be retained both should be included in the list. The National Council on Education should take a closer look at this recommendation with a view to implementing same.

Keywords: Access to University Education, Equity, Justice.

Access to University Education in Nigeria

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a central coordinating agency for admission into the nation's universities in 1977. One of the three criteria for admission was the Educationally-Less-Developed-States (ELDS). It is a sort of affirmative action meant to address the perceived disadvantage suffered by some states thus promoting equity in the country. As of the time the ELDS was introduced as one of the criteria for university admission in the late 1970s, there were only six first generation universities in the country, based in Ibadan, Nsukka, Lagos, Ile-Ife, Zaria and Benin City, while the second generation universities were just being established in Calabar, Jos, Maiduguri, Ilorin, Port Harcourt, and Kano.

Happily, there is now a widespread geographical distribution of Federal universities, totalling 72, with each state having at least one. In the same vein, it is gratifying that the various states have risen to the challenge of widening access to university admission places. Currently, 66 State universities with each state owning at least one. (www.nuc.edu.ng)

ELDS-based admission is driven by the goal of promoting equity, diversity, and social inclusion. It seeks to create a more diverse and inclusive student body and enhance social mobility. The ELDS carries a weight of 20% during admission.

The other two primary types of admission criteria currently employed in selecting admission candidates into Nigerian federal-owned universities (Omeje et. al., 2016) are Merit and Catchment areas. **Merit-based Admission** prioritizes the admission of the most qualified students based on academic performance and examination scores. Merit is assigned a weight of 45% during the selection process. On the other hand, **Catchment-based Admission** is assigned a weight of 35% for selecting admission candidates. Catchment areas are specific geographical regions surrounding universities or colleges. Catchment-based admission ensures that students from the immediate and neighbouring states in which a university is situated have a sense of belonging in terms of access to higher education opportunities.

The following 23 states are listed as the ELDS in the country (Table 1):

Table 1: Current list of ELDS, 2025

| S. No | State | S. No | State |
|-------|----------|-------|-------------|
| 1 | Kano | 13 | Gombe |
| 2 | Adamawa | 14 | Plateau |
| 3 | Niger | 15 | Borno |
| 4 | Jigawa | 16 | Kwara |
| 5 | Bauchi | 17 | Kaduna |
| 6 | Rivers | 18 | Cross River |
| 7 | Nasarawa | 19 | Benue |
| 8 | Bayelsa | 20 | Ebonyi |
| 9 | Katsina | 21 | Taraba |
| 10 | Kogi | 22 | Kebbi |
| 11 | Zamfara | 23 | Yobe |
| 12 | Sokoto | | |

There is no empirical data to ascertain how the list of ELDS was arrived at. Moreover, it is not likely that whichever parameters were employed when the idea was first mooted nearly five decades ago would have remained constant over time. We have attempted to look at current data for university admission as published by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). In terms of the number of applications it received during the period from 2018 to 2023, the outlook is as shown in Table 2.

There has not been any significant change in the total number of UTME applications from the top states, such as Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Imo and Delta over the period under review. The same trend was observed for the states at the lower rung of the ladder such as, Zamfara, Sokoto, Yobe, Kebbi, Jigawa and Bayelsa, as well as the FCT.

A spatial distribution of the ranking of the number of UTME applicants for the 36 states and the FCT in 2022 is shown in Figure 1.

Table 2: Statistics of the Number of UTME Application by States of Origin, 2018 to 2023

| 2023 | State | Number of Applications in 2023 | Position of States in the Respective Years | | | |
|------|-------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 |
| 1st | Oyo | 106,295 | 1 st | 1 st | 1 st | 2 nd |
| 2nd | Osun | 98,300 | 2 nd | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd |
| 3rd | Ogun | 98,173 | 3 rd | 5 th | 4 th | 4 th |
| 4th | Imo | 80,851 | 4 th | 3 rd | 2 nd | 1 st |
| 5th | Delta | 79,794 | 5 th | 7 th | 5 th | 5 th |
| 6th | Kogi | 74,762 | 6 th | 9 th | 10 th | 14 th |
| 7th | Kwara | 65,158 | 13 th | 10 th | 11 th | 11 th |
| 8th | Edo | 63,973 | 11 th | 12 th | 12 th | 7 th |
| 9th | Anambra | 63,245 | 9 th | 11 th | 9 th | 6 th |
| 10th | Benue | 62,907 | 8 th | 8 th | 8 th | 12 th |
| 11th | Ondo | 62,885 | 10 th | 15 th | 15 th | 10 th |
| 12th | Kaduna | 60,741 | 7 th | 4 th | 6 th | 8 th |
| 13th | Enugu | 56,791 | 14 th | 14 th | 14 th | 13 th |
| 14th | Akwa Ibom | 51,138 | 15 th | 13 th | 13 th | 15 th |
| 15th | Kano | 47,935 | 12 th | 6 th | 7 th | 9 th |
| 16th | Ekiti | 44,322 | 17 th | 19 th | 18 th | 18 th |
| 17th | Rivers | 42,701 | 19 th | 20 th | 19 th | 19 th |
| 18th | Lagos | 41,527 | 20 th | 24 th | 24 th | 21 st |
| 19th | Abia | 40,209 | 18 th | 17 th | 17 th | 16 th |
| 20th | Plateau | 37,044 | 16 th | 16 th | 16 th | 17 th |
| 21st | Nasarawa | 30,720 | 21 st | 18 th | 20 th | 20 th |
| 22nd | Cross River | 29,837 | 24 th | 22 nd | 22 nd | 22 nd |
| 23rd | Ebonyi | 25,142 | 26 th | 28 th | 27 th | 23 rd |
| 24th | Katsina | 24,548 | 22 nd | 21 st | 21 st | 24 th |
| 25th | Bauchi | 21,562 | 25 th | 25 th | 25 th | 28 th |
| 26th | Borno | 21,042 | 23 rd | 23 rd | 23 rd | 25 th |
| 27th | Gombe | 20,478 | 27 th | 26 th | 28 th | 27 th |
| 28th | Niger | 20,148 | 28 th | 27 th | 26 th | 26 th |
| 29th | Adamawa | 19,141 | 29 th | 29 th | 29 th | 30 th |
| 30th | Taraba | 18,181 | 30 th | 30 th | 30 th | 29 th |
| 31st | Bayelsa | 16,387 | 31 st | 32 nd | 32 nd | 31 st |
| 32nd | Jigawa | 16,177 | 32 nd | 31 st | 31 st | 32 nd |
| 33rd | Kebbi | 15,205 | 33 rd | 34 th | 34 th | 34 th |
| 34th | Yobe | 13,052 | 34 th | 33 rd | 33 rd | 33 rd |
| 35th | Sokoto | 12,053 | 35 th | 35 th | 35 th | 35 th |
| 36th | Zamfara | 6,420 | 37 th | 36 th | 36 th | 36 th |
| 37th | FCT | 6,203 | 36 th | 37 th | 37 th | 37 th |

(Source: <https://www.jamb.edu.ng>)

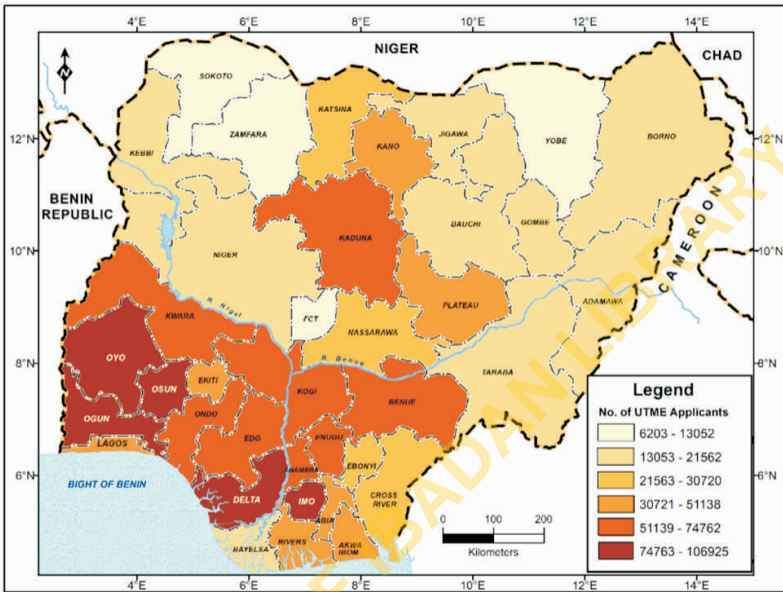


Figure 1: Map showing ranking of number of applicants for UTME per state in 2022
(Source: <https://www.jamb.edu.ng>)

Rather than using the raw figures of the number of applications in ranking the states on the basis of number of UTME applicants per state, a much fairer basis for comparison was embarked upon by considering the population of the various states (sub-nationalities). The National Bureau of Statistics published the sixth edition of its Demographic Statistical Bulletin population projection for the country for the period 2016 to 2019 in 2020 although only the 2018 and 2019 figures fall within the period of the current work. The total population in the various states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) for 2018 and 2019 was based on the 2006 population census figures and their 2019 projected populations. The respective 2019 population figures for the 36 states and the FCT were used for 2020 and 2021 in the absence of any other available population figures. If it is assumed that the annual population growth rate is fairly constant, then a minimal (insignificant) margin of

error in the analysis is plausible as presented here. The latest official population figures available for 2022 (<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/cities/>) were adopted for 2022 and 2023.

The ranking of the various states and the FCT when the number of UTME applicants is normalized in respect of the population is shown in Table 3. A comparison of Tables 5 and 6 shows that the ranking of the states has somewhat changed. A summary of the normalized ranking of the states from 2018 to 2023 is shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Normalised ranking of states on the basis of number of UTME applicants per million of population in 2022

| Ranking | State | 2022 Official Population Projection | Number of UTME Applicants | Number of UTME Applicants per Million of Population |
|---------|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1st | Osun | 4,435,800 | 98,300 | 22,160 |
| 2nd | Kwara | 3,551,000 | 65,158 | 18,349 |
| 3rd | Kogi | 4,466,800 | 74,762 | 16,737 |
| 4th | Ogun | 6,379,500 | 98,173 | 15,389 |
| 5th | Imo | 5,459,300 | 80,851 | 14,810 |
| 6th | Delta | 5,636,100 | 79,794 | 14,158 |
| 7th | Oyo | 7,976,100 | 106,925 | 13,405 |
| 8th | Edo | 4,777,000 | 63,973 | 13,392 |
| 9th | Ekiti | 3,592,200 | 44,322 | 12,339 |
| 10th | Enugu | 4,690,100 | 56,791 | 12,109 |
| 11th | Ondo | 5,316,600 | 62,885 | 11,829 |
| 12th | Nasarawa | 2,886,000 | 30,720 | 10,644 |
| 13th | Anambra | 5,953,500 | 63,245 | 10,623 |
| 14th | Akwa Ibom | 4,979,400 | 51,138 | 10,270 |
| 15th | Benue | 6,141,300 | 62,907 | 10,243 |
| 16th | Abia | 4,143,100 | 40,209 | 9,705 |
| 17th | Plateau | 4,717,300 | 37,044 | 7,853 |
| 18th | Ebonyi | 3,242,500 | 25,142 | 7,754 |
| 19th | Cross River | 4,406,200 | 29,837 | 6,771 |
| 20th | Kaduna | 9,032,200 | 60,741 | 6,725 |
| 21st | Bayelsa | 2,537,400 | 16,387 | 6,458 |
| 22nd | Rivers | 7,476,800 | 42,701 | 5,711 |

Cont'd

| Ranking | State | 2022 Official Population Projection | Number of UTME Applicants | Number of UTME Applicants per Million of Population |
|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 23rd | Gombe | 3,960,100 | 20,478 | 5,171 |
| 24th | Taraba | 3,609,800 | 18,181 | 5,037 |
| 25th | Adamawa | 4,902,100 | 19,141 | 3,905 |
| 26th | Yobe | 3,649,600 | 13,052 | 3,576 |
| 27th | Borno | 6,111,500 | 21,042 | 3,443 |
| 28th | Kano | 15,462,200 | 47,935 | 3,100 |
| 29th | Lagos | 13,491,800 | 41,527 | 3,078 |
| 30th | Niger | 6,783,300 | 20,148 | 2,970 |
| 31st | Kebbi | 5,563,900 | 15,205 | 2,733 |
| 32nd | Bauchi | 8,308,800 | 21,562 | 2,595 |
| 33rd | Katsina | 10,368,500 | 24,548 | 2,368 |
| 34th | Jigawa | 7,499,100 | 16,177 | 2,157 |
| 35th | FCT | 3,067,500 | 6,203 | 2,022 |
| 36th | Sokoto | 6,391,000 | 12,053 | 1,886 |
| 37th | Zamfara | 5,833,500 | 6,420 | 1,101 |

(Population figures from <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/cities>;
Accessed 27th January 2024)

Table 4: Normalised ranking of states on the basis of number of UTME applicants per million of population in the period from 2018-2023

| 2023 Position | State | Number of UTME Applicants per Million of Population | Position of states in the respective years | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 |
| 1st | Osun | 22,160 | 1st | 1st | 1st | 1st |
| 2nd | Kwara | 18,349 | 2nd | 2nd | 2nd | 2nd |
| 3rd | Kogi | 16,737 | 3rd | 3rd | 4th | 6th |
| 4th | Ogun | 15,389 | 6th | 8th | 9th | 9th |
| 5th | Imo | 14,810 | 4th | 4th | 3rd | 3rd |
| 6th | Delta | 14,158 | 5th | 6th | 6th | 4th |
| 7th | Oyo | 13,405 | 8th | 10th | 13th | 14th |
| 8th | Edo | 13,392 | 7th | 7th | 7th | 5th |
| 9th | Ekiti | 12,339 | 10th | 13th | 12th | 12th |
| 10th | Enugu | 12,109 | 9th | 9th | 8th | 7th |
| 11th | Ondo | 11,829 | 11 th | 15 th | 16 th | 11 th |
| 12th | Nasarawa | 10,644 | 12 th | 5 th | 5 th | 8 th |
| 13th | Anambra | 10,623 | 13 th | 14 th | 14 th | 10 th |
| 14th | Akwa Ibom | 10,270 | 16 th | 12 th | 10 th | 17 th |
| 15th | Benue | 10,243 | 14 th | 11 th | 11 th | 15 th |
| 16th | Abia | 9,705 | 15 th | 16 th | 15 th | 13 th |
| 17th | Plateau | 7,853 | 17 th | 17 th | 17 th | 18 th |
| 18th | Ebonyi | 7,754 | 18 th | 19 th | 18 th | 16 th |
| 19th | Cross River | 6,771 | 22 nd | 20 th | 20 th | 21 st |
| 20th | Kaduna | 6,725 | 19 th | 18 th | 19 th | 20 th |
| 21st | Bayelsa | 6,458 | 20 th | 21 st | 21 st | 19 th |
| 22nd | Rivers | 5,711 | 23 rd | 24 th | 24 th | 24 th |
| 23rd | Gombe | 5,171 | 21 st | 22 nd | 22 nd | 22 nd |
| 24th | Taraba | 5,037 | 24 th | 23 rd | 23 rd | 23 rd |
| 25th | Adamawa | 3,905 | 25 th | 27 th | 26 th | 26 th |
| 26th | Yobe | 3,576 | 28 th | 26 th | 27 th | 27 th |
| 27th | Borno | 3,443 | 26 th | 25 th | 25 th | 25 th |

Cont'd

| | | | | | | |
|------|---------|-------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 28th | Kano | 3,100 | 27 th | 28 th | 28 th | 28 th |
| 29th | Lagos | 3,078 | 33 rd | 36 th | 36 th | 34 th |
| 30th | Niger | 2,970 | 29 th | 29 th | 29 th | 29 th |
| 31st | Kebbi | 2,733 | 34 th | 32 nd | 32 nd | 32 nd |
| 32nd | Bauchi | 2,595 | 30 th | 30 th | 30 th | 30 th |
| 33rd | Katsina | 2,368 | 31 st | 31 st | 31 st | 31 st |
| 34th | Jigawa | 2,157 | 35 th | 33 rd | 33 rd | 33 rd |
| 35th | FCT | 2,022 | 32 nd | 34 th | 34 th | 35 th |
| 36th | Sokoto | 1,886 | 36 th | 35 th | 35 th | 36 th |
| 37th | Zamfara | 1,101 | 37 th | 37 th | 37 th | 37 th |

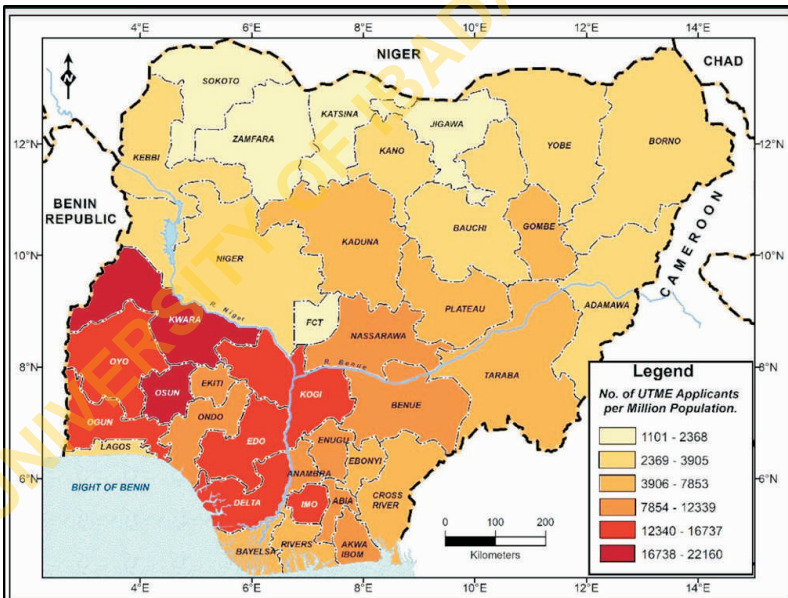


Figure 2: Map showing normalised ranking of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory on the basis of the number of applicants for UTME per Million Population in 2022

The foregoing spatial distribution of the normalised ranking of the states and the FCT (Figure 2) shows that Osun and Kwara States are the best performers, followed by Kogi, Ogun, Imo, Delta and Oyo States, respectively. Similarly, the worst ranked states comprised Zamfara, Sokoto, the FCT, Jigawa and Katsina.

Based on the analysis reported here, an attempt was made to group the 36 states and the FCT into four quartiles (Table 5).

Table 5: The Revised list of state performance from the normalised ranking of UTME applicants (as derived from this paper)

| Quartile 1 | | Quartile 2 | |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| Ranking | State | Ranking | State |
| 1 st | Osun | 10 th | Enugu |
| 2 nd | Kwara | 11 th | Ondo |
| 3 rd | Kogi | 12 th | Nasarawa |
| 4 th | Ogun | 13 th | Anambra |
| 5 th | Imo | 14 th | Akwa Ibom |
| 6 th | Delta | 15 th | Benue |
| 7 th | Oyo | 16 th | Abia |
| 8 th | Edo | 17 th | Plateau |
| 9 th | Ekiti | 18 th | Ebonyi |
| Quartile 3 | | Quartile 4 | |
| 19 th | Cross River | 28 th | Kano |
| 20 th | Kaduna | 29 th | Lagos |
| 21 st | Bayelsa | 30 th | Niger |
| 22 nd | Rivers | 31 st | Kebbi |
| 23 rd | Gombe | 32 nd | Bauchi |
| 24 th | Taraba | 33 rd | Katsina |
| 25 th | Adamawa | 34 th | Jigawa |
| 26 th | Yobe | 35 th | FCT |
| 27 th | Borno | 36 th | Sokoto |
| | | 37 th | Zamfara |

Policy Options

The current definition of Educationally-Less-Developed-States can neither promote equity nor social justice for candidates seeking admission into Nigerian Federal Universities as there is an urgent need for the National Council of Education to take another look at this. Osun, Kwara and Kogi States emerged in the overall first, second and third positions, respectively. Kwara and Kogi States in particular have performed very well, as both states are up till now classified as ELDS. Along with Nasarawa State which now occupies the 12th overall best position, these three states should no longer remain on the list of ELDS. Instead, the three states of Kwara, Kogi and Nasarawa should be replaced by Lagos State and the Federal Capital Territory. This may not be unconnected with the fact that both locations are cosmopolitan with the possibility of most of their residents being non-indigenes of the state. Alternatively, the notion of grouping some states as ELDS could be scrapped altogether, as it has outlived its usefulness.

The National Council of Education should interrogate this matter and decide appropriately, as part of data-driven policy making at the national level.

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About the Author



Professor Abel Idowu Olayinka served as 12th Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan from 2015 to 2020, during which, among others, he provided leadership to strengthen the admission process into the undergraduate programmes in the University. He had previous served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Dean of the Postgraduate School, Head Department of Geology and Chairman, Senate Curriculum Committee. He has interest in quality assurance in higher education .

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978-978-775-812-0 ONLINE