

**SOCIAL DEMAND AND THE SUPPLY OF UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION IN NIGERIA, 1980-2005**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMICS,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, AWOLOWO
UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA.**

**IN PARTIAL FUFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN
ECONOMICS.**

2007

ABSTRACT

The study examined the validity of the Fields' proposition that continuous expansion of universities in Nigeria might be due to political response to social demand. It also analysed the trend and pattern of university education between 1980 and 2005 and examined the influence of higher education policy on university expansion. This was with a view to determining the factors responsible for the rapid expansion in university education in the last two and a half decades.

The study used secondary data obtained from the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Universities Commission (NUC), the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin and Annual Abstract of Statistics from National Bureau of Statistics. Descriptive and quantitative methods of analysis were used. The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimation technique was used to examine the extent to which social demand consideration had influenced the expansion in university education. The study showed an upward trend in expansion of universities from 13 at the beginning of 1980 to 76 in 2005. This implied a growth rate of 7% per annum. Also, the study showed that higher education policy had expansionary effect on the number of universities in Nigeria. The policy of equity in the distribution of universities and increased access to university education accounted for the expansion of the universities. Also, the policy of private involvement in the educational sector brought about the increase in the number of universities as there was rapid increase in private universities from 1999. The number of private universities rose by 700% between 1999 and 2005. The spatial pattern of enrolment and admission varied with more applicants from the Southwestern and Southeastern parts of Nigeria.

The percentage admitted was more for the Northern part than the other zones. 11.6 per cent of the applicants from the Western zone were admitted, 9.1% of those from the Eastern zone while 20.5% were admitted from the Northern part between 1980 and 1985.

The result of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method showed that the social demand significantly influenced the expansion in the number of universities ($t=3.87$, $p<0.05$), confirming Fields' postulation. However, it showed that there were still other factors like population growth ($t=8.48$, $p<0.05$), human resource needs ($t=6.58$, $p<0.05$), and growth rate of the economy ($t=8.35$, $p<0.05$), which significantly affected the expansion of universities.

The study concluded that the Fields' proposition was validated in the context of the Nigerian situation. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of university education in the country was not exclusively a matter of political response to social demand. It was also greatly influenced by such factors as growth rate of the economy, human resource needs and population.