Education Re-Engineering in the New Normal World

Festschrift for Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye



Edited by Kester Osegha Ojokheta Kehinde O. Kester

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A FESTSCHRIFT FOR PROFESSOR RASHID ADEWUMI ADERINOYE

Edited by

Kester Osegha Ojokheta, DIP, Ph.D, FUIL, FSOU, MNAE, MNNCAE Professor of Literacy, Open-Distance and Lifelong Learning Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan

> Kehinde Oluwaseun Kester, Ph.D, MNAE Professor of Industrial Education and Training Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan



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Chapter 29

Access Barriers to Higher Education Among Nigerian Households

E. J. Isuku, E. Nwafor and I. Olowookere

Introduction

Demand, by definition, is a concept that describes consumers desire to pay a price for goods and services. If all factors are constant, a rise in the price of a good or service will reduce demand and a decrease in price of such good will increase demand. The demand for higher education has been rising over the past years in Nigeria. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2018), more than two million candidates sought to fill about 750,000 available spaces in tertiary institutions in the country. In an attempt to gain access to higher institutions many prospecting Nigerian candidates has sought admission to HEIs outside the country with the UK being the most popular destination with student population of 17,973 presently, followed by Ghana with student population of 13,919 studying in the universities. Similarly, the number of Nigerian students in the various countries are as presented: Malaysia (13,000), US; 7318, Canada; 3257 and South Africa; 2525 (UNESCO, 2017).

According to National Bureau of Statistics (2018), Nigeria has a population growth rate of 3.2 percent which translates to a doubling time of less than 22 years with the population growing at an average annual rate of 6.5 percent over the last 50 years, without a commensurate increase in educational development. However, there are myriads of challenges to access to quality higher education in Nigeria which is extensively discussed in this paper. Nigeria falls in the category of a low income earner (OECD, 2010) as majority of the households earning capacity fall below the poverty line therefore putting so much financial stress on these households which could culminate in withdrawal of their wards from school, sale of major assets and even putting these children to forced labour so that they can earn and send themselves to higher education. So far, the Nigerian government appears not to have seen the need to allocate a reasonable proportion of budget to higher education to complement households. contributions. A World Bank (2018) report of analysis on budgetary allocation to education in selected countries of the world indicates that Nigeria is the least country in terms of budgetary allocation in Africa. The analysis shows that Nigeria just allocated 8.4 percent to education.

UNESCO had recommended 26 percent budgetary allocation to education in terms of GDP but Nigerian government appears to play down on this recommendation despite the numerous resources at her disposal. Thus, this paper seeks to provide an overview of the various dimensions of barriers (demand-side and supply-side) to access to higher education by households in Nigeria, and different interventions designed to address them. The problem

of access to higher education in Nigeria has continued to draw serious concern to both government and the society at large. The general objective of this paper is draw attention of government and all stakeholders in higher education system to appreciate the various bottlenecks restricting access to higher education in Nigeria. It specifically attempted to highlight the causes and dimension of the barriers to accessing higher education in Nigeria. The objective of the paper was also to provide areas of possible interventions towards improving access to higher education in the country.

Barriers to Accessing Higher Education

Although we acknowledge that there are many accepted definitions of access to education to higher education, we will use the definition by National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) which referred to access to higher education as the ability to attend organised

learning activities at the tertiary level.

Access has four dimensions: Availability, geographic accessibility, affordability and acceptability (O'Donnell, 2007). Barriers to accessing higher education in Nigeria by its households can stem from the demand side and/or supply side (Talba, Fontaine, Haarma and Masson, 2017). Demand-side determinants are factors influencing the ability to access higher education at individual level or household level while the supply side determinants are aspects inherent to the higher education that hinder access by individuals or households. The need to differentiate demand side from supply side barriers is related to the formulation of appropriate interventions. Long (2010) provide a framework for assessing barriers along the four dimensions of access while Talba et al (2017) presents a framework of supply-side and/or demand side barriers. The two approaches were combined as shown in Table 29.1.

Table 20.1: Supply and Demand-Side Barriers to Higher Education

Dimensions of barriers (Mazzarol, T. and Soutar 2002)		Barriers (Talba et al 2017; Long 2010)	
1.	Geographical Institutional locations Household locations	Indirect costs to households (e.g transport) (D)	
2.	Availability Demand for services Educational workers	2. Income of households (S)	
3.	Costs and prices of services Household resources and	3. Price of educational services (S)	
	willingness to pay	4. Opportunity costs (D)	
4.	Acceptability	THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE PARTY.	
	Characteristics the educations service	5. Technology (S)	
	Users attitudes and expectations	6. Cultural or community attitudes and norms (D)	

Source: Adapted from Long (2010) and Talba et al (2017) Notes: D = Demand side; S = Supply side Other aspects that impede access to higher education appear to be missing from both frameworks or at least are not explicitly mentioned in the literature but captured in Table 29.2 include:

Inadequate funding of the Nigerian education sector is another factor that could hinder access to higher education (Jaja, 2004). When there is shortage of funds in the educational sector, it affects quality thereby causing a form of dis-attractiveness to its potential customers. Also, household expectations in accessing higher education is quite low especially for low income earners who see higher education as a service that can only be accessed by the rich (Saint, 2013).

Table 29.2: Overview of identified access barriers along demand and supply in the four dimensions of access

Supply-side barriers		De	emand-side barriers
L	Geographic accessibility Service location	1.	Means of transport available Availability
2	Availability Unqualified Educational workers, Lack of opportunity (exclusion from services)	2.	Information on higher education services/providers
	Late or no referral	3 .	Household resources and willingness to pay
3-	Affordability Costs and prices of services,	4.	Opportunity costs
	including informal payments Cash flow from household	5.	Households' expectations
4	Acceptability Quality of higher education; its appeal to potential customers.	6.	Low self-esteem and little assertiveness
	ovision on selicing	7.	Community and cultural norms
	a and participation - all the participations of these appropriate forms.	8.	Indirect costs to household (transport)

An important determinant of excellence in university education is the presence of a critical mass of outstanding teaching staff, researchers and students. Olugbenga (2014) noted that staff of institutions of higher learning need to acquire new skills needed for improvement as well to ensure that performance go beyond bringing about piece-meal improvement to institutional wide improvements as Nigerian tertiary institutions are short of qualified staff which could help to ensure that the education provided learners by Universities in Nigeria contributes significantly to the educational needs of the society; therefore, Nigerian University Vice-Chancellors could improve the working conditions of staff especially teaching staff/academics.

Salami (2012) also noted that institutions locations could hinder the poorer households aspiring to attend universities; thereby he proposed that tertiary institutions

should have satellite campuses in every state of the federation. When any tertiary institution is quite far from the residence of potential students, it will definitely be a barrier as this would amount to incurring more cost in accessing such institutions on

the part of the parents.

In Nigeria, culture plays an important role in shaping the outlook of the society as it is observed that some communities have a mindset of sending only the male children to further their higher educational aspirations thereby hindering the effective engagement of young intelligent males in acquiring skills, knowledge and necessary tools for survival (Akaranta, 2014). Therefore engaging the locals to see the negative impact of some of their cultural norms and values could go a long way in reshaping the mindset of the locals.

Furthermore, Usman (2014) asserted that effective policy in achieving access to higher education by Nigerians is hindered by the high costs and price of services charged by most of these institutions whose parents are not earning enough thereby restricting access to the schools of their children's' choice. Cost of education is increasing as years go by, majority of the empirical results concluded that cost-related issues are one of the most important elements that influences higher education institution choice.

Other non-financial barriers such as increase in the means of transport which households are subjected to being more expensive due to constant irrational and constant

increase in the fuel cost (The Guardian, 2017).

Interventions to Enable Access to Higher Education by Households

While wide access to education is the aim of every government, it has shown that higher education tend to reach the socio-economically better-off, while the majority of the poor benefit only later after they must have sacrificed a lot. Therefore in addressing the barriers to accessing higher education in Nigeria, it is pertinent to know that due to time lag, especially in developing countries like Nigeria that are to a considerable extent has low budgetary allocation for educational sector, Targeting is often a preferred strategy (Victora, Fenn, Bryce, and Kirkwood, 2005). In the absence of lack of access, there are two main targeting options for enabling greater access to higher education for the poor households who are in the majority, it is pertinent to build the capacity of higher education providers to target service provision on selected groups (a supply-side strategy), or to reduce the barriers to access and participation – a demand-side strategy (Bornemisza, Ransom, Poletti, Sondorp, 2010). Both of these approaches to developing interventions to address barriers to higher education are described and considered in this paper.

Interventions aimed at facilitating access to higher education need to be implemented at community level, as this is known to constitute the most appropriate geographical situation which will definitely address the geographical issue however due consideration should be given to the potentially limited capacity of qualified educational staff in these communities. Moreover, because most barriers to care cannot be overcome by the higher education acting alone, inter-sectoral collaboration is called

for (Braveman and Gruskin, 2003).

Community participation should be built into interventions addressing access barriers as it reduces the power gaps between the population and higher education. Whatever interventions are developed, monitoring their service uptake should be an integral part of the strategy. Before presenting the analytical framework for analysing

interventions to address supply-side and demand-side barriers to access, we present an overview of interventions that can be implemented at community level by the educational sector alone or in collaboration with other government departments and non-government or civil-society organisations through the public and/or private sector. It is assumed that higher levels in the education sector, set out the broad policy framework, enforce legislation, ensure provision of a relatively steady supply of funds, goods and equipment, and conduct monitoring and supervision of the lower echelons in the higher education.

Many proposed interventions take a monetary-incentive approach to addressing access barriers to higher education services, e.g. the provision of free or very cheap public transportation network to address the issue of transportation for the households who live very far from these tertiary institutions and solve the problem of constant hike in pump price of gas (Parr 2020). Olaniyan (2001) suggest that in aiding access to Nigerian universities, and in fact African universities, there should be a special Insurance higher education subsidies for the poor, Conditional cash transfers to the poor and Pre-payment schemes for the masses to address inadequate financing of higher education by consuming households. Also Larsen et al (2003) pointed out that even developed countries have been noticeably reluctant to make proposals for further liberalisation of educational services which will aid access. This is due to the concerns for many potential threats posed to cultural values and national traditions by access in educational services. however if there will be improved management, including supervision and feedback mechanisms for those in government and the institution themselves, there will be unhindered access to higher education.

Table 29.3: Overview of interventions to address supply- and demand-side barrier

Non-Monetary intervention Monetary interventions · Community-loan funds to pay for Community-based participation and selection for admission transport into higher institutions · Higher Education equity fees Provision of essential higher being charged educational services for the · Insurance higher education subsidies for the poor identified poor · Culturally sensitive higher Conditional cash transfers educational delivery to the poor Improved management, including · Pre-payment schemes supervision and feedback Reduction of user fees mechanisms for those in government

A number of interventions appear to address all four dimensions of access barriers. Such interventions include community participation and community-based interventions, Educational equity funds, conditional cash transfers, provision of essential services, improved management, etc. However, these interventions do not necessarily affect all the aspects of the barriers to access within each dimension and often vary according to the comprehensiveness of and peculiarity of the household involved. For

example, community participation may tackle many demand-side and supply-side aspects and ensure access to higher education, but may not specifically target the poor; Education equity feeds tend to focus only those who can disclose their earnings and community-based higher education interventions tend to be rather narrowly defined and limited to specific conditions. Other interventions such as subsidising of transport may touch only a few dimensions and aspects and tend to be successful in a specific context only (though this is not necessarily a disadvantage). None of the discussed interventions appear mutually exclusive. Although they were presented separately for the sake of developing the analytical framework, in reality most are used in combination, and their success may depend in fact on their particular configuration and joint implementation.

Conclusion

The central theme in this paper is identifying the factors that prevent household in Nigeria from accessing Higher Education easily with emphasis on some interventions that can be employed to bring about catalyst of change. There are many demand- and supply-side barriers that affect access to higher education access by households especially for the poor. While interventions have been put forward to address these barriers, their individual effectiveness may be optimised when applied in combination with others, since none appears to concurrently address all dimensions or aspects of access barriers. It is worthy to note that, higher education should be accessed by all and sundry no matter the status of any household therefore if the issue of access to Nigerian educational system in general and higher education in particular is not d addressed, the socioeconomic transformation of Nigeria is yet to be out of the unborn.

In conclusion therefore, the continuous relevance of the higher education system is hinged on its ability to be accessed by all citizens; only then can the continuous existence and relevance of the country be appreciated worldwide.

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Section conscielly in relation to countries approach to delivating pedagonics stroubbons