

Public Policy and its Clients: An Inquiry into the Receptivity of University Idea amongst Indigenes of Nasarawa State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Nasarawa state is considered one of the Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) in Nigeria. As one of the policy instruments for overcoming the problem of educational backwardness, the state government established its own university in 2001 amidst skepticism and cynicism. Therefore this study sought to investigate the nature of response of the indigenes to the idea of university. The opinion survey design was used in the study. The study was State wide and covered all indigenes of Nasarawa State that were resident within the geographical boundaries of the state. A representative sample of 114 respondents was selected from the universe using scientific procedures. The main research finding is that the receptivity of university idea amongst the indigenes of Nasarawa state is high. To further foster the receptivity of university idea amongst the indigenes, a number of recommendations were advanced and these included: the establishment of the university's alumni association, introduction of the open and distance mode of educational delivery, and that the facilities and programmes in the university should be expanded.

I. INTRODUCTION

In all countries of the world, education being the pillar of society has been and is still a fundamental public issue. Education can be defined simply as the learning process by which people acquire knowledge, skills and values. To develop, according to Curle (1972), a society must have high proportion of trained and educated citizens. Therefore, as Odiba (2004) pointed out, no nation can develop above her level of educational attainment. Studies by Harbison and Meyer (1964), and Ngutsav (2005), and Todaro (1988) have all demonstrated that the higher the level of education, the greater appears the contribution of education to economic growth and national development.

The university being the apex of formal education is the most equipped for the development of high level human skills and advancement of knowledge. The recognition of the role of university education in national development underscores why so much importance is placed on its provision. A university writes Olumbumo and Ferguson (1960), is a community dedicated to the task of acquiring and propagating knowledge.

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The formulation and implementation of public policies are considered the principal functions of government. Leichter (1977), sees public policy as a series of goal oriented actions taken by governmental actors. Public policy has also been defined as the formal articulation, statement, or publication of a goal that the government intends to pursue in order to address a need or a problem (Waldr 2001). Jega (2003) says that the public policy process is supposed to be the arena for continuous interaction and dialogue between the citizens and public officials. The citizenry make up the human environment of government policies, and their disposition or reaction to a particular public policy has considerable consequences for its effective implementation, performance and impact.

Nasarawa state is classified as an Educationally Less Developed State (ELDS) in Nigeria (JAMB 2005). The fact that Nasarawa state is educationally backward is of serious concern to the government and people of the state. As one of the policy measures to further the development of education in the state, the state government established its own university in 2001 for the purpose of helping to produce high level personnel for Nasarawa state specifically and the Nigerian nation in general. In this regard, it was reported that:

The governor then realized that the state lack adequate management level staff in its public services. He reasoned that this must be due to

in availability of state owned university to train its workforce and inability of other universities to absorb as many of its people as possible. The state then, resolved to establish its own university (Reporter 2002).

However, the university project came into existence amidst skepticism and pessimism. As the founding governor Abdullahi Adamu puts it:

... Government did not make a mistake when it took the decision of establishing the university amidst criticism and pessimism by some interest groups within the state (Adamu 2005).

Being state owned, Nasarawa state university is expected to cater for Nasarawa state indigenes first and foremost, and as such they are the primary clients and beneficiaries of the public policy of establishing a state university. No doubt, for any government policy or project to succeed and have the desired impact, the support and cooperation of the target population is essential. This study therefore investigates how well or otherwise the indigenes of Nasarawa state have been receptive of the idea of university.

The inquiry is guided by the following five research questions and one null hypothesis:

1. What is the level of awareness pertaining to the existence of Nasarawa State University among the indigenes of the State?
2. Are the indigenes of the State willing to identify with the university?
3. Are the indigenes of the State willing to make use of the services offered by the university?
4. Are the indigenes of the State willing to support the university financially and materially?
5. How receptive has the indigenes of the State been to the idea of university?

Ho: Receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa State is not high.

II. METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The research location is Nasarawa state in Nigeria. The state has a population of about 1.8 million people (Census 2006). The state comprises of 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nasarawa –Eggon, Obi, Toto and Wamba (Nigeria 1999). The study covers all indigenes of Nasarawa

state that are resident within the geographical boundaries of the state.

The multi-stage sampling method was used to select the sample for the study. First, Keffi and Lafia LGAS were purposively selected because they host campuses of the university. Then, from the remaining 11 LGAS, one LGA was randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts of the state. The 3 LGAS so randomly selected are Karu, Akwanga, and Obi from south, central and Eastern Senatorial districts respectively. Thereafter, the simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from within each of the LGA so chosen. A total of 150 respondents were selected from the 5 LGAS on the basis of 30 respondents from each LGA. The research instrument used was the Indigenes' Receptivity of University Idea Questionnaire (IRUIQ) designed by the researcher. The instrument has two sections – A and B. Section A sought demographic information while section B contained 11 Likert type questions in which the respondents were requested to indicate their opinions on a four-point rating scale of strongly disagree (SD) 1, Disagree (DA) 2, Agree (AG) 3, and strongly agree (SA) 4, in order to elicit information on the receptivity of university idea from the respondents.

Of the 150 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents by the researcher, 114 copies were responded to and returned in usable condition giving a percentage return rate of 76%. The effective sample of 114 respondents was made up of public servants, self-employed persons/private sector employees, traditional rulers, politicians, teachers and labour unionists. Table 1 shows that the sample consisted of 81 males (71.05% of the sample) and 33 females (28.95% of the sample). Fifteen respondents (13.16% of sample) were under the age of 21 years, 60 of them (52.63% of the sample) were within the age bracket of 21-40 years while 39 respondents making up 34.21% of the sample were above 40 years of age. Forty-eight respondents (42.11% of the sample) were single, 63 of them (55.26% of the sample) were married and 3 respondents constituting 2.63% of the sample were of the others category. Sixty-one respondents (53.51% of the sample) were Christians while 53 of them (46.49% of the sample) were Muslims. Thirty respondents (26.32% of the sample) were educated up to secondary school level whereas 84 respondents

Table 1: Characteristics of sample

Characteristics	Category/Options			Total
Sex	Male 81 (71.05%)	Female 33(28.95%)		114(100%)
Age	Under 21yrs 15(13.15%)	21-40yrs 60(52.63%)	Above 40yrs 39(34.21%)	114(110%)
Marital Status	Single 48(42.11%)	Marriage 63(55.26%)	Others 3(2.63%)	114(110%)
Religion	Christian 61(53.51%)	Muslim 53(46.49%)	Others (Nil)	114(100%)
Education	Secondary 30(26.32%)	Post-secondary 84(73.68%)		114(100%)
Occupation/Employment	Public 72(63.16%)	Private 27(23.68%)	Others 15(13.16%)	114(100%)

Table 2a: Awareness of the existence of the university

Question item	SD1	DA2	AG3	SA4	Total
I am aware of the existence of the Nasarawa State University, Keffi	-	-	54	60	114
Know there is a state owned University in Nasarawa State	-	-	54	60	114
	Negative 0		Positive 114 (100%)		114 (100%)

Source: Field survey

(13.68% of the sample) possess post secondary qualifications. With regard to occupation/employment, 72 respondents (63.16% of the sample) were employed in the public sector, 27 of them (23.68% of the sample) were privately employed while 15 respondents (13.16%) of the sample were in other types of employment /occupations. Data obtained was analyzed using simple percentages¹ and the chi-square² statistical technique. The chi-square test was also applied to test the hypothesis formulated for the study.

III. RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness pertaining to the existence of Nasarawa State University among the indigenes of the State? Data for answering research question one is presented in Tables 2a and 2b. Table 2a indicated that all the respondents (100% of the sample) were aware of the existence of the state university. Data are statistically significant since the calculated χ^2 of 114 is higher than the table/ critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05% errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively (DF=1) (see Table 2b).

Table 3a: Identification with the university

Question item	SD1	DA2	AG3	SA4	Total
I consider the university project a wise investment	06	12	45	51	114
I feel a sense of pride in my state owning a university	03	18	24	69	114
Nasarawa State University is my preferred choice of university in Nigeria for myself and/or family members	-	09	30	75	114
Average	Negative 48 16(14%)		Positive 294 98(86%)		114 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Table 2b: Contingency table derived from Table 2a

Opinion	Fo	Fe	(Fo-Fe) ² Fe
Negative	0	57	57
Positive	114	57	57
Total	114	114	114

Source: Field survey

Research Question Two: Are the indigenes of the State willing to identify with the University? Data for answering research question two is presented in Tables 3a and 3b. Table 3a revealed that 86% of the respondents expressed a sense of strong emotional and symbolic attachment to the State University. However, 14% of the sample gave a contrary opinion. Data presented in Table 3b are statistically significant as the calculated χ^2 of 58.98 is higher than the table/ critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05% errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively (DF=1).

Table 3b: Contingency table derived from Table 3a

Opinion	Fo	Fe	(Fo-Fe) ² Fe
Negative	16	57	29.49
Positive	98	57	29.49
Total	114	114	58.98

Source: Field survey

Table 4a: Willingness to make use of university services

Question item	SD1	DA2	AG3	SA4	Total
If I have the opportunity, I will avail myself and/or family members of the services of the university	-	27	42	45	114
I and/or my family members are beneficiaries of the services of the university	09	27	39	39	114
The service of the university are valuable in high level human resources development in Nasarawa State	27	30	18	39	114
N = 114 Average	Negative 120 40(35%)		Positive 222 74 (65%)		114 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Research Question Three: Are the indigenes of the State willing to make use of the services offered by the university? Data for answering research question three is presented in Tables 4a and 4b. Table 4a showed that 65% of the sample indicated willingness to make use of the services provided by the University. Whereas 35% of the respondents expressed a contrary view. Data are statistically significant since the calculated χ^2 of 10.14 is higher than the table/critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05% errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively (DF=1) (see Table 4b).

Table 4b: Contingency table derived from Table 4a

Opinion	Fo	Fe	(Fo-Fe) ² Fe
Negative	40	57	5.07
Positive	74	57	5.07
Total	114	114	10.14

Source: Field survey

Research Question Four: Are the indigenes of the State willing to support the university financially and materially? Data presented in Tables 5a and 5b are used to answer research question four. Table 5a revealed that 69% of the sample expressed their willingness to support the university financially and materially. But 31% of the respondents stated otherwise. Data presented in table 5b are statistically significant as the calculated χ^2 of 16.98 is higher than the table/ critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05% errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively (DF=1).

Table 5a: Willingness to support the university

Question item	SD1	DA2	AG3	SA4	Total
I am willing to support the university in cash and kind	06	21	51	36	114
If I have the means, I am willing to institute scholarships, prizes and endow chairs in the university	21	24	30	39	114
I support the grant or donation of land and other properties to the university	03	30	39	42	114
N = 114 Average	Negative 105 35(31%)		Positive 237 79(69%)		114 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Table 5b: Contingency table derived from Table 5a

Opinion	Fo	Fe	(Fo-Fe) ² Fe
Negative	35	57	8.49
Positive	79	57	8.49
Total	114	114	16.98

Source: Field survey

Research Question Five: How receptive has the indigenes of the State been to the idea of university? Data presented in Tables 6a and 6b are used to answer research question five. Table 6a showed that 78% of the respondents indicated positive / favourable response to the idea of university while only 22% of them expressed negative / unfavourable response. Data are statistically significant since the calculated χ^2 of 35.92 is higher than the table/ critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05% errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively (DF=1) (see Table 6b).

The hypothesis formulated for this study is restated in its null and alternate forms thus:

H₀: Receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state is not high.

H_a: Receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state is high.

Data for testing the hypothesis are also presented in Tables 6a and 6b.

Degree of freedom (DF) = 1

Critical/table χ^2 =3.84/6.64 at .05/.01 Level of significance respectively

Calculated χ^2 = 35.92

Decision: Since calculated χ^2 of 35.92 is higher than table / critical χ^2 of 3.84 (at .05%

Table 6a: Ratings based on responses to questions pertaining to the receptivity of university idea

<i>Question item</i>	<i>SD1</i>	<i>DA2</i>	<i>AG3</i>	<i>SA4</i>	<i>Total</i>
I am aware of the existence of the Nasarawa State university, Keffi	-	-	54	60	114
I know there is a state owned university in Nasarawa state	-	-	54	60	114
I consider the university project a wise investment	06	12	45	51	114
I feel a sense of pride in my state owning a university	03	18	24	69	114
Nasarawa state university, Keffi is my preferred choice of university in Nigeria for myself and/or family members	-	09	30	75	114
If I have the opportunity, I will avail myself and/or family members of the services of the university	-	27	42	45	114
I and/or my family members are beneficiaries of the service of the university	09	27	39	39	114
The services of the university are valuable in high-level human resources development in Nasarawa state	27	30	18	39	114
I am willing to support the university cash and skin	06	21	51	36	114
If I have the means, I am willing to institute scholarship, prizes and endow chairs in the university	21	24	30	39	114
I support the grant or donation of land and properties to the university	03	30	39	42	114
Total score	75	198	426	555	
Average score	6.82	18	38.73	50.45	
	Negative 24.82 (25)(22%)		Positive 89.18 (89)(78%)		114 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Table 6b: Contingency table derived from Table 6a

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Fo</i>	<i>Fe</i>	<i>(Fo-Fe)²Fe</i>
Negative	25	57	17.96
Positive	89	57	17.96
Total	114	114	35.92

Source: Field survey

errors) and 6.64 (at .01% errors) respectively, the research decision is to reject the H_0 which states that the receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state is not high and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state is high.

IV. DISCUSSION

The null hypothesis which states that “receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state is not high” was refuted as it could not be corroborated empirically. This clearly indicates that contrary to the null hypothesis, the receptivity of university idea amongst the respondents (who are all indigenes of Nasarawa state) is high. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of the respondents constituting 78% of the sample indicated positive / favourable response to the idea of university. This goes to show that the generality of Nasarawa state indigenes have now fully embraced and accepted the idea of university whatever may have been the misgivings of some of them in the past. The

positive contributions of the university to the development of the state are obviously not lost on the indigenes.

All the respondents (100% of the sample) said that they were aware of the existence of the university. This shows that despite its relatively young age, the university enjoys high visibility and has attracted wide recognition within and outside the state. This is no mean feat given the fact that the university was founded in 2001. Majority of the respondents (86% of the sample), also expressed a sense of strong emotional and symbolic attachment to the university. This implies that most indigenes are proud to identify with the university. Similarly, 65% of the respondents indicated willingness to make use of the services provided by the university when the opportunity arises. Demand for the services of the university has been on the rise since it commenced academic activities in 2002 with 470 matriculated students. In recent time, the university could only admit about 2,500 students out of the over 12,000 candidates who applied to the institution (Zakari 2007). Due to immense pressure from far and near, admission process into the university has become highly competitive.

Majority of the respondents (69% of the sample) further expressed their willingness to support the university in cash and kind. This shows that the university enjoys widespread grassroots support. Many individuals, organizations and governments have generously as-

sisted in funding the university. Evidence of financial³ and material support from local (Nasarawa) sources abound (Zakari 2006). Examples are:

- ❖ The 13 Local Government Councils and 16 development areas in the state jointly contributed the sum of ₦100 million as their annual support for the development of the university.
- ❖ The Nasarawa state foundation donated the sum of ₦13.6 million to assist the university.
- ❖ Nasarawa state government – ₦1.5 billion
- ❖ Association of Local Government in Nasarawa – ₦1 billion
- ❖ Nasarawa State House of Assembly members - ₦50 million
- ❖ Emirs and chiefs in Nasarawa state – ₦10 million

Nasarawa state sources (individuals, organizations and governments) have therefore shown the willingness to support the university both financially and materially.

V. CONCLUSION

In general, this study established that the indigenes of Nasarawa state have not only fully embraced the idea of university but are willing to contribute towards the sustenance of the university project.

In living up to her motto: “knowledge for development”, which emphasized the fact that knowledge is only useful if it results in the development of people and society in all ramifications, the university must continually strive to remain relevant by meeting the needs of the local populace it was set up to serve. In this regard, no dichotomy should be allowed to exist between, in a manner of speaking, ‘gown’ and ‘town’.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations which are germane to the furthering of the receptivity of university idea amongst indigenes of Nasarawa state are offered:

- ❖ The university’s management should strive to make the institution financially self – reliant. This should be achieved by expanding the university’s donor base and increasing fund raising activities. Government and

private funders have to be persuaded that their investment in higher education is justified.

- ❖ Nasarawa state university foundation, which is to attract funds to the university, should be established. It will be the responsibility of such a foundation to reach out to potential donors.
- ❖ The university should endeavour to keep school fees and other related costs reasonable and affordable at all times so as not to exclude indigent students from making use of the educational opportunities provided by the university.
- ❖ The Nasarawa state government should continue to award bursaries to her indigenes in the university offset part of their study costs.
- ❖ Wealthy individuals in the society particularly indigenes should be encouraged to institute scholarships and prizes as well as endow academic chairs in the university.
- ❖ The open and distance learning (ODL) mode of educational delivery should be introduced by the university to further expand access to university education opportunities to mature working – class indigenes.
- ❖ The facilities and programmes in the university should be expanded. New courses and programmes in the university should be introduced to provide wider access to indigenes. In this regard, part time and sandwich as well as sub-degree (diploma and certificate) programmes should be introduced. Moreover, the university should develop and offer customized training programmes and short courses according to identified needs of the state which is the host community of the university.
- ❖ The establishment of the university’s Alumni association should be encouraged. Alumni are the university’s greatest assets and best image – builders. In the same vein, an Alumnus of the year award should be introduced to pay tribute to alumni who make an outstanding contribution within their fields or communities.
- ❖ The recruitment of other Nigerian and foreign students should be made a deliberate policy. This is because having students from diverse cultures and backgrounds enrich the learning experience in the classroom.

- ❖ Equal treatment should be granted to all staff and students regardless of ethnic origin, religion, sex or disability to make the university a true 'melting pot'.

NOTES

1. The formula for simple percentages is:

$$\% = \frac{X}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where:

X is item

N is total number of items

2. The formula for chi-square (χ^2) as applied to one sample

variable is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where:

f_o is the observed frequency in a given category

f_e is the expected frequency in a given category

Degree of freedom = $k - 1$ of $2 - 1$ = (Assignments of degrees of freedom for χ^2 is based on the number of categories (k).

3. Nigerian Naira 145 = 1 United States Dollars.

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