

Individual Factors Influencing Demand for School Based-Module II Programs at the University of Nairobi

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Abstract

This article examines the factors determining demand for module two programs in the University of Nairobi. The findings are based on a survey done randomly on university students enrolled in module II Masters in Education program regardless of the year of learning. Descriptive survey design was chosen as it allowed the gathering of information, summarising, analysing, presenting and interpreting over the past decade. This research is a survey descriptive study. About 150 students registered under the module II Med programs were targeted to answer questionnaires. The questionnaires were mainly seeking factors influencing the choice of University of Nairobi as a university to further their studies. Of the targeted population only 88 students successfully answered and returned the questionnaires. Simple descriptive methods of data analysis were considered to interpret, inform and fill a knowledge gap to a future potential student and other stake- holders including university management Kenya has had a tremendous growth in the demand for higher education. This is evidenced by the number of students applying and admitted and the quantitative growth of universities. This article takes a step towards documenting factors that can guide higher education access policy in Kenya

Keywords: Higher Education, Access, Demand, Module II, Kenya

Introduction

The role of education in determining social and material well-being is well pronounced and documented. Investment in human capital has both economic and non-economic benefits. Individuals' earning capacity and employment prospects is enhanced through education. This brings a spill- over effect to the distribution of income, firms' productivity and economic growth (Psacharapoulos & Woodhall, 1985; Psacharapolous, 1984). Mincer (1974) estimated the effects of schooling on wages at 10% using US census data. One of his findings was that education increases the probabilities of being employed and once in employment, better educated individuals earn considerably more than their less educated peers. Non-economic benefits of education includes intergenerational benefits, lower crime, lower fertility, lower maternal and child/infant mortality and better political literate citizens (Psacharapoulos and Woodhall, 1985). Though the role of education in development has been questioned (Arrow,

1973), developing countries has continued to use it as a vehicle of development (Psacharopoulos, 1984). Public spending in education remains one of the few uncontroversial roles of the Kenyan governments. Even when the state is under internal and external pressure to reduce spending and address account imbalances, expenditures on education generally, find wide-ranging support. There is no doubt that education remains a priority in effort to foster growth and reduce poverty in developing countries. Higher education in Kenya has quantitatively grown since independence in 1963 (Sifuna, 1990).

University education in Kenya began in 1963 with just 571 students enrolled in Nairobi University College (Economic Survey, 2003). Since then, the system has undergone considerable expansion, and as of 2014, there were a total of 22 public universities and 30 private universities with varying levels of accreditation. Table I show the quantitative growth of universities in Kenya since 2009. It can be noted that the sector has attracted a number of higher education private sector players over time.

Table 1: Number of Public and Private Universities in Kenya since 2009

Year	09	10	11	12	13
Public	7	7	7	8	22
Private	24	25	27	27	30
Total	31	32	34	35	52

Source: Economic Survey, 2014

The rapid demand for higher education has strained the existing universities and adversely affected the capacity of the government to supply university education. Demand for higher education places outstrips supply and the places are allocated based on student performance in secondary school. The underlying assumption on this, assumes that higher education based on ability yields the greatest efficiency (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, (Hoppers .et al, 2009; Abagi et al, 2006)

However, in many developing countries, access to high-quality secondary education is determined by several factors. One major factor is household income. Since the year 1995, the Kenyan government shifted the burden of higher education costs from being borne predominantly by government, or taxpayers, to being shared with parents, students and the private sector (ROK, 2010). This cost sharing policy has implications on university enrolment. Hence, enrolment may shift from a heavily subsidized public sector to a much less subsidized, tuition dependent – private sector (Johnston, 2003).

The rapid demand for higher education has strained the existing universities and adversely affected the capacity of the government to supply university education. In 1994, the government of Kenya decreased the education budget from 37 per cent of its total annual recurrent budget to about 30 per cent stating that it was not possible to allocate additional funding to higher education (Kiamba, 2004). There has been a shortfall in the public education budget for higher education. Institutions are therefore expected to look for alternative income generating sources to reduce overdependence on the government budget. To this end, several strategies for revenue diversification were adopted. These included establishment of units for income generation, Institution of overhead charges on externally funded research projects and the introduction of the Module II programs in 1998 (Wainaina, 2011).

The number of private candidates in Kenya, those outside Joint Admissions Board (JAB), has grown rapidly with part time students' constituting 34.2% of the total student enrolment and those in private accredited universities accounting for 17.2 per cent. This is a total of 51.4 % of the total student enrolment in 2013/14 academic year. (ROK, 2013, 2014)

The overall university student enrolment increased by 34.9 per cent from 250,551 in 2012/2013 to 342,560 in 2013/2014. The increase is attributable to higher enrolment levels in public university following the introduction of new courses in addition to upgrading of university colleges. Enrolment at public universities increases by 41.3 per cent 195,528 in 2012/2013 to 276,349 in 2013/2014. Enrolment in private universities increases by 7.9 per cent from 45,023 in 2012/ 2013 to 48,211 in 2013/2014 (ROK, 2014). Table 2 below shows gender disaggregated data of enrolment for a period of 4 years since 2010/11 academic year.

Table 2: Gender Disaggregated Data of Enrolment

Year	2010/2011		2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Public	85,931	53,839	94,358	63,558	109,821	85,707	167,046	109,303
Private	21,793	16,055	23,342	17,002	25,615	19,408	26,139	22,072
Total	107,724	69,894	117,700	80,560	135,435	105,115	193,185	131,375

Source: Economic Survey, 2014

University of Nairobi in Perspectives

The University of Nairobi has diversified academic programmes and specializations. Through self-sponsored programmes, invaluable opportunity has been opened to Kenyans and non-Kenyans, who meet university admission requirements. The university has since then witnessed further growth and, in 1983, underwent a major restructuring resulting in decentralisation of the administration. Today, the University of Nairobi has six campus colleges;

- College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences , Upper Kabete Campus
- College of Architecture and Engineering ,Main Campus
- College of Biological and Physical Sciences , Chiromo Campus
- College of Education and External Studies , Kikuyu Campus
- College of Health Sciences, Kenyatta National Hospital
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences , Main Campus

The location of the University in the capital city of Nairobi and its environs is an advantage that has seen the university increasingly become a busy hub and citadel of academic activity both during the day and at night through multiple programs and modes of learning. In addition to the regular, evening and weekend programmes, classes are conducted at the University's Campuses in Mombasa and Kisumu and also in the Extra mural Centres located in satellite campuses of ;Garissa, Kakamega, Nakuru, Meru, Kapenguria, Kisii, Thika, Lokichogio, Lamu and Nyeri. By 2014, the number of students had reached 79,000 thousands from 30,000 thousands in 2004 with an average of 14, 300 graduands per year.

Research methodology

This research is a survey descriptive study. About 150 students registered under the module II Med programs were targeted to answer questionnaires. The questionnaires were mainly seeking factors influencing the choice of University of Nairobi as a university to further their studies. Of the targeted population only 88 students successfully answered and returned the questionnaires. Simple descriptive methods of data analysis were considered to interpret, inform and fill a knowledge gap to a future potential student and other stake- holders including university management. The university would consider these factors very seriously and use them as marketing benchmarks.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on a general hypotheses, selecting a university for studies is a multistage decision process affected by a variety of factors involving the student's characteristics, information gathering, college actions, and college/program characteristics. It is also based on the human capital theory that postulates that higher education raises the productivity of individuals by imparting useful knowledge and skills, which raises the level of lifetime earning in future. This in turn contributes to decision making on the best choice of a commodity, in this case choice of university to attend. It is important to note that the main asset of most people is their human capital; therefore, investing in the human capital is a powerful way to augment their assets, redress asset inequality, and reduce poverty. Education is assumed to be an investment good where individuals derive utility. Utility function is presented where education competes with other basket of goods purchased by the individual or family. The utility function is usually given,

$$U = u(E, Z,)$$

Where E is the amount of education purchased and Z is all goods bought and consumed by the family. In order to maximize utility holding other factors constant, the level of education bought is affected by the size of all other goods bought. Assuming that wealth is constant, thus, demand for education of any income level represents an opportunity costs i.e. the expenditure made on education. The spending on education had been done so at the expense of other spending. Depending with the prevailing economic growth and household income level, spending on the education represents a household sacrifices. Therefore, demand for education is determined by several factors.

Demand for education = f(a, b, c, d.....)

Research Findings and Discussions

For the sake of this research only individual factors were taken into consideration. These factors are presented in the next section. The wide range of determinants that were captured in the data collection was grouped into two categories, student and university characteristics.

For the sake of the discussions, little effort is made to separate the two as many of them cut across. The research results indicate that majority (99%) of the students prefer universities with a good academic reputation. University of Nairobi is the oldest university in Kenya. In 2014 University of Nairobi was ranked number 1 of all public and private universities and over the years produced many accomplished alumni. The University of Nairobi remains the best regional public university as per international web. University of Nairobi tops the region and emerges nine in Africa in web-ranking. This was a major reason cited by students to have made them consider joining the university. Being an alumna of a reputable university increases the benefits of getting a job in many reputable institutions. This reasoning was from the majority (90%) students who cited many graduates from the university who have landed into very attractive jobs (Blaug, 1973). This is in consistent with theories of demand for education; demand is directly related to both monetary and non-monetary benefits of education ((Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985; Gichuhi, 2007)

All the 150 students were happy with the programs offered at the university another factor that the student cited as a consideration is type, flexible and quality of programs offered. The university over the years has developed new and exciting programs at all levels and repackaged others. The programs are in line with market demands and aspirations. This has not only helped in development of employability graduates but it also markets the university and cuts an edge for itself (Varsity Focus, 2014).

The university is located in the capital city of Nairobi. Distance to the learning institution is a major determinant of indirect cost of education. The more the distance the higher cost of travel holding all other factors constant (Gichuhi, 2007). Students (97%) cited this as a major factor especially because they can access and they receive other services without incurring extra costs. Most of the students cited proximity to government offices like the teachers employer, Teachers Service Commission (TSC) where most of them can access without extra transport costs. This was the major office mention as most of the students in this study are teachers or are potential teacher candidates. About 58 % of the students were happy to be in the university since it also gives them an opportunity to spend some time in the capital city.

The cost of the programmes was also considered as a factor influencing the choice. The household costs to education include direct and direct cost. Comparing the annual costs of education and the households annual income, households incomes are not adequate to meet basic needs (Health and Clothing) and therefore meeting the cost of education is a major sacrifice (ROK, 2013). Though the cost of programmes is high at University of Nairobi in compared to the costs in other public universities in Kenya, 88 % of the students cited flexibility in fees payment and the grace period given to students to clear their fees. According to the students, the university allows them to attend classes and only pay the fees when ready to sit for their examinations. Though the demand for education is price sensitive, many students (70 %) of the university students care more about academic performance and quality of the programme more than the cost (Varsity Focus,2014) . About 5% of the students were using university check off system to pay for their programs. These were either university employees or relatives of the university of Nairobi employees who have the check off facility.

Majority of module II students cater for their own accommodation. One major factor for consideration according to the students was the cost of accommodation and other related

welfare factors. Sixty six per cent of the students operate from homes and the rest 20 % cited cheap housing within the proximity of the university or where the programs are hosted especially during the school based module II programs. Other students (14 %) prefer staying with their relatives within the city environs during their university education in order to save on accommodation and other living costs. Gichuhi (2007) notes that cost of a accommodation is a major cost that should always be considered among other direct cost to education.

Family influence was also a major factor of consideration. This was mainly important for the young students, who were still dependent on the family choice basket (Gichuhi, 2007). From the findings 92% of the young students depend on family choice of university. This is mainly if the parents or other siblings, relatives were university alumnae. However, 5% of the students would like a different university compared to the one parents or relatives attended especially if they perceive the benefits of attending the university low. Three per cent of the students were not committal on the family role in their choice of the university. This was especially important mature students (3%) who solely depend on individual choices.

Peer to peer influence play an important role. Majority of the students (73%) mentioned 2 or 3 other students in the same university who either was in the same secondary schools or come from the same village or estate. Sixty eight per cent cited their friends as the point of reference when they were making their admission decisions. This confirms that the word of mouth is very important to the potential students. Peer to peer plays a significant role especially in accommodation pairing and when holding academic discussions.

Conclusion

The most fundamental pre-requisites for university development in any country is to understand what the potential student clientele are interested in while making individual and family choices. Due to financing gaps in the public universities, the government has continuously encouraged the universities to diversify sources of funds (Economic Survey, 2013). Thus, given the importance all universities have attached to module II programs; there is need for all universities stakeholders to seriously engage in discussions, rethinking and reformulation of policies on how universities can have health competition among each other to avoid duplication of efforts and programs. This will make universities be more effective and efficient in meeting the needs of the student and shall attract more students in a win - win situation

All of these findings are consistent with many other studies in this field (Kiamba, 2004; Wainaina, 2011; Gichuhi, 2007), implying that students' behaviour on university choice is consistent with other findings elsewhere. In this overview, we have tried to sketch the major individual- perspective - factors on demand for a university. While the information presented do not pretend to respond to all the choice process for a university, the paper findings should leave the reader with one conclusion: Competition over potential students by different public and private universities is real. How the universities win their own clients need to be seriously thought out.

Recommendations

There are number of implications for policy that can be drawn from the experience of the study. However, caveat should be taken while generalising the results for blanket education demand strategies. A little more should be done;

- A future study should cover more module II students from all the public universities. This will help in exploring various and multidimensional factors that can influence demand for university places
- The data analysis used to feed discussions and interpretation did not consider regression analysis that a careful planner would like to have. Correlation based research is therefore important in order to identify the significant levels of the factors that can guide policy.

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