THE POLICIES AND POLITICS OF MASSIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA, 1952-2000

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ABSTRACT

Apollos O. Nwauwa, Advisor

This study constitutes a history of the policies and politics surrounding the massification of university education in Nigeria between 1952 and 2000. The concept of massification as used in this study refers to a program of expansion of facilities and mass access to university education in post-independent Nigeria. In 1948, the British colonial administration in Nigeria established the first university, the University College of Ibadan (UCI). However, from 1948 through 1959, the British consistently ignored the growing demand for more access to university education. To address this problem, the Nigerian government set up the Ashby Commission to study the country’s higher education needs on the eve of independence. Following the report of the Commission, the Nigerian government realigned university education policies and vigorously embarked on policies of massification. This study shows that the policies and politics of massification were embarked upon largely in response to the critical needs for human resources, economic development, and national integration. Furthermore, it examines how the divergent and, sometimes, inconsistent interests of the pluralistic society of Nigeria, the politics of oil revenue and state creation, the ideologies of civilian/military governments and international forces shaped policy initiatives, shifts, and outcomes of massification.

Between 1960 and 1983, successive civilian and military regimes controlled not only university development but also policies of expansion of facilities and access to university education for all Nigerians regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, and creed.
However, the economic decline of 1983, the intervention of the military in governance, and the implementation of the IMF/World Bank-induced Structural Adjustment Program adversely affected the funding of universities. Consequently, universities facilities deteriorated as the establishment of private universities in the 1980s and 1990s became a welcome innovation. From 1959 to 2000, the number of universities increased from 1 to 45 while student enrolment concomitantly rose from 939 to 526,780. This study is not merely a history of how universities were founded in post-independence Nigeria but it is about how the formulation and implementation of official policies on human resource development, economic advancement, and national integration are linked to the politics and drama of massification of university education.
To the blessed memory

of my mother,

Patience Anyanwu.

Your absence is ever present in my life. I love you.
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for their extraordinary dedication to my work, and for having confidence in me even when I doubted myself. By setting high academic standards and continually stimulating my analytical thinking and research skills, they have helped me to develop my abilities as a critical, independent, and constructive scholar and teacher, able to respond to the challenges of life in a realistic and dynamic manner.

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of Education, Arewa House, Kaduna, and Office of Statistics, Lagos, for cooperating with me during the months I invested collecting data for this project in Nigeria. A special note of thanks to Dr. Adize Anyanwu, Mr. Taiwo and Mrs. Chioma Irechukwu; you eased the pain associated with my research trip in many ways, and I am indebted. I am equally thankful to Emma Okoroafor and Chukuwu Njoku for sharing the burden of sorting out many dusty documents and helping me to photocopy them.

During the three years I spent on my doctoral studies, God blessed me with many wonderful people such as DeeDee Wentland, the graduate secretary. DeeDee constantly made me feel special all the time, treated me like her brother, and provided much needed humor and entertainment in what could have otherwise been a somewhat stressful journey. Knowing her has made me a better person. Thank you, DeeDee. Same goes for Tina Amos, the department secretary, for going out of her way to assist and guide me. Many people on the faculty of Bowling Green State University assisted and encouraged me in various ways during my course of studies. I gladly extend my thanks to Dr. Liette Gidlow, Dr. Walter Grunden, Dr. Gary Hess, Dr. Andrew Schocket, Dr. Scott Martin, Dr. Peter Way, and Dr. Candace Archer. Thank you all. I also thank my friends in Bowling Green who made me laugh always: Camille Rogers (alias CH), Seneca Vaught, Sheila Jones, Maria Baldwin, Jennifer Potocnak, and Thomas Nathan. Also, I specially acknowledge Chukuwdu Amankem, my very good friend. It’s sad that you did not live to see this day for me. You will forever live in my mind. I love you! May your soul rest in peace!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABU: Ahmadu Bello University
AG: Action-Group
AHK: Arewa House Kaduna
ASUU: Academic Staff Union of Universities
CCF: Carnegie Corporation File
Cmd: Command Paper issue by the British Government
COFHE: Committee on the Future of Higher Education
CUF: Committee on University Finances
CUE: Committee on University Entrance
CVC: Committee of Vice-Chancellors
ETF: Education Tax Fund
First NDP: First National Development Plan
Fourth NDP: Fourth National Development Plan
Fifth NDP: Fifth National Development Plan
FNRP: First National Rolling Plan
FUT: Federal Universities of Technology
GCE: General Certificate of Education
GNPP: Great Nigeria People's Party
IMF: International Monetary Fund
IUC: Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies
JAMB: Joint Admission and Matriculation Board
JCC: Joint Consultative Council
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<td>National Archives Ibadan</td>
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<td>NAE:</td>
<td>National Archives Enugu</td>
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<td>NAK:</td>
<td>National Archives Kaduna</td>
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<td>NAUT:</td>
<td>Nigerian Association of University Teachers</td>
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<td>NDA:</td>
<td>Nigerian Defense Academy</td>
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<td>NCE:</td>
<td>National Council on Education</td>
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<td>NCE:</td>
<td>National Certificate of Education</td>
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<td>NUNS:</td>
<td>National Union of Nigerian Students</td>
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<td>NYSC:</td>
<td>National Youth Service Corps</td>
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<td>NUC:</td>
<td>National Universities Commission</td>
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<td>NPN:</td>
<td>National Party of Nigeria</td>
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<td>NPP:</td>
<td>Nigerian People's Party</td>
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<td>NRB:</td>
<td>Nigerian Education Bank</td>
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<td>NSLB:</td>
<td>Nigerian Student Loan Board</td>
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<td>NPE:</td>
<td>National Policy on Education</td>
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<td>NOU:</td>
<td>National Open University</td>
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<td>N.C.N.C:</td>
<td>National Convention of Nigerian Citizens</td>
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<td>NPC:</td>
<td>National Progressive Party</td>
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<td>PRO:</td>
<td>Public Record Office</td>
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<td>PRP:</td>
<td>People's Redemption Party</td>
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<td>PPT:</td>
<td>Petroleum Profit Tax</td>
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<td>PPB:</td>
<td>Presidential Political Bureau</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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<td>Seminar on a National Policy on Education</td>
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<td>Third NDP</td>
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<td>UME</td>
<td>University Matriculation Examination</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>UA</td>
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<td>UI</td>
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<td>UPN</td>
<td>United Party of Nigeria</td>
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<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Committee</td>
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<td>WAEC</td>
<td>West African Examination Council</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The British establishment of the first university in Nigeria—the University College of Ibadan (UCI)—in 1948 was a fulfillment of nationalists’ demand for a higher institution in the colony. However, the British conceived UCI as an ivory tower preoccupied with the training of the elite class. The restrictive admission policies of UCI deprived many qualified Nigerians the opportunity to receive university training. With an annual intake of less than 130 students, a low turn out of highly trained labor force for the public and private sectors, and a lopsided curriculum and enrolment, UCI did not satisfy the higher education needs of Nigerians in the 1950s. Thus, nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello rejected the ‘elitist’ and ‘conservative’ traditions of UCI and demanded radical changes in the institution’s curriculum and admission policies to reflect the wishes and aspirations of Nigerians.

In the 1950s, constitutional and political changes in Nigeria, anxieties over shortages of highly educated Nigerians, and the international campaign in favor of changing the prevailing elitist system of higher education, laid the foundation for the new direction of post-colonial university education in Nigeria. Empowered by the 1951 Macpherson Constitution, which granted the newly constituted legislative assemblies in Lagos, and the Western, Eastern, and Northern Regions jurisdiction over primary and secondary education, the regional governments initiated mass education programs. Backed by the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, which extended the powers of the regions to legislate on higher education, and inspired by the World Bank report of 1954, which strongly supported rapid expansion of higher education opportunities in Nigeria, the Eastern Region quickly passed into law in 1955 the bill that established the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). The UNN was modeled after the American "land-grant
college system, and it essentially sought to provide greater opportunities to higher education that were unavailable at the UCI.

Furthermore, when the London Constitutional Conference of 1957 granted ‘self-government’ to the Regions, established a ‘national government,’ and decided on 1 April 1960 as the tentative date for Nigeria’s independence, the expansion of university opportunities assumed a greater urgency. As Nigeria approached independence with only 939 students (excluding about 1,000 that were studying overseas) enrolled in the UCI in 1959, nationalists blamed the college for insufficient training of the high-level human resources required to replace the departing Europeans as well as to advance economic development. As a stopgap measure, the regional and national governments stepped up scholarship awards to train more Nigerians in various higher education institutions overseas. Encouraged by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which advocated higher education reform in the British African colonies, the Nigerian government set up the Commission on Post-Secondary School Education (Ashby Commission) in April 1959 to conduct a comprehensive study of the present and future higher education needs of Nigeria. The recommendations of the Ashby Commission were envisaged to provide Nigerian governments with a blueprint to guide post independence higher educational policies. At independence in 1960, the Commission submitted its report to the federal government; its far-reaching recommendations marked a turning point in the development of university education in Nigeria.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Ashby Commission, the federal government realigned the British university education system to suit Nigeria’s needs, namely more access to university education, rapid economic development, and national integration. This resulted in a policy of massification. Massification, a program designed to expand, liberalize, and democratize access to university education, came to dominate post-colonial higher education policies in
Nigeria. What is the logic of massification, and how did it change the old system? What role did policy makers assign to university education under massification? What kind of educated Nigerians did policy makers envisaged? How did the complex coalescence of domestic and external social, economic, and political forces shape policy initiatives, shifts, and outcomes? Essentially, this study sets out to address these questions.

Conceptually, massification is essentially the amalgam of three dominant policies instituted by the federal government and its component units to ‘decolonize’ the elitist legacies of British higher education system in response to the needs of postcolonial Nigeria. First, it involves the expansion of access to university education through the establishment of more universities, diversification of the university curriculum, centralization, and decentralization of university control, and the involvement of the private sector in the supply of university education. The idea was to train the country’s labor force, especially in the sciences, not only to fill the vacancies created by the departing Europeans but also to help champion future economic and social development. Second, massification is the liberalization of access through measures such as the centralization of the admission process, revision of the British rigid entry qualifications, award of scholarships and loans, and granting of free university education. The purpose was to remove the historical and structural bottlenecks that impeded access to university education in the colonial era.

Third, massification involves the democratization of access through the equal geographical distribution of universities and the introduction of quotas in university admission. The intent was to end the often volatile and divisive educational disparity between the North and South through equal representations of all ethnic groups in the existing institutions. These policies represent a radical departure from the colonial elitist system of higher education, which
was inequitable and unrepresentative. Thus the most dominant theme in the history of post-colonial university education in Nigeria is what Martin Trow called the shift from elite to mass higher education.\textsuperscript{1} Aimed at ‘decolonizing’ the elitist legacies of the colonial education system by providing opportunities for university training for all Nigerians to meet the present and potential needs for high-level labor force, especially in the sciences, promoting economic development, and engaging university education to unite Nigeria’s pluralistic societies together, the massification program transformed post-colonial higher education scene, leading to a significant increase in the number of universities as well as student enrolment.

There is no comprehensive study on the policies and politics of massification of university training, though some works exist on the history of university education in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{2} Apollos Nwauwa’s \textit{Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism}\textsuperscript{3} demonstrates how the British colonial reforms in the 1930s and 1940s resulted in the establishment of the University College Ibadan in Nigeria in 1948. Although this work does not deal with post-colonial educational policies, it provides a valuable historical background to this study. In \textit{Universities: British, India, African},\textsuperscript{4} Eric Ashby is preoccupied with the ‘export’ of British university models overseas, and the struggle to create from the British transplanted universities both a truly indigenous university and an internationally respectable institution. He emphasizes the importance of adapting university education to African society, and the need for flexibility and adaptability achievable

\textsuperscript{1} Martin Trow, \textit{Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education} (Berkeley, California: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973).
through exercising an ‘eclectic’ choice between the British and American patterns of higher education. Ashby’s *African Universities*,\(^5\) Abdulla Adamu’s *Reform and Adaptation*,\(^6\) and Romanus Ejiaga’s *Higher Education*\(^7\) demonstrate the importance of curriculum and admission reforms and policies in the development of post-colonial universities. Nevertheless, these works do not provide detailed historical analysis of the domestic and external forces that dictated higher education reforms and correlate them to the government’s desire to decolonize the elitist legacies of UCI, advance scientific and technological development, and foster national unity. Unlike these other studies, the present study demonstrates how Nigeria’s experiment with flexibility and adaptability interacted with the politics of independence and ethnic/regional tensions to dictate the direction and outcome of postcolonial massification in the 1960s and beyond.

A number of scholars have focused on the post-colonial development of human resources in Nigeria. In his book, *Nigerian Universities and High-level Manpower Development*,\(^8\) Falonya contends that the desire to train a labor force was at the center of the government’s expansion of educational opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s. He fails to show, however, the type of educated citizens envisaged by the government, and ignores the role of oil politics, educational disparity, and the civil war in shaping the centralization and expansion policies of the post-1970 military regimes. Focusing on university development from 1868 to 1967, Nduka Okafor’s *The Development of Universities in Nigeria*\(^9\) reveals how Nigerian universities were vulnerable to the ‘rough and tumble of domestic politics,’ showing how the struggle for power at the national and

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regional levels affected the growth of universities in Nsukka, Ibadan, Lagos, Ife, and Ahmed Bello in the 1960s. However, Okafor’s analysis emphasizes the internal workings of these institutions, providing scanty information on how national factors such as military interventions and innovations, shaped the government’s commitment, or lack of it, to massification. In *University Development in Africa*,¹⁰ Vincent Ike draws on the American system of mass higher education to examine human resource development from the standpoint of selection and entry qualifications in the universities up to the late 1960s. While his findings show that the first attempt at massification did not meet the vision of government, he does not discuss the socio-economic factors responsible for this situation. Besides, he does not place his analysis within the framework of the post-independence massification project. Nevertheless, the political dimension of his work is useful in explaining the problems of massification.

What is missing from all this scholarship is a link between university development and human resource development, economic development, and national integration. None of these works discuss university expansion as a policy oriented, policy driven, and need driven phenomenon. This study is not a mere history of the development of post-colonial education in Nigeria. Rather, it explores how post-colonial governments realigned university education to serve the post-colonial needs for human resources, economic development, and national integration. It accounts for, and provides new insights on, how government policy options and agendas were susceptible to the divergent and, sometimes, inconsistent interests of the Nigeria’s pluralistic society as well as to international forces, shedding light on nation building in Nigeria. The concept of economic development, as perceived by Nigeria’s policy makers, implied the scientific and technological transformation of the country. This perception sought to shape

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Nigeria in the image of the West. Yakubu Gowon, the Nigeria’s head of state between 1966 and 1975, confirmed this mindset when he challenged Nigerian universities to emphasize science and technology. According to him, “it is perhaps not too much to hope… that if it ever becomes necessary for the human race to transfer en masse to some other planets, like Mars, our scientist and technologist would be ready with the necessary means of transport for Nigerian citizens!”

Furthermore, national integration, as used in this study, means the constant resolution of the historical tension and rivalries existing among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, and the promotion of a sense of national unity through the pursuit of equal opportunities.

The idea of the writing on the subject of university expansion developed during the time I worked both as an administrator (1996-1999) and a lecturer (2000-2003) in Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria. As an administrator, I was involved in the implementation of the affirmative action in university admissions and also witnessed the complaints and contradictions associated with the policy. Also, as a lecturer, I conducted most of my classes in overcrowded classrooms, largely because the expansion of learning facilities failed to keep pace with the surge in the students’ demand and enrolment. My personal experience and impression are helpful in my analysis. Besides, my familiarity with the university system facilitated the acquisition of relevant data.

Any study of the origins and development of the post-colonial massification project would be incomplete without carefully searching out, indexing, interpreting, and reporting on the significant primary and secondary data gathered from several research sites located in Nigeria. This study thus relies on primary source documents acquired from the National Archive of Nigeria, Ibadan and Enugu; National Library, Owerri; National University Commission (NUC),

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11 Address by his Excellency Major-General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government and Visitor of the University during the 21st Anniversary of the University of Ibadan, *Ibadan*, No. 28, July 1970, 17.
Abuja; Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Abuja; Office of the Committee of Vice-chancellors, Lagos; the Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja; Arewa House, Kaduna; Office of Statistics, Lagos, Newspaper Houses, World Bank and UNESCO websites. It also relies on secondary sources acquired in some of the sites mentioned above, the Bowling Green State University’s Jerome Library and the OhioLink Library Catalog that serves all higher education institutions in Ohio. Materials collected from these sites include, among others, the proceedings of conferences, government decrees and edicts, official gazettes, education digests, annual education reports, national development plans, official speeches, newspaper clips, UNESCO and World Bank documents, published books, articles, and monographs.

Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain documents from the library of the federal ministry of education located in Lagos because the building’s leaking roof had destroyed the documents. Besides the higher education files containing information on the activities of the Carnegie Corporation, the Ashby Commission, and Nigerianization scheme of the 1950s and 1960s, no higher education file was located in all the archives I visited. Worst still, officials of the federal ministry of education refused to release their files on account of government policy that forbids their public disclosure. In any case, loss of information has been compensated for by the huge body of evidence collected from the National Universities Commission, Abuja, and National Archives at Ibadan and Enugu, Arewa House Kaduna, and other sources.

The theoretical framework for this study is the societal theory of investment in higher education by Earl J. MacGrath, who suggests that since higher education exists to serve the society and the individual, opportunities should be open to those who can reach it. Unlike the societal view, the scholastic view holds that higher education exists to select and form the relatively small group of individuals who in any society, large or small, will have the responsibility for making decisions.

Earl J. MacGrath, ed., *Universal Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966). Unlike the societal view, the scholastic view holds that higher education exists to select and form the relatively small group of individuals who in any society, large or small, will have the responsibility for making decisions.
citizen stands (or knocks) at the door of any school he must be admitted, and it is the responsibility of the appropriate government authorities to anticipate his request so that school capacity will be adequate to accommodate him.”

The Societal view of higher education is central to massification. Conducting a study on university education in the light of a broader and analytical approach that accounts for the historical movement from elite to mass forms of higher education brings fresh perspectives in understanding that the larger issues in university education over the second half of the 20th century flow from the creation and adoption of the massification system. By addressing the issues of human resource development, economic advancement, and national integration, as well as hinting on such issues as academic quality, relevance, funding, governance, brain drain and unemployment, this study is invaluable in informing policy makers, political leaders, educationists, the Nigerian public, and international agencies of the problems, weaknesses, strengths, challenges, and future directions of Nigeria’s university system.

This study is chronologically and thematically organized in six chapters. Chapter one examines the purposes of education, especially higher education, as conceived by the British colonial authorities, indicating how the demands for higher education reforms by Nigerian nationalists led to the setting up of the Ashby Commission in 1959. Based on the recommendations of the Commission, the newly independent government in 1960 embarked on the massification of university education. The result was the first wave of massification of 1959-1960. Chapter two examines the aims and objectives of higher education as conceived by Nigerian policy makers during the first wave, the expansion of facilities and access, and how regional rivalries, admission policies, and political instability constituted bottlenecks to the smooth expansion of university education. During the second wave of massification, the federal government sought to remove the bottlenecks between 1970 and 1979 by centralizing the control

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of university expansion. Chapter three focuses on how the federal government under the military regimes of Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Mohammed, and Olusegun Obasanjo used the university question to advance national unity, science education and equity in the spread of educational opportunities and facilities.

A democratic government under President Shehu Shagari came to power in 1979 after thirteen years of military rule. Chapter four discusses how the provisions of the newly amended constitution shaped the doctrine of a free university, the quota system, and federal, state, and private sector involvement in the massification of university education during the third wave, 1979-83. Nigeria’s economy slumped into recession in 1983. Chapter five examines how the depressed economy inherited by the new military regimes of Mohammed Buhari and Ibrahim Babangida and the resultant involvement of the World Bank and the IMF in Nigeria’s socio-economic policies shaped the introduction of rationalization policy and the subsequent under funding of massification projects during the fourth wave of massification, 1983-1990. After seven years of under funding of universities, Nigeria’s oil revenue improved dramatically in 1990 as a result of the gulf war. Chapter six looks at how the new economic prosperity renewed the federal government’s interest in expanding university facilities during the fifth wave of massification, 1990-2000. It also shows how the government’s reactions to the recommendations of the Longe Commission on funding, quotas, and private universities shaped the challenges and directions of massification during this period.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND TO POST-COLONIAL MASSIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA, 1952-1959

Educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution.¹

S.O. Awokoya, 1952.

The ideas and forces behind the post-colonial massification of university education policies originated in the 1950s. As a product of sustained nationalist attack on the elitist tradition of the University College, Ibadan (UCI), established by the British colonial government in 1948, and reinforced by international pressure on the colonial government, massification policies remained crucial in the direction and outcome of twentieth century university development. Attempts at massification of university education in the 1950s did not come to fruition except for the unprecedented expansion of education at the primary and secondary school levels coupled with modest scholarship awards for overseas university.

This chapter examines the origins and objectives of university education during the last decade of British colonial rule in Nigeria; the mass education schemes undertaken by the Federal and Regional Governments, the nationalists’ agitation for greater access to UCI, and the support of the World Bank and Carnegie Corporation of New York for tertiary education in Nigeria. It will demonstrate how the coalescence of domestic and external forces, dating to the 1950s, laid the foundation for the post-colonial governments’ determination to use massification policies to reorganize the country’s colonial and elitist higher education system. Intended to provide full opportunities to all, accelerate economic development, and unify Nigeria’s pluralistic society,

¹ NAI, Sessional Paper on an Education Policy Presented to the Western House of Assembly, July 1952, 5.
these policies provide a glimpse into how education, politics and societal forces intersected and, shaped Nigeria’s turbulent march to nationhood.

Nigeria’s passion for higher education during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was never in doubt; what was at issue was its provision in sufficient quantities. Before the advent of Western education in Nigeria, two types of education systems existed: the traditional educational system transmitted informally through everyday living and the formal Islamic system that was introduced in the northern part of Nigeria as early as the 15th century. Under these systems, educational opportunity was open and available to all members of the society.\(^2\) Intrinsically, they provided four basic educational competencies that UNESCO later adopted and promoted: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together.\(^3\) Intended to last from ‘womb to tomb,’ it provided lower and higher levels of knowledge in history, identity, culture, religion, among others, so as to develop the total personality of inhabitants from childhood to adulthood (learning to know and learning to be). In addition, it provided practical skills in agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, and crafts, among others (learning to do). Finally, it inculcated a sense of civic duty into members for the sake of peace and order (learning to live together). However, the advent of Western education through European missionaries and mission schools in the 1840s changed the dynamics of pre-existing education systems.

Formal schools came into existence in Nigeria with the arrival of Thomas Birch Freeman in 1842.\(^4\) Before the end of the 1800s, missionary bodies such as the Church Missionary Society

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\(^2\) Initially, these two preexisting systems of education operated side by side with the Western system. But over time, Western education system, introduced by the missionaries and imposed on Nigeria by the British colonial government came to be the foremost tool of social mobility.


\(^4\) Thomas Birch Freeman was the first Christian missionary to work in Nigeria. He was born at Twyford, Hampshire, England. He was a son of an English mother and a freed African slave. His pioneering work in founding many mission stations and chapels in the area underpinned later development of mission schools and Methodist success in Ghana, Western Nigeria, Benin, and Dahomey.
(CMS), Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Baptist, and the Baptist from the (American) Southern Baptist Convention, the Catholic Church’s Society of African Missions, the Jesuits, the Basel Missionaries, and the Lutherans had made inroads in Nigeria. These missionary bodies were anxious to spread the gospel and to convert Africans to Christianity. Thus, they established schools that emphasized religious instruction. As Father Wauter, a Catholic missionary in Western Nigeria pointedly stated: “[w]e knew the best way to make conversion in pagan countries was to open school. Practically all pagan boys ask to be baptized. So, when the district of Ekiti-Ondo was opened….we started schools even before there was any church or mission house.”

The emphasis on religious instruction in the missionary schools continued until the British consuls, who later established effective political control of the region, modified or broadened the educational curriculum to suit colonial objectives.

Originally, the British consuls had acquired political influence in many parts of Nigeria through treaties of protection with the natives, and later through conquest. Before 1900, the British had conquered and occupied the following areas in Nigeria: Colony and Protectorate of Lagos (1886); Niger Coast Protectorate (1893); and Northern Protectorate (1900). In 1906, the Niger Coast Protectorate merged with the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos to become the Southern Protectorate. In 1914, modern Nigeria came into existence when the British amalgamated the diverse peoples in the Southern and Northern Protectorates in an artificial political entity called Nigeria and Sir Frederick Lugard (1914-1919) became the first Governor-General. Subsequently, and for administrative purposes, Sir Bernard Henry Bourdillon,

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Governor-General (1935-1940), divided Nigeria into three regions in 1939: the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions, with Lagos as the administrative center.

Although the British initially allowed the missionaries to control the provision of education in Nigeria, they increasingly understood that to consolidate imperial rule education would be of great assistance. There therefore arose the need for direct government involvement. Accordingly, the British promulgated the Colonial Educational Ordinance for West Africa in 1882, followed by similar ordinances in 1887 and 1905. These Ordinances sought to regulate educational activities and practices in Nigeria. In addition, they sought to provide the colonialist with the opportunity to justify colonialism, which included bringing to the natives the blessings of civilization; creating a body of literate, obedient, organized and productive Africans who would be indispensable in the exploitation of their resources. Accordingly, the British idea of education emphasized reading and writing of the English language and literature, which was the medium of communication and reporting to the Imperial Government as well as a powerful tool for cultural assimilation. Other subjects were arithmetic, British history and geography. The British hoped to create a group of Nigerians sufficiently literate and skilled to achieve further integration of the colony into the mainstream of the colonial economy and administration as clerks, messengers, and interpreters. A British educator summed up the government view of education as follows:

...the conception of the aim of education was that it should make useful citizens, and when we say useful citizens, we mean literally citizens who would be of use to us. The conception was one of exploitation and development for the benefit of the people of Great Britain—it was to this purpose that such education as given was directed.6

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The British education policy emphasized the provision of primary and secondary education by establishing schools but did not establish any university. This is because under the colonial system of indirect rule that was introduced to administer the conquered territories, there was no place for highly educated Nigerians. Indirect rule, especially before the Second World War, retained the pre-colonial traditional political institutions and made effective use of ‘illiterate’ indigenous rulers while excluding highly educated Nigerians who obtained their degrees overseas. But soon the colonialists were disappointed. Bad blood ensured. Visitors to Nigeria and to other parts of West Africa commented on the tension and animosity between the colonialists and educated Nigerians. According to one observer, the relationship was “….delicate and difficult.”  

Charles Roden Buxton made similar observations when he stated: “[f]ew white people have a good word to say for the educated Africans… [H]is failings and absurdities are one of the stock subjects of conversation among White people in West Africa.”  

A district officer bluntly noted that the colonial government “…has like the Frankenstein, raised up a monster which will consume it.” Since educated Nigerians were political and social outsiders in their country, and since they strongly opposed colonialism, the colonial officials had good reasons to dread them, especially the radical ones who received higher education in America. Under this circumstance, the establishment of universities to train or to expand the class of educated elite was inconceivable. As Coleman confirmed:

It was the educated who organized mass meetings in Lagos, provoked disturbances in the provinces, published vituperative articles in the local press, and made life miserable and insecure for British administrators. There was nothing a district officer, a

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8 Ibid, 146.
resident, or a governor dreaded more than political disturbances and unrest during his tour of duty.  

However, West African intellectuals such as Edward Blyden, James Horton, Casely-Hayford, and Nnamdi Azikiwe had been demanding the establishment of a university in Africa since the second half of the nineteenth century. Except for Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone that was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1827 to train Africans as schoolmasters, catechists and clergymen, the British ignored the demand until 1934 when the Yaba Higher College was established in Nigeria. Yaba was a vocational institution. It was placed under the direct control of the Government Department of Education. The British hoped that the vocational institution would train Nigerians to satisfy the need for lower cadre of officials for the colonial service. Accordingly, admission to Yaba became dependent on the availability of positions in the civil service. No fees were charged when Yaba was established, but full tuition and boarding fees were introduced in 1938 and set at £50.00 per annum; a sum that only few Nigerians could afford. The College offered courses in Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture, Education, and Arts leading to the award of a Diploma. Since the college did not award degrees, the promotion of its graduates to a higher position was restricted. Dissatisfied, nationalists intensified their demands for the establishment of a degree awarding institution in the colony similar to those available in England, which, of course, would qualify them for senior service positions. As Kenneth Coleman, 150.

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10 James Coleman, 150.
12 Fourah Bay College was also established to provide its pupils, the children of the freed slaves and liberated Africans, with opportunities to obtain training in basic skills needed to survive in their new environment. Also, it was established to train those pupils who displayed the requisite aptitude as teachers and priests. In 1876, the CMS succeeded in getting the College affiliated to Durham University, which meant that the students could sit for Durham's matriculation examinations and take Durham University degree examinations, although Durham had no control over the appointment of lectures and lecturing. The affiliation led to a revision of the courses to include Latin and Greek. Fourah Bay College eventually moved towards University status in January 1965 and offered courses such as Hebrew, Arabic, History, Natural Science, French, and German.
Mellanby recalled, Nigerians showed passionate feelings “to be given the opportunity to qualify for senior service posts…”\(^{13}\)

Despite the demands for an autonomous university in Nigeria, the British did not yield for strategic and practical reasons. First, they sought to avoid the overproduction of Nigerian graduates who would not only make demands on the few available higher posts in government but question the legitimacy of colonial rule. Given the strong opposition to colonial government from the educated elite, “…the expansion of the educated class remained an anathema.”\(^{14}\) Second, the Nigerian Director of Education, E.R.J. Hussey, did not want the establishment of a university college in Nigeria to be hurried. Alternatively, he proposed a three-stage scheme: the production of students for available positions in the public and private sector by West African colleges; the later affiliation of the colleges with an English university for the purpose of external degrees; and finally, the granting of local autonomy to the colleges. Consideration of academic standards underscored this proposal. As Hussey declared, “We must at all cost avoid giving what we proclaim to be a University degree unless we can safeguard standards.”\(^{15}\)

Third, faced with the economic recession of the 1930s, the British, who had problems funding Yaba adequately, could not contemplate shouldering the additional financial burden of another higher education institution. In the 1930s, the return that the British government obtained from the primary products of Nigeria was extremely low and there were few funds available for development. In addition, during the Second World War the British reduced Yaba’s slender staff by the conscription of some lecturers and reduced its funding allocations as well. Worst still, in 1939, the army took Yaba’s buildings and converted them to a military hospital. As result,

\(^{14}\) Apollos Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism*, 81
engineering students moved to C.M.S Grammar School, Lagos; others relocated to Achimota College, Gold Coast (now Ghana). Under the circumstances, establishing a university in Nigeria was not a priority for the British. To their frustration, many Nigerians had to travel overseas for university training. The rising number of students studying abroad even during the Second World War testified to the high demand for university degrees. Nevertheless, as Nigerians continued their agitations for a university, a change in British policy seemed inevitable.

In response to the increasing demands for university education based on the standards and pattern of higher education in England, and partly to meet the long felt educational needs of its colonies, the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940. The Act was intended to contribute to political stability within British colonies by allocating £120 million for education, health services, water supplies, and other social and economic services. According to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Stanley, many of the colonial development schemes suffered because of shortage of trained persons. As a result, the establishment of institutions for university education in the colonial territories became a necessity. Thus, the British appointed the Elliot and the Asquith Commissions in 1943 to examine the university question for Africans and make recommendations in line with this new attitude. The reports of both commissions were published simultaneously in 1945, addressing various aspects of the university question. Their recommendations became the blueprint for the development of university education in Nigeria as well as other British colonies.

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The Asquith Commission that was appointed to articulate the fundamental principles needed to guide the promotion of higher education learning, research, and development of university colleges in the British colonies recommended a residential university college in a special relationship with London University. In addition, it proposed high academic standards in student admissions and staffing, and maintenance of academic autonomy.\(^{19}\) Anticipating eventual independence of the British colonies, the Asquith Commission hoped that the institution would help “produce men and women with the standards of public service and capacity for leadership which self-rule required.”\(^{20}\) However, while the Asquith report supported the idea of developing higher education in Africa in anticipation of ultimate independence, it did not view full independence as imminent. Indeed, even though the British encouraged constitutional developments in Nigeria from 1946 to 1954 with the purpose of granting self-government, they did not consciously prepare for Nigeria’s independence. It would be quite deceptive to equate self-government, as conceptualized by the British with full independence. In the British tradition, internal self-government or responsible government meant government with full responsibility for local affairs; it was not synonymous with complete freedom or independence. This explains why as late as 1955, the British Cabinet, troubled by the political implications of the terms ‘self-government’ and ‘independence,’ resolved that the term self-government should be used in all references to constitutional development of the colonies, and that the use of the term “independence in this context should be discontinued.”\(^{21}\)

\(^{19}\) A university college was defined to “mean an institution of higher learning at university level which is not empowered to grant degrees.” See, Colonial Office, *Report on Higher Education in the Colonies*, Cmd 6647 (London: HMSO, 1945), 1, hereafter cited as Asquith commission report.

\(^{20}\) Asquith commission report, 10-11. In a sense, this meant that higher education was only available to a few.

On the other hand, the Elliot Commission was established to “report on the organization and facilities of the existing centers of higher education in British West Africa and make recommendations regarding future university development in that area.”22 As the commission acknowledged, “…the need for educated Africans in West Africa in general already far outruns the supply, present and potential.”23 To this end, it specifically recommended the establishment of a university in Nigeria to award degrees from the University of London.24 However, the commission did not envisage mass university education, rather education for the few who would take over leadership positions after independence.

Following the report of the Elliot Commission, the University College of Ibadan (UCI) was established in 1948. It opened on 18 January 1948 with 104 foundation students. Nigerians hailed the UCI as a fulfillment of years of demands for the establishment of a university institution in Nigeria. The college immediately entered into a special relationship with the University of London, and was “by and large a sort of a carbon copy of the newer university institutions in Britain, most of which were at one stage or the other godfathered by London University.”25 The curriculum was a replica of that of the University of London without any modifications to meet Nigerian needs. Emphasis was on arts courses such as history, classics, and English; and pure sciences courses such as chemistry, physics, and mathematics. The students prepared for, and wrote the University of London degree examinations. The inter-University Council for Higher Education in the colonies made all academic and administrative appointments in the college from London on behalf of the University of London. The college

22 Elliot commission report, 17.
23 Ibid.
24 The Commission also recommended the establishment of two additional university colleges in Gold Coast, now Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Both the Elliot and Asquith Commissions, which exchanged information, agreed that the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies (later Overseas) was to advise the new University Colleges on how best to attain the objectives for which they were established.
was run on an educational philosophy in line with the British or classical model of a university, which views a university as an ivory tower preoccupied with training of the elite.

The quality of education obtained at the UCI was ‘beyond reproach’ because the institution set “standards in Nigeria at a level which would be a credit to any country in the world…”26 In defense of the institution’s standards whose degree was internationally recognized, Awokoya, the Minister of Education in the Western Region, said: “We don’t want another Yaba.” 27 Similarly, a suggestion made by several critics of the UCI that Nigeria should adopt the Egyptian pattern of higher education, characterized by easy entrance, enormous classes, nonresidential students, and teaching at night, was rejected in the editorial pages of the *Lagos Daily Times*.28 This is not surprising since the Nigerian elite would have frowned upon any university that was designed outside the type of system obtainable in London. They would have accused the British of running a ‘slummy’ second-rate university in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, it later became clear to many Nigerians that the university would not satisfy the demand for places let alone solve the human resource needs of the country given its narrow curriculum and facilities to admit more students. Moreover, the curriculum was to a certain extent inappropriate. In the sciences, for instance, UCI emphasized pure science subjects such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and neglected applied science courses. Ten years after the college was founded, no courses were offered in engineering, economics, law, geology, anthropology, sociology, and public administration, and it took eight years to establish a department of education.29 As Tai Solarin further noted:

> During the first ten years of the existence of our first university, agriculture was not taught, even though anybody could have

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26 Ashby Commission report, 5.
28 Ibid., 46.
29 Ibid., 32.
thought it should have been the first subject on the curriculum. Between 1948 and for almost ten years later, medicine did not appear on the curriculum of our premier university.... when anybody could have expected medicine to be the second faculty. What then were the subjects that glowed on the curriculum of the first university? English Language and Literature, Latin and Greek, and Religious Studies.\footnote{Tai Solarin, “The Nigerian University as a Trustee of Society,” in 25 Years of Centralized University Education in Nigeria, edited by A.U. Kadiri (Lagos: National Universities Commission, 1988), 56.}

Furthermore, admission to Ibadan through either direct entry or concessional admission was highly restrictive. Candidates for direct entry were required to pass five subjects at the General Certificate of Education (GCE), two of which must be at the Advanced Level, or four subjects, three of which must be at Advanced Level. These exams were taken after completing sixth form, an advanced two-year program for secondary school graduates offered by a number of selected secondary schools in Nigeria. Only a few secondary schools in Nigeria had sixth form, which limited the number of potential candidates for university education. On the other hand, candidates for concessional admission were required to have passed the GCE (Ordinary Level) in five subjects including English and Mathematics. In addition, they were required to take a university administered entrance examination. The entrance examination at Ibadan was demanding and highly competitive and, therefore, limited the number of students admitted. As Eric Ashby remarked, “Ibadan entrance requirements were more exacting than those for the universities in Scotland and Ireland, and much more exacting than the entry requirements for universities in America, Canada, and Australia.” \footnote{Eric Ashby, African Universities, 31.} 31

Ironically, many students classified as non-university material and denied admission owing to the stringent admission policy of Ibadan, eventually proceeded to America and Europe and successfully pursued university education. Indeed, many of them graduated with distinctions.
Additionally, the annual intake of students in the college was not decided by the number of qualified candidates or even by the country’s needs, but principally by the availability of “sleeping accommodation [at] the elite residential halls in the College.” Collectively, the limited curriculum, the exacting entrance requirements, and the limited spaces in the residential halls restricted admissions to Ibadan to a few students. Thus, from 1948 to 1954, 406 students were enrolled. As a result, many qualified Nigerians, who were denied the opportunity to obtain university education at Ibadan, traveled overseas. In fact, more Nigerians studied abroad than at the university. During the 1948/49 session, while 210 Nigerians enrolled for studies at Ibadan, 542 students were enrolled in higher institutions in the UK, Canada, and USA. This trend continued in subsequent years. Thus, in the 1949/50 session, 298 students were enrolled in Ibadan while 823 were enrolled in higher institutions in the UK, Canada, and USA. In 1950/51 322 Nigerians were at Ibadan while 1,239 were abroad; in 1951/52, 336 in Ibadan, 1,551 abroad; in 1952/53, 367 in Ibadan but 1,686 abroad; and in 1953/54, 406 in Ibadan while 1,911 were abroad. As a result, nationalists saw Ibadan as “…conservative, cautious, elitist, and ill-equipped for pioneering a new University in an alien culture.” Worse still, as Nwauwa puts it, the college could not, or perhaps was unwilling to, fulfill the expanding demand for university education in Nigeria. Increasingly, the new university came under attacks by African nationalists who had become disenchanted with their elitist, foreign and prodigal image.

Mr. E. E Esau, the General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, called for the expansion of Ibadan’s curriculum by suggesting the establishment of the faculty of education to

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34 Kenneth O. Dike, “The Ashby Commission and its Report,” in Chinelo Amaka Chizea, ed., Twenty Years of University Education in Nigeria (Lagos: National Universities Commission, 1983), 2. Along this line, Ashby had argued that the university of Ibadan emphasized “in standard and curriculum, the thin stream of excellence and narrow specialism,” and in “social function they regard themselves as restricted to an elite.” See Eric Ashby, 12.
35 See Apollos Nwauwa, Imperialism, Academe, 212.
train teachers. 36 The editorials of leading newspapers supported Esau’s call.37 Also, Nnamdi Azikiwe questioned the narrow curriculum of the institution, which was not only unrelated to the needs of the society, but restricted student intake as well. According to him, Nigeria “…cannot afford to produce or to encourage the continued production of upper class parasites who shall prey upon a stagnant sterile class of workers and peasants.”38 Besides, he indicted the college because the number of students trained in the college did not justify the amount of public expenditure on the institution. Zik stated that Ibadan “is becoming a million pound baby simply because it knows that whenever it cries it will be accorded a million pound kiss.” 39 From time to time columns in newspapers spoke against Ibadan. One insisted that the institution should end the “rigid method of selection of candidates for entrance to the University.”40 Another noted that Ibadan was not established “to compete with standards of British institutions.”41 There were suggestions that entrance qualification should be lowered to hasten Nigerianization.42 These reactions reflected Nigeria’s desperation for higher education and dissatisfaction with the educational limitations imposed on aspiring Nigerians by the British.

From 1948 to 1959, three notable features characterized Ibadan: insufficient admission and production of qualified candidates for public and private services; regional imbalance in enrolment that favored students from the south; and imbalance in course enrolment that favored the liberal arts. Regrettably, the British resisted fundamental changes to the Asquith tradition with the exception of the establishment of three colleges of Arts, Sciences and Technology under the ten-year development plan of 1952. The colleges were regionally distributed with branches in

40 Ibid, 9 January 1951.
41 Ibid, 21 May 1954.
42 Ibid, 26 March 1956. Nigerianization was a process of facilitating the high-level training of many Nigerians to fill in the positions occupied by European expatriates in the civil service.
Zaria (North), Enugu (East) and Ibadan (West). Yet, the colleges did not have university status, and they conducted their courses in arts and sciences at the intermediate level only. Nevertheless, these colleges formed the nuclei of future universities in the postcolonial era.

In the 1952-1959, on the eve of independence, remarkable internal and external developments simultaneously occurred in Nigeria. On the domestic front, there were regional struggles for power, constitutional changes, and deliberate experiments with mass education. On the international front, the World Bank and the officials of Carnegie Corporation advocated the expansion of Nigeria’s higher education to promote mass university education. The events of this period exposed the flaws of the country’s colonial higher education policies and dictated the tone for post-colonial massification policies.

When Nigeria was divided in 1939 into three Regions: the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions, the boundaries of these regions were conterminous with the three largest ethnic groups: North with Hausa-Fulani, West with Yoruba, and East with Ibo. The deficiencies in the division marked the beginning of ethnic rivalry in Nigeria and influenced the configuration of socio-economic and political policies: territorial and educational inequality. In territory and population, Northern Region had 729,815 square kilometers of territory and about 16.8 million people. The respective figures for the other regions were: Eastern Region had 119,308 in sq km, 7.9 million people; the Western Region, 117,524 sq km and about 6.1 million people. The Lagos Federal Territory had 70 sq km and 273,000 people. As these figures show, the Northern Region had 75 percent of the land mass as well as 54 percent of the population. Because the Northern Region was bigger than the two regions put together, Southern elites reasoned that the North would likely dominate them hence the inevitable regional rivalry, a situation for which the British bear primary responsibility. As Apollos Nwauwa puts it,
While it could be said that under British rule, efforts toward unity were begun with the formation of Nigeria on the outbreak of World War 1, paradoxically, it was the same British who sowed the seeds of disunity when Governor Arthur Richards divided Nigerian into the three unequal and ill-fated regions. 43

In 1944, the Daily Service predicted “an era of wholesome rivalry among the principal tribes of Nigeria [Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo].” 44 Sir Adeyemo Alakija, the president of the Ebge (a pan-Yoruba organization), in direct declaration of Yoruba role in Nigeria politics noted in 1948: “The big tomorrow[for the Yoruba] is the future of our children…How they will hold their own among other tribes of Nigeria…How the Yorubas will not be relegated to the background in the future.” 45 Similarly, on the anticipated role of the ‘assertive’ Ibo ethnic group in the East, Nnamdi Azikiwe echoed the sentiments of the Igbo people when he declared: “…it would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages. The martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver…. The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility.” 46 The Hausa ethnic group in the North similarly expressed apprehension over the likely domination of the more educated South. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who later became the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria, expressed concern over the migration of southerners to the north. According to him, they threatened to displace northerners in the colonial civil service. 47 Similarly, since southerners had more people with Western education, the editor of Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo Newspaper wrote an editorial

44 Daily Service, 17 October 1944.
45 Minutes of the first inaugural conference of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, June 1948, as cited in James Coleman, 346.
46 West African Pilot, 6 July 1949.
warning that if the British granted Nigeria early independence, nothing would stop Southerners from taking the places of the Europeans in the North.

What is there to stop them? ….it is the Southerner who has the power in the north. They have control of the railway stations; of the Post Offices; of Government Hospitals; of the canteens; the majority employed in the Kaduna Secretariat and in the Public Works Department are all Southerners; in all the different departments of Government it is the Southerner who has the power . . .

Despite the mutual misunderstanding among the three regions, they lacked the political power to initiate actions that would promote their peculiar interests. Clearly, the Regional Houses of Assembly created in 1946 by the Richard Constitution denied them the power to legislate, even for their own regions. They could only consider bills affecting their regions and make recommendations to the central legislature in Lagos to consider; only Lagos could pass legislation. Since the British imposed the constitution on the regions without seeking their input, nationalists criticized it and demanded changes that would grant more power to the regions.

John Macpherson, who was appointed Governor in 1948, yielded to the nationalists’ demands to re-examine the Richards Constitution by convening a constitutional conference in 1950. Delegates at the Conference in Ibadan in January 1950 unanimously agreed that regions would have greater autonomy. In addition, they agreed on a federal system of government whereby the regions would share power with the central government. However, the delegates were divided on what should be the quota of representation from each region in the proposed Federal House of Representatives. Conscious of their underdevelopment and educational backwardness in contrast with the south, but determined to use their population to

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counterbalance southern domination, the northern delegates at the constitutional conference demanded a 50-50 representation ratio in the central legislature between it and the other regions (East and West). In his contribution to the debate, Mallam Sani Dingyadi, a spokesperson for the North, pointed out that the South, comprising East, West, and Lagos feared that the North would dictate for the rest of the country if given 50 per cent representation in the House of Representatives. He said, however, that the North would feel the same way if the three regions were given equal representations. The reason he adduced was that the East, West, and Lagos shared a common religion, had attained the same standard of education, and therefore, were more likely to arrive at common grounds and counterbalance the country’s balance of power in their favor. On the other hand, he stressed,

….the North has a different religion and different standards of education, so the North must stand alone by itself. Therefore, in any matter of importance one would find the East, West, Lagos ….on one side leaving the North on the other side. Therefore, I do not think it is fair and cannot tolerate it that equal representation should be given to each region. What we would recommend is at least one-half representation for the North and one-half for what I call the South. 49

In contrast, Chief Obanikoro, the spokesperson for the Western delegation together with Alvan Ikoku for the Eastern delegation disagreed, and indicated that if the North had their way, it would amount to “placing the fate of the two regions at the mercy of the North.” 50 As they stated: “[w]e all know that the population of the North is larger than that of the other two regions. But if the principle is one of federation and not of domination, the basis of representation at the centre must be regional, each region should have equal representation at the

50 Ibid., 52.
centre. At the end of the debate, the Northern Region ultimately had its way without which the Emir of Zaria had threatened that he “would ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria….”

Based on the agreements at the constitutional conference, a new constitution, the Macpherson Constitution, emerged in 1951. Unlike the preceding constitution, the 1951 Constitution came into being after an unprecedented process of consultation with the people of Nigeria as a whole. Initiated by Sir John Macpherson, Governor-General of Nigeria (1948-1954), the constitution established central and regional legislative councils as well as a central executive council for the country. The regional legislatures legislated only with respect to certain specified areas i.e Agriculture, Education, Local Government, and Public Health, while the central legislature was responsible for all legislative areas, including those governed by the regional legislatures. In 1952, elections were conducted, and regional political parties with clear majorities in their regions emerged to advocate the course of social and economic advancement for their respective regions. In the East, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (which became the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens after 1960), dominated the Eastern Region with the Igbo as its major ethnic base. Nnamdi Azikiwe was founding leader of the party. The Action Group (AG) emerged in the Western region, led by Obafemi Awolowo, and with membership mostly from the Yoruba ethnic group. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), led by Ahmadu Bello, became a Northern Party dominated by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups.

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51 Ibid., 22.
52 Ibid., 218.
53 The central legislative council was known as the House of Representatives, consisting of a President, Six ex-official members; One hundred and thirty-six representative members elected from the Regional House, and Six special members appointed by the Governor to represent interests not adequately represented in the House. The executive council, known as the council of ministers, consisted of the Governor as President, six ex-official members and twelve ministers. Each region was represented by four ministers appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of regional legislatures.
Education was uppermost in the minds of regional leaders. Even though the demands for more education at all levels were increasing, the British government refused to introduce mass education schemes because of the country’s “seemingly limited financial resources.”  

The British education policy of 1951 stated that “[w]hile universal primary education is one of the essential aims of educational policy, it is not the only, nor is it necessarily the most urgent aim.”

To the contrary, the nationalists thought it was urgent. Motivated by the Macpherson, Obafemi Awolowo, the Action Group leader who won the first election to the Western House of Assembly in 1952 made it clear to members of the House that his government would introduce free universal primary education. In July of the same year, the Minister of Education in the region, S.O. Awokoya, presented to the House of Assembly a sessional paper on the region’s educational policy which was a radical departure from the British policy: “educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution.”

Thus the educational policy of the region, which reflected the position of the Action Group, was “…one of expansion and reorientation [implying] an all-out expansion of all types of educational institutions [hopeful] that in few years time, it should be possible to have universal education for all children of school age in the Western Region.”

Similarly, empowered by the 1951 constitution and conscious of the shortages of graduate output from UCI, the Council of Ministers appointed a commission in 1952 to study

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55 NAI, Nigeria: Annual Report of the Development of Education, 1/4/51-31/3/52 (Lagos: Government Printer, 1952, para. 30. The policy further noted: “[t]he present policy while recognizing the desirability of universal primary education wisely refrains from attempting any estimate as to when it can be achieved, but wisely proceeds on the assumption that the first step towards it consummation is to increase, within the resources available, provision for secondary education and teacher training so as to increase the flow of teachers.”
56 NAI, Sessional Paper on an Education Policy presented to the Western House of Assembly, July 1952, 5.
57 Ibid.
ways of promoting the Nigerianization policy. The policy, introduced in 1938 to train a high-level labor force by awarding overseas university scholarships to Nigerians, benefited a mere forty-one Nigerians between 1938 and 1952. However, in its report, the commission recommended an increase in the number of recipients. Following the report, the number of scholarship recipients increased from forty-one to 250 in 1952.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the bold steps taken by the Action-Group-controlled government in the West, the N.C.N.C led party in the Eastern Region contemplated a similar policy. In 1953, the Minister of Education in the Region, R.I. Uzoma, articulated his government’s modest mass education policy, which involved cost sharing between the regional and local governments. However, in that year, the N.C.N.C witnessed a leadership overhaul with Nnamdi Azikiwe replacing Eyo Ita as the leader of the party, while I.U. Akpabio replaced Uzoma as the Minister of Education. Azikiwe rejected the modest proposal of his predecessor and proposed an eight-year free education plan instead. In 1953, over one-half million of the region’s estimated one-quarter million children of primary age were enrolled. Outlining his party’s educational program Azikiwe stated:

> [o]ur educational program shall be designed to produce citizens who are capable of adapting themselves not only to their surroundings but also to the world environment. We shall emphasize education of the head, hand and heart to enable our

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60 The program required the local governments in the region to pay 45 percent of the cost of providing free education. The policy also proposed an increase in teachers from 1,300 to 2,500 annually as well as the establishment of secondary school in all the divisions.
children to gain knowledge and acquire skills and to cultivate a sense of duty to the community.\footnote{Nnamdi Azikiwe, \textit{Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamadi Azikiwe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 258.}

While the Eastern and Western Regions became more aggressive in expanding educational opportunities, the Northern Region was rather slow in pushing for expansion. The problem with the North was the general apathy towards Western education, which they alleged to corrupt the recipients. Clearly, the Missionary control of education throughout most of the colonial era meant that demands for education and Christianity were interwoven. The south received the missionaries and their education. The Muslims, who dominated the Northern region, perceived Western education as synonymous with Christianity, and therefore, resisted it. Most children of ages four to twelve compulsorily attended the Koranic schools. The influential local authority officials, including the emirs and the chiefs, saw no useful purpose for sending their children to Western educational institutions. Thus, while the Koranic schools attracted the vast majority of the children, the Western educational institutions in the region remained virtually empty.

Although education was free in the North, the Northern Region did not launch any universal education program to encourage mass enrolment as the other regions had done. As the Premier, Ahmadu Bello stated: “[i]n the North, education has always been free. There was a small nominal fee for the middle schools. But in practice hardly any one paid it and every conceivable excuse was presented for not doing so.”\footnote{Ahmadu Bello, \textit{My Life} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962),60.} Mindful of teacher shortages in northern schools, the region embarked on a teacher training program intended to produce enough teachers to make universal free education realizable. Thus, the Northern Region pursued a policy of cautious planning and maximum efficiency through teacher training.
The policies embarked upon by the Eastern and Western Regions to expand educational opportunities as well as the policy of teacher training embarked upon by the Northern Region between 1952 and 1953 received the endorsement of the World Bank. As a part of its routine duty to developing nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development sponsored a Mission to Nigeria in 1953 to study the degree of reconstruction and developments since World War II, and Nigeria’s economic development prospects. The mission conducted its work from late September until December 1953. It traveled widely in the three regions of Nigeria. In its report, the Mission observed that the “…intense and widespread desire in Nigeria for education is encouraging…. [and the] enthusiasm for education in much of Nigeria amounts to a blind faith that schooling regardless of content or method is a passport to employment and affluence.”64 It noted a remarkable burning desire for change in Nigeria:

The people of Nigeria are anxious to live better and hence to produce more goods, in greater variety; they want to become better educated; they show a growing willingness to modify those institutions which hold back economic progress and accept methods of social, economic and political organization which elsewhere have proved conducive to such progress.65

The Mission observed that Nigeria possessed two essential elements for economic development, namely a work force and funds. The work force, however, had not developed enough to champion the course of development. Though it recognized the establishment of UCI as a positive step, it stressed “…that Nigeria needs many times more college graduates than even the most optimistic plans could provide.”66 The Mission therefore recommended that “…every effort be made to increase enrolment at the university, presently around 400, as quickly as possible…At the same time the University College should offer a greater variety of

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65 Ibid., 69 & 567.
66 Ibid., 72.
courses…related more directly to the economic advancement of the Nigerian people than it has been thus far.\textsuperscript{67}

The report also reiterated the 1953 report of a conference on African education at Cambridge sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation and the Colonial Office, which emphasized that “none of the many schemes for social and economic development can be carried to success unless Africans with the right skill and training are available to work them.”\textsuperscript{68} It also echoed Elliot Commission’s view on the development of higher education in West Africa, which believed that “the need for highly trained Africans is too great to be met in any way other than by training them in their own country.”\textsuperscript{69} Furthermore, according to the World Bank report, India had one student at college level to 70,000, while Nigeria had less than one to 70,000, and thus stated that “…if Nigeria is to reach the level of India there will have to be over 20,000 students instead of the present 400.”\textsuperscript{70} The World Bank report of 1953 was an indictment of UCI. It added great impetus to the nationalists’ opposition to the limited opportunities in UCI’s, and propelled them to agitate for changes in the institutional admission policies. Though few if any changes were made, the constitutional changes in 1954 paved the way for what was to come.

The year 1954 was remarkable in the history of education in Nigeria. In that year, further constitutional changes, largely induced by inter-regional friction, streamlined the relationship between the center and the regions, granting them legislative power over higher education. The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 (named after Oliver Lyttleton, the Secretary for the Colonies, who chaired the constitutional review committee) officially fashioned Nigeria as a federation of three regions, with Lagos as the federal territory. The constitution defined the relations between the

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 72-73 and 594.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{African Education} (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 12.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Elliot Commission report}, 23.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 592.
Federation and the Regions in the distribution of legislative powers and provided for three legislative lists: the Exclusive Legislative List, the Residual List, and the Concurrent List. The subjects under the Exclusive Legislative List were exclusively reserved for the Central Government while the subjects under the Residual List were exclusively reserved for the Regions. Both the Central and Regional Governments could legislate on the subjects under the Concurrent List. Under this constitution, regional governments could legislate on the subject of primary and secondary education, which the constitution placed on the Residual List. In response to these changes, the three regions and Lagos enacted Education laws that became the basis for mass education at the primary and secondary school levels. In addition, the constitution placed higher education on the Concurrent Legislative List and as such both the Central and Regional governments could establish and run higher education institutions.

The Eastern Region went beyond the experiment with mass primary and secondary education and initiated plans to establish a university in the region. The Government of the Eastern Region was conscious of the new constitutional powers granted to the regions under the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, inspired by the 1953 World Bank advice on the need to expand opportunities for university education, and was still highly critical of the elitist nature of Ibadan. Consequently, in May 1954, the Region seized the moment and began to push for the establishment of a university in the region. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had been a vocal critic of Ibadan, and who had since 1920 nursed the ambition of establishing a Nigerian university, championed the course. As a Minister of Local Government (sworn in January 1954), Azikiwe

71 Legislative lists are the designated subjects that the constitution empowers each level of government to enact laws.
72 The Western Region led the way when it enacted the Education law No.6 of 1954, which officially endorsed the free education at the primary and secondary schools. Likewise, the Eastern Region promulgated the Education Law No.28 of 1956 and the federal government enacted the Education (Lagos) Act, 1957. However, the Northern Region enacted Education Law No. 17 of 1956, which emphasized teacher training as the first step to the introduction of free education.
led a delegation to Europe and America. The purpose of the trip was to attract investors to the Eastern Region and to seek advice and backing of the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom as well as university experts on the feasibility of establishing a bonafide university in Eastern Nigeria. The delegation was to request advice on how to plan and execute the university project. Encouraged by the positive response to the idea, Azikiwe, who became the Premier of the Eastern Region on 1 October 1954, introduced a motion in the Eastern House of assembly in May 1955, seeking the creation of the University of Nigeria. As he stated:

> In order that the foundations of Nigerian leadership shall be securely laid, to the end that this country shall cease to imitate the excrescences of a civilization which is not rooted in African life, I strongly support this Bill to the effect that a full-fledged university shall be established in this region without further delay. Such a higher institution of learning should not only be cultural, according to the classical concepts of universities, but it should also be vocational in its objective and Nigerian in content. We should not offer any apologies for making such a progressive move. After all, we must do for ourselves what others hesitate to do for us....

The proposed Bill also called for the establishment of twenty diploma-conferring institutes. Azikiwe reasoned that if the institutes were organized to operate pari passu with the faculties, the region would have embarked upon "an historic renaissance in the fields of academic, cultural, professional and technical education on the same lines as the leading countries of the world." In formulating its policy for the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Azikiwe noted that the Government of the Eastern Region was obliged to make a radical departure from the restrictive practices and long-held elitist traditions of Ibadan. Contrary to Ibadan, the proposed university of Nigeria was intended to accomplish the following, as Azikiwe later recollected:

> It will not be exclusively residential but it will also accommodate external students who may reside outside the precincts of the University. It will not only blend professional cum vocational higher

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73 NAE, Eastern House of Assembly Debates (Enugu: The Government Printer, 18 May 1955), 150-155
74 Ibid.
education, but it will create an atmosphere of social equality between the two types of students. It will adapt the "land-grant college" philosophy of higher education with the classical tradition in an African environment. It will cater for a larger student body to specialize on a variety of courses, whilst maintaining the highest academic standards. It will not restrict the number of its students purely on the basis of the potential absorption of its graduates into vacant jobs within the territorial limits of Nigeria. It will spread its activities over a wide range of fields of human endeavor to enable the average student to specialize on the basis of his aptitude.75

The idea of a Nigerian university in the Eastern Region dedicated to accomplish the above objectives was unique and revolutionary because it sought to expand enrolment opportunities by removing the obstacles that hindered access to Ibadan. It also sought to promote the course of nationalistic consciousness, diversify the curriculum, serve the economic needs of the Nigerian society, and at the same time blend the American style "land-grant college" system with the classical concept of universities.76 Thus, mass university education, educational expediency, and nationalism--fueled by Azikiwe’s connections--were the fundamental driving forces in the establishment of the university. Azikiwe and other supporters of the American system such as Ita Eyo, Nwafor Orizu, among others, received university training in the United States, which radicalized their opposition to the British elitist system. Apollos Nwauwa has examined how the influence of American trained university graduates facilitated the establishment of Universities

75 Nnamdi Azikiwe, “Hope to a Frustrated People,” An Address made by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chairman of the Provincial Council of the University of Nigeria, at the Inaugural Meeting of the Council, 3 March 1960. Azikiwe added as follows: “Its sources of income will in addition to the regular practice in the United Kingdom include earnings from its agricultural and commercial estates. Its curriculum will be prepared not only to measure up to the highest standards of the older universities of Europe and America, but efforts will be made to emphasize the problems created in the environments of Nigeria and Africa, e.g., Nigerian History, Nigerian Geography, Nigerian Literature, Economic History of Nigeria, African Ethnography, etc

76 Land-grant colleges are American institutions which have been designated by Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. These acts provided funds to educational institutions by granting federally-controlled land to the states. The mission of these colleges, as provided in the 1862 Act, is to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts and cooperative extension without excluding classical studies. The idea was to help members of the working classes to obtain a practical college education.
in Africa, including Nigeria. These supporters of American style higher education in Nigeria did not stop when the University of Ibadan was established in 1948. Rather, they continued as crusaders for American practical (“horizontal”) education, as contrasted to the British literary (“vertical”) tradition.

For instance, Professor Eyo Ita, a veteran teacher and leader of the opposition in the Eastern House of Assembly, supported the idea of establishing a vocational university as obtainable in the American universities to challenge the British elitism in Nigeria. He predicted that a day would come “…when every province would have its state university. That day is dawning. May it break out soon.” The confidence in American education among Nigerians educated in America was one of the major reasons for the post Second World War migration of hundreds of Nigerians to America. Conversely, their bias for the American educational ideals and radical nationalism contributed to the antipathy of both British and British educated Nigerians toward American education and American-educated Nigerians. Nevertheless, on May 18, 1955, the Eastern House of Assembly passed into law the bill establishing “The University of Nigeria.” The first practical financial step towards fulfillment of the plan inherent in the Bill was the decision of the government in directing the Eastern Nigeria Marketing Board to lay aside £500,000 annually from 31 December 1955 to the end of 1964. This fund was envisaged to amount to a total of £5 million by the end of 1964.

Coincidentally, while the Eastern Region planned a university that would depart from Ibadan’s elitism, Carnegie officials in 1954 and 1955 similarly questioned the elitist philosophy

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79 James Coleman, 243. However, the advocacy of the American trained Nigerians bore fruits during the 1969 curriculum conference when its recommendations for educational reforms reflected American influence.
81 Okechukwu Ikejiani, 157.
that underscored the higher education policies in British colonies. In particular, Alan Pifer, an executive assistant of the British Dominions and Colonies Program, advocated the financial involvement of America in the British colonies in Africa to help expand education facilities and opportunities. As Pifer advocated, “American aid, if wisely given, cannot be regarded as anything but beneficial –indeed urgent…Education, of course is the key. There is no aspect of African life which is not affected by it.” This new interest in Africa was reinforced after the end of the Second World War as a strategic tool during the cold war. America’s largest foundations, Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Ford Foundation, assisted the USA in furthering its interests internationally. These foundations emphasized education by funding programs linking the educational systems of the new African nations to the “values, modus operandi, and institutions of the United States.”

On May 11, 1954, Carnegie Corporation held a meeting in New York to discuss steps to intervene in Africa’s educational development. In attendance at the meeting were Alan Pifer and Steve Stackpole, executive assistants of the British Dominions and Colonies program; Walter Adams, Secretary of the Inter-University Council; and Sally Chilvers, secretary of the Colonial Social and Science Research Council. At the meeting, Pifer and Stackpole stated that the focus of Carnegie assistance in the British Colonies would henceforth be universities, university colleges, and research institutions. They wanted a change of British policy in higher education.

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82 Under the British Dominions and Colonies program, Carnegie set aside some funds to provide assistance to emerging countries in Africa, particularly in the field of African education.
85 Under this program, Carnegie set aside some funds to provide assistance to emerging countries in Africa, particularly in the field of African education.
In a letter to Stackpole, Pifer wrote: “[m]y own view, shared by Adams, is that too many people have been resting on the Asquith and Elliot Reports for too long. A lot has happened in the African colonies in the past ten years.”

Pifer specifically proposed that the first step to reform was to conduct a broad survey of higher education in Africa, preferably in Nigeria. He advocated a review of the Asquith commission with a view to determine Ibadan’s relevance or otherwise to the society and to the needs of the country’s professional, agricultural, technical and general education. Pifer’s preference for Nigeria was based on its huge population estimated then at 32 million, which stood out as a colony that was four times larger than any other territory in other British colonies in Africa. In 1955, the principals of six Asquith University institutions, including Nigeria, met informally at a conference at the University College in West Indies, Jamaica, between 16 and 18 June to reevaluate the principle of elitism which the Asquith commission had endorsed. Pifer attended, and used the forum to advance his reform agenda. At the end of the conference, it was agreed that alternative patterns of higher education such as the idea of “mass” university education in Puerto Rico and democratization of access to higher education in the United States were possible models for British colonies in Africa. The delegates agreed on the need to set up a commission to study strategies to expand education in Africa, beginning with Nigeria. The agreement reached at the Jamaica Conference and the proposal to establish a university according to the American pattern in Eastern Nigeria was intended to reform the British elitist system of higher education.

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87 Letter from Pifer to Stackpole, October 28, 1954, Carnegie Corporation File (CCF) Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas, hereafter cited as CCF.
88 Ibid.
89 Alan Pifer, 93.
90 Barbara Anthony Rhodes, 137.
Resistant to any attempt to reform British higher education policy, Dan Maxwell, the Assistant Secretary of Inter-University Council, wrote a letter to Pifer in October 1955, four months after the Jamaica Conference and offered five reasons why the resolution passed at the Jamaica Conference had been suspended: events in the colonies were moving so fast that the study may not keep up with it; the Asquith principles should not be reviewed but instead interpreted, modified and applied to each region; the best people to conduct the study would not spare time for it; a delegation from the University of London had gone to West Africa to assess the capacity of the universities to cope with engineering courses; the Premier of Eastern Region in Nigeria had proposed the establishment of the University of Nigeria. As Maxwell concluded, “…until the results of these delegations and discussions have been made known and digested, the review idea has been put into cold storage.” 91 Though the British shelved the idea of reforming the prevailing system, Pifer did not give up.

Meanwhile, between 1955 and 1959, accelerated domestic and external developments interlocked to provide the foundation to post-colonial massification of university education in Nigeria. On the domestic scene, the period was marked by increased demands for independence. The momentous year was in 1957. In that year a constitutional conference, held in London under the distinguished chairmanship of the Colonial Secretary, formally agreed to grant ‘self-government’ to the Western and Eastern Regions in August 1957 and the Northern Region in 1959. It also created a ‘national government’ under federal Prime Minister Alhaji Tafawa Belewa. Even though the terms ‘regional self-government’ and ‘national government’ suggests little more than the progress connoted by provincial autonomy, or municipal self-government in other political systems, it was, according to Azikiwe, a “major achievement” marking ‘the end of

91 Letter from Sam Maxwell to Alan Pifer, October 16, 1955, CCF.
the beginning of the struggle for freedom from political tutelage…” 92 Elections were scheduled on 11 December 1959, and a target date for independence was tentatively scheduled for April 1960. Independence meant that Nigerians would have to take over top bureaucratic positions previously held by expatriates, mostly British.

As Nigeria moved towards independence and as many expatriate civil servants consequently began to leave the country, labor shortages star in the face of Nigerian would-be leaders. Given this fact, the national government under Belewa contemplated measures to train Nigerians in preparation for the challenges of independence. In the pursuit of Nigerianization policy, it appointed an officer to specifically push for the training and recruitment of Nigerians for public service positions. 93 In addition, the government appointed a special committee of the House of Representatives in March 1958, which commented harshly on previous plans to train Nigerians; unwarranted concessions accorded to expatriate officers, lack of progress in placing Nigerians in senior posts; and insufficient graduate output from Ibadan. 94 Nevertheless, the government continued to train Nigerians, particularly for the senior civil service positions through awards of scholarships, training courses, and courses of instruction. As a result, the government increased the number of scholarships for Nigerians to study in United Kingdom to 101; 44 in America; and one in India. 95

The regional governments were equally engaged with efforts to train high-level personnel abroad in readiness for independence. The government of Western Region sponsored 312 students from Western Nigeria for training overseas while about 2, 639 private students studied

92 NAI, Daily Times, 9 August 1957.
95 NAI, Nigerianization Policy-Higher Training of Nigerians, Senior Service Staff, CFEO, 638/S. 4, 1957: See also NAI, PSO. 4/3.3/C 130, 1960. Total regional and federal government expenditure on scholarships increased from 235.8 thousand pounds during the 1952/53 fiscal year to 820.9 thousand pounds during the 1959/60 fiscal year. See also A. Callaway & A. Musone, Financing of Education in Nigeria, 84.
in overseas higher institutions.\textsuperscript{96} The government spent about £140,000 annually to support these students. Similarly, the Eastern Region awarded overseas post-secondary scholarships to 549 students while 735 private students studied abroad.\textsuperscript{97} The Northern Region did not make similar efforts but rather nursed the ambition of establishing a university. However, the region was handicapped by insufficient number of applicants due to the region’s apathy to Western education. As Sir John Lockwood, the Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Education recounted, as far back as 1957, “…the Premier and the Ministry of Education of the Northern Region had left me under no illusions about their hopes. They told me at Kaduna last January [1956] that as soon as there were enough potential candidates from their region, they would wish to have a university (of their own).”\textsuperscript{98} Nevertheless, the massive educational advances made by the Eastern and Western Regional governments coupled with generous scholarship awards ensured that either Southerners or expatriates dominated the Federal and Regional jobs, and perhaps, jobs in the private sector. The situation was indeed very disturbing because, as the Nigerianization Officer put it:

> It is believed that only one per cent of the staff of the (federal) service is of Northern origin, and it is doubtful whether, among the senior posts, the percentage is as high as this. The size of the problem can be estimated when it is realized that Northerners constitute approximately 55 percent of the population of the federation.\textsuperscript{99}

Since Southerners filled available posts in the federal civil service, Northerners interpreted Nigerianization as synonymous with ‘Southernization.’ In response, in December 1957, the Public Service Commission of the Northern Region initiated the Northernization policy


as a counterpoise to the Nigerianization policy. The Northernization policy stated that “...if a qualified Northerner is available, he is given priority in recruitment; if no Northerner is available, an expatriate may be recruited or a non-Northerner on contract terms.” The policy was apparently intended to help fill the public service in the North with Nigerians of northern origin and discriminated against Southerners who were, in deed, the target of the policy. Headlines like “Northernization: More Southerners Sacked,” dominated newspaper dailies in the South with harsh words for the policy. This disagreement, mostly inspired by the discomfort and fear of the North arising from the educational imbalance between it and the South, underscored the Northernization policy. Because the regions were autonomous entities, the central government was too weak to forestall the attendant regional competition and bitter rivalries. As Robin Hallett noted:

The relations of the Regions one with another are haunted by fear and suspicion; the North apprehensive of the South hurries forward its policy of Northernization; the South is half-afraid, half-contemptuous, and almost wholly ignorant of the North. Then look how weak the Federal Government is. . .

Essentially, the artificial division of Nigeria into three regions with greater regional autonomy benefited the colonial masters but compromised the chances of building one nation out of the different antagonistic nations. This explains why Sir Alan Burns, Nigeria’s Governor-General (1942-1943), stated: “…there is no Nigerian nation.... The very name of Nigeria was invented by the British to describe a country inhabited by a medley of formerly warring tribes with no common culture, and united only in so far as they are governed by a single power.”

Also, Lord Milverton (formerly Arthur Richards), Nigeria’s Governor-General (1943-1948),

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100 AHK, Northern Region of Nigeria, Public Service Commission, Report of the Public Service Commission for the Period 1st November 1954 to 31 December 1957 (Kaduna, 1958), 7.
101 See Daily Service (Lagos), 17 February 1960, 2.
102 Robin Hallett, “Unity, Double-Think and the University,” Ibadan, No. 6 (1959), 4.
maintained that Nigeria was more of a geographical expression than a nation. In addition, an American social scientist, Martin Kilson, who conducted research on the rise of nationalism in Nigeria, concluded: “...the chances for a viable, united Nigerian nation-state are rather slim indeed.”

Regional conflicts notwithstanding, between 1957 and 1958, the Eastern Region took a bold step to ensure the speedy take off of the University of Nigeria. At the request of its government, the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas and the International Cooperation Administration (now United States Agency for International Development) agreed to assist the region in its bid to found a university. Between April and May 1958, Mr. James W. Cook, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter, England; Dr. John A. Hannah, President of Michigan State University (MSU) and Dr. Glen L. Taggart, Dean of MSU International Programs visited Nigeria to study the viability of the proposed university and to make recommendations to the region concerning its nature. The group issued a report in 1958 that proposed “...the development of the University of Nigeria based on the concept of service to problems and needs of Nigeria.” Encouraged by this report, the government passed a law in November 1958 establishing the Provincial Council for the university. The government later appointed the Council in April 1959 “with financial and administrative powers to build a sound university.” Similarly, in the Western Region, the Action Group mounted a renewed offensive on UCI when it released a policy paper on higher education in 1958, which, among other things,

104 Lord Milverton “Thoughts on Nationalism in Africa,” Corona, VII (December 1955), 447. Awolowo echoed this statement throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.
106 The University of Nigeria Calendar, 1961—62, (Nsukka: Printed under the direction of Michigan State University, 1961), 11-12.
108 Ibid.
criticized the College for its low intake and limited range of courses. Even though it did not initiate immediate plans to establish a university for the Western Region, it called for the expansion of opportunities at Ibadan, while nursing the ambition of establishing a university.\footnote{The Action Group Paper on Higher Education in Nigeria.}

On the international scene, Pifer did not give up his campaign of educational reform in British colonies in Africa. Since 1954 when Carnegie held its first meeting on the subject of reforming higher education in the British colonies, pressures for expansion of opportunities for university education continued to grow. For instance, when the Colonial Principals of university colleges in the British colonies met in Salisbury for the second time in 1957 and discussed the type of university required in rapidly developing countries, “they discussed specifically whether the universities should be comprehensive on the American style or selective in accordance with British tradition.”\footnote{Anthony Barbara Rhodes, 146. Pifer attended the conference.} They preferred the former. The question of suitability of existing higher educational facilities was one that was being asked by more and more people. Indeed, shortages of highly educated people in the country provided the context for Nigerian leaders to face the question, which explains the Nigerianization policy. The forces of Nigerianization met headlong with the reality that there was a definite shortage of manpower and that this shortage was related to the existing educational system introduced by the British.

For Pifer’s reform agenda to succeed, he needed urgent cooperation from the British before Nigeria’s independence because he was uncertain of succeeding in reforming the system after independence. Moreover, involving the British would ensure Nigeria’s acceptance of the American system of education already held in low repute by British educated Nigerians. Thus, Pifer continued to push for Anglo-American cooperation. Eventually Sir Christopher Cox, educational advisor to the Colonial Office, after continued discussion of the proposed study on
the expansion of higher education in Nigeria with members of the Inter-University Council, Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller Brothers, John Howard, Mel Fox, Pifer, and Stackpole, supported the idea. Cox committed himself to the idea of holding an Anglo-American Conference to discuss further cooperation between the United Kingdom and United States in providing assistance to former British colonies in Africa, which had achieved independence or were about to achieve independence.\textsuperscript{111} This seemingly sudden change of mind was, in all probability, the result of the British assessment of the two meetings convened by the Colonial Principals, the growing support for expanding higher education in Africa, and Pifer’s tenacity in pushing the idea that was central to Carnegie’s policy in African education-a tenacity that manifested itself in his consistent impact at conferences and his many informal meetings and communications with colonial administrators and educators since 1954.\textsuperscript{112} Most importantly, Cox was encouraged by the fact that Carnegie would fund any commission set up for a study. Thus, the British agreement to hold a conference where the specifics of the educational reform were to be discussed was a melting point in the Anglo-American participation in Nigeria’s educational reform. As Ashby correctly stated, “\textit{[i]t seemed quite clear at that time that the principles on which the development of post-secondary education in certain of the colonies was based, needed reexamination.}”\textsuperscript{113}

Carnegie consequently sponsored the Greenbrier Conference, convened from 21-25 May 1958 at White Springs, West Virginia, with participants invited from universities, foundations, businesses and government agencies in the U.K and USA.\textsuperscript{114} At the end of conference, the

\textsuperscript{111} Report of meeting between John Howard, Mel Fox, Stackpole and Pifer, Carnegie Corporation, New York November 11, 1957. CCF.
\textsuperscript{112} Anthony Barbara Rhodes, 140-149.
\textsuperscript{114} The list of participants and their titles were as flows: Reginald Barrett; James R. A. Bottomley, First Secretary, British Embassy, Washington; William 0. Brown, Director, African Research and Studies Program, Boston.
delegates agreed on the need to conduct an Anglo-American study on higher education needs of Nigeria.\(^{115}\) This new partnership between the British and the US in African education emerged in the context of the cold war and apparently recognized the necessity to forge closer relations with Africans in order to prevent them from shifting their allegiance to communist blocs. Nevertheless, at the conference Pifer spoke on the need to get Nigerians on board. As he stressed, “[w]e must not try to settle issues which affect the African leaders more vitally than anyone else by discussing them on a purely Anglo-American basis without the participation of the African leaders themselves.”\(^{116}\) But as of 1958, Nigerians were not involved in the Anglo-American deliberations. Besides, the fact that no one in Nigeria had advocated for a national study to reform the higher education system concerned Cox and Pifer. In July 1958, Cox wrote to Pifer stating thus:

> At present, I cannot clearly see an initiative of this kind coming from the Nigerian government or from ourselves (I.U.C)...at the moment. I have the feeling that the likeliest way to get something actually happening would be an initiative from the Foundation (Carnegie), and I can see that presents difficulties from your side.\(^{117}\)


\(^{116}\) Ibid.

Given the heightened wave of Nigerian nationalism of the late 1950s, any proposal for reform from non-Nigerians would have been logically viewed with suspicion and as such Pifer and the British found it uncomfortable to initiate the idea. Undeterred, however, Pifer undertook a trip to Nigeria in November 1958 to subtly sell the idea to the government officials at the federal and regional levels. His goal was to get them [Nigerian officials] to ‘initiate’ it on their own.118 Before Pifer went to Nigeria, he stopped at London on October 20 1958 where he met with Cox, Thompson, and Sutton at the Colonial office. At the meeting, the British expressed concern that the Prime Minister of the Eastern Region would view the proposed study as an attempt to obstruct implementation of his plans for the University of Nigeria and would resist it.119

Based on the London discussion, Pifer informed the Governor-General, Sir James Wilson Robertson, and the Deputy Governor-General, Ralph Grey, of the purpose of his visit, and requested them to talk informally with key government officials about his impending visit. The idea was to establish a receptive atmosphere to Pifer’s idea. In turn, the colonial officers in Nigeria approached the Federal Minister of Education, Aja Nwachukwu, with the information that Carnegie might be interested in funding a study of post-secondary education, and that he should use Pifer’s imminent visit to appeal to him to sponsor the scheme. Nwachukwu agreed. In November 1958, Pifer arrived in Nigeria. In a letter to Stackpole, he noted, “Shortly after I arrived in Lagos, the Federal Minister of Education proposed the survey to me and asked for Carnegie assistance to finance it.”120 Nwachukwu’s readiness to welcome Carnegie Corporation

to sponsor higher education reforms in Nigeria was the consummation of Pifer’s long years of sustained efforts to involve America in the development of education in British colonies in Africa through the corporation. To Pifer, this was a dream come true.

While in Nigeria, Pifer presented a lecture before the Philosophical Society of the University College, Ibadan, on 16 November 1958. At the lecture, he articulated what American interests were in what he described as the ‘sixth period’ of the ‘great American discovery of Africa.’ For him, American interests in Africa during this period were academic, philanthropic, strategic, and economic. The establishment of formal and informal African studies programs in nine universities and one theological seminary, and the formation of the African Studies Association in 1956 indicated American growing interest in Africa. In addition, with the exception of the Rockefeller Brothers, whose interest centered on economic development, other American philanthropic foundations such as Ford, Carnegie, Phelps Stocks, and others, were primarily in Africa to advance higher education and carry out research. Furthermore, Pifer indicated that “…a continent that occupies a fifth of the earth’s surface cannot be without interest to us [America] and of course to the whole Western world.” In keeping with America’s strategic interest in Africa, particularly in the context of the cold war, Pifer stressed that “[a]n unfriendly Africa would be a direct threat to our security.” America was mindful of the great natural endowments in Africa and was therefore interested in “…the continent’s minerals and raw materials,” and saw no reason “why equitable arrangements cannot be made for us to buy our share of these, and we believe that in so doing we can help African develop

121 Alan Pifer, “American Interest in Africa,” A lecture given before the Philosophical Society, University College, Ibadan, on 16 November, 1958, 1. The other five great periods of African discovery, as he mentioned, were that of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Portuguese (and others from the 15-17 centuries), and the period of political exploration ending with the partition of Africa by the European powers.
122 Ibid, 3-4.
123 Ibid, 4-5.
124 Ibid, 9.
125 Ibid.
their resources for their own ends.”

Nigeria occupied a special place in the minds of Americans. Thus, Nigeria’s appearance “as the twelfth largest independent nation in the world and the third largest in the Commonwealth will have an impact on the American consciousness.” Although Pifer was an Executive Associate of British Dominions and Colonies, his analysis reflect the minds of American official policy makers and showed that American interest was not altruistic after all.

Pifer subsequently accompanied Nwachukuwu on a tour to the three regions in December 1958 to elicit the support of the regional governments for the proposed study. The consensus was overwhelming, as indicated in a letter to Pifer written by V.K. Lockwood, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria. During the tour, Pifer met with Azikiwe in Enugu and found him “most enthusiastic about the survey” once he (Pifer) made it clear to him that the study would not delay his plans for the University of Nigeria.

It was clear from the 1958 tour that the three regions, which had functioned more or less independently since the Macpherson Constitution, were willing to work together as a nation. Regardless of their differences and mindful that the anticipated independence required that all regions would be merged into one country, the three regions for the first time arrived at a consensus on the need to expand university education in recognition of its role in promoting regional and national development. It was a momentous period in the history of Nigerian university education. The enthusiasm expressed by the regions was by no means surprising because they had made earlier efforts along the lines of expansion of educational opportunities and facilities at the primary and secondary school levels. From 1952, when universal free

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126 Ibid., 10.
127 Ibid.
129 Anthony Barbara Rhodes, 158.
education was introduced in the Western Region, to 1959, school facilities expanded such that primary school enrolment rose from 811,432 in 1955 to 1,080,303 in 1959 while enrolment in secondary grammar schools rose from 10,935 to 22,374 during the same period.\textsuperscript{130} During the same period in the Eastern Region, primary school enrolment rose from 742,542 to 1,378,403, and secondary grammar school enrolment equally rose from 10,584 to 15,789.\textsuperscript{131} Though the Northern Region did not introduce universal free education, primary school enrolment nevertheless modestly increased from 168,521 to 205,912, and secondary grammar school from 2,671 to 4,683 during the same period.\textsuperscript{132}

Furthermore, when the ‘national government’ under Belewa, enacted the Education (Lagos) Act of 1957 for the Federal Capital, Lagos, primary school enrolment grew from 37,038 to 66,320, and secondary grammar school from 3,157 to 4,804 during the period between 1957 and 1959.\textsuperscript{133} Educational expansion engaged a substantial chunk of the finances of governments at all levels. In the North, education absorbed between 19.5 per cent and 23.9 per cent of the total government expenditure between 1955 and 1959. The East and West had higher figures. In the East, education absorbed between 26.9 per cent and 43.0 per cent; in the West, between 28.1 per cent and 42.6 per cent; and in the federal capital, between 18.7 and 15.2 per cent. Callaway and Musone’s study in the 1960s revealed that in most developing countries, educational expenditure ranged between 18.7 per cent and 15.2 per cent of total government expenditure.\textsuperscript{134} However, the Eastern and Western Regions far exceeded that number.

\textsuperscript{132} D.H. Williams, \textit{A Short Survey of Education in Northern Nigeria} (Kaduna: Ministry of Education, 1960), 45-47.
\textsuperscript{133} Education Sector Analysis, \textit{Historical Background on the Development of Education in Nigeria} (Abuja: Education Sector Analysis, 2003), 88.
\textsuperscript{134} A. Callaway & A. Musone, 25.
Although the federal and regional mass education programs ended a few years after they were introduced owing to inadequate financial resources caused by the unprecedented demand for education, by 1959, nonetheless, a total of 2,775,938 students enrolled in various primary schools all over the country while a total of 47,650 students enrolled in secondary grammar schools. According to Fafunwa, “…more primary and secondary schools were built and more children enrolled at the two levels between 1951 and 1959 than during the one-hundred years of British rule.”

Disappointingly, the existing university, UCI, turned out insufficient number of graduates. Data on student enrolment in Ibadan revealed that from 1948 to 1959, a total of 939 students enrolled in UCI: 359 from the Eastern Region; 484 from the Western Region; 74 from the Northern Region; 7 from Lagos, and 17 from Cameroons. In terms of distribution of students by disciplines, Arts topped the list with 385 students; sciences, mostly pre-medical and pre-Agricultural students followed with 260 students; 176 in Medicine; 68 in Agriculture, and 50 in Education. Of these numbers of students, 865 were males while 64 were female.

The mass primary and secondary education schemes pursued since 1952, the Nigerianization policy, the critique of UCI’s elitism, the Eastern Region’s initiative as well as demands for more universities and more opportunities underscored Nigeria’s longing for higher education. This explains, quite explicitly, why Pifer’s campaign to review the existing rigid educational system to make way for expansion of opportunities was well received by Nigerians. It was apparent in December 1958 that a commission would be set up to revisit the foundation of

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British higher education policy in Nigeria and articulate ways and means of expanding facilities for mass access.

As a whole, the interests of Carnegie, Britain, and Nigeria for higher education reform coalesced in the late 1958 and formed not only the cornerstone of a new era in the Anglo-American collaboration in Nigerian higher education expansion, but also a prelude to Nigeria’s post-colonial commitment to mass university education as well. One major objective that united Carnegie, British, and Nigerian official thinking—though for different reasons—was the need for a shift from elite to mass university education. For Carnegie, it was an opportunity to use education as a means for American future involvement in the emerging African nations, though its success depended essentially on British endorsement. It was also a way to challenge British influence in Africa by offering Africans an alternative higher education system based on the American model. For the British, the pace of change in the colonies in the late 1950s was uncontrollably fast, and for that reason, failure to identify and plan with these colonies would greatly jeopardize their chances of friendly relations with African countries after the attainment of independence. Besides, Britain was concerned that American readiness to assist Dr Azikiwe in his bid to found a university in the Eastern Region based on the American land grant system would compromise their influence in Africa’s most populous nation. Thus, Britain had no choice but to cooperate since a Nigerian nationalist, Azikiwe, was in the forefront of the American involvement and Carnegie was ready to provide funds.

For Nigeria, the proposed study was an unprecedented and a revolutionary opportunity to advance the course of mass university education as a practical and desirable alternative to the elitist system of British higher education. Emergent policy makers in Nigeria were well informed of the need to satisfy mounting demand for university opportunities, saturated as they were with
the idea of accelerating the training of a skilled labor-force for post independence economic development, and encouraged by the prospects of addressing regional educational imbalance to promote national unity. Therefore, the study--the first inter-regional and international collaboration in Nigeria--became a critical step in the process of integrating Nigeria’s pluralistic societies as a united nation. Besides, not only did the proposed study provide a glimpse on how education, politics, and economics intersected, it also shed light on how massification policies became fundamental and yet controversial ingredients in Nigeria’s march to nationhood.
CHAPTER II

HUMAN RESOURCE NEED, ASHBY COMMISSION, AND THE FIRST WAVE OF MASSIFICATION, 1959-1969

Our program for higher education should include a chance for the man who was not chosen in the early days of small numbers. The fire of hope must be kept burning.

Francis Keppel, 1959.

Stimulated by the federal and regional government’s mass education programs, Nigeria’s primary and secondary school enrolments soared phenomenally in the 1950s. However, a similar trend did not exist in university enrolment. From 1948 when the British colonial government established University College, Ibadan (UCI), to 1959, the supply of university education failed to satisfy the mounting demand by Nigerians. Since only 939 students enrolled in the UCI, Nigerian elites pressed for the democratization of opportunities for access as well as expansion of facilities. Although Nigerians yearned for more opportunities for university education, the government had not assessed the extent of the need. However, when the interest of Nigerian governments in favor of massification coincided with those of Carnegie Corporation and the British colonial government in 1959, federal government officials seized the opportunity by calling for the appointment of a commission to assess the higher educational needs of Nigeria. The discussions on the principles that would guide the work of the commission influenced its recommendations, as contained in the report issued in 1960. Subsequent implementation of the report by the federal and regional governments resulted in the first wave of university massification, 1959-1969.

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1 Memo from Francis Keppel to H.W Hannah, 24 February 1960; Personal Files of H.W Hannah, Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 1959-1960. Francis Keppel and H.W Hannah were American members of the 1959 Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria. This memo underlay the principle behind the subsequent recommendation of the commission.
Although it was obvious that a commission would be appointed to re-examine Nigeria’s higher education needs, its membership and terms of reference had not been figured out by January 1959. Alan Pifer of the Carnegie Corporation, sought to clear that up when he wrote to Lockwood in January 1959 regarding the possibility of having Eric Ashby chair the commission because of his prestige in the British higher educational system as well as his familiarity with and admiration of American patterns of education.\(^2\) Ashby began his career at Bristol University and later served the colonial administration in Australia. He returned to teach at Manchester University and then went to Belfast. He was a member of the Ibadan Visitation Committee in 1957 and made extensive tours of American Universities for the Commonwealth fund in 1958. His works after this tour reflected admiration for the value of innovations in the American educational system. He was, therefore, well qualified for the position. Pifer’s choice of Ashby was strategic. It was aimed at not only protecting American interest in the final recommendations of the commission, but also to guarantee the acceptance of American system by Nigerians who held it in low repute. More importantly, Pifer wished to avoid the possible charge by both the British and Nigerians that the commission was in reality a blatant American interference and a *coup de grace* against the British hegemony in Africa. Thus, Carnegie had to tread carefully and diplomatically. Ashby’s leadership, therefore, reassured the British even though the new ‘kid’ on the block was, in fact, the Americans.

Furthermore, Pifer stressed the importance of conducting certain professional studies prior to the commission’s work, which would constitute background materials. He suggested that an economist study the Nigerian economy to determine its capacity to support the expansion of post-secondary education; that an educationist organize and supervise the collection of educational statistics; and that an Islamist prepare a paper on Islam in Nigeria and the possible

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\(^2\) Letter from Pifer to Lockwood, 5 January 1959, CCF: Carnegie Corporation File, hereafter cited as CCF.
relationship to the development of higher education in the Northern Region. Specifically, Pifer suggested that an American should be the economist while a Briton should be the educationist. He recommended Professor R. B. Sergeant of the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University as the Islamist.³

Nigerians were absent at this stage of the study where the design of the commission and its membership were discussed. Besides, the understanding between Pifer and Lockwood was that either Carnegie or Inter University Council would appoint the commission and have it submit its report before Nigeria’s independence scheduled for 1 October 1960. However, when Ashby agreed to head the commission, he insisted that the Nigerian government should appoint the commission and be intimately involved in the whole process. In addition, he objected to the schedule that required the commission to submit its report before independence, stressing that if the independent Nigerian government would accept the commission’s report, it must echo the initiation of Nigerians. As he cautioned: “[i]s it not conceivable that the fact that the report was published before independence would give some Nigerian leaders an excuse for disregarding it? In brief, I considered whether the report of this commission would not be better as a first product of an independent Nigeria rather than the last fling of advice to a British colony.”⁴ Pifer and Lockwood seemed to have accepted Ashby’s suggestions, and in a letter to Lockwood, Pifer expressed his desire to see that the survey was “…fully regarded in Nigeria as a Nigerian affair and if the commission were appointed by Carnegie Corporation or I.U.C., it would tend to be regarded as something imposed from outside.”⁵

Another issue that occupied the attention of the officials of the Carnegie Corporation and the British Ministry of Overseas Development (former Colonial Office) was the nature

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Letter from Ashby to Pifer, 15 January 1959, CCF.
⁵ Letter from Pifer to Lockwood, 17 February 1959, CCF.
of the Commission’s recommendations. The discussion centered on whether the commission’s report should link the purposes of higher education directly to economic development by training relevant high-level personnel. This developmental dimension, endorsed by many discussants, essentially re-echoed the prevailing trend of thought among economists in Western countries, which saw education as a crucial tool of influence in the economic development of the developing world. The theory held that national economic development was contingent upon capital formation attainable through investment in human resources. Thus, by improving the quality of a work force through increasing its level of education, a country would increase the productivity of the individuals involved, and in so doing, lay down the technical base necessary for its economic development.6

Carnegie notably held the notion that education was a tool for modernization, and it hoped that the commission would investigate the interconnection of high-level labor needs, educational development in Nigeria, and economic development.7 In a memorandum addressed to the Deputy Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir Ralph Gray, Alan Pifer stressed the economic implications of the commission’s tasks and indicated that Carnegie planned to offer assistance to Nigerian government specifically “to reorganize its system of higher education in order to make education a direct factor in economic development.”8 Similarly, in a memo to Ashby, Pifer emphasized that since economic development would be of immense importance to Nigerians, the commission should “concentrate on how to develop the personnel for leading positions as a basis for planning of national economic development.”9

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7 “Education Background,” a paper presented to the Cumberland Lodge Meeting, Windsor, England, May 1959, CCF.
8 “Memorandum from Alan Pifer…to Sir Ralph Gray,” 30 March 1959, in Lockwood Papers (Files on Higher Education), Birkbeck College Archives, University of London.
9 “Memorandum from Alan Pifer to Eric Ashby, 10 April 1959, ibid.
Sir Christopher Cox, the advisor to the British Ministry of Overseas Development supported Pifer but stressed that “if the standards of education already established were to be maintained in institutions of higher education in the future, the commission should deal partly with economic development and partly with solution of manpower problems of Nigeria.” Government officials in Nigeria welcomed this sentiment, and given the shortage of personnel, Gray thought that higher education would have to play a part in “preparing the human resources of Nigeria for greater efficiency and economic output.”

To champion the course of national development in post-colonial Nigeria, the training of a high-level workforce was fundamental. However, shortages of skilled human resources in the private and public sector of the Nigerian economy presented a source of increased anxiety for government officials and nationalists, especially as independence drew near. The Federal Minister of Education, Aja Nwachukwu, observed that “[i]f we are to approach independence with confidence and serenity, we must know that there will be adequate numbers of skilled technicians and of professional workers in all fields, who are aware of and ready to accept the responsibilities attendant upon the attainment of self-government, when the appointed day comes.” Mindful of the human resource shortages in Nigeria, and motivated by the mood for change, the federal and regional governments moved speedily to propose an immediate appointment of a commission to study higher education needs of Nigeria, as suggested by Pifer in 1958. Consequently, in March 1959, the Governor General of Nigeria, James Robertson, sent a dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lennox Boyd to inform the Colonial Office that Nigerian governments welcomed the idea of a commission to study post-secondary education. The dispatch further stated that the Federal Minister of Education had also accepted

10 Cox to Sir John Lockwood, 17 February 1959, ibid.
11 Memorandum from Sir Ralph Gray to Alan Pifer, 10 April 1959, ibid.
the recommendation of the Colonial Advisor on Education, Cox, that Eric Ashby head the commission.  

Acknowledging the importance of the proposed commission Robertson declared:

> The number of educated young Nigerians produced from these sources is significant, but they are in no way adequate to the needs of the country. It is the view of the government that there must over the coming years be a considerable expansion of facilities for higher education in Nigeria. That the need exists and that it is urgent is not doubted; but its extent has not yet been studied and no programme has been drawn up for meeting it.  

The Federal Minister of Education, with the concurrence of the government of the Regions, announced the appointment of the Commission on Post-Secondary and Higher Education on 27 April 1959. The terms of reference of the commission, often refereed to as the Ashby Commission, were principally “[t]o conduct an investigation into Nigeria’s needs in the field of post-secondary and higher education over the next twenty years, and in the light of the Commission’s findings to make recommendations as to how these needs can be met.”

Members of the Commission consisted of three Nigerians (one from each Region), three Americans, and three British. Nigerian members of the Commission were Professor K. O. Dike (East), Senator Shettima Kashim (North), Dr. S. D. Onabamiro (West). Sir Eric Ashby, Master of Clare College, Cambridge University, and formerly President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast, chaired it. Other British members were Sir J. F. Lockwood and Mr. G. E. Watts. American members were President Eric Walker, Professor H. W. Hannah, and Dean F. Keppel. Although the Commission was a joint Nigerian, United States, and United Kingdom operation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided the financial support.

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14 Ibid. By ‘these sources,’ Robertson was referring to Nigerians trained in the University College, Ibadan, and institutions in the United Kingdom and United States of America.
15 PRO: CO 554/2029, Announcement on Survey of Nigerian Education, Colonial Office Information Department, 27 April 1959.
16 The Commission, as Pifer suggested, invited five experts who prepared papers on certain aspects of the work of the Commission. Professor F. Harbison of the Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, prepared a report
The inaugural meeting of the commission was held on 4 May 1959 in the committee room of the House of Representatives. Thereafter, it commenced an extensive study, sittings, and regional field trips. The Ashby Commission was an unprecedented milestone in the history of education in Nigeria. For the first time Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and America came together to re-examine the principles that guided British higher education policies in Nigeria with a view to adjust it in order to serve the current and future needs of a country advancing towards independence. As J.F. Ade Ajayi and others noted, international involvement “interacted with the politics of independence to usher in a new age of higher education in Nigeria.” Besides, it was the first time that the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions had accepted a collective project in educational matters. Earlier, they had independently pursued their education policies without yielding to federal coordination.

Should the commission’s recommendations emphasize the introduction courses in applied sciences vital for economic development or should they call for expansion of access to university education with emphasis in liberal arts? This question dominated discussion until September 1960 when the commission submitted its report. Lockwood, a member of the Ashby commission, suggested that the “whatever the final recommendation, Nigerian universities should not continue to follow the pattern of the University of London.” He further noted that such changes did not mean a departure from “what we regard as reasonable demands upon students,” stressing that Nigeria should try the Scottish model because “if it had the

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benefit of considerable infiltration of American-type courses it would probably be specially beneficial for meeting some of the special needs of Nigeria."\(^{20}\) An American member of the commission, Kepple, added that Nigeria should modify the tradition embodied in the Asquith report by “making opportunities for higher education more widely available, and by changing its content so as to approximate the pattern of American land-grant colleges.”\(^{21}\) These ideas implied that the recommendation of the commission on university reform would emphasize courses in the vocational and applied sciences vital to Nigeria’s economic development as opposed to the existing emphasis on liberal education.

To the contrary, a British member of the commission, Watts, argued that recommending the training of only technical labor force for economic development would be a futile exercise as it was unlikely in the “foreseeable future that a considerable number of Nigerians would be attracted to it.”\(^{22}\) He therefore urged the commission to stress that an adequate supply of applied scientist, engineers, technologists, technicians, and artisans was indispensable for economic development. The main issue, according to him, was to find “some blend of the British and American system which might be acceptable and effective in Nigeria.”\(^{23}\) Similarly, Eric Ashby, in retrospect, believed that the best way to achieve that objective was “not to slow down on expansion, but to ruthlessly ensure that education is relevant even if it means a radical departure from the forms and patterns associated with education in modern industrial societies.”\(^{24}\) He affirmed:

The recommendations…had on the one hand to be sufficiently deeply rooted in the existing pattern of Nigerian education to be

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\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Memo from Francis Keppel to H.W Hannah, 24 February 1960, ibid.
\(^{22}\) “Summary of the Views of Mr. G.E. Watts,” Ashby Commission Background Papers, Lockwood Papers.
\(^{23}\) Ibid.
acceptable and practicable…on the other hand the recommendations had to promote adaptation, to stimulate innovation and prevent Nigerian higher education from congealing into a neo-British mould.\textsuperscript{25}

Although there was a common consensus among members of the commission and Nigerians on the expansion of educational facilities, some members of the commission and staff of UCI opposed the idea of closely associating higher education with economic development through emphasis on the development of sciences while neglecting liberal arts courses. Dr. Dike, the Principal of UCI and a member of the Ashby commission argued that the proposed curriculum reform in favor of science courses should not affect established institutions like UCI. As he stated, “...progress in science, medicine, and technology should tend to follow rather than precede education. With education, in fact, training in the above skill would be inevitable and would come automatically from within rather than be imposed from outside.”\textsuperscript{26} He, therefore, urged the commission to allow Ibadan to continue with “the higher education of the elite,” who would be leaders of thought.\textsuperscript{27} Likewise, Dr John Fergusson, the then head of classical education in UCI, argued that Nigerian university education should be limited to the act of nurturing and producing “men and women with standards of public service and capacity for leadership which self-rule requires.”\textsuperscript{28}

Furthermore, Dr Onabamiro, a member of the commission, similarly believed that the unwarranted prominence placed on science and technology would endanger education standards, suggesting that the “special relations existing between UCI and universities abroad—preferably the UK—should be maintained.”\textsuperscript{29} In addition, some members UCI senate strongly expressed

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., 269-270.}
\footnote{Kenneth O. Dike, “Summary of Professor K.O. Dike’s Views,” Ashby Commission Background Papers.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{See J, Fergusson, “Ibadan Arts and Classics,” \textit{University Quarterly}, IX (September 1965), 399-405.}
\footnote{S. Onabamiro, Ashby Commission Background Papers.}
\end{footnotes}
fear that the proposed curriculum changes would interfere with the high standards of the college and could counteract the influence of the college on the future pattern of higher education in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{30} Even the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC), the most influential body in the formulation of policy in the 1960s opposed any adjustment in the existing pattern, objectives or curriculum, basing its objections on the need to preserve academic standards.\textsuperscript{31} Undeniably, the strong opposition to curriculum changes from the academic community highlighted the pervasive influence of the British elitist tradition in that many scholars who studied under the system were willing to defend liberal education even when emphasis on applied courses was vital to economic development.

Emphasis on applied science courses or liberal courses notwithstanding, the three regions were eager to pursue the expansion of university facilities and opportunities to train personnel who would fill senior positions in the civil service. They were less concerned with whether or not at the national level the federal government emphasized science and technology courses in university education curriculum. Alhaji Isa Kaita, the regional minister of education in the north, expressed his government’s overriding concern to see the creation of a university in Zaria to help produce the work force that was desperately needed by the Northern Region.\textsuperscript{32} In the Western region, political leaders wanted an end to limited opportunities at the UCI, which was why the

\textsuperscript{30} Minute of Meeting with senate of the University College, Ibadan, 11 January 1960, Ashby Commission background Papers.
\textsuperscript{31} National Archives Kaduna (NAK), Minutes of Meetings of the JCC, 1960-1961, File No. CDN C. 16. Formed in 1955, JCC was an independent body representing major organizations involved in educational activities in the country (the Universities, Regional Education Ministries and the Union of Teachers). It acted in advisory capacity to both the Federal and State Ministries of Education, Universities, Institutes of Education, the West African Examination Council, and all other education agencies. Its main functions include influencing educational development in the country, offering professional officers a forum for exchange of ideas and information, and reconciling professional views in order to evolve a harmonious national educational system.
\textsuperscript{32} Minutes of Meetings of the Ashby commission, January 1960, Ashby Commission background Papers.
region at the same time had advanced a plan to found its own university. In the East, Jerome Udoji, the then secretary to the premier, indicated that the educational concern of his government was to consolidate the regional government to meet administrative needs of the establishment aimed at producing local candidates for employment in various branches of the public service.

The overriding need for an educated labor force by the regions showed that the UCI did not train enough Nigerian personnel for public service. Nigerian nationalists and government officials had since 1948 bemoaned the inadequate opportunities and facilities to ensure mass access to university education in spite of high demand for university education. Mass education experiments in the 1950s produced potential candidates for higher education and wetted appetite for more education. Sir Ronald Gould, a British schoolteacher and trade unionist, who conducted a three-week tour of Nigeria in 1960, observed that “...the demand for education . . . at all levels seems to be insatiable . . . Everybody sees its desirability and even its necessity.” However, since opportunities for access were limited in the country, many Nigerians who had the means traveled overseas for higher education study. By August 1960, there were at least 47,500 overseas students in Britain. Out of the 8,500 from West Africa, Nigeria topped the list with 6,000 students.

Meanwhile, while the report of the commission was awaited, the call for massification of access to university education in place of privileged education dominated newspapers throughout the 1960. The American educational policy based on “the maximum development of every

34 Minutes of the meeting with J. O. Udoji, Chief Secretary to the Premier of Eastern Nigeria, January 18, 1960, Ashby Commission background Papers.
35 Sir Ronald Gould undertook the tour at the request of the British Council; organized by their officials in London, and aided by the Mr. E.E. Eaus, the General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Teachers. See NAI, *Daily Times*, April 30, 1960, 5.
person to the limit of his ability,” reverberated in the discussions and, constituted a crucial reference point in the public quest for unlimited access to university education. Notably, Olalekan Are, a former student of the UCI, specifically dismissed the institution as ‘a waste of taxpayers’ money.’ He reminded the government of the belief in the United States that every qualified candidate was capable of learning. According to him, what the UCI needed was the US land grant college policy, which held: “…admit and give education to all qualified candidates. Never refuse any qualified student.” Furthermore, he argued that if implemented, the College in its present form would handle 10,000 students, as opposed to only less than a thousand. Accordingly, the UCI entrance examination should be open to all persons irrespective of their grades in the West African School Certificate. Students should be paired up in every room and of-campus students should be encouraged as from 1960-61 session. The idea of all students being in residence must be forgotten in the interest of the nations’ needs and progress. The building of more staff quarters should be discouraged so as to have enough room for future college expansion…. Money should be made available to students who cannot afford the college fees.

Are’s suggestions highlighted the factors that had limited access to university education to many Nigerians. These factors, as Dr S. D. Onabamiro stated were absent in the American system because American higher education “…reflect broadly the fundamental democratic principles governing the structure of its society, and are a sharp reaction to the traditional European conception of University which used to be an exclusive preserve of the aristocracy, the

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38 NAI, Olalekan Are, “Suggestions for UCI,” Daily Times, 23 May 1960, 5. Similar ideas featured in Daily Times of the following dates: March 6, 1960; March 28, 1960, April 19, 1960; September 9, 1960. However, Dr. Kenneth Dike, the Principal of UCI responded to this during the 12th Anniversary of UCI by stating: “Our expansion in terms of student is almost entirely dependent of the availability of adequate residential accommodation, laboratories, library, and classroom facilities. In spite of all that has been written in the press about admitting non-residential student into this college, and although we have opened our doors to them for nearly three years, not a single student has availed himself of this opportunity. See NAI, “Dr. Kenneth Dike’s Address at the 12th Anniversary of UCI,” Daily Times, 19 November 1960, 16.
39 Ibid.
upper classes, the rich and the privileged.”  

Such principles encouraged massification by providing opportunities to everyone. Instead of shutting out from the campuses prospective students who are capable, according to Onabamiro, the general principle that governed admission into American higher education “prefers to err on the side of taking in people who may not be able to go through the courses.”

Likewise, Orotayo Kitchie and J.A.O Odupitan letters to the Daily Times editor supported the call for massification. Kitchie strongly appealed to the government to consider the universal yearning for eligible candidates and abandon the policy of education for the few.

As Odupitan stated, Nigeria

…must make haste to expand the existing scheme to suite our outlook [:] abandon forthwith the bogus idea of education for the very few who could afford it; [and encourage] more afternoon and evening classes…Call it cheap education or whatever you like, but we are sure to have education at its best for the masses.

Lack of adequate opportunities for Nigerians who desired university training was a common indictment of the British higher education system. Attentive to the public desire for mass access to university education, members of the Ashby commission decided on seven principles to guide their proposals, prominent among which was: “…[o]ur program for higher education should include a chance for the man who was not chosen in the early days of small numbers.”

By insisting on the principle of inclusion as one of the guiding principles to its recommendations, members of the commission, who traveled to all the parts of the country, apparently acknowledged public desire for massive educational expansion. The commission’s report, submitted to the federal government in September 1960-- a month before independence--

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41 Ibid.
44 Memo from Francis Keppel to H.W Hannah.
essentially responded to public expectations. The Commission’s recommendation was based on its imagination of Nigeria in 1980 as

…a nation of some 50 million people, with industries, oil, and a well developed agriculture; intimately associated with other free African countries on either side of its borders; a voice to be listened to in the Christian and Moslem worlds; with its tradition in art preserved and fostered and with the beginnings of its own literature; a nation which is taking its place in a technological civilization, with its own airways, its organs of mass-communication, its research institutes.45

The report addressed six interconnected issues, which provided the government with the blueprint to pursue its vision of mass university education during the first decade of independence, and subsequently. The issues rested on the paramount need for the post-colonial governments to expand educational facilities and liberalize educational opportunities in such a manner as to advance both economic development and national integration; commit available financial resources as well as secure international assistance to meet that objective and; finally, create institutions to implement, evaluate, and guarantee success. Here, education, national needs and external forces intersected, and shed light on how massification policies ultimately shaped modern Nigeria. Each recommendation underlay government readiness to depart from the British system and employ mass university education to serve the complex and multiple needs of independent Nigeria.

First, the report acknowledged the link between investment in education and economic development, declaring that the training of labor force in the universities, especially in the sciences, was a vital component of economic development. As the report noted, “[o]f all the Nigeria’s resources her young people are the most valuable; expenditure upon their education

45 Ashby commission report, 3.
should be a first charge upon the nation’s finances.”

Accordingly, it recommended that the minimum need over the next ten years was 80,000 people with post-secondary school education, 30,000 of whom would be in senior positions: “managerial, professional and administration." To attain the target, the report recommended “an annual flow of at least 2,000 graduates from universities” in place of the present flow of “300 from Ibadan and perhaps 600 from overseas.”

The Commission based this estimate on the submission of F. H. Harbison, an economist invited to provide an estimate on Nigeria’s labor needs at the post-secondary school level. Harbison report was published in full as chapter one of the Commission’s report. In the report, he stressed that the training of human resources was indispensable for Nigeria’s economic development and urgent. As Harbison argued:

> Of all the resources required for economic development, high-level manpower requires the longest ‘lead-time’ for creation. Modern dams, power stations, textile factories, or steel mills could be constructed within a few years. But it takes between 10 and 15 years to develop the managers, the administrators, and the engineers to operate them. Schools and college building can be erected in a matter of months; but it requires decades to develop high-level teachers and professors.

Second, to meet the commission’s estimate of the required workforce, it was necessary to establish more institutions to train it. Thus, the report recommended the establishment of three additional universities to be located in the federal capital, Lagos; Eastern and Northern Regions. The proposed university in Lagos would operate day and evening courses leading to degrees in commerce, business administration, economics, and social science, including courses at the post-

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46 Ibid., 7.
47 In addition to 30,000 Nigerians with university degrees, the report also estimated 50,000 people with intermediate qualification which meant people with two or three years of full time study after Scholl Certificate in technical institutes or agricultural colleges, etc.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 50.
graduate level in higher management studies.\textsuperscript{50} In the East, it proposed the creation of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, to be integrated with the Enugu branch of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, and in the North, the establishment of a university in Zaria in the buildings of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology. The huge land mass and population of Nigeria was a major factor in the spread of universities in all regions. As the report noted, “[t]he distances in Nigeria, the variety of people which comprise her population….all point to the need for at least one university in each Region.\textsuperscript{51} With the UCI located in the Western Region, all the regions had a university. Therefore, the report did not see the need for another university in the Western Region for the meantime, but hoped that a “time will certainly come when there is a need for more than one university in each region.”\textsuperscript{52}

Although the Commission did not recommend another university in the West, regional officials wanted a university. The report noted that as the commission revised its recommendations for submission, “...we were informed that the Hon. Minister of Education for the Western Region had some time ago decided to establish a university in the West with Regional funds and had already made plans to that end.”\textsuperscript{53} Regardless, the report stressed that “at present we do not feel able to recommend that Federal aid be given to more than one university in each region.”\textsuperscript{54} Notwithstanding, a minority report authored by S.O. Onabamiro, who represented the Western Region in the Commission, disagreed with the majority report on this. Instead, he proposed the establishment of two universities in all the regions, including the West, which would bring the number of universities to seven.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 26-29.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Reservation by S.D. Onabamiro, in Ashby commission report, 48.
To ensure a steady supply of candidates for university education, the report stressed the need to maintain a healthy educational pyramid with the primary school at the base followed by secondary school and post-secondary school at the top of the pyramid. The report observed that while the pyramid in the South (East and West) was broad at the primary and secondary levels, it constricted far too sharply at the university level. In the North, the pyramid was slim at all levels. The report strongly urged that a proper balanced of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education should guide subsequent educational programs.\textsuperscript{56} It suggested the creation of some 600 more secondary schools and an enlargement of existing secondary schools to facilitate massive intake.\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, it recommended an increase in secondary school intake from 12,000 per annum in 1958 to more than 30,000 in 1970.\textsuperscript{58}

Furthermore, it suggested an increase of sixth forms. The British introduced Sixth form in 1956 as a two to three year intermediary period of study in between secondary school and university, leading to Higher School Certificate (HSC) or General Certificate “A” Level. It was a requirement for direct entry into the UCI. Few secondary schools had the facilities and personnel for sixth form education. Besides, it was easier to gain admission to the university with ‘O’ level, obtainable in American universities than ‘A’ level. The Commission recognized this problem by recommending the increase of sixth forms from 22 to 110 to provide enough streams of potential university students. It noted that 29,000 children would complete secondary school certificates and about 21,000 should seek employment, and about 8,000 should go for further training.\textsuperscript{59}

Third, to enhance access to universities, the report emphasized the overriding need for greater flexibility and diversity in university education to accommodate the diverse interests of

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 12.
potential candidates. In order to open up further opportunities for university education, the report proposed that one university should offer evening courses leading to the degrees while another should organize and conduct correspondence courses leading to degrees in a limited range of subjects. In addition, the report suggested greater diversification of the university curriculum to include courses often neglected in Ibadan such as African studies, commerce and business administration, teaching, engineering, medicine and veterinary science, agriculture, law, and extension services. The report acknowledged that the British system of university education as obtainable in Ibadan suited the British because in Britain, there were many alternative routes to professional training, “...and the prestige of these alternative routes is such that thousands of young people prefer to take them rather than go to the university.” However, that system did not suit Nigeria. According to the report:

In a country [Nigeria] where these alternative routes are missing or carry less prestige, the British university system is too inflexible and too academic to meet national needs. We think it is unlikely that in Nigeria these alternative routes will, in the foreseeable future, acquire the prestige which universities already have. Accordingly, a much greater diversity of demand is likely to be made on Nigerian universities than on their British counterparts.

The report revealed its admiration for the American system of higher education when it identified the American land-grant universities as model for diversification of university studies in Nigeria. According to the report, “[t]he land-grant universities of the United States have had to fulfill functions similar to those which Nigerian universities are now called upon to fulfill, and the best of them have done so without in any way surrendering their integrity.” Although the report did not impose either the American or British system of education on Nigeria, it argued

60 Ibid., 54.
61 Ibid., 22.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
that “[n]either kind of university should be exported unchanged to Nigeria; but both kinds have something to teach this country, and the lessons to be learnt from America include diversity and flexibility.” 64

Equally, to promote mass access to university education, the Ashby commission recognized the importance of scholarship awards. In the past, lack of funds had largely prevented many bright students from accepting places offered them by UCI. According to the principal of the college, at the end of 1959/60 session, the university asked more than 101 students who failed to pay their fees to withdraw. 65 The Ashby commission, therefore, recommended “…that grants should be made from regional or federal funds to all students who are accepted for admission to Nigerian universities and who are not able to pay for their university education themselves.” 66

Fourth, the commission was sensitive to the role of educational opportunities and facilities for promoting national cohesion. When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the question of unity and balanced educational development for equitable production of the workforce subordinated to academic standards during the colonial period, assumed great importance. The Commission envisaged that federal appointments would continue to generate controversy because the North was disadvantaged in terms of available high-level personnel as compared with the East and the West. The North did not stand a chance if strict academic merit determined appointments at the federal level. Therefore, the recommendation to establish a university in the North served to provide more opportunities for the indigenes to catch up with the south. Acknowledging the existence of strong regional loyalties as well as inter-regional rivalry, the commission insisted, “…it would be a disaster if each university were to serve only

64 Ibid.
66 Ashby commission report, 46.
its own region.”  

The report called a uniform admission policy for all the universities based on merit without discriminating against any region or tribe, but cautioned:

> But the borders between Regions must never become barriers to the migration of brains. Nigeria’s intellectual life, and her economy, will suffer unless there is free migration of both staff and students from one Region to another. We know that we are echoing the convictions of Nigerian leaders when we say that one of the purposes of education in this country is to promote cohesion between her Regions. Universities should be a powerful instruments for this purpose: it is their duty to respond.  

Fifth, since the funds required to expand university expansion were enormous, the commission suggested that for the country to meet the ambitious targets contained in the report, Nigerians must be prepared to accord education first priority; make sacrifices for it as well as provide a source for external assistance. The report noted that the proposal was a “stupendous undertaking,” and therefore, “Nigerian people will have to forgo other things they want so that every available penny is invested in education. Even this will not be enough. Countries outside Nigeria will have to be enlisted to help with men and money. Nigerian education must for a time become an international enterprise.”

Sixth, the commission recommended the establishment of two institutions to ensure successful implementation of government policies. The first was the National Universities Commission, whose function was to secure and distribute funds to universities, co-ordinate the activities of the universities and provide cohesion for the whole system of higher education in the country. The second was an Inter-Regional Manpower Board charged with the duties to review continuously the labor needs of the country and to formulate programs for effective workforce

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67 Ibid., 25.  
68 Ibid.  
69 Ibid., 3
development. Since the 1960 Constitution granted autonomy to the regions, the roles of these bodies were to co-ordinate activities of all universities to ensure uniform development.

The Ashby Commission’s proposal was “massive, unconventional, and expensive,” and this informed its doctrine of ‘investment in education.’ In making these bold proposals, the Commission noted that “...it would be a grave disservice to Nigeria to make modest, cautious proposals, likely to fall within her budget, for such proposals would be totally inadequate to maintain even the present rate of economic growth.” Ashby’s bold approach to educational planning differed significantly from the “cautious and modest” approach to colonial educational planning. During the colonial period, the British post-war policy on education, which offered fifty million pounds to the colonies under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, provided for controlled educational expansion within ‘financial limits.’ In contrast, Ashby suggested that financial limits should not hinder expansion. For the Commission, education was an investment for which financing must be sought from Nigerian as well as external sources. It was no longer a matter of budgeting on what the country could afford but on its future needs.

The report was comprehensive, and by broadening its terms of reference to include the needs for primary, secondary, technical, and teacher education, it recognized the pyramidal structure of education, which viewed all levels of the pyramid as connected. Its vision for education became a blueprint for educational development in Nigeria. Throughout the 1960s government was mindful of its proposals essentially because they promised to bring about, and respond to, the desired directions and rates of change in the society and economy; to correct educational imbalances between the north and south; diversify the university education system; and expand, improve, and democratize university facilities and opportunities. By re-configuring and re-conceptualizing the inherited system of higher education to serve Nigeria’s post-colonial

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70 Ibid., 41.
needs for high-level workforce, economic and technological development, and national integration, Ashby report represented a strategic thinking for Nigeria’s circumstances in the 1960s and beyond.

Once the federal government received the Ashby report, it sought the opinion of the regional and federal ministries of education and the JCC. It also engaged the services of J. N. Archer to assess the cost (capital and recurrent) of the proposals for the country as a whole, separately for each Region, and for the Federal Capital Territory. Besides, it required Archer to phase the expenditure over the period 1961-70 as the program built up in terms of teaching staff, buildings, and output of students, with particular reference to expenditure likely to be required in the period 1962-67 by each Government.\(^{71}\) Since the Ashby Commission did not provide financial cost of its recommendations, the Archer’s work helped the government to assess the cost of its undertaking in higher education.

While still considering the ramifications of the report, the federal government moved swiftly in support of the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), as proposed by the Eastern Region. The government of the Eastern Region wholly financed UNN with the £5 million earmarked by the Eastern Regional Board. UNN formally opened on 7 October 1960, six day after Nigeria’s independence. Classes commenced on 17 October with 220 students. While the university began with a faculty of arts, shortly after, enrolment surged when broad and wide-ranging of courses in the faculties of agriculture, applied sciences, and vocational studies were mounted.\(^{72}\) Dr. George Johnson, the first acting principal of the University, noted that the


\(^{72}\) The University of Nsukka offered classes in the following subjects: accountancy, agricultural economics, agricultural engineering, agricultural mechanization, animal science, anthropology, architecture, botany, business administration, chemistry, economics, education, engineering (civil, electrical and mechanical), English, fine art, French, geography, history, home economics, journalism, land economics, languages, law, mathematics, music, philosophy, physical education, physics, physiotherapy, plant-soil science, political science, psychology, religion, sociology, vocational teacher education, veterinary science, and zoology, medicine and its ancillaries.
purpose of curriculum diversity was to “develop professional and practical curricula which produce citizens who are broadly educated and at the same time equipped with specialized knowledge which will enable them engage in productive work in a rapidly changing society.”73

The UNN retained the British title ‘principal’ in an attempt to sustain the confidence of Nigerians that the university would maintain high standards characteristic of British universities. When UNN was established, “…there were those who said that that university would soon award the B.A. degree in dish washing and boxing.”74 Given the pervasiveness of the British system in Nigeria, it was fashionable to deride the comprehensive nature of American education; hence, the university adopted certain element of the British pattern. Nevertheless, the founding of Nsukka fulfilled part of the recommendation of Ashby commission for rapid expansion of university facilities and diversity in curriculum.

Since the Eastern Region founded the University of Nsukka in 1960 by exploiting the provision of 1954 as well as the independence Constitution, which placed higher education on the Concurrent Legislative List, the Western Region likewise insisted on taking advantage of the same constitutional provision to establish a regional university. As far back as 1958, the Western Region under the Action Group, had been quite critical of the elitist character of the University College, Ibadan, and as revealed in the 1958 Policy Paper on Higher Education, wanted a university that would symbolize its idea of a university.75 However, Ashby’s report did not recommend the establishment of a university in the region because the UCI, though a federal university, was located in the Western Region and was expected to serve the admission interest of

75 The Western idea of a university corresponded with the reasons why the University of Nsukka was established; which included among other curriculum diversity, and liberalization of access.
the entire region. Given the fact that the Western Region had made plans since 1958 to establish a university in the region, and the minority report authored by Onabamiro favored more than one university in each region, the region forged ahead with the idea of a regional university.

Although the UCI was located in the Western Region, government officials of the region argued that the institution catered to a broad national interest. They therefore sought to establish another university in the region that would serve purely regional interests. The idea of a regional university was, perhaps, an attempt to afford the Western Region full control of one university, a privilege that they anticipated the Eastern and Northern Regions would ultimately enjoy. Thus, in 1960, the government of the Western Region set up a university planning committee and later appointed a team that studied the systems of higher education in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and Israel. Since the constitution permitted the regions to establish institutions of higher education in their own financial responsibility, the federal government did not stop the Western Region. Subsequently, the Region passed legislation authorizing the establishment of the university of Ife and also published a White Paper on the Establishment of a University in Western Nigeria in November 1960.

Ethnic/regional rivalries that had been a common feature of Nigeria’s political life since the British created three regions in 1939 manifested itself in the bid by the Western Region to establish a university. In the White Paper released by the government of the region, it accused the Ashby Commission of neglecting it in its recommendations for new universities in Nigeria. It noted that while the Ashby commission recommended the establishment of universities in the Eastern and Northern Regions, it failed to do likewise for the West. The sentiments expressed in the White Paper clearly revealed the intense mutual suspicion and ethnic rivalry that characterized Nigerian inter-regional relations in Nigeria, especially when it explained the likely
implications of not establishing a university. According to the paper, the Eastern Region would own

…its own Regional University, as well as continue to enjoy its quota of admissions into the University College, Ibadan. The Northern Region might also have a new University College in Kano, the Ahmadu Bello College, as well as continue to enjoy its own quota of admissions into the University College, Ibadan, with the consultation, of course, that students from this Region might also be admitted into the Federal University Institutions in other parts of the Country.76

The allusion to quota system of admission supposedly obtainable in the UCI as part of the justification for establishing a regional university in the West was both erroneous and propagandistic simply because the institution did not have a quota policy for the regions. Clearly, during the height of the call for a quota system of admission in the college, the Inter-University Council in its report in 1952 insisted that “…the college while admitting every woman and Northern candidate qualified for university work should resist any proposal to accept or introduce a quota system.” According to the report, “[a] quota system of admission might lower academic standards, not only in terms of quality of the student’s entry but in terms of the work of the staff and students throughout the college. It would damage the college and would not assist the object it was designed to serve.”77 Since IUC released this report, Ibadan never considered admission by quota. Indeed, the driving force behind the plan by the Western Region to establish a university was to prevent other regions from surpassing it in training the workforce. Protecting the interest of the region in the context of regional competition was a fundamental driving force, and it was evident in the white paper’s concluding remarks:

The Government has seriously considered the present position and the new situation that might arise, and regards it as its duty to take

the proper measure to safeguard the interest of the people of Western Nigeria in the provision of facilities for higher education. It is in order to meet the challenge of the situation that the Government has decided to build a new university.\footnote{White Paper on the Establishment of a University in Western Nigeria, 1.}

Meanwhile, after wide consultations, the federal government accepted the Ashby’s recommendations in December 1960. In the Sessional Paper No 3 of 1961, it enthusiastically adopted them “in principle as a sound analysis of the present position, and that their recommendation, with some amendments, should constitute the basis for the development of post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria for the next ten years.”\footnote{Federation of Nigeria, \textit{Educational Development, 1961-1970}, Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1961 (Lagos: Federal Government printer, 1961), 4.} In announcing this conclusion, the federal government proclaimed its determination to pursue an energetic policy of higher educational development, and the promotion of economic development of the nation. As the paper declared, “Nigeria must aim to make and sustain an educational effort more than three times as great as is already being made now.”\footnote{Ibid., 9} To achieve this, it affirmed that “[t]he Federal Government will endeavor to play its full part in the implementation of these proposals [hoping that]….Regional Governments will be willing to shoulder their share of the financial burden of implementing the proposals.”\footnote{Ibid.} Where the federal government found the Commission’s recommendations to be somewhat conservative, it favored a more radical approach. For instance, it extended the proposals by recommending a target enrolment of 10,000 students as against 7,500 suggested by Ashby commission.\footnote{Ibid., 7.} In addition, it stated government readiness to raise the number of Sixth Form streams to 350 in order to bring the number of students preparing for Higher School Certificate (HSC) or General Certificate of Education (‘A’

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Level) to over 10,000. The paper also approved the plans to establish a university in the West by its government.

The approval of the Ashby report was a turning point in the development of higher education in Nigeria, forming the basis for the launching in June 1962 of the First National Development Plan (First NDP) (1962-1968). Education planning constituted a strategic part of development planning. The overall national goal of the First NDP in terms of education was the “democratization of education at all levels, and for all Nigerians, irrespective of their geographical location, religious persuasion, and age.” It stressed that Nigeria’s “virile population has scarcely yet been developed to a degree sufficient to alleviate the poverty of the bulk of the people.” For the period of the First NDP, the government earmarked a total expenditure of £45 to £65 million for the implementation of federal and regional governments programs in the education sector. This amount, which represented about 60 percent of the total expenditure for the First NDP, was huge. The principal architect of the First NDP was Professor W. F. Stolpher, who was sent to Nigeria by the Ford Foundation of America. He was assisted by Dr. L. M. Hansen, equally on loan from the Ford Foundation; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Economic Development, the Economic Advisor to the prime Minister, among others. Though the amount allocated to education was huge, Stolpher expressed optimism about securing external funding. As he stated, “I have personally not the slightest doubt that the money (for

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83 Ibid.
84 Prior to the Plan, there was absence of comprehensive development plan. The colonial development plan was limited to the development of agricultural sector only in terms of promoting some cash crops; and the building of transport and communication systems at the neglect of industrial and human resource development.
86 Ibid., 1.
execution of the plan) will be forthcoming but the real limitations will be neither capital nor foreign aid but manpower.”

To ensure the realization of Nigeria’s needs for trained labor force, and acting on the recommendation of Ashby commission, the federal government constituted the National Manpower Board (NMB) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1962. It appointed Dr T.M Yesufu, a Senior Labor Officer in the Federal Ministry of Labor, as the secretary of the NMB. The board’s responsibility was to “determine periodically the nation’s man-power needs in all occupations, and formulate programmes for effective man-power development throughout the federation through university expansion, scholarships, and fellowships.” Ideally, the recommendation of the NMB should inform and enrich the development plan, but the federal government launched the First NDP before constituting the NMB. The shortage of high-level personnel was a central causative factor. During the inauguration of the NMB, the Minister of Economic Development noted, “…it has taken so long to constitute the Board because of a number of difficulties, one of which emphasizes the importance of your work: namely, that qualified persons were not easily available for appointment to the specialist post in the manpower Secretariat.”

During the third meeting of the board, the Minister reiterated the problem when he stated: “[t]here are critical shortages in capital formation and high-level manpower. The two are intricately intertwined: capital is needed

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for manpower development but capital will be wasted if there is no adequate manpower to make optimum use of it.”

Furthermore, the federal government constituted the NUC under Dr Okoi Arikpo as the Executive Secretary and charged it with the responsibility, among others, “…to inquire into and advise the government on financial needs both recurrent and capital of university education in Nigeria.” It was also required “…to consult with the universities and other relevant bodies to plan the balanced and coordinated development of the universities in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to meet the national needs.” In addition, the Commission was to “receive annually a block grant from the federal government and allocate it to universities with such conditions as the commission may think advisable.” However, the NUC was non-statutory. It was an administrative unit in the cabinet office. Thus, it functioned in an advisory capacity and lacked the executive power to enforce its decisions, especially since the regional governments jealously guarded their autonomy over their universities. This factor rendered the NUC ineffective in fulfilling the aims and objectives for which it was set up.

The federal government’s acceptance and implementation of the Ashby commission, which led to its prioritization of higher education in the First NDP together with the appointment of both the NMB and NUC between 1960 and 1962, testified to the importance it attached to the expansion of university education in Nigeria. As Bello Salim aptly observed, the implementation of Ashby report, “…started Nigeria’s march towards general access to university education…”

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In keeping with the recommendation of Ashby commission, the government of Northern Region under the leadership of the first Premier, Ahmadu Bello, invited a delegation from the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas in April 1961 to seek their advice on the proposed university for the region. The delegation observed that besides providing the much-needed labor force, establishing a university in the North would stimulate all forms of education progress in the region, and it stressed the need for extra-mural studies to guarantee a supply of university candidates. Following the advice from the delegation, the House of Assembly of the Northern Region passed the law that established the Provisional Council for the proposed university in November 1961, and in June 1962, it established Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) located in Zaria. The Northern Region wholly funded ABU although the federal government gave the university the old site of the Nigeria College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria, which was valued at £2.6 million. Formal lectures began on October 4 1962 with 400 students spread through the faculties of Arts and Education, Pure Science, Social Science, Technology, Agriculture and Forestry.

Furthermore, acting on the recommendations of the Ashby commission on the need to establish a university in the federal capital of Nigeria, the federal government sought the aid of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in planning the University of Lagos. The UNESCO advisory committee for the establishment of the University of Lagos, appointed in June 1961, submitted its report in September of the same year. The report favored the opening with the following faculties: Faculties of Medicine, Law and Commerce as well as Faculties of Arts, Science and Education; Faculty of Engineering; Faculties of Arts, Science, and Education; Institute of African Studies. It also recommended the

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development of evening classes in all Faculties, especially those of Law and Commerce. In April 1962, the Federal parliament passed the law establishing the University of Lagos (UNILAG), and by October 22 1962, the university opened with a student population of 100. Since it was a federal university, the federal government provided 100 percent funding for the UNILAG.

Similarly, on 24 October 1962 the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, established by the Western Region opened with a total 244 foundation students. The region wholly funded Ife, although the federal government gave the university the site of the old Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology valued at £1.5 million. The students were admitted into five faculties: Agriculture, Arts, Economics, and Social Science, Law, and Science including Pharmacy but later added the following courses to the curriculum: medical sciences, education, agricultural engineering.

By 1962, two years after independence, five universities emerged in Nigeria, including the UCI, which in 1962 severed its relationship with the University of London to become an autonomous degree-awarding institution called the University of Ibadan (UI). During the 1961/62 session, there were 3,235 students enrolled in all Nigerian universities, the highest enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa. The three regions owned and financed their respective universities at Nsukka, Ife, and Zaria while the federal government likewise owned and financed universities in Lagos and Ibadan. The determining factors for the establishment of regional universities were political and regional interests. The regions determined what kind of universities they wanted and where they were located. To the extent that the federal government

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yielded to the ambitions of the regions, it was equally acting in accordance with the conviction that education would open the road to social and economic development.

Meanwhile, with the increase in the number of universities, it became necessary to set up a forum where the vice-chancellors of these institutions would come together to discuss issues of common concern. That forum, called the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (CVC), was founded in 1962 on the initiation of the Vice-chancellor of Ibadan, Dr. K.O. Dike. Fashioned after the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of the United Kingdom, which was a powerful non-statutory body, the CVC, as defined by Dr. Jubril Aminu, “...is an informal, non-statutory body set up by the Universities to advise themselves on matters of mutual interest.”\(^{97}\) The forum brought Vice-chancellors together in a loose, non-statutory organization with moral power based on consensus of members in order to make decisions for the smooth and uniform development of universities. However, its decisions were advisory; the federal or regional governments were not bound by its decisions because there was no force of law to back it. Nevertheless, the CVC became a formidable force in shaping and influencing government policies on university education throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.

Since the four new universities had successfully taken off, the National Universities Commission decided to conduct a routine visit to all the universities in fulfillment of its duties. After its inaugural meeting on 11 October 1962, the NUC officials visited all the five universities between December 1962 and early May 1963. At each university, the Commission discussed with members of the Governing Councils, the Senate, Deans of Faculties, non-professional academic staff, administration, non-academic staff, and students. The Commission submitted its report in 1963 to the federal government. The report addressed two notable issues, funding of

universities and student enrolment by faculties. First, it proposed that the federal government should be responsible for 50 percent of the total recurrent and capital expenditure of the three regional universities, Nsukka, Ife and Zaria while Lagos and Ibadan, being federal universities, should received 100 percent subsidies.

Second, based on the projection of student numbers submitted by various universities, the commission projected an enrolment of 10,000 full time students by 1967-68 spread according to the following order of disciplines: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 1,250 students; Pure Science, 2,830; Veterinary Science, 300; Medicine, 1,000; Engineering, 2,000; Arts, 1,420; and others (Business, Social Studies and Management), 1,000. The suggestion for higher enrolment in science courses represented the view of the Ashby Commission as well as the desire for the universities to respond to government policy on education for economic development. The NUC report noted that since Sixth form facilities were inadequate to train potential university candidates, it was necessary to have preliminary courses in Nigerian universities, especially for sciences courses, to provide opportunities for all Nigerians. At the same time, it stressed that the government should continue to expand Sixth Form facilities in Lagos and the Regions with £805,000 thousand earmarked for that purpose.

Furthermore, the Commission acknowledged the increasing demand for university education by many Nigerians, but observed that at every university it visited “...a large number of candidates competing for admission into university are insufficiently equipped for it.” According to it, many students who secured admission into university had inadequate financial resources to complete their education: “...they start on a degree course with just enough money to

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99 Ibid., 13.
100 Ibid., 19
carry them through one session in the hope that once they are in the university a scholarship or bursary would be made available to them. When this hope fails, they leave the university without completing their course and their place is wasted.”

The Commission therefore recommended automatic scholarships for all qualified students.

Before the federal government released a white paper on the NUC report, it created the Mid-Western Region in 1963, bringing the total number of regions to four. Since the Mid-Western Region was the only region without a university, it nursed the ambition of establishing one. Nevertheless, the federal government released a white paper in 1964, which detailed its decisions on the NUC report. In the paper, it agreed to provide the entire financial needs of Ibadan and Lagos and provide the three Regional Universities with 50 percent of their shares of the capital grant of £17.63 million and agreed to provide Nsukka and Ife with 30 percent of their shares of the recurrent grant of £30 million. However, the federal government undertook to provide 50 percent of the recurrent grant for Zaria. Justifying this apparent disproportionate allocation, the federal government noted that “...75 percent of students in ABU came from outside the Northern Region whilst the North had not at present got as many students in other universities and that was likely to be the position for some time to come.”

Besides, it noted that the financial relief for the Northern region would enable it to “...make available more funds for the provision of sixth forms in secondary schools and thus increase the number of potential entrants in Northern Nigeria.” The White Paper further accepted the NUC report on awarding scholarships to all students and enrolment in science courses, but added that out of the projected

101 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
student population of 10,000, “7,580 should be taking courses in pure and applied sciences in view of the shortage of qualified Nigeria’s in those fields of study.”

The financial allocations in favor of the Northern Region as contained in the 1964 white paper revealed the federal government’s awareness of the low number of high-level personnel from the region and its willingness to help. For instance, the data on registered high-level personnel by region revealed that the Northern region, despite its large population, recorded the lowest number: North, 54(4.2 percent); Federal Territory, 79(6.3 percent); Eastern Region, 468(37.0 percent); Western Region, 499(39.5 percent), and Mid-Western Region, 162(12.8). These data show the regional imbalance that became a source of tension between the South and North.

Why did the federal government favor courses in the science and technology? The federal government’s decision to train the Nigerians in science and technology was a manifestation of the trend of thinking in the 1960s. The political elite and scholars believed that the wonders of the Western world emanated from the sciences. Therefore, to sustain independence as well as justify it to Nigerians, the government hoped to train Nigerians with relevant skills to modernize the economy. As S.O. Biobaku noted, “a developing country must modernize its economy in order to ensure growth and make its independence a reality.” The key, of course, was the provision of educated men trained in all fields but most importantly in the fields of science and technology. Moreover, university education was, unavoidably, in the frontline of government’s

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104 Ibid. 5. In addition, the government recognized the increasing number of part time students and affirmed that the maximum enrolment target of such students by all universities should not exceed 5,000 by 1967-68 session. Clearly, by 1964, only the University of Lagos enrolled part time students, but the government urged other universities to follow suit.


efforts at modernization, and as such, emphasis on personnel training in science and technology served as a constant reinforcement of the need for investment in university education and expansion of opportunities.

In a convocation speech at the UI in 1962, Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Governor-General of Nigeria, advised graduating students that “[i]n a technological age, the men who shape our destinies are men who create, and creation does not happen behind the desk or at the telephone but in the workshops of the firm [,] the laboratory and the virgin bush.” 107 Indeed, Azikiwe was not alone in linking higher education to the practical needs of Nigerian society. In an inaugural address delivered on the occasion of his installation as the first chancellor of UI, the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa declared that in this age of rapid technological development in the Western world, “…the key to a nation’s economic well-being is likely to be the amount of efforts that is put into scientific research and education.” 108 He stressed that the reason why the federal government emphasized science education was to provide Nigerians with the kind of education that would produce citizens who “…know how to think; and knowing how, do it.” 109 He concluded by stating that the best test of UI and other universities would be in the “…success with which they help the community to build the education they need to cope with their changing needs.” 110 The pronouncement of these leaders underscored the importance the federal government accorded science education because of its place in facilitating the economic and technological development of the country.

To realize its goals of science education and mass education, the federal government sought external financial support. External donors committed an estimated amount of 10 million

107 NAI, Daily Times, 18 November 1960, 14.
108 Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, “Inaugural address delivered on the occasion of his installation as the first chancellor of the University of Ibadan,” Ibadan, No 18, February 1964, 14.
109 Ibid., 15.
110 Ibid.
pounds for university education in Nigeria from 1960 to 1964 in form of foundation grants for research, endowment, and buildings. For instance, Ford Foundation provided over 2 million pounds for buildings, research, and personnel at Ibadan as well as to develop the Faculty of Education at UNN. USAID provided over 1 million pounds to UNN; the initial principal and first two Vice-Chancellors (G.M. Johnson 1960-64, and Glen Taggart 1964-66), and 30 professors and teachers biennially, with equipment and technical assistance especially in the central administration and agriculture. It also contracted the University of Wisconsin to develop Agriculture at Ife and ABU. Furthermore, the Rockefeller Foundation supported Agricultural and Medical research and staff development at Ibadan; Nuffield Foundation supported research facilities; Carnegie Corporation supported education projects and Institutes of Education at UNN, ABU, Ife; and the Netherlands Government provided grants to develop the Faculty of Engineering at UNN. UNESCO provided general assistance at Lagos, especially the School of Business Administration in collaboration with USAID; and West German Government at various Nigerian Universities provided scholarship awards.111

Regardless of official pronouncements on massification of university education and science education, three major factors affected the expansion of opportunities for university education up until the 1970s. They include admissions requirements, sixth forms facilities, and student’s finances. In terms of admission requirements, the Universities of Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello admitted candidates with A-level qualification or its equivalents. Candidates were required to pass five subjects at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) (two of which must be at the Advanced Level), or four subjects (three of which are at Advanced Level). Students sat for these exams after completing a two-year program in secondary schools with

sixth forms. Admissions were through direct entry, and as such, students spent only three years at universities. Nevertheless, these four universities also provided opportunities for concessional admission, which was available for candidates fresh from high school. Such candidates were required to have passed the GCE (Ordinary Level) in five subjects, including English and Mathematics. They also sat for an entrance examination, and if successful, underwent one-year preliminary course before proceeding to a degree course. Those admitted under this circumstance were primarily in the sciences, medicine, and technology, where there was insufficient enrollment.

Similarly, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, retained the same admission policy obtainable in Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello in terms of direct entry requirements and course duration. In addition, students admitted by entrance examination, took four years to obtain a degree in most subjects, excluding engineering, which took five. However, Nsukka differed from the others by requiring a minimum entrance qualification of passes in six subjects at the GCE Ordinary Level (or five credits in the West African School Certificate), provided that these subjects were passed at one and the same sitting, and included a language and either mathematics or an approved science subject. In a sense, the primary entrance qualification into Lagos, Ibadan, Ife and Zaria was quite similar to that required for entrance into United Kingdom universities, whereas Nsukka resembled admission to universities in the United States of America.

One of the main driving forces behind the idea of Concessional Admission in Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello, and Ordinary Level requirement at Nsukka was the apparent lack of a sufficient number of sixth-form schools and teachers, especially in the science subjects. This situation clearly resulted in great shortage of students qualified for university education, especially in the sciences. Enrolment statistics from 1962 to 1967 revealed that students in the
Humanities outnumbered those in other fields including the sciences. In 1962/63 session, enrolment in the Humanities was 56 per cent while Science was 44 per cent. Subsequently, the ratio of enrolment in Humanities and Science were as follows: 1963/64: 57 percent: 43 per cent; 1964/65, 59 percent: 41 per cent; 1965/66, 56 percent and 44 percent; 1966/67, 54 per cent and 46 percent and in the 1967/67 session, 57 percent and 43 percent. 112 Evidently, these statistics was not what the government expected. Indeed, a careful analysis of labor force projections indicated that at least 60 percent of Nigeria’s work force should have received at least a basic training in science and technology. However, the enrolment situation was almost reverse with 60 percent of Nigeria students in the universities enrolled in the liberal arts or social sciences. This statistic showed that the post-colonial curriculum reform had not yet met the expectations of the federal government, and a survey conducted by Babs Fafunwa in 1964 confirmed the general dissatisfaction of Nigerians with the prevailing system of education. 113 Disturbed by the report of this survey, the Joint Consultative Committee at its 1964 bi-annual meeting scheduled a national conference in 1965 to change the curriculum and discuss a national philosophy to guide educational development. However, due to political unrest and eventual the outbreak of civil war, the conference date was postponed indefinitely.

How did the universities’ enrolments fail to satisfy government’s expectations? K.O. Dike stated that besides the lack of adequate funds that frustrated the introduction of courses in the applied sciences such as engineering, food technology, etc., there were inadequate efforts by the government to encourage the study of sciences at the primary and secondary school levels. The result was that majority of university applicants sought courses in the arts and social

sciences. For Dike, to meet the enrolment target in the sciences, government should begin at the primary and secondary school levels.

Until that is done, it would be difficult, indeed unrealistic, to accord the applied sciences the degree of emphasis that is now being demanded, no matter how strenuously the universities may be urged to alter their emphasis. If the schools persist in turning out a majority of students whose training is literary, the universities cannot turn out technologically minded students from such material.114

Consequently, Nigerians began to blame the Sixth Form, which was perceived as a blind copy of the British system, for insufficient preparation of candidates for higher education in science disciplines. Most countries, except the United Kingdom and the former British African colonies, followed a four-year university course, which required passes in Ordinary Level Certificate examination. Countries such as U.S.S.R, U.S.A, Canada, Australia, India, and New Zealand, required a good secondary school certificate and/or a pass in the university entrance examination.115 However, Nigerian universities, except Nsukka, maintained the direct entry admission, which required some passes at Advanced level GCE. Only in secondary schools with sixth form would students prepare to take the Advanced level GCE. At independence, there were few such schools. Thus, the Ashby Commission retained the sixth form as the normal starting point for an undergraduate course and recommended its expansion to ensure an adequate supply of candidates for university education. Although the number of sixth formers qualified for direct entry into universities increased rapidly from 289 in 1960 to 1,190 in 1966, “university places available out-paced sixth form production by at least four times.”116 Six years after the

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The report of Ashby Commission, Eric Ashby who chaired it regretted the decision. According to him,

> It may turn out that this was an unwise decision. The consequences are already unfortunate: a valuable opportunity to provide flexibility in the educational system has been lost, and one university [Nsukka] has found it advisable to circumvent the rigidities of the British pattern of schooling by admitting students at O level. 117

Because sixth form constituted a bottleneck to massification, the call to abolish it mounted. Dr. Oko Arikpo, the Secretary of NUC, pointed out that the sixth form system was not in the best interest of Nigeria on both economic and educational grounds. He further noted that the “inability to recruit qualified teachers, and the shortage of capital and recurrent funds, placed severe limitations both on increasing the number of sixth forms, and on improving those that already exist.” 118 Similarly, an editorial in the *West African Journal of Education* argued that the heavy capital and recurrent cost involved in sixth form expansion was unjustifiable, especially “at a time when the staffing of the whole secondary school system cannot be regarded as satisfactory.” 119  

> It argued that the “time has now arrived for a systematic evaluation of the sixth form and its place, if any, in the total educational system. 120

Subsequently, the federal government set up a Commission under the joint auspices of the National Universities Commission and the Committee of Vice Chancellors to “…review the place of the sixth form as preparation for university admission and for entry to other vocations;” and to determine whether or not “the sixth form as now constituted does provide a satisfactory

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120 Ibid.
preparation for university admission.”

The Commission was required either to make recommendation for its improvement “…both in quantity and quality (content, structure and breadth [or] to recommend alternative measures for the preparation of University entrants so as to maintain high academic standards in Nigerian universities.”

In its report, submitted in 1967, the Commission observed: “[t]here were not enough sixth form students at the HSC level to feed the universities and the universities had to rely on private students who sat for the GCE Advanced Level and school leavers from the fifth form who took the School Certificate examination.”

The commission noted that “[t]he sixth form as presently organized is wasteful and uneconomical,” and therefore called for its abolition as an integral part of the secondary school.

However, the commission advocated for the temporary maintenance of concessional admission into universities, especially in the sciences, to remedy students’ deficiencies. This, it suggested, would be in the interest of national need as long as “there continues to exist an insufficient supply of inadequately qualified entrants in the field of science and technology.”

Another factor that affected enrolment to universities was financial constraints on the part of candidates. Government scholarship awards from 1960 to 1965 revealed that the federal government sponsored 895 students in the five existing universities; the regional governments, 1,245 students; other bodies, 1,042; private students, 3,525. This brought the student population in all Nigerian universities to 6,707.

Compared to the demand for places, however, this number was small. It was surprising that the Nigerian governments that committed themselves to expansion of access to university education were unable to guarantee automatic scholarships to

122 Ibid.
123 Report of the Commission on the Sixth Form and University Entry, 8.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
indigent students. As Kenneth Dike observed, there was an irony that a land crying out for trained men and governments that established more universities to meet this national emergency was “unwilling to award automatic scholarships to deserving students to enable them accept places offered them at Ibadan.”[127] For instance, during the 1962/63 session in Ibadan, 921 students gained admission; but mostly due to financial reasons, only 670 accepted the offer. About 40 percent of those students were private students and judging from experiences, many of these students “may not pay their fees and therefore run the risk of expulsion.”[128]

Meanwhile, series of political crisis of between 1964 and 1966 worsened this precarious situation, ultimately leading to the military overthrow of the Belewa-led civilian government in January 1966. Under the leadership of Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Easterner, the federal government adopted a unitary system of government for the country, which stripped the three regions of their autonomy. It also identified education as a source of disunity and, promulgated Decree No. 34, which promised to reappraise educational policies to ensure high and uniform standards throughout the country as well as to re-orientate universities to serve the genuine needs of the people.[129] The North, which had been educationally disadvantaged since the colonial period, had held strongly to political power and autonomy as a tool to overcome the educational imbalance. Thus, the drift towards centralization, characteristic of Aguiyi-Ironsi’s pronouncements, terrified Northerners. As Welch and Smith puts it:

> Despite its size, the North feared the Southern regions. This fear sprang largely from the limited educational and economic opportunities in the region. Preference for recruitment into the Northern Civil Service was given Northerners, even with lower

[128] “An Address by the Principal, Dr. K.O. Dike, to Congregation in Trenchard Hall on Foundation Day, 17 November (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1962), 9. Similar problems existed in other universities. For instance, Daily Times of January 10 1969 reported that more than 261 students of the University of Ife failed to register for classes on the grounds of non-payment of fees.
[129] Federal Republic of Nigeria, Decree No 1, 1966; Daily Times, 29 January 1966. Decree No 1 was called ‘Unification Decree,’
Largely inspired by fear of losing the privileges enjoyed by Northerners (of which university education was one) another coup, spearheaded by Northern military officers, brought down Aguiyi-Ironsi’s regime on July 29, 1966, six months after coming to power. Lieutenant Colonel (later general) Gowon, leader of the coup that saw the brutal assassination of Aguiyi-Ironsi, became the new head of state and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. The crisis that followed led to the declared secession of the Eastern Region from the country culminating into the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. Mainly to weaken the secessionist attempt, the federal government strengthened its powers in May 1966 by promulgating the decree titled States (Creation and Transitional provision) Decree No. 14 of 1967. This Decree divided the country into twelve states. Before then, there were four regions, Northern, Eastern, Western, and Midwestern Regions. With this decree, six states were created in the Northern Region (North Central, North Eastern, North Western, Kano and Benue-Plateau, Kwara); three carved out of the Eastern Region (East-Central, South Eastern, and Rivers); two created in the Western Region (Lagos and Western); and it retained the Mid-Western state. These geo-political changes did not prevent the former Eastern Region from pursuing its secessionist’s agenda. On May 30, Emeka Ojukwu proclaimed the independent Republic of Biafra, and swiftly the government

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131 Clearly, after independence the demand for state creation especially from the minority groups, which began since 1939, continued and intensified following the overthrow of Aguiyi-Ironsi by Gowon in July 1966. See N. Azikiwe, “Essentials for Nigerian Survival,” *Foreign Affairs*, XLIII (1964/65); O. Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966). Gowon set up an Ad-Hoc Committee to examine the possibility of state creation. The Committee submitted its recommendation on September 30th in which it considered that the Federal Constitution had certain defects amongst the most important of these were the disparity in sizes of the constituent regions of the Federation and the small number of the federating units. See Nigeria, Federal Republic, *Memoranda Submitted by the delegation to the Ad-Hoc Conference on Constitutional proposals for Nigeria* (Lagos: national Nigerian Press, 1966), 61.
declared war on the former Eastern Region, culminating into a civil war. The civil war disrupted academic activities in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In addition, Easterners studying in other universities, especially in the North, returned home.

In the midst of the civil war, the Midwestern state under Major-General David Ejooor as the Military administrator in 1967 initiated the plans to establish a university in the state. He set up a Higher Education Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor Oritsejolomi Thomas. The committee held discussions with officials of NUC in 1967, which promised to provide the sum of £50,000 thousand pounds during the first year of the university’s foundation. However, due to the occupation of the MidWest by the Biafran secessionist forces in August, the committee suspended its plans. However, while the war continued, “…popular demand for the establishment of a university continued.” 133 In 1968, the MidWest was liberated from the Biafran occupation, and then Military governor, Colonel S.O Ogbemudia, in 1969 requested the University of Ibadan to establish some of its faculties in the Midwest. In pursuit of this request, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor T.A. Lambo, and other principal officers of the University met with the governor of Midwest on the subject. After subsequent series of meetings, the University of Ibadan agreed to establish a campus located in Benin in October 1970 to offer courses in the Faculty of Applied Sciences and technology such Petrochemical Engineering, Materials Technology, production Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Metallurgy and the Physical Sciences. 134 The decision to establish an institution solely based on sciences and technology courses was laudable largely because the government had since independence emphasized modernization of the country, and Nigerians trained in these areas were in high demand for that purpose. However, “after what appeared to be an encouraging start, the

134 Ibid.
agreement could not be implemented, and in the circumstances, the Midwest Government decided to establish the Institute of Technology, Benin.”\(^{135}\)

While the war continued, the federal government articulated the policy of financial assistance to indigent students to facilitate their access to university education. The Federal Commissioner for Finance and Deputy Chairman of the Federal Executive Council, Obafemi Awolowo, in a national broadcast in 1967, outlined a seven-point program of the military government for development after the civil war. On education, it observed, “at present, we [Nigeria] are extremely deficient in high-level manpower.”\(^{136}\) He declared government’s commitment to overcome this deficiency, stressing that for the government to achieve that objective “…many of our youths who have the innate talents, but are unable to obtain secondary as well as university education, simply because their parents are too poor to find the money, should be given the fullest possible financial assistance by the government.”\(^{137}\) What the government had decided to do, according to Awolowo, was “…to give free financial assistance, not loans to all secondary school pupils and university students who, for good reasons certified by the authorities concerned to the satisfaction of the Federal Government, are unable to pay their fees.”\(^{138}\)

Following the policy on free education for financially challenged Nigerians, the federal government launched an *Indigent Students Scheme* in 1968. The idea behind the scheme was to provide financial assistance aimed at subsidizing the cost of university education for poor students. The implementation of the policy increased the tension that existed between the north and south. Notably, greater number of candidates from the south benefited from the scheme than

\(^{135}\) Ibid, 6. The MidWest did not establish the proposed institute until 1970.
\(^{137}\) Ibid.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 5-6.
those from the north. Northern leaders perceived the program as a deliberate ploy by the south to use national resources to sustain their lead in university education. This caused resentment in the north even among intellectuals. In the article written by Ibrahim Tahir, a lecturer in Ahmadu Bello University on the subject of *Indigent Students Scheme*, he argued against the Scheme on the ground that it benefited one ethnic group in the south more than others. ¹³⁹ This was in the middle of the war when the federal government was no longer sponsoring students from the East. Thus, since a handful of beneficiaries came from the North, the bulk of the students who benefited were from the West, hence the use of ‘one ethnic group’ by Tahir.

Similarly, the Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Ishaya Audu, called on the federal government to scrap the scheme and substitute it with a loan scheme because only five students from the North benefited from it as opposed to numerous students from the South. ¹⁴⁰ Commenting on the statement credited to Audu, the Indigent Student Association of the University of Ibadan said that it was “ironical that some intellectuals who had attained their present academic status through virtually free primary, post-primary and all higher learning now rejected the way by which they climbed.” ¹⁴¹ The student body declared that Audu was “…arousing Northern movement against the South.” ¹⁴² The Federal Minister of Education, Mr Wenike Briggs, in support of the student position, declared government support of the scheme and dismissed Audu’s statements as unfortunate. ¹⁴³ Nevertheless, the federal government went ahead to cancel the scheme in October 1969. Since the head of state, Gowon, came from the North, it took little effort to convince him to scrap the policy in sympathy with the Northerners.

¹⁴² Ibid.
One of the implications of the military creation of twelve states out of the four regions that existed before 1966 was the need to change the preexisting revenue allocation formula where the regional governments had greater financial autonomy. Under the new military posture that favored centralization of government, the federal government was compelled to set up the Dina Committee in 1968, headed by Chief I.O. Dina, to examine and suggest changes to the existing system of revenue allocation in the country. Based on the need to maintain national unity, the committee in its report submitted in 1969 suggested that the federal government take custody of the country’s revenue hitherto controlled by the former regions to promote uniform economic and social development of the country. As the report stated, “[o]nce it is accepted that the overwhelming social urge is for accelerated economic development as a major prerequisite for expansion of welfare services, then the point must be sustained that financial relations become only meaningful in the context of integrated development planning.”

Based on this spirit, the report also proposed that all Nigerian universities be financed 100 percent by the federal government, which, by implication, would make them federal universities. Although the states expressed strong opposition to the committee’s recommendations, they guided the federal government’s post-1970 socio-economic policies, including university control and expansion.

In 1969, Nigeria’s post-colonial massification policy, articulated in 1960 to decolonize the British elitist legacies in Nigeria’s higher education by providing full opportunities to all, accelerate economic development, and unite Nigeria’s pluralistic societies in a collective

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144 Federal Government of Nigeria, *Dina Committee Report* (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information Printing Division, 1969), 29. The Report further stated: “We believe that the fiscal arrangements in this country should reflect the new spirit of unity to which the nation is dedicated. No more evidence of this is necessary than the present war to preserve this unity at the cost of human lives, material resources and the radical change in this country’s structure. It is in the spirit of this new-found unity that we have viewed all the sources of revenue of this country as the common funds of the country to be used for executing the kind of programmes which can maintain this unity.” Ibid., 27.

145 Ibid.
conscience, had transformed university education during the first wave of massification. The federal government was receptive to the idea of open access based on social demand and it expected university opportunities to be available to the masses as well as meet the country’s human resource needs, especially in the applied sciences. Thus, from 1959 to 1969, student enrolment tripled from 939 to 9,695, excluding enrolment in the University of Nsukka due to closure occasioned by the civil war.\textsuperscript{146} That was a huge figure, surpassing the Ashby’s proposal. When the Ashby commission submitted its report in 1960, Nigerians perceived it as a radical proposal in the expansion of educational opportunities. However, the proposal proved far less than the actual development of schools, which exceeded its recommendation of 7,500 students. Ironically, however, enrolment failed to meet the target of mass access to university education. Statistically, this enrolment figure revealed that only 0.2 percent to 0.3 percent of the age-group population of students from Northern Nigeria enrolled in Nigerian universities, while 0.5 to 0.6 percent enrolled for the rest of the country.\textsuperscript{147} Although the period was a significant improvement over the British elitist pattern, it failed to accommodate increasing demand for university education. For instance, at the University of Ife, while 10,518 students applied for admission in the university between 1966 and 1969, only 1,924 secured admission. In the University of Ibadan, while 14,048 students applied for admission between 1964 and 1970, only 2,882 secured admission.\textsuperscript{148}

Furthermore, the rapid expansion failed to meet the target of student enrolment in the science and technology courses as anticipated by the First NDP. The government believed that


the product of universities, technologists, engineers, agriculturists, veterinarians, etc, would
guide national economic development in the provision of goods and services, in constructing
roads, houses, hospitals and schools, and in generating income for the country. However, not
everyone shared the governments’ emphasis on applied sciences. For instance, Dr J. E. Adetoro,
a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, and later the minister of health under General
Yakubu Gowon, warned: “[s]cientific and technological studies must never be allowed to crowd
out humanities and the cultivation of spiritual and aesthetic values.”

Similarly, Dr Okoi Arikpo, UNC Secretary, expressed the widespread fear that the “special support for the sciences will either be an absolute reduction of support for the arts and social sciences, or a punishing limitation on their own development.”

Thus, NUC reemphasized the pre-eminence of “pure disciplines” in the curriculum, and asserted that the “… reputation of a university may well depend upon the strength of these basic department (arts, humanities and pure sciences) which provide the background for the development of professional and technological courses.”

Indeed, the opposition from these quarters, including the obstacles presented by the shortages of sixth form schools, contributed to low enrolment in science courses.

Moreover, even though government officers, policy makers, and other proponents of change emphasized applied sciences and vocational subjects as obtainable in the American land-grant colleges, the actual implementation, with the exception of University of Nsukka, did not support their pronouncements. In reality, there were fewer demands for graduates in the sciences compared to the humanities, law, and liberal arts disciplines. It seemed that politicians were interested in producing graduates to fill positions in the regional and federal civil service.

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151 Ibid.
regardless of course of study. Therefore, candidates made effective demands for liberal courses to which universities responded. Besides, prominent Nigerians in leadership positions, including Azikiwe, Awolowo, etc were not scientists. The kind of role models they provided favored arts, humanities, and law. Secondly, high-level positions in the civil service went ‘crazy’ on BA holders, and occasionally, BSc. holders. There was the unfounded notion that the best administrators were those who majored in liberal arts, social sciences, humanities, and law. Of courses, Nigerian parents pushed their children to emulate those individuals and follow their academic path.

Similarly, the absence of an effective demand for science and technology courses was largely because the government failed to invest in secondary school education in order to produce the required candidates for science courses. Moreover, sixth form, inherited from the British continued to constitute a hindrance to easy access to universities. In addition, even though the geographical spread of universities was intended to promote national unity, the implementation of some educational policies such as the *Indigent Scheme* clearly exposed the animosities that existed between the north and the south. Worse still, the civil war not only threatened to break down the process of nation building but also truncated the expansion of educational facilities and opportunities, especially in the former Eastern Region where academic activities stopped and the facilities at Nsukka were destroyed. Given these problems, policy makers and Nigerians alike felt that the aims and objectives of university education were unrealistic. Thus, the 1960s witnessed what Adaralegbe described as follows:

...a constant babble of voices as educators, parents, government functionaries, the laymen, scholars, and the press(with conflicting ideas) speak of the ills of our educational system and particularly the inadequacy of the school curriculum to develop individual
In response to increasing dissatisfaction of Nigerians with the shape of Nigerian education, the need arose to re-examine the totality of the educational system, identify the problems affecting it, and search for solutions with a view to reposition it to reflect Nigeria’s needs and expectations. Since the hostility that characterized the civil war had considerably declined in late 1969, the federal government through the Chief Federal Adviser on Education and head of the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC), Dr S. J. Cookey, summoned a conference called the National Curriculum Conference (NCC) to study the problems of higher education in Nigeria. Initiated by a group of highly influential American educated Nigerians, including Babs Fafunwa, Adeneji Adaralegbe, among others; co-sponsored by the federal government and some international organizations; and chaired by Cookey, the NCC was held in Lagos between 8 and 12 September 1969.

The NCC attracted more than a hundred and fifty participants, including experts and professionals as well as representatives of trade unions, farmers, town unions, women’s organizations, religious bodies, teachers associations, university teachers and administrators, youth clubs, businesspersons, and government officials. The NCC was not for educationists alone; the broad spectrum of participants represented the end users of education. As Cookey observed, “…it was necessary also to hear the views of the masses of people who are not directly engaged in teaching or educational activities, for they surely have a say in any decisions to be

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153 NERC was an organization under the federal ministry of education devoted to the development of specialized aspects of education and actively involved in curricular review and renewal.

154 The federal government voted special funds for the conference. In addition, USAID paid for the expenses of non-governmental Nigerian participants who wished to take part in the conference, and Ford Foundation, UNESCO, and CREDO provided financial assistance to service the conference.
taken about the structure and content of Nigerian education."\textsuperscript{155} Focusing on Nigerian education at all levels, the NCC was charged with three responsibilities, which include “[i]dentification and clarification of a national philosophy, goals, purposes and objectives; statement of issues and problems; development of implications and recommendations for a national curriculum reform.”\textsuperscript{156}

In his address at the conference, the Federal Commissioner for Education, Briggs, confirmed the failure of the current educational system and reaffirmed government support for mass education, science education and education for national unity. On mass education, Briggs stated that the “concept of mass literacy has important implications for the purpose which this conference is expected to achieve.”\textsuperscript{157} Therefore, “…in order that the masses of our people to understand the modern world in which they live, and take a lively, active and appreciative interest in the wonderful discoveries and inventions of man…we must educate not only our youths but also adults.”\textsuperscript{158} Regarding science, Briggs stressed that the present system of education failed “…because it has tended to produce an educated class of ‘pen-pushers’, and because it failed to lay the foundations of economic freedom by providing the manual skills and expertise for successful industrial and agricultural development.”\textsuperscript{159} As he argued, “…one of the consequences of this modern age of technology...is the rising tide of automation.”\textsuperscript{160} Thus, for Nigeria “…to meet the needs of the machines age, our workers must be flexible and versatile so as to be able to cope with the supervision, operations, repair, and maintenance of complicated and delicate equipment.”\textsuperscript{161}


\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., xv.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., xvii.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., xvii.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., xvii.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., xix.
Furthermore, Briggs stressed that education was supposed to teach the principles of citizenship in order to promote national unity. He asked: “[c]ould a better system of education have prevented it (civil war)? Can education remove its causes in our society and ensure stability. My answer to this question would be yes, for good education would include in its programme training for citizenship.”

Briggs ultimately anticipated that from the “…conference will emerge principles and guidelines that will enable the governments of the federation to make the right decisions in education matters and to spend money on only those projects that are likely to ensure the attainment of our national goals.”

Participants at the conference deliberated on all aspects of the Nigerian educational system, and at the end of the conference submitted the proceedings to the government in October 1969. The document, among others, recommended the abolition of sixth form, which Cookey described it as “a blind copy of the British system; too narrow and inflexible.” In its place, it recommended a 6-3-3-4 system of education as obtainable in America. This involved six years of primary school; a two tier secondary schooling divided into a three year Junior High School, and a three-year Senior High School with a direct transition to a restructured four-year university education.

It also emphasized the need to “…educate [Nigerians] on a mass scale,” and to that end, proposed free education at all levels “to all those who can benefit from it.” It further cautioned that the modern Nigerian university should not remain an ivory tower any longer even if it wished to do so, but instead, the “Nigerian university must serve as an agent and instrument of change in bringing the fruits of modern technology and our rich cultural heritage to as many

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162 Ibid., xviii
163 Ibid., xxi.
164 Ibid., xxii.
165 The 6-3-3-4 system was different from the prevailing 6-5-2-3 system, which involved six years of primary school, five years of secondary school, 2 years of sixth form, and 3 years of university education.
Nigerians as possible. In addition, it recommended that universities should take part in the process of national development and serve as a catalyst for national unity and change. Finally, it strongly suggested that henceforth, the philosophy of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which blended economic, cultural, and nationalistic objectives, should serve as a model for future educational development in Nigeria.

Mass education, education for self-reliance, national unity, and development were the distinct themes of the conference. In calling for a restructuring of the Nigerian educational system along the lines of American system, it reflected the distinct and active American influence of its conveners and sponsors. Further departures from the British educational system, as contained in the conference proceedings, included a call to abolish the sixth form, introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education, and the emphasis placed on diversification of university curriculum. Since 1960, the American system of education continued to be attractive to Nigerians while the British system, earlier held in high regard, continued to lose its attraction. Remarkably, the climate that produced the recommendations reflected sensitivity to America’s lead in landing the first man on the moon on 20 July 1969. This event dramatically heightened the admiration of Nigerians for American decrees. According to E.O. Fagbamiye, “[i]f the award of such degrees would ensure a technological break-through for Nigeria, many Nigerians would gladly support such awards.”

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167 Ibid., 75.
168 Ibid., 76.
169 E.O. Fagbamiye, “Curricular Implications of a Science and Technology Oriented Education,” In Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, “Mobilizing Nigeria’s Education Towards Technological Self-Reliance,” proceedings of the 11 Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, held at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, 10-11 March, 1988, 46. In 1961 there were only 552 Nigerian students in the United States, while there were 1,124 in the United Kingdom. By 1964, the US share had gone up to 2,945 while the number of Nigerian students in UK was only 1,382 in the same year. See UNESCO, Unesco Statistical Year Book, 1966-1991 (Paris: UNESCO, 1991).
On the whole, the higher educational philosophy of providing “a chance for the man who was not chosen in the early days of small numbers as well as the human resource needs of Nigeria shaped the federal and regional governments’ attempts to make university education available to all during the first wave of massification, 1959-1969. Influenced by the governments’ desire to decolonize the elitist legacies of the British higher education; guided by the recommendations of the Ashby commission’s report and inspired by the politics of independence, the period witnessed the radical expansion, democratization, and liberalization of access to university education. The aim was to provide easy access to university training, training of high-level personnel, especially in science courses, and to use university education to build a united nation. Consequently, five autonomous universities emerged, geographically spread to promote national unity; massive scholarship awards were generously extended by the governments; science education was emphasized; and the curriculum was diversified, leading to an increase in student enrolment to 9,695. However, regional rivalries, financial constraints, the sixth form, low demand for science courses, military overthrow of the civilian government, and the civil war adversely affected the smooth implementation of the massification program during the first wave. To re-position education, including university education, to serve the needs of post-colonial Nigeria, the new military government under Gowon convened the National Curriculum Conference in 1969 to articulate a philosophy to guide post-civil war educational policies. The recommendations of the conference set the tone for the post-civil war expansion of university education and ushered in the second wave of university massification, 1970-1979.
CHAPTER III

CENTRALIZATION AND EXPANSION OF UNIVERSITIES FOR MASS ACCESS AND NATIONAL UNITY, 1970-1979

As early as 1970, the federal military government declared that forging national unity, facilitating access to universities, and training of scientists would be its post-civil war higher education policies. First, eager to keep Nigeria as a united nation, President Gowon’s victory speech at the end of the war declared the federal government’s commitment to foster national “reintegration, reconciliation, and reconstruction,” and requested all Nigerians to come together to “rebuild the nation anew.”¹ The civil war clearly exposed the regional and ethnic rivalries that characterized Nigeria’s pluralistic society and questioned the viability of the Nigerian nation. However, it rekindled the federal government’s determination to explore ways of uniting the country’s diverse groups (together as a nation), one of which was to close the educational gap existing between the north and the south. The gap, as the Federal Commissioner of Education, Chief A.Y Eke, revealed, was so wide that “roughly speaking, for every child in a primary school in the northern states there are four in the southern states; for every boy or girl in a secondary school in the north there are five in the south. And for every student in a post-secondary institution in the north there are six in the south.”² Since the government was determined to promote national unity, Gowon, therefore, required the universities to close this gap by assuming a national outlook in admission, stressing that their success would be contingent on “the extent to

² West Africa, 16 October 1978, 2027.
which [they] can meet the needs and aspirations of the society which they are established to serve….”

Second, the government undertook to pursue the goal of mass access to university education. The civil war resulted in the disruption of all levels of educational activities as well as the destruction of educational facilities in the country, especially in the former Eastern Region. At the end of the war, the federal government anticipated “a real explosion in numbers of suitable candidates seeking University education, [which]…would call for expansion of existing institutions either in size or in numbers and, possibly, both.” Thus, Gowon directed the universities to deliberate on the best approach to expansion, mindful of the need to supply the workforce required to facilitate economic development, and considering options such as the introduction of other forms of higher education, greater specialization in particular fields of study by each institution, expansion of facilities in the existing universities, and establishment of several campuses. He affirmed, however, that no matter how the universities approached the issue of expansion, given Nigeria’s population and the high demand for university education, the objective of educational development of his government would remain mass university education.

Of course, the size of our country, the rate of population growth, the ambition of our youths, and our national goals are also important factors that will have to be taken into consideration. I hope that Nigeria’s attitude will continue in any case to be that adequate facilities should be provided for the maximum number of students able to profit from University education.

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3 Address by his Excellency Major-General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government and Visitor of the University during the 21st Anniversary of the University of Ibadan, in Ibadan, No. 28, July 1970, 15-16.
4 Ibid., 16.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 16-17.
Third, the federal government expected science students to dominate enrolment in universities. It believed that the training of scientists was essential to the development of science and technology as well as ‘modern life,’ and therefore, requested that the universities emphasize courses in the applied sciences. Underscoring the importance of science and technology, and inspired by American’s scientific breakthrough in landing the first man on the moon in 1969, Gowon argued that the country should not be left behind in the global race for scientific development. According to him, “…it is perhaps not too much to hope also that if it ever becomes necessary for the human race to transfer en masse to some other planets, like Mars, our scientists and technologists would be ready with the necessary means of transport for Nigerian citizens!”

Nevertheless, statistics of students enrolled in the existing universities located in Ibadan, Nsukka, Zaria, and Ife revealed a low supply of university places, domination by southerners, and low enrolment in the science disciplines. In 1970, only 14,468 students were enrolled in all the universities and when compared to Nigeria’s population, estimated at about 51 million, the number was statistically insignificant. The facilities at the existing universities were grossly inadequate to accommodate the increasing demand for places. For instance, out of the 7,000 applicants in the 1969/70 session, only 1,500 secured admissions. In addition, students from the South, who constituted more than 75.6 per cent of the total student enrolment, dominated the universities; and, less than 46 percent were enrolled in the science courses. These numbers clearly fell below government expectations. Meanwhile, the efforts made by the Midwestern State since 1967 to establish a state university came to fruition when the government, following the decision it made in 1969, promulgated an edit on 10 April 1970, which led to the

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7 Ibid., 17.
8 Address by his Excellency Major-General Yakubu Gowon, 16.
establishment of the Institute of Technology in Benin. The Institute opened on 23 November 1970 with 108 students.\(^\text{10}\)

Eager to restructure the university system in order to facilitate access to all Nigerians and to promote economic development, the federal government launched the Second National Development Plan, Second NDP, (1970-1974) in 1970 with the overall national objective of transforming Nigeria, among others, into “a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.”\(^\text{11}\) As the Second NDP noted, the federal government faced a choice: either provide university education to all Nigerians “for its own sake, as a means of enriching an individual’s knowledge and developing his full personality…or to prepare people to undertake specific tasks and employment functions which are essential for the transformation of their environment.”\(^\text{12}\)

However, as the Second NDP acknowledged, “Nigeria should in her stage of development, regard education as both.”\(^\text{13}\)

The Second NDP not only sought to restore facilities and services damaged or disrupted by the civil war, but desired to develop and expand education at various levels in order to attain higher enrolment ratios while at the same time reducing the educational gap in the country. Mostly affected by the civil war, the UNN suffered from “…severe deterioration of existing faculties, academic and public buildings, student hostels and staff houses; serious environmental degradation; and inadequate space for academic activities, recreational facilities. etc.\(^\text{14}\)

Therefore, the Second NDP allocated large funds for its rehabilitation, reconstruction, and expansion of educational its facilities as well as those of other universities. The federal

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\(^{10}\) The institute became the University of Benin when the National Universities Commission granted it the status of a university on 1 July 1971.


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 235.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

government allocated £25.500 million for the reconstruction and expansion of the UNN in addition to the £2.558 million contribution from the East-Central and South-Eastern States for the same purpose. The Western States allocated £5.500 million for the University of Ife; the Northern States, £5.160 million for Ahmadu Bello University; and the Mid-Western State, £2.300 million for the Mid-West Institute of Technology. To guarantee steady supply of candidates for university education, the state governments planned a capital expenditure of £27.478 million on primary education while the Federal Government allocated a grant of £6.460 million for primary education. The total federal and state planned expenditure on secondary education was £28.400 million, £12.291 million on technical education and £13 195 million on teacher education. The total allocation for capital expenditure on education was £89.771 million from the states, and £138.893 million from the federal government.15

These allocations notwithstanding, two demands dominated education policy in the early 1970s: need for more universities by the states without universities, and the call for a quota system that would guarantee access to university education by the states described as disadvantaged, particularly those in the former Northern Region.16 In 1970, six states out of twelve had universities. Ahmadu Bello University was located in the North Central State; the University of Nsukka in the East-Central State; the University of Lagos in the Federal Capital State of Lagos; the Universities in Ibadan and Ile-Ife in the Western State; and the University of Benin in the Mid-Western State. The six remaining states--North-Eastern State, North-Western State, Kano State, Benue/Plateau State, South-Eastern State, and Rivers State--had none. Out of the six states without universities, four were located in the former Northern Region, an area marked by low enrolment in university education and considered educationally disadvantaged.

15 Ibid., 239-42
16 These states include North Central state, North Eastern state, North Western state, Kano state, Kwara state, and Benue-Plateau state.
Nevertheless, they embarked on vigorous plans to establish their own universities. Ownership of a university became a symbol of state pride, and given the level of inter-state and inter-ethnic rivalry, unregulated establishment and running of universities carried the potential of exacerbating the existing tension. As noted in the *Ibadan* editorial of July 1970:

> The real danger [lies] in the creation of State institutions which will be inward-looking and inbreeding…. [the] isolation of the youth of each state of the Federation into their State Universities will not make for the much needed unity of the country. There exists the fearful danger that both students and their teachers will remain within their States and that a new type of “tribalism” will develop.\(^{17}\)

Similarly, the Inter-University Council delegation to Nigeria in 1970 frowned at the plans by some Nigerian states to establish their own universities. The delegation, led by Dr. F. J. Llewellyn,\(^{18}\) visited Nigeria at the invitation of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVC) from 24 November to 5 December 1970 to assess the needs of Nigerian universities in the first academic session after the Nigerian civil war. According to Martin Kolinsky, “Nigerian vice-chancellors wanted the continued advice of the Inter-University Council on financial and administrative aspects of university planning.”\(^{19}\) The report of the delegation noted that even though the civil war affected the country adversely, there was a burning social and political desire by states, especially those in the North, for more universities. However, it strongly urged the federal government through the CVC to strengthen the existing universities to enable them meet increasing students’ demands as well as provide quality education rather than spending limited resources to fund new universities.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{18}\) Dr. F. J. Llewellyn was the vice-chancellor of the University of Exeter, and chair of the West African Group of the Inter-University.


States, especially in the North, however, continued to agitate for more universities and more representation of their indigenes in the existing universities. For instance, the former Military Governors of the Northern States under the platform of Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA) wrote to the Head of State in September 1971 drawing attention to the fact that students from the Northern States constituted less than 2 percent of the total student population in the Federal Universities of Ibadan and Lagos. They asked the federal government to expand the preliminary courses in these universities and to give preference to students from the North in university admissions. Based on the recommendation of the National Universities Commission on “a bold programme... to increase primary school population... and... considerable financial grant to the States,” the federal government did not attend to the ICSA request.

The agitation for more universities and more representation grew louder such that the federal government was worried over the negative impact of uncoordinated establishment of universities on both the academic standards of university education and government finances and decided to intervene. As Gowon declared on 21 August 1972, “…unless a planned and conscientious national plan for university development is introduced standards will suffer to the extent that the degrees and diplomas awarded will be worth very little.” He strongly supported federal government control of universities “since the states are not financially strong enough to

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21 No. CSA/MIG/222 7 as cited in Jubril Aminu, “Educational Imbalance: Its Extent, History, Dangers and Correction in Nigeria,” 26. The (ICSA) was designed to oversee assets held in common by northern states at the time they were created from the former Northern Region in 1967. Many southerners perceived ICSA as a sign of perpetuation of the former allegedly monolithic "North."


finance their universities, and since the ability of the federal government, itself, to finance them is not always taken into account in planning new universities.”

Therefore, Gowon suspended the constitutional provision with respect to higher education in August 1972. He announced the decision of the Supreme Military Council to assume henceforth “full responsibility for higher education throughout the country,” further stating that “education, other than higher education, should become the concurrent responsibility of both the Federal and the State Governments, and be transferred to the concurrent legislative list.”

Gowon’s pronouncement placed higher education on the Exclusive Legislative List; it was a significant amendment of the 1963 Constitution designed to foster greater unity through higher education. The 1963 constitution placed higher education on the Concurrent Legislative List, which granted power to both the federal and regional governments to legislate on higher education matters, including the establishment and control of universities. It also placed primary and secondary education on the Residual List category, which meant that only the regional governments could legislate on them. The 1972 declaration reversed this, placing primary and secondary education on the Concurrent List and university education on the Exclusive list. By implication, the federal government, henceforth, arrogated to itself the sole right to establish universities, and to legislate on all matters concerning further expansion of university education. This step paved the way for the future centralization and nationalization of university system in line with the federal structure. It gave the federal government the power to enforce a central planning system necessary to promote greater national unity. Thus, according to A.Y. Eke, the Federal Commissioner of Education, “instead of remaining the parochial or regional subject it

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24 Ibid.
25 Daily Times, 21 August 1972, 17. Supreme Military Council was the highest law making body comprised of all the military service chiefs and the state governors.
had previously been, education is now a matter of immense national consequence to all the citizens of Nigeria.”

Having instituted federal control of universities, the federal government still had to confront the question of a quota system in university admissions as demanded by the Northern states. The question was not new in 1972. It originated in the 1950s when the North advocated for a quota system that would promote increased enrolment of its indigenes in the University College, Ibadan. However, the IUC firmly opposed it and insisted on academic merit as the sole criteria for admission to the university. Subsequently, a Federal Government white paper on the Ashby Commission report reaffirmed it. Thus, throughout the 1960s, students secured admission to universities solely on the basis of academic merit. This favored the South, which had embraced everything Western, including Western education. The North, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, embraced Western education selectively and reluctantly. This resulted in the North’s low success in Western education even at the university level. In the early 1970s, the Northern states intensified their call for a quota system to reserve admission spots for their indigenes in the existing universities. Given the bitter experience of the civil war, the government began to reconsider its thinking on the merits of quota system, naturally provoking a great deal of discussion and debate that drew the attention of the head of state.

In his public address at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Gowon discussed the problems and solutions to the educational imbalance. He expressed the commitment of the federal government to “…tackle and settle, if possible, once and for all a number of vital and controversial issues among which are the question of educational imbalance and the quota

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system of admission.”27 Since employment opportunity in the country was few and highly competitive, the South with higher educational and professional attainment dominated available jobs, further widening the existing educational gap between it and the North. Gowon therefore stressed that long-term sustainable approach to overcome the educational imbalance was not through a quota system of admission into universities but strengthening primary and secondary school education in the affected states so that, over time, they would produce enough candidates for university admission and job opportunities.28

Equity was the key to national unity and Gowon recognized this. Despite his disapproval of quota system, he admitted that in the interest of national unity a short-term solution was compelling. He affirmed that the “fears and anxieties of these relatively educationally backward areas are genuine and it would be irrational to dismiss those fears and anxieties as unfounded.”29 According to Gowon, for the affected states, “….unless they are able to provide enough graduates of their ethnic or state origin now, they will be denied what they regard as an equitable share of employment opportunities in the country.”30 As far as those states are concerned, “they are not unduly interested in the long-term solution….; they want immediate solution and answers….,”31 Since individual universities solely admitted their own students, Gowon cautioned them to

   ….do a lot more than they are doing at present to reflect the federal structure of this country in their student admission. Failing that, we have to accept that the quota system would be the only method that will provide some opportunities for the educationally backward areas to be represented in the universities.32

27 NAE, Address by his Excellency General Yakubu Gowon, on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on Saturday, 2 December, 1972, 6.
28 Ibid., 8.
29 Ibid., 9. Gowon was from the North and he was sympathetic to the plight of the disadvantaged Northern states.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 10. Gowon was referring to universities, especially universities located in the South.
In the meantime, Gowon’s administration established the Nigerian Student Loan Board in 1972 but was still determined to address the quota question, as well as produce a national educational blueprint that would not only guide equal educational development but also a massive expansion of university opportunities and facilities. In a speech in April 1972 at Berewa College, Zaria, Gowon promised that the government would launch a national policy on education that would outline its educational objectives and vision. Thus, on the directive of the federal government and based on the report of the proceedings of the 1969 Curriculum--published in 1972--that examined the philosophy to guide the future direction of the Nigerian educational system, the federal and state ministries of education drafted a new policy for Nigerian education. The National Council on Education (NCE), a Council of Commissioners of education, considered the draft at its meeting in December 1972 and proposed a national seminar where Nigerian educators and other interested and knowledgeable persons on the subject of education would examine the draft with the aim of eventually producing a national policy on education. NCE appointed the current Chair of the National Universities Commission and a former Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Chief S.O Adebo, to chair the seminar dubbed the Seminar on a National Policy on Education (SNPE). The SNPE was held between 4 and 8 June 1973 at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Participants at the SNPE included representatives of the Federal and State Ministries of Education, educational institutions, representatives of various interest groups, and organizations including the UNESCO. Observers included representatives of the British Council, Ford Foundation, USAID, and UNICEF—a truly international group. According to Adebo, the Nigerian “Governments, supported by public opinion, are anxious to reform our whole national education

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policy and they are seeking public reaction to their plan of reform. That plan itself is in large part the result of an earlier public consultation carried out in September 1969.”

Using education to promote unity was compelling. As he further noted,

….imbalance in educational opportunities results in imbalance in economic opportunities which in turn adversely affects our national unity with the consequences that we all know. Surely, the time has come to deal firmly with this problem, and to give all it takes in financial and other terms to solve it.

The SNPE received twenty-one memoranda from the public. However, the four basic documents that guided the deliberations and conclusions reached were “A National Policy on Education”—working paper produced by the Federal and the State Ministries of Education; “A Philosophy for Nigerian Education”—report of the Nigerian Curriculum Conference, 8-12 September 1969; “Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow,” UNESCO, 1972; and The opening address “Charting Nigeria’s National; Aspirations,” by the Federal Commissioner for Education, Chief A.Y. Eke. Among the issues that the commissioner demanded the participants to address included the ownership and centralization; control and administration of educational institutions; the democratization of education in order to correct imbalances; and a curriculum review with emphasis on science and technology. At the end of its deliberations in June 1973, the SNPE submitted a report that provided a blueprint on a National Policy on Education. The policy, according to Eke, the Federal Commissioner of education, was “an embodiment of the collective aspirations of a people and an index of their national purpose… [and]…without such a chart the ship of state is bound to run from one danger to

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34 Ibid., 42.
35 Ibid.
another which could well have been avoided.”\textsuperscript{36} The seminar defined Nigeria’s national purpose in the context of the role of education policy in helping to build and nurture Nigerian society.\textsuperscript{37}

The SNPE recommended the expansion and democratization of access to university education in order to promote national unity and economic development. The report restated and endorsed the five main ingredients of the Second National Development Plan, which included, among others, the fostering of “a land of bright and full opportunities for its citizens.” It suggested that the government should make maximum efforts to grant access to those who could benefit from higher education, noting that financial handicaps should not hinder access to higher education for anyone who could benefit from it. It suggested that the “goal of free University education must always be kept in view.” In addition, the report suggested the expansion and diversification of educational facilities to afford individuals more opportunities for access. It endorsed the principle of maximum self-development and fulfillment of the learner, equal educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels, better mobility of students and easy access to higher education, and the establishment of a joint matriculation board for the selection of student for admission.\textsuperscript{38} It envisaged that such a central admission coordinating board would not only help to address the multiple admission problems that limited access by duplicating admission of some candidates to the detriment of others, but would also ensure the suitable representation of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria in all of the existing universities in Nigeria.

Addressing the issue of disunity and rivalry, the report declared that education should promote “learning to live, not simply learning to pass examinations, but to “develop in our

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 8-10, 20-21.
youths a sense of unity, patriotism, and love of our country.” It further advised the government that future development of universities should ensure a geographically equitable distribution to provide a fairer spread of higher educational facilities as a means of achieving national unity, and insisted that admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other higher institutions of learning should be sensitive to the diverse regions and ethnicities. The thinking behind employing university education to achieve national unity seemed cogent, because if Nigerian youth—presumed to be future leaders—from various ethnicities received equal access to all Nigerian universities, every ethnic group would feel confident that they would have equal access to the national wealth. Besides, this would provide the youth a good opportunity of understanding one another and building up friendship. Furthermore, if they study one another’s culture and live in areas outside their home states they would most likely become broad-minded and tolerant. The ultimate result would be the promotion of common purpose, unity, and national identity.

The report recommended the abolition of the sixth form and its replacement with 6-3-3-4 system of education. This system implied six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school and four years of university education. It replaced the 6-5-2-3 system, involving six years of primary school, five years at the secondary, two year of Higher School (sixth form), and three years of university education. Under the new system, students would move from secondary school to university without interruptions. This

39 The Chairman of the seminar acknowledged the report of Unesco’s Commission on the Development of Education, which advocated ‘Learning to be’ and ‘Learning to live’ as fundamental components of a good educational system. According to him, “I would call the process “Learning to live,” learning to live as a spiritual, political, social, economic, and cultural animal… Under the new scheme, education at all levels will be closely related to the environment, to the realities of life, and it will be the more exciting for that, and the more serviceable to the trainee and to his community.” See S.O Adebo, “Seminar Chairman’s Address,” 42. However, the extent to which the lack of educational system induced lack of patriotism and contributed to the civil war has not received adequate study.

recommendation highlighted the influence of American system of education such as the introduction of a new secondary school system based on American system of junior and senior high schools; the abolition of the British oriented sixth form; and the introduction of a four-year university system like one in the United States.  

As the report concluded, “[e]ducation is not a static but a dynamic instrument of change,” and it hoped that the recommendations it advanced would be “continually reviewed and updated.”

The first attempt to evolve a truly Nigerian educational policy began under Gowon’s regime when he involved Nigerians on a massive scale in the design of future educational programs, as shown in the number of people who participated in the 1969 Curriculum Conference as well as the 1973 SNPE. This contrasted sharply with the 1960 Ashby Commission where only three Nigerians participated in the deliberations. The large section of the Nigerian population invited for these conferences was on Gowon’s public relations campaign to win public acceptance of his regime. On the other hand, it was designed to involve the end-users of university products in curriculum development discussions as a means of meeting society’s needs; and also as Ray Ekpu puts it, also “consummating a marriage between town and gown.”

In August 1973, the federal government began what Gowon described as ‘the widest consultations’ with various governmental and non-governmental institutions on the major policies and projects to pursue based on the recommendations of the SNPE and in preparation for the next national development plan scheduled for 1975. While the consultation was in-progress, the country’s economy witnessed a sudden boom, occasioned by the Yom Kippur War,

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41 Nigerian attraction to the American system was so strong that it later went ahead to reject the British parliamentary system of government in favor of American presidential system.  
which began on 6 October 1973 in the Middle East. Although Nigeria made appreciable oil income since 1970 when it registered as a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with the 1973 war, oil became Nigeria’s major foreign exchange earner and contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The war led to oil shock when Arab members of the OPEC stopped shipment of petroleum to nations that supported Israel in its conflict with Egypt—that is, the United States and its allies in Western Europe. America and European countries thereafter increased their demand for Nigerian oil. Oil prices quadrupled. Revenue from Nigerian crude oil exports increased from ₦1.4 billion in 1971 to ₦5.6 billion in 1973. Nigeria’s GDP also rose from ₦9.442 billion in 1970/71 to ₦14.410 billion in 1973.

Motivated by oil wealth, and after due consultation with state governments and other stakeholders, the federal government accepted the report of the SNPE in November 1973 while it continued to discuss the policies and projects that would be included in the Third National Development Plan. The approval of the ambitious and revolutionary recommendations of the SNPE was apparently inspired by Nigeria’s sudden wealth in late 1973. Meanwhile, the federal government took a number of steps towards the central control of universities as well as promotion of national unity. First, it assumed financial control of UNN. It must be noted that even though the federal government altered the constitution in 1972 to prevent states from establishing their own universities, it had not taken full financial responsibility for the universities at Nsukka, Ife, Benin, and Zaria. But in 1973, the government of East Central State, because of the increasing financial burden of running UNN and conscious of increased wealth of

45 The war was fought between Israel on one side, and Egypt and Syria on the other, backed by Iraq and Jordan, and supported economically by Saudi Arabia.
46 G. O. Nwankwo, Nigeria and OPEC: To Be or Not to Be (Ibadan: African University Press, 1983), 11; See also the Third National Development Plan, 1975-80, 11.
47 The government white paper was ready to be published when a military coup led by Murtala Mohammed toppled Gowon’s administration in 1975. This disruption deferred the publication of the though it was eventually published in 1977. See Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (Lagos: Government Press 1977), 2.
the country, voluntarily handed over the university to the federal government. However, the state
universities in Benin, Ife, and Zaria remained under state control until 1975.

Second, Gowon established Unity Schools (federal government colleges) in 1973 to bring
young adolescents from all parts of the country together in several schools. By providing the
opportunity for students of diverse ethnicity to interact and grow up together in the newly
established unity schools, the federal government envisaged to create a solid foundation for
national unity. Furthermore, for the first time in Nigerian educational history, the government
used the quota system of admission into these federal schools. The aim was to correct the
educational imbalance between the south and north by generating enough candidates for
university admission, especially from the disadvantaged states.

Third, in 1973 Gowon introduced the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), which
compelled Nigerian graduates of higher institution under the age of 30 years to provide a 12-
month period of continuous service outside their home state. The government planned the
scheme to expose graduates to the modes of living of the people in different parts of the country
with a view of removing prejudices, eliminating ignorance, and confirming at first hand the
many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups. Since there was no consultation with the
national student's union, parents, or the university administrators, preparations for national youth
service were very poor and its take off and execution created hardship for the corp members.
Consequently, in 1974 students stated massive demonstrations, demanding that the federal
government abolish the scheme. In reaction, the federal government closed down the universities
most affected. Commenting on the closure of universities of Lagos, Ibadan, and Ife over these
protests, the Alumni Association of the University of Lagos said, “In a society like ours, where
social justice is still a far-fetched dream, university students would be negativist should they fail
to agitate and appeal to the conscience of the nation. Let us not over-play their style and forget their ideals.” Similarly, four professors in the University of Ibadan—O. Aboyade, T. Ajibola-Taylor, T. A. Bamgbose and R.K. Udo--issued a statement requesting that the government embrace the students’ ideas while condemning their methods. 

Fourth, the federal government reconstituted the NUC by Decree No 1 of 1974 and extended its powers in an effort to centralize university education to ensure ordered expansion.

The functions of the reconstituted commission included:

(a) to advise the Head of the Federal Military Government, through the Commissioner, on the creation of new universities and other degree-granting institutions in Nigeria;
(b) to prepare, after consultation with all the State Governments, the universities, the National Manpower Board and such other bodies as it considers appropriate, periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of universities in Nigeria and such plans shall include—
(i) the general programmes to be pursued by the universities in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to national needs and objectives
(ii) recommendations for the establishment and location of new universities as and when considered necessary, and
(iii) recommendations for the establishment of new faculties or post-graduate institutions in existing universities or the approval or disapproval of proposals to establish such faculties or institutions;
(c) to make such other investigations relating to higher education that the Commission may consider necessary in the national interest;
(d) to make such other recommendations to the Federal Military Government and State Governments or to the universities relating to higher education as the Commission may consider to be in the national interest
(e) to inquire into and advise the Federal Military Government on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital, of university education in Nigeria and, in particular, to investigate and study the financial needs of university research and to ensure that adequate provision is made for this in the universities
(f) to receive block grants from the Federal Military Government and allocate them to universities in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Executive Council.

The NUC, as previously constituted, was unable to perform its role properly because higher education was a joint responsibility of both state and federal governments. Since the

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49 Sunday Times, Sunday, 2 March 1975, front page. However, on 13 March 1975, the government succumbed to public pressure when it announced that the schools be reopened in April 1975.
federal government arrogated to itself the exclusive responsibility for higher education, the reconstituted NUC, became an instrument for the federal government to effectively execute its vision of a centrally coordinated university system in order to realize the goals of massification, national unity, and training of scientists. The authorities of universities, hitherto accustomed to having direct contact with the federal government, now had to pass through the NUC. This change generated bitter controversy that has endured until the present.\textsuperscript{51}

Faced with inadequate facilities to meet demand and often saddled with the increasing incidence of multiple admissions, university enrolment remained low despite the availability of qualified applicants. For instance, between 1970 and 1975, the number of potential entrants based on passes in the Advanced Level examination witnessed sustained increase. In 1970, there were 6,739 potential entrants. That number increased to 7, 886 in 1971; 10, 719 in 1972, 7, 660 in 1973; 13, 186 in 1974, and 15, 363 in 1975.\textsuperscript{52} This growth led to increased demand for university education; but the supply was insufficient. For example, in the 1970/71 session, out of 8,926 candidates that applied to the University of Ife, the university admitted only 1,179 applicants even though 4,311 applicants were qualified. Likewise, in the 1971/72 session, 13,740 applied, 7,066 qualified, but only 1,601 were admitted; 21, 069 applied in 1972/73, 10,851 qualified, but 1,814 were admitted. In 1973/74, 23, 536 applied, 11,235 qualified, but 1,645 admitted. In 1974/75, 26,741 applied, 10,729 qualified, but 2,013 admitted. In the University of Ibadan, 10,036 candidates applied for admission in 1970/71, 4,682 were qualified, but 1,383 were offered admission. In 1971/72, 13,008 applied, 4,760 were qualified, but only 1,471 were admitted. In 1972/73, 11,248 applied, 3,446 qualified, but only 1,559 were admitted. In 1973/74,

\textsuperscript{51} A further study to account for how the power tussles between the NUC officials and universities authorities affected the smooth expansion of universities.
16, 706 applied, 10,870 qualified, but only 2,336 were admitted. In 1974/75, 25,568 applied, 18,508 qualified, but only 3,162 were admitted.\textsuperscript{53}

The primary factor that determined and limited student admission was the lack of facilities (classes and hostels) to accommodate demand. This factor made the admission process highly competitive. In his 1973 and 1974 matriculation addresses, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos, J.F. Ade Ajayi, noted that “the gap between the demand for and supply of university places [was a] widening gap, which makes it necessary to accord special congratulations to those who have succeeded against odds to secure admission to the university.”\textsuperscript{54} He further observed, “…the transition from school to University in this country is no longer smooth; it has become a stormy and capricious passage that gives would-be students and their parents far more worries than the transition from Elementary to Secondary School.”\textsuperscript{55}

Furthermore, the incidence of multiple admissions was a secondary factor that limited entry for qualified candidates. Although individual universities offered admission to candidates based on the available facilities, due to the incidence of multiple admissions, there were many unfilled spaces. Multiple admissions occurred when students received many admission offers from many universities and/or departments in a university. This situation, which began in the 1960s, occurred because individual universities independently operated different admission criteria, advertised separately, and conducted separate admission exercises. To increase their chances of admission, many candidates applied to many universities or departments in same universities. In most cases, top candidates often received multiple admission offers from many universities and/or departments resulting in multiplicity of admissions. Ultimately, such

\textsuperscript{55} J.F. Ade Ajayi, “Matriculation Address” \textit{Mimeo}, University of Lagos, 1974, 2.
candidates would accept one admission offer. However, many candidates failed to inform other universities of their unwillingness to accept offers made to them. The offering universities had no choice but to still hope that such candidates would accept their offers.

The admission practice was that when candidates rejected admission offers and informed the university early enough, the affected university would offer admissions to other equally qualified applicants who did not receive initial admission offers due to limited spaces. However, candidates usually failed to inform the concerned institutions or did so late. As T.M. Yesufu, the Vice-chancellor of the University of Benin, noted, “[b]y the time the universities are aware that their original offers would not be honored it is too late to admit those who would otherwise have accepted and utilized the places available.”

In fact, according to Adeyemi Aderinto, “it is always after matriculation that a particular university could say precisely how many students have accepted admission offers. But at that time, it is already late to start sending letters of admissions to a new set of [qualified] students because invariably lectures are at an advanced stage.” Worse still, even after matriculation, some students still left “…if given late admission into faculties of choice. They might have accepted the first one [admission] because [they were] not sure of admission for [their] best choice.” Thus, incidences of multiple applications, multiple acceptances; uncertainty as to whether a candidate will accept admission offers; uncertainty as to whether those who accepted admission offers would actually register worked together to deprive many qualified candidates of university admissions each year and prevented the universities from meeting enrolment targets.

56 See Address delivered at the Congregation for the conferment of degrees by the Vice-chancellor, Professor T.M. Yesufu, 26th February 1977, 6.
58 Ibid.
The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Ade Ajayi, drew attention to the incidence of multiple admissions when he highlighted the inability of the University of Lagos to meet its enrolment target. He revealed that the targets for Science, Engineering, and Environmental Design in 1976 session were 130,175 and 70 students respectively. In the science, 241 students were offered admission but 78 registered; in engineering, 130 were admitted but 54 registered; in Environmental design, 54 offered but 44 registered. The “deficit” was not peculiar to the University of Lagos; it affected all the universities in the country. Altogether, the deficit at Ibadan,Nsukka, Zaria, Ife, Lagos, and Benin was 9.8 percent in 1970-71; 11.2 percent in 1971-72; 13.8 percent in 1972-73; 11.8 percent in 1973-74; 8.0 percent in 1974-75; and 6.9 percent in 1975-76.

Notably, applicants from the South dominated incidences of multiple admissions. Since they were the most qualified, they secured placement in many universities; but they obstructed mostly other Southerners, and then Northerners who were on the margin of admission. An analysis of the distribution of candidates admitted into two or more universities in the 1974/75 session revealed that out of the 766 candidates offered two or more admissions, most (31 percent) came from the Western State, followed by the East-Central (23.12 percent), and the Mid-West (16.71 percent). Thus, Southern candidates, who had maintained a lead in university enrolment, accounted for more than 70 percent of multiple admissions. Any meaningful explanation to this, according to Aderinto, “will have to do with intense determination of the candidates from the southern states to obtain university education. To them, a university degree was an ‘International meal ticket.”

59 J.F. Ade Ajayi, Vice Chancellor’s Matriculation Address, Mimeo, University of Lagos, 13 November 1976.
61 Adeyemi Aderinto, 395.
62 Ibid.
Udoji Report) further confirmed the Southern educational lead. The report drew government’s attention to the regional imbalance in the high-level administrative positions in the federal service, positions that university graduates occupied. The report showed that the Northern region, with a population of a little more than half of the entire country, had only (54) senior administrators or 4.3 percent of the national total. The Western region had 39.5 percent (499); the Midwest 12.8 percent (162), the Eastern region, 37 percent (468), and the federal district 6.3 percent (79). These figures corresponded closely to university enrollments over the previous decade.

It may be tempting to argue that financial constraints instead of multiple admissions prevented many students from accepting admission offers, but the availability of state and federal governments scholarships and financial subsidies--introduced to massify university education--makes it less plausible. Most state government offered bursary and scholarship awards. For instance, the former Western State operated a state scholarship called Regulation 18B. In addition, the federal government was involved in direct student financing through loans and scholarships. For instance, between 1972 and 1977, the Nigerian Student Loan Board provided loans to 22,433 to finance their undergraduate or graduate studies within Nigeria and abroad. Between 1972 and 1991, the federal government had spent about ₦46 million. During the 1974/75 session, the government provided scholarships to 333 postgraduate students, 2,700 undergraduates students, and 1,000 technical students. In the 1975/76, the number of recipients increased to 636 postgraduate students; 3,839 undergraduates students, and 2,131 technical

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63 This commission was set up to review the need of senior administrative staff at the Nigerian civil service.
students benefited from the scheme. During the 1976/77 session, 1,985 postgraduate students, 4,515 students, and 4,014 students benefited. These were the major actions of governments to promote access to university education.

To address the multiple systems of applications and admissions problems, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors set up a panel of two experts in 1974, comprised of Mr. L.R. Kay, Secretary, Universities Central Council on Admissions of the United Kingdom, and Mr. W. H. Pettipiere of the Ontario Universities Applications Centre of Canada. They were to examine the system of admissions into Nigerian universities, identify the problems and shortcomings arising from it, and make recommendations ‘without prejudice to existing individual standards and traditions of the various universities.’ The report submitted by the two experts on 31 May 1975 recommended for the setting up of a central admission board to coordinate admission to all Nigerian universities. However, the CVC did not pursue the implementation of this proposal. By asking the two experts to make recommendations ‘without prejudice to existing individual standards and traditions of the various universities,’ it was apparent that the CVC preferred to preserve the independence of the universities in terms of their powers under their laws to admit their own students. Thus, according to Prof. B.A. Salim, when the experts recommended a central admission system, it “touched on a sore side [which the universities] saw as a breach of that fundamental clause which sought to preserve the status quo (University Autonomy on Admissions).” In addition, since the study and the recommendation of the expatriate committee was a non-governmental affair, the federal government was not compelled to order the CVC, or

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67 Report by Mr. L.R. Kay & Mr. W. H. Pettipiere on Central Admissions Procedure in Nigerian Universities, P&D C. Paper NO. 74/74, Com./FO/van, 31/5/75.
68 Prof. B.A. Salim “Problems of Assessment and Selection into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria,” Being a paper presented by the Registrar/Chief Executive Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Nigeria, at the 21st Annual Conference of AEAA held at Cape Town, South Africa from 25th-29th August, 2003. AEAA stands for the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa.
more appropriately, the NUC, to implement the proposal. Therefore, providing solutions to the problem of multiple admissions was deferred.

The Second NDP ended in 1975 without addressing the bottlenecks that prevented massification. Although enrolment increased from 14,468 in 1970 to 26,228 in 1974/75 session, the federal government had yet to come up with a clear policy to address the unresolved issues of multiple admissions, a quota system, and science education. Notwithstanding, the federal government was eager to overcome the lingering problems of access and wished to execute the doctrine of ‘fairer spread’ of higher education facilities as the SNPE recommended. Thus, equipped with enormous financial resources from oil revenue, the Third National Development Plan (Third NDP) was launched in March 1975. The Third NDP outlined grand plans to expand agriculture, industry, transport, housing, water supplies, health facilities, education, rural electrification, community development, and state programs. The Third NDP was very ambitious. While the First NDP and the Second NDPs allocated a capital expenditure of ₦2.2 billion and ₦3.0 billion respectively, the Third NDP earmarked an expenditure of ₦30 billion.69

The expansion of the productive base of the economy simultaneously required the production of skilled labor to staff the expanding economy, placing university education at the center of accomplishing governments’ objectives. The objectives of the university educational program for the Third NDP period were “to expand facilities for education aimed at equalizing individual access to education throughout the country…to consolidate and develop the nation’s system of education in response to the economy’s manpower needs [and] …to make an impact in the area of technological education.”70 In pursuit of these objectives, the Third NDP announced its resolve to expand facilities in the existing universities, establish four new universities, and

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70 Ibid., 245.
increases student enrolment from its present level of 23,000 to 53,000 by 1980. To that end, it allocated a total capital expenditure of ₦251.856 million. However, it noted that the federal government would provide part of the expenditure of state-owned universities but universities at Ife and Benin would meet 50 percent of their expenditure while ABU, a university in the North, would meet 25 percent.  

Furthermore, contrary to the argument that low enrolment in universities was due to lack of sufficiently qualified students, the Third NDP noted that “the university system has over the years adhered too rigidly to restrictive admission policies which in the light of current realities are over due for a drastic revision.” To break down the “built-in barrier against expanded student intake,’ the Third NDP promise to set up a ‘high powered committee…to look into various facets of the problem and make recommendations to the federal government for adoption in the universities.” Also, the Third NDP announced that “A 60:40 Science/Humanities ratio will be deliberately pursued.” While the Third NDP was a further step in the government effort to accelerate the process of economic and social development in Nigeria, as Gowon puts it “…it also represents a major milestone in the evolution of economic planning in this country. It is undoubtedly the most ambitious development effort ever attempted in Nigeria.” Gowon was optimistic that the “full implementation of the Plan should ensure a radical transformation of the Nigerian society.”

As Gowon noted, the impressive attempts to transform university education “reflect not only the considerably increased resources now available to us but also the government’s
determination to translate the country’s vast potential into a permanent improvement in the living condition of all Nigerians.” 

Therefore, the buoyant oil revenue strengthened the government’s capability to execute far-reaching plans and provided the motivation for massive increases in government public expenditures to expand infrastructure and social services. Likewise, since the oil wealth coincided with domestic pressure for university expansion, the federal government seized the moment to engage in unprecedented expansion of access designed not only to provide a workforce to manage the expanding economy, but also to assuage regional, state, and ethnic demands. Moreover, in August 1975, all the universities came under federal control when the federal government took over the three state universities in Benin, Ife, and Zaria. Although the Third NDP approved the establishment of four universities, the federal government went ahead to establish seven instead. The new universities were deliberately sited in the so-called disadvantaged states mostly in the North: Jos (first founded as the campus of the University of Ibadan); Ilorin (started from scratch); Sokoto (started from scratch); Kano (begun as the Northern Government owned Ahmadu Bello College); Maiduguri (which took over facilities of the North East College of Arts and Sciences, which opened in 1973); Port Harcourt (called campus by government decision but converted to university colleges); and Calabar (first founded as Calabar campus of the University of Nigeria). 

With thirteen universities under federal control, there were increased financial allocations from the federal government, higher enrolments, and greater chances of fostering a sense of unity. The total budget for universities, put at ₦ 39 million in 1970/71, increased to ₦ 320 million in 1976. Likewise, student enrolment increased from 14,468 in the 1970/71 session to 40, 552 in

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77 Ibid.
1976. 79 This development, as Alex Gboyega and Yinka Atoyebi noted, “marked the decisive turning point when university education became available to the masses in Nigeria.” 80 In addition, the federal control of universities and equitable geographical spread seemed to assuage the so called educationally disadvantaged Northerners. As J.F. Ade Ayayi, et al observed, “It was the oil revenues that incited the federal government to create not only a national system of higher education, but also education as a whole, under the federal control as a factor of reconciliation and unification after the civil war.” 81

In keeping with the objectives of the Third NDP, at the formal inauguration of NUC on 10 July 1975, Gowon re-affirmed his government’s determination “to boost the educational opportunities of every Nigerian… [in response] to the needs and the aspirations of the nation and its people.” Mass access to the universities, according to Gowon, “will have to be accompanied by a realistic reappraisal of entry qualifications into our Universities so as to render these increased opportunities for university education accessible to a greater number of aspiring Nigerians.” 82 He requested NUC to make recommendations on a review of entry requirements. Accordingly, NUC appointed a study group, which subsequently visited all the universities.

Gowon’s administration set the tune for future university expansion in Nigeria, but his days in office were numbered. The massive allegations of corruption against his regime and his indefinite postponement of earlier plans to hand over government to a civilian regime in 1976 caused dissatisfaction among Nigerians. On 29 July 1975, General Murtala Mohammed overthrew Gowon’s regime. To justify his intervention, Murtala noted: “In the endeavour to

82 Speech delivered at the Inauguration of the national Universities Commission, 10 July 1975.
build a strong, united and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood,’ but unfortunately, the
‘leadership [he refers to Gowon] either by design or default, had become too insensitive to the true feelings and yearnings of the people. The nation was thus being plunged inexorably into chaos.’

Obviously to satisfy the yearnings of Nigerians, Murtala immediately announced 1979 as the deadline to hand over control to a civilian government. In addition, based on the recommendation of the Justice Ayo Irikefe’s panel, set up by the new administration in 1975 to advise it on the creation of more states, Murtala announced the creation of an additional seven states in February 1976, bringing the total number of states to nineteen. Murtala was convinced that the creation of more states in Nigeria would “enhance future political stability of the country.” The states he created were as follows: Benue, Kaduna, Borno, Sokoto, Plateau, Kano, Kwara, Oyo, Lagos, Bendel, Cross River, Rivers, Anambra, Imo, Gongola, Niger, Bauchi, Ondo, Ogun. These were populist steps. In a way, the politics of demand for more states was analogous to the demand for more universities. The demands for states were made often to maximize the opportunities of partaking in the share of the federal wealth. One way to guarantee this was for states to train their own high-level workforce at the university level. Since universities existed in twelve out of the nineteen states, the seven remaining states were bound to demand their own universities. According to the IUC, “The cohesion of the Nigerian State depends on Lagos listening to these voices.”

Nevertheless, Murtala’s regime was confronted with the unresolved issue of multiple admissions, which did not end with the establishment of seven additional universities, but multiplied instead. Candidates from the northern states continued to be affected. For instance,

83 Murtala Mohammed, Televised broadcast in the evening of July 30 1975. He noted that with the intervention of his regime Nigeria would have another opportunity of rebuilding the nation.
during the previous academic year, 1974-1975, the six northern states (out of the twelve states in the federation) with more than 50 percent of the total population, accounted for only 5,764 or just under 22 percent of the national total university enrolment of 26,448.\(^85\) This unequal access to university education made the northerners uncomfortable because university education was perceived to confer greater benefits on the recipients and greater access to national resources or ‘cake’ by Nigerian ethnic groups. According to T.M. Yesufu, “A federal or confederal country, in which some sections feel inferior and dominated because of educational imbalances, tends to be inherently unstable. Equal educational opportunity tends to ensure equal employment opportunities.”\(^86\) The advantage of equal educational opportunity was that

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\text{…it develops and diffuses unifying cultural and social traits, a sense of intellectual camaraderie and mutual complimentality; it promotes identity of perspectives and interests with regard to national issues; promotes mutual personal and group understanding, a sense of equality and justice; and creates bond of national unity.}\(^87\)
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Eager to address the issues of educational gap between the North and the South and multiple admissions, the federal government set up the Committee on University Entrance (CUE) in December 1975, headed by M.S. Angulu.\(^88\) The terms of reference of the committee were:

1. To study the problems of admission into the Universities in Nigeria with a view to removing all bottlenecks limiting entry into these institutions so that the increased opportunities for

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\(^86\) T.M. Yesufu, “Nigerian Education in the 1990s,” 22.

\(^87\) Ibid.

\(^88\) Mr. M. S. Angulu was the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture &Natural Resources, Minna. Other members of the committee were Mr. T. O. Ilugbuhi, Secretary, National Manpower Board, Lagos; Dr. Jibril Aminu Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, Lagos; Mrs. Mairo T. Bello, Ministry of Education, Kano; Mr. O. W. Inyang, Inspectorate Division, Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos; Professor Adamu Baikie, Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Dr. E. O. Olatunji, Department of Physics, University of Lagos, Yaba, Lagos; Mr. V. C. Ike, Registrar, West African Examinations Council, Accra, Ghana. Chief S. O. Omitade, Principal, Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo; Professor S. D. Onabamiro, Principal, Federal School of Arts & Science, Ogoja; Professor B. O. Ukeje, Provost, Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri; Alhaji Hassan Rafindadi, Katsina Local Authority, Emir’s Palace, Katsina; Alhaji Hamidu Alhaji, Secretary to the Military Government, Gongola State; Dr. Abel I. Guobadia, Head of Academic Planning, NUC, Secretariat, Lagos.
University education in all parts of the country are enhanced, and to make appropriate recommendations.

2. To study and make appropriate recommendations on the steps to be taken, both within and outside the University system, to ensure that liberalization of admission into the Universities is balanced against the need to maintain quality in the graduate output by means of appropriate course system.

3. To review the performance of the various pre—University examining bodies in Nigeria (including WAEC) in terms of how much they constitute a bottleneck to entry into the Universities, and, if necessary, to make recommendations on appropriate alternatives such as a Joint Matriculation Board.

4. To review the entry requirements of the various Universities in Nigeria with a view to making them not only realistic and responsive to national needs and aspirations but also uniform in the whole University system, if necessary through a Common Entrance Board.

5. To make such other recommendations as will help the federal Military Government achieve its objectives on University entrance as enunciated in the Third National Development Plan.89

The terms of reference of the CUE reflected the urgency and seriousness of the problem of multiple admissions, which hindered access and prevented the universities from reaching their projected enrolments. Besides, it highlighted the federal government’s willingness to liberalize admissions for the sake of regional equality and mass access. While the CUE deliberated, the Murtala Mohammed’s regime ended on 13 February 1976 when Lt. Col. B.S. Dimka assassinated him in an abortive coup. In his second broadcast, Dimka accused Murtala of compromising Nigeria’s unity because “… some of the programmes announced for a return to civilian rule are made to favor a particular group.”90 General Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner, emerged as the new head of state. Uncertain about the step the new head of state would take to close the educational gap between the North and South, Northern states increased their pressure on the federal government to intervene in the university admission process to close the gap. One of the most ardent lobbyists was Dr. Jubril Aminu, then the Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission and a member of the CUE. He used his influential position to agitate vigorously for balanced educational development to achieve equal representation of all ethnic

89 Report of the National Committee on University Entrance, Lagos, February 1977, ii-iii.
groups in the existing universities. In a 53-page paper he addressed to the federal government, Aminu lamented:

The four old states of East Central, Lagos, Midwest and West exercise an alarming monopoly of enrolment into the University system. These four states, with a combined population of about one third of the whole country, have for long had a disproportionate advantage in higher education. Even recently, in the 6 old Universities the four states had 75.6 per cent, 71.4 per cent, 72.9 percent, 68.3 per cent and 69.4 per cent of the enrolments in the academic years 1970/71, 72/72, 72/73, 73/74, 74/75, respectively.91

The Southern states dominated enrolment in science courses. According to Aminu, the four old states located in the South monopolized 80% of the enrolment in Medicine and Pharmacy, 77% in Engineering and Technology, 75% in Pure Science and Agriculture and Forestry as well as 75% in Education, 60% in Law, and 56% in Public Administration in the year 1974/75 session. Based on these statistics, Aminu declared that in relation to their population, the Northern States suffered most and as such, the future of Nigeria rested in the hands of these southern states “since they have enjoyed a long monopoly of highly skilled manpower development in all disciplines, and since the situation is not improving.”92 The reason why the South maintained the educational lead, according to Aminu, was the early efforts the Christian Missionaries made to bring Western Education to the South, which was resisted by the Muslim North due to the proselytizing activities of the missionaries. He insisted that the criteria for university admission “must only be uniformly applied if they are fair and just from first

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91 Jubril Aminu, “Educational Imbalance: Its Extent, History, Dangers and Correction in Nigeria, 3. Aminu was refereeing to the four states out of the twelve created by Gowon in 1967. Murtala Mohammed created more in 1975 and the former East Central State became Anambra and Imo; former Western State became Oyo, Ondo and Ogun; former Mid-West became Bendel, and Lagos State was retained. These states new seven are located in the South. Out of the remaining twelve states described as disadvantaged, ten (Benue, Kaduna, Borno, Sokoto, Plateau, Kano, Kwara, Gongola, Niger, Bauchi) are located in the north and two (Cross-River, Rivers) are located in the South. 92 Ibid., 3.
principles; namely, if all started the competition from the same line.” Even though Gowon established all the seven new universities in the educationally disadvantaged states, Aminu however, noted that “...this action by itself would never solve the problem of imbalance without concomitant changes in the admission policies.”

To increase the opportunities and the eligibility of the students from the under privileged areas, Aminu suggested, among other things, that the federal government should introduce “the system of quota admission.” In addition, it should also insist on “a sixty per cent quota admission for the twelve states, on population basis into the new universities; and fifty per cent quota admission for the twelve states, on population basis, into the existing universities.” Additionally, he requested that the government establish urgently needed remedial centers in all the ten disadvantaged states of the former North, as well as Rivers and Cross Rivers States. While he urged the federal government to take responsibility for the entire financial burden of establishing these centers, he stressed that the centers should be under the complete control of the state governments, including the admission policies. The federal government, Aminu advised, should approve these proposals in order to lay a solid foundation “for unity and for contentment” among Nigerians by removing “all sources of strife - imminent or potential.” In carrying out this task, Aminu stated that the federal government “needs to offer no apologies, and the Committee on University Entrance needs to have no hesitations in recommending.”

Aminu’s letter was highly influential. In 1976 following some of the recommendations contained in that letter, the federal government announced the establishment of Schools of Basic Studies in each of the ten states in the North (with the exception of Kwara), and two states in

93 Ibid., 9.  
94 Ibid., 12.  
95 Ibid., 25.  
96 Ibid., 10.  
97 Ibid.
the south, considered educationally disadvantaged. The federal government financed each school but states controlled them, including the admission policy. Each school, affiliated to the six older universities, was to prepare its students for admission to the universities. Although the federal government did not approve a quota system of admission to universities, it directed each of the six older universities to guarantee admission to the successful graduates of each school of Basic Studies affiliated with it. By implication, candidates from the remaining states would be considered on merit for whatever vacancies that exist thereafter. The federal government further directed each of the seven new universities to establish a remedial course within its system for students from the same disadvantaged states who might be deficient in some of the general or special university entry requirements. It insisted that students admitted to such courses would matriculate into the university straight away and any vacancies left after admission should go to candidates from the remaining states.98

Influenced by Aminu’s letter, the head of state held a special meeting with the Committee of Vice Chancellors and officials of the NUC on 18 September 1976. 99 At the meeting, the head of state addressed, among others, the issues of admission into Nigerian universities, especially as it affected candidates from the educationally disadvantaged areas of the country and low enrolments in science disciplines.100 He bluntly blamed Nigerian universities for maintaining

98 Report of the National Committee on University Entrance, Lagos, February 1977, 57-59
99 In attendance at the meeting were Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi, chairman Committee of Vice—Chancellors; Professor I. M. Yesufu, Vice-Chancellor, University of Benin; Professor Iya Abubakar, Vice-Chancellor Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Professor J. O. C. Ezeilo, Vice-Chancellor, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Professor T. N. Tamuno, Vice-Chancellor University of Ibadan; Professor G. O. Onuaguluchi, Vice-Chancellor University of Jos; Professor E. U. Essien-Udom, Vice-Chancellor, University of Maiduguri; Professor E. A. Ayandele, Vice-Chancellor University of Calabar; Professor A. S. Galadanci, Vice-Chancellor University of Sokoto; Professor O.O. Akinkugbe, Principal, University College Ilorin; Professor D. E. U. Ekong, Principal, University College Port-Harcourt; Mallam Mahmud Tukur, Principal, Bayero University College Kano; Mr. I Ogbue, Secretary, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Mr. A. I. Yusuf, Assistant Secretary, Committee of Vice-Chancellors. Also present at the meeting were the Federal Commissioner of Education, Colonel A.A. Ali; Chief S.O. Adebo, Chairman, National Universities Commission; and Dr. Jubril Aminu, Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission.
100 Minutes of Special Meeting of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors with the Head of State at Dodan Barracks on Saturday, 18 September 1976, 1.
aristocratic seclusion and remoteness from the society they were meant to serve, a fact he considered “a big constraint in the expansion programme of all our universities because all other universities tended to follow the example of the University of Ibadan.” He cautioned that since the federal government had committed large sums of money to the universities, it expected them to “reflect the true Nigerian character both in their intake, the content of the courses offered, and their physical environment.” As he further declared:

> The universities should be a vehicle for the promotion of national consciousness, unity, understanding and peace….Education is a recognized factor of unity in a nation, but unfortunately we still have within our nation educational disparity which tend[s] to undermine the desires and efforts to achieve true unity; because there can only be true unity where educational opportunities and resultant facilities, amenities and benefits are evenly distributed. It is a matter of concern that up to this day there is still a preponderant turn-out of humanities graduates in our universities over science or technical graduates.

There was the fear that the federal government was bent on imposing a quota system in university admission. The federal commissioner for education denied it in his speech at the meeting. As he stressed, instead of introducing quota system, it was the desire of the federal government to see “a more pragmatic formula for admission into our universities that will reflect the federal nature of this country and that will redress the chronic imbalance without necessarily reducing standards. I must say categorically that no quota system is envisaged.” The commissioner also pointed out that the government had established schools of basic studies to remedy the imbalance in the availability of qualified students for admissions. Apparently, the commissioner was diplomatic in his appraisal of the situation. It was, in a sense, unlikely for the universities to produce a ‘more pragmatic formula’ to admit students without fundamentally

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101 Ibid., 3.
103 Ibid., 2-3.
104 Ibid., Annexure ‘B’2.
changing the prevailing admission system based on merit. This system worked in favor of candidates from the South. So, the federal government wanted to introduce a quota system of admission, which would reduce the number of admissions of candidates from the South in order to enhance the chances of northerners. However, since Southerners, who had resisted any system that would lower standards, dominated the administration of Nigerian universities, and since individual universities controlled admission exercises, they were prepared to sabotage the implementation of a quota system. Aminu recognized this factor when he stated that “Senates [responsible for admission] are very conservative bodies which jealously guard what they call university autonomy and academic freedom. But neither of these can over-ride national unity and harmony.” 105 Tactically, the government now decided to set up a central examination body as a prelude to the eventual imposition of quota system. Under this arrangement, the power of universities to admit would be constrained by the body, which, of course, would be controlled by the federal government.

Meanwhile, at the end of the meeting with the head of state, the committee of vice chancellors agreed with the government on the need for the universities to assume greater national outlook and favored a system whereby students from different parts of the country would mix in all universities. The CVC supported the establishment of schools of basic studies and other remedial institutions in the disadvantaged states. However, concerned that the establishment of a central admission body would strip them of their power to select their students, they requested the government to give them the opportunity to comment on the awaited report of the Committee on University Entrance before the government would give its approval. 106

106 Report of the National Committee on University Entrance, Lagos, February 1977, 5.
In pursuit of the goals of closing the educational gap between the North and the South as well as the massification of university education, Obasanjo’s administration radically implemented the vision of liberalizing and democratizing university education. In his speech at the convocation ceremony of the University of Ibadan on November 17, 1976, he repeated what had become a government ‘anthem’—the challenges of educational disparity, which he said Nigeria must surmount before it “can mature into full nationhood.”

But he took an unprecedented step by announcing the decision of the Supreme Military Council to make university education, including technical secondary school and post-secondary school, tuition-free and boarding-free; students’ feeding was also subsidized by 50 percent. Obasanjo had launched the Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE) on 2 September 1976, which made primary education free and compulsory in the country. Extending free education to the post-primary and post-secondary education was revolutionary and unprecedented. With the increase in number of universities as well as free tuition, Obasanjo believed that “more Nigerians will continue to have the benefit of higher education until a stage was reached where no section of this country would find itself on the defensive in the quest for and attainment of knowledge.”

In addition, to reduce the bottlenecks that impeded access to the universities, Obasanjo also promised that a University Central Admission Board would come into effect as from 1977/78 session “to harmonize and standardize admission process into our universities.”

Obasanjo’s decision to introduce free tuition, free boarding, subsidized feeding, and create the University Central Admission Board was the height of massification and another turning point in the development of higher education in Nigeria. Besides eliminating the incidence of multiple

107 “Our Educational Legacy,” Olusegun Obasanjo’s Speech on the convocation ceremony of the University of Ibadan on 17 November 1976, 11.
108 Ibid., 13.
109 Ibid., 12
admissions that had hitherto led to the underutilization of university spaces, the decision had the potential of intensifying demand for universities from those who previously were discouraged by financial constraints.

To reinforce its resolve to liberalize access to university education, the federal government published *The National Policy on Education* (NPE) in January 1977. The NPE endorsed the federal government’s policy to finance education at all levels. As the document declared, “Education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise, but a huge government venture that witnessed progressive evolution of government’s complete and dynamic intervention and active participation.” It also reaffirmed government preparedness to “continue to support higher education as generously as it is doing…. [to] enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given access to it.”

Furthermore, the NPE approved the abolition of the British system of Sixth Form (i.e. Higher School Certificate) and the introduction of six-year secondary school system. The implication was that all candidates could go direct from secondary schools to university. The NPE also requested universities to restructure their courses from the three year to the four-year degree pattern, as obtainable in the United States of America. Furthermore, since the federal government adopted education “as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development,” it declared, “University development will ensure a more even geographical distribution to provide a fairer spread of higher education facilities.” The report reconfirmed the federal government preference for science disciplines, decisions on tuition fees and university control by fixing the ratio of Science to Liberal Students at 60: 40, endorsing tuition

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110 The NPE was earlier scheduled for publication in 1975 but was deferred because of change of Gowon’s regime.
112 Ibid., 17.
113 Ibid., 11.
114 Ibid., 15.
free university education, and declaring thus: “The federal government will decide when and where new universities are to be established.”

The NPE was influenced by both the proceedings of the 1969 *Curriculum Conference* and the recommendations of the 1973 *Seminar on a National Policy on Education*. The advice of these two conferences implied the decolonization of British colonial educational system and its Americanization and massification in order to promote national unity as well facilitate scientific and technological advancement. According to A. Fajana, the NPE was “the collective wisdom of Nigerian educators and their foreign friends.” But, the publication came too late in the game, after all the massification policies had been clearly delineated.

One month after the publication of the NPE, the Committee on University Entrance, (CUE) submitted its report. The report recognized multiple applications as the major impediments to access to universities. To overcome these problems, the CUE recommended the establishment of two central admission bodies to conduct entrance exams for all Nigerian universities, including the Joint Matriculation Examination (for those who completed full secondary school) and the Higher Joint Matriculation Examination (for those who completed an approved post-secondary education program).

While CUE believed that the quality of entrants could guarantee standards, it stressed, nonetheless, that standards could best be maintained by the quality and effectiveness of the instruction in the universities, including adequate facilities for staff and students. It also recommended that in order to expedite the examination process, and to improve its overall efficiency, the WAEC should have its competent authorities nearer to each of the examination centers; it should have an office in each state of the federation, and zonal

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115 Ibid., 16-17.
117 Report of the National Committee on University Entrance, 68.
118 Ibid., 15.
councils consisting of 3-4 states. Since the deliberations of the CUE were spiced with a lot of rancor caused by two major contentious issues related to using the quota system to correct geographical imbalance, the deliberations were not reflected in the final report. Instead it recommended the introduction of remedial programs for the educationally less developed states.

In February 1977, shortly after the CUE submitted its report, the Commissioner of Education, summoned a meeting of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and the National Universities Commission (NUC) during which he announced the setting up of a single body to embrace the functions of the two bodies recommended by the CUE. At the meeting, Dr. Aminu suggested the name Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and it was accepted. Shortly after the meeting, Professor O.O. Akinkugbe and Mr. M.S. Angulu were appointed chairman and registrar of the board respectively with all the universities as members of the board. With the creation of JAMB, admission to the universities became centralized and nationalized. Henceforth, students were to gain admission through either the University Matriculation Examination (UME) or Direct Entry. UME was open to those who possessed School Certificate/WASC with five credits obtained at not more than two sittings, including English language for Arts subject students and Mathematics for Science subject students. It was also open to teachers grade II Certificate with a minimum of five credits, and candidates who did not possess these requirements but had registered for the November/December 1977 GCE O’ Level or June 1978 SC/GCE. Such candidates, who would have to await the outcome of their performance these exams would be eligible for university admission if they ultimately fulfilled

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119 Ibid., 45-46.
the conditions stated above. For direct entry admission, candidates were expected to possess a General Certificate of Education (GCE) A Level in at least two subjects relevant to the intended course of study; National Certificate of Education (NCE) for courses in education; International Baccalaureate; and the Interim Joint Matriculation (IJMB) conducted by Ahmadu Bello University.\textsuperscript{121}

JAMB was expected to conduct its first exam in 1978, but before the federal government promulgated the law to provide the board with the legal backing to conduct an entrance exam, the Nigerian economy suffered a recession in the later months of 1977. The recession caused a decline in oil revenue occasioned by energy reforms such as the development of alternative sources of energy as well encouraging indigenous production of hydrogen gas by the industrialized countries, especially the United States of America. Since the bulk of Nigeria’s oil exports went to the US, according to the Commissioner for Petroleum and Chairman of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, General Mohammedu Buhari, President Jimmy Carter’s energy reforms reduced US dependence on oil supplies from OPEC, including Nigeria’s oil.\textsuperscript{122} Worst still, with the decline in oil revenue, which accounted for over 93 percent of Nigeria’s revenue and over 95 percent of its foreign exchange, the country’s GDP declined by 5.7 per cent.\textsuperscript{123}

Given the fall in the country’s GDP, the federal government suspended some of its liberalization policy. In his budget speech, Obasanjo noted that “...although petroleum remained the greatest contributor to the economy, its share in the national income declined slightly.\[Therefore\] …the 1977/78 Budget had to be a strict one both in terms of government having to cut down its programmes and also in terms of sacrifices which were being demanded

from all Nigerians. “\(^{124}\) The universities were expected to make sacrifices, and under this circumstance, realizing the ambitious hopes and aspirations contained in the NPE, conceived when the economy was in good shape, became a big challenge. As C.O. Taiwo puts it, the NPE “was conceived during a period of buoyant economy but born in period of tight economy which made it difficult to realize the hopes and fulfill the promises expeditiously, if at all.”\(^{125}\)

While the oil boom since 1973 fueled university expansion policies, the 1977 oil burst promoted the opposite. Consequently, the federal government introduced austerity measures and borrowed Nigeria’s first jumbo loan of US$1 billion from the international capital market.\(^{126}\) The impact of the government’s belt-tightening measures on financing social services, including the universities, was immediate; government reintroduced some fees in Nigerian universities. It revised hostel accommodation charges upwards at ₦90.00 per session of thirty-six weeks or ₦30.00 in a session of three terms and the feeding fees upwards from 50 Kobo per day to ₦1.50 per student per day (for three meals).\(^{127}\) Although the federal government introduced these fees in order to ease its financial burden in funding university education, were these fees really enough? The *Daily Times* editorial noted that fee changes did not address the root of universities’ financial problems, stating that it “did not amount to a clear, consistent, and coherent policy statement on the financing of higher education.”\(^{128}\) It further cautioned that instead of assuming the responsibility of student housing and accommodation, which saddled the government and university authorities with avoidable non-academic problems, they

\[\ldots\text{ought to put some bite into their off-campus policy, so that they become non-residential in the shortest time possible. They need to}\]


achieve that objective in order to be able to address themselves to
the more important question of how to offer university education to
a maximum number of students…

Inspired by oil revenue and aimed at promoting national unity, the federal government
implemented a geographical spread of thirteen universities in twelve states. However, the
unintended consequences of government action were that with the decline in oil revenue, these
universities constituted a heavy burden on the government’s dwindling resources. According to
Eniola Adeyeye, the existing thirteen universities involved separate and financially demanding
administrative structures and personnel. He wondered why the federal government had not
established fewer universities “with expanded facilities including scattered colleges all over the
country such that a single university, like the University of Cairo could graduate annually tens of
thousands of much needed graduates to man key posts in all the sectors of the economy.”

Conversely, Jubril Aminu, the Executive Secretary of the NUC defended the
government’s position on expansion. For him “Those who criticize the establishment of more
universities will do well to find out the views of the large, usually silent, majority in the country.
If the people want more universities, they are entitled to more universities and they deserve what
they get.” This thinking, deficient in long-term strategic thought, reflected disappointingly, the
mindset of those who advised the government on university expansion. Regrettably, even with
the establishment of thirteen universities, the total number of students they absorbed was very
low. For instance in 1977, out of the total more than 90,000 applicants, only 47,499 secured
admissions.

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129 Ibid.
130 See Eniola Adeyeye, Sunday Times, Sunday 16 April 1978, 5. See also Daily Times, Wednesday, 15 March
1978, 3.
131 National Universities Commission, Bulletin of the National Universities Commission, Lagos, Vol. 1 No. 3, July-
September, 1977, 51
132 Higher education in the 1990s, 34.
As the university financial crisis continued, however, the gap between the demands of universities for funds and the grants provided by the federal government widened. Confronted with complaints by the university authorities, the federal government accused them of financial mismanagement and recklessness. In the meantime, individual universities devised cost saving measures to cope with shortages of financial allocations. For instance, the university authority at UNN stopped the feeding of students during the 1977/1978 session and introduced a policy of “Pay-As-You-Eat.” Nevertheless, to study the financial problems confronting the universities, the NUC set up the Committee on University Finances (CUF) in 1977, headed by the Director of Education, Nigerian Army, Brigadier T.B. Ogundeko. The terms of reference of the CUF were:

To examine the financial plans, arrangements and practices of the Universities and other institutions financed through the National Universities Commission and to advise the Commission as to how those plans, arrangements and practices might be modified in the interest of economy and efficiency without detriment to the achievement of their legitimate objectives.

The terms of reference of the CUF recognized the country’s current economic meltdown and the need for the universities to make inevitable adjustment, but before it submitted its report, the JAMB law was promulgated. The federal government promulgated Decree No 2 establishing the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in February 1978. The Decree clearly stated: “Notwithstanding the provisions of any other enactment, the Board shall be responsible for… the general control of the conduct of matriculation examinations for admissions into all Universities

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134 Other members of the CUF were Mrs. Yetunde Holloway, Kayode Aluko, Hamza Zayyad, G.A. Aghhowa, and Mr. Uthman A. Ekhar.
in Nigeria.” It further stressed that “for avoidance of doubt, the Board shall be responsible for determining matriculation requirements and conducting examinations…” With this Decree, the Board was set to conduct its first UME. Although the vice-chancellors of each university or his representative were members of the Board, the abrogated the portions of University Laws dealing with admissions by the JAMB Decree, offended the CVC. In retrospect, the CVC at the special meeting with the head of state in September 1976 requested him to give them the opportunity to provide input on the recommendations of the CUE before the government’s approval. On the contrary, the federal government went ahead to hastily announce the establishment of JAMB in 1977. Feeling slighted, and given the fact the CVC had rejected the recommendations for a central admission body in 1974 by two experts, the university vice-chancellors opposed JAMB. “To the universities,’ according to Salim, ‘the Board was government’s tool for reduction of the universities autonomy and bringing in the quota system through the back door.”

The opposition to JAMB continued and diversified after JAMB conducted the first UME in April 1978. In the conduct of its first exams, JAMB recorded many administrative difficulties. JAMB exam was conducted in one day, and thousands of candidates who registered for the exam, reported to centers that did not exist. Under the caption “Thousands did not sit for JAMB,” the Nigerian Tribune noted that a good number of candidates missed the examinations because of the late arrival of the examinations papers, and most of the centers marked for the

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136 Federal Republic of Nigeria, Decree No 2, 13th February, 1978, A28. Quota system was not mentioned because of its volatile nature. It was merely deferred.
137 Ibid.
138 Prof. B.A. Salim “Problems of Assessment and Selection into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria,” Being a paper presented by the Registrar/Chief Executive Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Nigeria, at the 21st Annual Conference of AEAA held at Cape Town, South Africa from 25th-29th August, 2003. AEAA stands for the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa.
examinations were non-existent. These administrative lapses in the conduct of the exams, which rendered the exam ‘chaotic, as the JAMB Registrar, Angulu, later admitted, prevented many students from gaining admissions in the 1978/79 session (they would have to wait for another year) and also raised questions about the ability of the new board to handle entrance exams successfully. Therefore, the New Nigerian editorials consistently called for a review of the JAMB Decree to transform it into a clearinghouse to avoid multiple admissions. Blaming the problem on the haste with which the board was established, Adeyemo Aderinto argued: “If there is any lesson to be learnt from the JAMB episode, it is the fact that setting up ill-prepared, ill-designed super-structures, however well intentioned, would not achieve the perceived objectives.

Furthermore, when JAMB released its first result for 1978/79 session, the educationally disadvantaged states realized that the board did not make much difference to their admission prospects. Of the 113,162 candidates who applied for admission in the 1978/79 session, less than 20,000 candidates came from the ten states. Out of this number, only 14,417 students, representing only 12 percent of the total number, were admitted. In spite of the population of the North, the number of candidates who sought admissions into the universities from the ten northern states--Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gongola, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Niger, Plateau, and Sokoto-- was small when compared with the total number of applications received. While only 2,776 students from the former Northern Region gained admission, 11,641 students from the

southern states gained admission. The affected states blamed the board for admitting fewer students from their region. However, the JAMB registrar stated that the operation of JAMB in its first year did not affect the “disadvantaged states more adversely than in the past as has been alleged.” He provided statistics to show that the number of candidates who gained admission during this period was an improvement from the past.

Nevertheless, students in the northern universities, who had hoped to secure automatic admissions to universities after their preliminary studies, were disappointed because universities followed JAMB guidelines in offering admission. An admission crisis in the University of Jos, for instance, illustrated their disappointment. In the university, Professor G.O. Onuaguluchi, a Southerner and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the University failed to carry out the decision of the university Council, which adopted the following admission policy in keeping with the federal government directive of 1976. The Council decided that “(1). Without lowering standard, all candidates from Sokoto, Niger, Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Rivers, Borno, Gongola, Bauchi, Cross River and Kano States who satisfy the minimum entrance requirements should be admitted subject only to the availability of facilities; (2). After (1) above, the residue of the vacancies should be filled on merit.” Having failed to carry out this decision, the Council set up a commission of enquiry on the 1977/78 admissions exercise. The report of the commission stated,

> After all the process of scrutiny of some of Master results sheets of some States were completed, we discovered that 530 candidates from eleven of the disadvantaged States qualified in all respects for admission into the University First Year Degree

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144 Joint Admission and matriculation Board, Lagos as reproduced in Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, “Higher Education and Development in the Context of the Nigerian Constitution.” The Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Seminar held at the University of Benin, Benin City, 26-27 February 1982, 68.
145 M.S. Angulu, Press Release.
programme for 1977/78 Session. Since the National Universities Commission projected enrolment for the University was 600 the same year, it followed that all the 530 successful candidates from the disadvantaged States should have been admitted first in compliance with Council policy decision on admission barring limitation of the projected enrolment of each faculty.  

Although 530 places constituted 88% of the total intake for year, the Commission insisted that they should have gone automatically to candidates from the disadvantaged states regardless of those qualified from the advantaged states. It condemned the admission committee for using a higher pass mark in JAMB to eliminate candidates from the disadvantages states. Although the federal government meant well when it initiated this policy to help those states said to be educationally deprived, the measure as demonstrated in the case at the University of Jos, tended to lose sight of the legitimate claims and aspirations of students from the favored States.  

Nevertheless, the students in the North assumed that Southerners championed the establishment of JAMB to serve their interest. Based on this assumption, northern students enrolled in northern universities demanded the abolition of the board in February 1979 resulting in the closure of all the universities in the north. As reported by *West Africa*, the JAMB debate divided Nigerian students on ethnic lines, with Southerners favoring JAMB and Northerners determined to wipe it out. According to the paper, the southern press soon attacked “the demonstrating students, and [suppored] the principle that university admissions be based only on exam-proven academic achievement (which they still dub “merit”)--a principle that will obviously favor the better resourced south.”

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147 Ibid., 9.
149 *West Africa*, 9 April 1979, 626.
Meanwhile, the Committee on University Finances submitted its findings in May 1978. The Committee identified the current problems of universities as well as their financial expenses. It showed, among other things, that the rate of growth in student population and the expansion in academic activities out-stripped the rate of development of teaching facilities. It addition, it noted the prevalence of over-crowding in students hostels due to inadequate living accommodation for students; inadequate staff housing forcing the universities to spend too much money on rented accommodation; and inadequate meal subsidies provided for students. In a way, these problems affected both student enrolment as well as the quality of education obtained in these universities.

To accommodate increased demand for university education, CUF suggested that the government should raise the level of grants to the universities to enable them to develop adequate physical facilities. It noted that the money should be used for the construction of additional big lecture theaters in the older universities. Likewise, in the new universities, it proposed that they should include in their master plan large lecture theaters in sufficient numbers and also to go ahead and construct some “in anticipation of growth so that large numbers of students could receive lectures at the same time.” Worried that the current economic difficulties would last a long time, it stressed that the money should be provided urgently to avoid the effect of future inflation. Recognizing the indiscretion among university administrators, it warned that any university embarking upon a new capital project without prior approval from NUC would not receive funding for that project. In addition, it cautioned that building designs should be

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151 Dennis Austin noted that the turbulent inter-state rivalries that produced the expansion of university education and affected by the financial difficulties of 1977, led to the future fall in academic standards. After his visit to Nigeria, he noted with shock that he “could not find much that suggested ‘the gold standard’ or any recognition of high excellence once ascribed to Ibadan and its successors.” See Dennis Austin, “Universities and the Academic Gold Standard in Nigeria,” Minerva, Vol.18, No2 (June 1980), 242.
simpler and more functional than they are at present, “with greater emphasis on maximum utility at minimum cost.”

In order to relieve the pressure on government finances, the CUF recommended that the older universities should finance construction of students’ hostels with loans. However, it suggested that the government should finance one third of the student accommodation required by the newer universities and the remaining two-third should be financed with loans. It advised that university yearly budgets should start with guidelines from the NUC on anticipated levels of recurrent and capital grants and such guidelines should take account of the approved programmes of the universities. It also recommended that students should be charged ₦150 per session for accommodation and that the universities should henceforth give car loans to staff through bank loans. The NUC, among others, approved these recommendations, and instructed the universities to implement them immediately.

The federal government’s abolition of tuition fees, reduction in boarding and lodging charges in 1977 led to sharp increases in student enrolment from 40,552 in 1976 to 47,499 in 1977, and increases in government’s financial commitments to the universities. However, it led to a huge drop in local revenue in fees generated by the universities from ₦10.4 million to ₦4.7 million. However, faced with a decline in oil revenue, financial grants to the universities were declined, and the shortfall in NUC recommendations and actual grants to universities in 1977/78 session were over ₦24 million. As NUC noted, the result was that “physical facilities cannot be developed at a sufficiently rapid rate to meet the demands for university places. The

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153 Ibid., 6, 16.
155 Ibid.
available facilities are therefore becoming increasingly inadequate. Congestion and squalor are worsening, and social problems are bound to accompany congestion.”  

Aggravated by the poor living conditions of university students, the Obasanjo government’s attempts to reintroduce tuition fees and increase boarding and lodging fees and other unpopular policies forced the universities to emerge “as centers of vigorous protest and often violent confrontation against the authorities.”  

First, the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) embarked on a massive protest in May 1978. The federal government immediately closed down all the universities, banned NUNS and expelled its president, Segun Okeowo, together with other student leaders.  

Two vice-chancellors of the most affected universities, Professor Iya Abubakar of ABU and Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi of the University of Lagos were relieved of their positions. The Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT), a hitherto conservative and timid association, metamorphosed into a formidable opposition group known as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU) in 1978. From 1978 up to 2000, ASSU assumed a leadership position in the struggle against the harsh policies of the Obasanjo regime and other successive military regimes.  

Meanwhile, in keeping with the transition program to civil rule initiated by Murtala Mohammed in 1975 and pursued by Obasanjo, a new constitution was introduced in 1979. The 1979 Constitution revised the 1972 constitutional amendment by removing higher education from the exclusive legislative list and placing it on the concurrent legislative list. Accordingly, it granted both the federal government and the nineteen states equal powers in the provision and

156 Ibid., 26.  
control of higher education thus ending the federal government’s monopoly on university education. What programs for university expansion would the new civilian administration initiate and pursue? How would the 1979 constitutional and political changes as well as the socio-economic circumstances dictate their policies during the third wave of massification, 1979-1983?

In conclusion, the three military administrations of Gowon, Mohammed, and Obasanjo arrogated to the federal government the exclusive control of university expansion between 1970 and 1979. Inspired by the need to build a strong and united Nigerian nation and encouraged by the oil wealth, they pursued the goals of massification by increasing the opportunities of access to university education, emphasizing science courses, and seeking to close the gap between the North and the South. Consequently, the number of universities grew from six in 1970 to thirteen in 1979 and enrolment surged from 14,468 in the 1970/71 session to 57,742 in the 1979/80 session. Given Nigeria’s population, estimated at 68 million in 1979, this number was statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, its significance lay in the fact that while enrolment grew from 1,360 in 1960 to 9,695 in 1969, it jumped to 57,742 in 1979. The question often asked is why military dictatorships usually opposed by the intelligentsia, championed the cause of university expansion. Nigeria’s case in the 1970s was unique. In essence, even though the military governments did not see themselves as politicians and were not necessarily prepared to please the masses, but to guarantee their survival in power, they had to justify their intervention. One way of doing that was to initiate popular programs, of which education was one. Failure to respond to public wishes would have provided excuses for other ambitious military officers to overthrow the government. The overthrow of President Gowon and the assassination of Mohammed exemplify this.

CHAPTER IV

THE 1979 CONSTITUTION, QUOTA SYSTEM, AND POLITICS OF FREE EDUCATION, 1979-1983

The promise of free education featured prominently during the 1979 election campaigns. Most Nigerians welcomed the democratic regime with enthusiasm, and anticipated a fulfillment of campaign promises, prominent among which was the provision of free education at all levels. They were not disappointed; the new regime responded to public expectations by embarking on the diversification of university education policies and programs. The doctrine of free education through mass access to university education; science and technology education for rapid economic development and the quota system of admission for equal representation in all universities dominated higher education policies during the third wave of massification, 1979-1983. Encouraged by the 1979 constitutional amendment, which placed higher education back on the Concurrent Legislative List, and emboldened by the revenue from the 1979/81 oil windfall, political leaders at the federal and state levels vigorously pursued the expansion of university education. This resulted to the establishment of seven federal universities of technology, eight state universities, twenty-six private universities, and an open university--all in an unprecedented atmosphere of policy chaos. The uncertainties of the country’s oil revenue, the unrealistic and unsustainable expectations of the masses for free education as well as lack of long-term strategic planning on the part of policy makers were central to understanding university education policies during the period of the third wave of massification.

The 1979 constitution was unique in many respects; its far-reaching provisions institutionalized a new political system with direct implications for the government implementation of social policies, including university education. The constitution introduced a United States-type presidential system in place of the parliamentary system adopted during the
First Republic whereby the executive branch of government derived its powers from the legislature. Under the new constitution, the president and vice president as well as state governors and their deputies came to power through separate elections, and possessed executive powers. The elections had both the federation and the state as constituencies. It placed higher education back on the concurrent legislative list, which allowed both the federal and state governments to legislate on the establishment of universities. Though higher education was on the concurrent legislative list during the First Republic, 1960-1966, the military governments returned it to the exclusive list due largely to their centralization policy between 1966 and 1978. However, the 1979 Constitution brought higher education back to the concurrent legislative list and this provision granted both the federal and state assemblies the power to make laws “with respect to the establishment of an institution for purposes of university, professional or technological education.”¹

Furthermore, the constitution established the principle of federal character based on a quota system in the federal civil service appointments. The intention was to prevent domination by one or more states, ethnic groups, or sections at the federal center. Chapter 2 Section 3 of the 1979 constitution adopted affirmative action in employment as a principle of state policy. It declared that the composition of the government of the federation and its agencies and operations would be carried out in a manner as to “reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity.”² The overall strategy was to use the system “to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.”³ The

² Ibid., 7
³ Ibid.
principle required that the composition of the cabinet, boards, and other executive bodies, as well as of appointments to top government positions, should reflect the federal character or diversity of the country at the particular level of government. This principle also applied in the distribution of national resources, such as the locations of schools and industries. Most significantly, the constitution enshrined the doctrine of free education as state policy by undertaking to provide, among others, free university education ‘as and when practicable.’ The 1979 constitution said little about education, and that little was so flexible that it left education subject to interpretation, especially by politicians in the 1979 elections.

The implications of the constitutional changes were that both the federal and state governments could establish universities, and the president and governors possessed executive powers to execute social programs, including education. In addition, in keeping with Nigeria’s federal character, the distribution of federal government political appointments, including the location of social amenities, had to reckon with the country’s pluralistic composition. Based on these constitutional changes and emboldened by the oil revenue of 1979, the politicians made free education a point in their campaigns and party manifesto during the 1979 elections. Out of the fifty-three political associations that emerged when the federal military government lifted the ban on political activities, only five parties that were registered prioritized education. They include the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), representing chiefly the North; the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), strong among the Ibos; the United Party of Nigeria (UPN), Yoruba-led Socialist-oriented party; the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), a party that espoused welfare capitalism; and the People's Redemption Party (PRP), a party that advocated radical social change. ⁴

⁴ Contrary to the expectations of the drafters of the constitution and the military rulers, most of these parties resembled the ethno-regional ones before 1966 even though officially parties were required to go beyond ethno-
Even though the political parties were divided along regional and ethnic lines, the promise and commitment to free education was common among them. The UPN, led by Awolowo, proposed free education at all levels if elected to power. Furthermore, the party promised to cancel all loans granted to students; abolish all lodging fees for student hostels, and increase the national subsidy for student feeding. Similarly, the NPN, under Makaman Bida, promised to eradicate illiteracy throughout Nigeria and promote the learning of science, culture and qualitative education. Waziri Ibrahim’s GNPP promised to work towards free and high quality education at all levels. The NPP under Nnamdi Azikiwe made similar declarations on education. Even though the political parties drew up programs for all sectors of the economy in order to attract votes, education featured prominently. However, none of the parties articulated other sustainable strategies for financing their ambitious and expensive educational promises because they believed in the endless flow of oil revenue.

The federal military government conducted elections between July and August 1979. Alhaji Shehu Shagari won the presidential election; nineteen state governors also emerged after state elections. Ultimately, on 1 October 1979, Shagari and the nineteen state governors assumed the positions of first executive president of Nigeria and executive governors respectively, marking a new beginning for Nigeria after thirteen years of military dictatorship. Given his Party’s emphasis on free and high quality education as well as the country’s mood, Shagari made...
a commitment to expand educational facilities. In his first nation-wide broadcast Shagari declared the commitment of his administration to make education a priority along with the principle of free education at all levels as provided in the 1979 constitution. Nigeria, Shagari noted, needed “…more schools, more playing-fields and numerous other supplies and equipment, all of which are involved with the increase in enrolment.” He noted however, that the main problem was “how to make education accessible to all, given the... inadequacy of teachers and educational facilities.” Of course, much money was required to conduct Shagari’s educational agenda. Oil revenue had not been stable since 1975. Nevertheless, by 1979, the gulf war between Iran and Iraq increased Nigeria’s revenue and gave Shagari’s administration the confidence to implement its ambitious campaign promises, including educational expansion and free education at all levels.

In 1980, President Shagari announced the decision of his government to establish a National Open University (NOU) and seven universities of technology in Nigeria. According to Shagari, the NOU would be without residential requirements for those who otherwise would have been deprived of such university opportunity. Since 1960, enrolment in Nigerian universities had been hampered by a combination of factors, including limited hostel and classroom spaces, exclusion of mature students, homemakers and the handicapped. The NOU was intended to address some of these problems and cut costs to both students and government while increasing access. The concept of an Open University was, unmistakably, at the center of massification of university education. It was derived from the objectives of making higher

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7 Ibid., 12-13.
8 Text of the First Nation-Wide Broadcast by the President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, on Monday, 1 October 1979(Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1979), 11.
9 Address by President Shehu Shagari on Budget Proposals, 120-121.
education accessible to those denied the opportunity at earlier stages of their lives, which would in turn improve the quality and quantity of the labor force in Nigeria.

On 1 May 1980, Shagari set up a Presidential Planning Committee on Open University and appointed Professor G. J. Afolabi Ojo to head it.\textsuperscript{10} The task of the committee was to come up with clear-cut proposals and recommendations on the nature of the University in the “…context of Nigerian higher education, the administrative and academic structure of the University, the technical support services, staff establishments, relationships with other universities and related bodies within and outside the country, and also relationships with the mass media.”\textsuperscript{11} The objectives of the National Open University, as envisaged by the federal government, were to provide programs, which would be rationally flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Such university would

run at the degree and post-graduate levels as well as for diploma, certificate, enrichment and refresher courses to meet the needs of university students who will include working adults willing to combine work with learning, housewives, handicapped persons, and also young men and women who must have minimum qualifications for admissions as determined by the Senate of the University.\textsuperscript{12}

The teaching methodology adopted was designed to reach a much wider audience than the existing traditional universities because it would use a combination of methods such as correspondence materials, radio and television, sound and video tapes suitable for use in transistorized equipment, face-to-face teaching at local study centers, and written assignment.\textsuperscript{13}

However, given the unreliable and poor state of Nigeria’s communication infrastructures, the

\textsuperscript{10} Ojo later became the first Vice-Chancellor of the NOU institution when it was established.
\textsuperscript{11} G. J. A. Ojo, Laying the foundations of the Open University of Nigeria: text of a lecture delivered during an International Conference on West African University Outreach at the University of Ibadan, 3-7 October 1982, and reproduced in Ojo, G J A (1982) Planning for Distance Education at Tertiary Level in Nigeria (Lagos: Government Printer, 1982), 13
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
provision of university education through this medium, particularly when the services were outside the control of the university, was bound to present unavoidable difficulties. Ojo acknowledged this reality when he stated that “…there are undeniable deficiencies in radio and television transmission in Nigeria.”\textsuperscript{14} However, he hoped that in view of the wide range of teaching techniques to be used by the Open University, plans would be made to ensure that its dependence on some technical support services was “…reasonable, feasible and reliable. Such essential technical support services include printing, radio, television, post and telegraphs, and computer facilities.\textsuperscript{15}

Similarly, the unavailability of modern communication equipments in many rural areas threatened to reduce the coverage of NOU. The vast majority of Nigerians, especially in rural areas, did not own and operate radio and television sets. The Planning Committee stressed that finding a way to reach Nigerians so handicapped was necessary for the success of NOU. The Committee therefore recommended that “…such media resources should be provided at local study centers where they can be operated with the assistance of technicians and where generators can be used to supply power if and when the supply from the National Electric Power Authority is unavailable.”\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, the absence of communication infrastructures and power supply in the rural areas and their unreliability in the urban areas presented serious challenges to the Open University project. One way of overcoming these challenges, which would have been within the powers of NOU, was through the postal system. To deal with the slow or non-delivery of letters and parcels to students of the NOU, the Planning Committee suggested that the NOU should operate an independent courier system to be operated by the University itself, which would relay the materials to students. However, this strategy, no doubt, would have inevitably

\textsuperscript{14} Ojo, G. J. A., \textit{The National Open University: A Source Book} (Lagos, Publisher not stated, 1984), 37.
\textsuperscript{15} Ojo, Laying the foundations of the Open University of Nigeria, 15.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 17.
increased the cost of the study at the NOU and would have made it practically costly and inaccessible to many more people. Given these uncertainties, it was not surprising the Senate turned down *The Open University Bill* at the second reading on 16 September 1981 even when the House of Representatives had passed it on 16 July 1981.

Shagari’s second announcement was the promise to establish seven universities of science and technology to train a workforce to champion technological development. The universities, he stated, would be located in states with no universities. The thirteen Nigerian universities operated in twelve states out of the nineteen states, leaving seven states out. So, the federal government proposed to situate the new universities in the seven states without university facilities: Bauchi, Gongola, Niger, Imo, Ogun, Benue, and Ondo. The idea of locating these universities of technology in these states was not only to foster national unity through fair geographical spread of university amenities, but more importantly to help champion the drive to scientific and technological advancement of Nigeria’s economy. The government’s determination to privilege science and technology was based on its need to train relevant personnel to execute the technologically oriented programs it embarked upon such as the modernization of agricultural development (Green Revolution), steel development, petrochemical technology, urban and rural electrification and the development of a new federal capital in Abuja. The sectoral workforce requirements for the execution of the programs in addition to what was available as at 1980 were as follows: engineers, construction and allied trades, 36,820; agriculturalists, scientists, engineers and veterinary surgeons, 12,790; medical and paramedical personnel, 82,366; accountants, 58,185; and legal practitioners, 5,185. To meet the

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technological human resource needs of the country, the government strongly believed that more specialized universities were needed. The military administrations of Gowon, Mohammed, and Obasanjo had made a series of pronouncements on their commitment to the development of science and technology, but these were not accompanied by actions. The new civilian administration recognized the failure of the military in this regard, and as the Vice President, Alex Ekwueme, stressed:

The Federal Government’s decision to establish seven universities of technology, while placing prime focus on the development of technologies for the country, will also ensure proper distribution of university institutions and location of a federally operated university in each geo-political state of the country. 19

Following the advice of the acting Executive Secretary of NUC, Dr. Abel Guobadia, the federal government decided to phase in the establishment of seven universities within a four-year period. The first phase was between 1980/81 when the universities of technology would be established in Bauchi, Benue, and Imo states. While universities would be established in Gongola and Ondo states during the second phase, 1981/82, the remaining universities would finally be established in Niger and Ogun states during the third phase, 1982/83. 20 To facilitate the immediate take off of these universities, the federal government not only appointed Vice-chancellors for the first-phase universities but also requested the NUC to organize a national conference. 21 The participations were expected to brainstorm about how to make government’s vision of training Nigerians in science and technology an immediate reality. The four-day seminar was held at the conference center of the University of Lagos from 8 to 11 December 1980. In attendance at the meeting were the Vice-Chancellors of the new universities, members

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20 Bulletin of the National Universities Commission.
21 The newly appointed Vice-chancellors were Professors A.O. Adekola for FUT, Bauchi; G. Igboechi, FUT, Makurdi; and U.D. Gomwalk, FUT, Owerri.
of the Nigerian Societies of Engineers, Town Planners, Architects, Geologists and other related professional bodies; professional and academic staff from existing universities; representatives of foreign institutions who had programs of Technical Universities or who had recently been involved in the development of technical universities in other countries; representatives of the Federal Ministry of Works, Communications, Transport, Agriculture, Science and Technology, Nigerian Petroleum Corporation; private industrial sector; and the professional staff of the National Universities Commission. The participants were, of course, well qualified to advise the government of a proper course of action.

In his opening address at the seminar, the Vice-President noted that the proposed universities were not just “an expansion of university opportunity: they were different from the traditional universities which we [Nigeria] inherited from our colonial past.” Echoing the long-standing government commitment to decolonize higher education system by moving away from dependency to real independence, he asked: “[h]ow much can … [Nigeria] afford to depend on the importation of technological goods and expatriate personnel for our building and construction, transportation and communication and other services?” The vice president implied that the new universities of technology would answer that question and besides provide “leadership to industrial and technological development in the country.”

At the end of deliberations, the report of the seminar emphasized the need for the proposed universities to offer academic and professional programs leading to the award of diplomas, first degrees, postgraduate and higher degrees in planning, adaptive, technical,

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22 These foreign institutions were the Polytechnic of Central London; Technical University of Nova Scotia, Canada; Howard University, USA, and the University of Houston, Texas, USA.
23 These participants represented the interest of Agriculture, Engineering and related technologies, Environmental Sciences, Earth and Mineral Sciences, Pure and Applied Sciences.
24 seminar on the Establishment of New University of Technology, vi.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
maintenance, developmental and productive skills in the engineering, scientific, agricultural, medical and allied professional disciplines. In addition, the report suggested the introduction of the following major academic programs: Management Sciences, Science Education, Environmental Science and Fine Arts, Earth, Mineral and Natural Sciences, Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, Engineering and Engineering Technology, Health Sciences and Technology, Pure and Applied Sciences, including Biotechnology. The report suggested the maintenance of admission through JAMB and retention of entry qualifications as obtainable in the existing universities. However, given the specialized and demanding nature of courses in those universities and the importance government attached to quality, the report stipulated that students with Ordinary Level Certificate should spend five years as opposed to four, and those with Advanced Level Certificates should spend four.

The seminar, nevertheless, failed to address more critical issue of how to fund and improve teaching of science subjects at the secondary school level in order to ensure a steady supply of students for universities of science and technology. This problem had been largely responsible for low enrolment in science subjects since the 1960s. The seminar report merely noted that “[i]n the belief that there are large numbers of potential students who can benefit from the University of Technology if adequate facilities are made available, each university should aim at initial intake of about 250 students and thereafter increase as facilities permit.” The huge cost of establishing seven new universities of technology aimed at admitting only 250 students when the existing faculties of applied science and technology remained ill developed to accommodate demand, seemed illogical. However, since the government sought to establish a specialized system, the number of students was not bad for a start.

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27 Ibid., 1.
28 Ibid., 6.
Given the evidence of the underfunding of the existing universities and the uncertainties of oil revenue, quality of personnel training expected at the proposed universities was predictably unreliable. More troubling was the possibility that if the government would fail to provide sufficient funds to train students in high capital-intensive courses in applied sciences, Nigeria would end up producing half-baked scientists. Professor G.O. Olusanya, the Director of Studies, National Institute of Strategic Studies, Kuru, articulated the concern of Nigerians in the Ilorin Lectures. While Olusanya praised the government for emphasizing science and technology, he strongly advised the government to shun establishing universities of technology for political popularity, but to be sure in its ability to provide sustainable funds to ensure that the university graduates received practical not theoretical education. According to him,

…what we need today are men who can match theory competently with practice and a great deal of money would to be expended to achieve this. It must be remembered that the constant and genuine complaints about the products of our Engineering and other professional faculties and schools is that most of their product are mere textbook engineers and professionals. Unless these problems are clearly articulated and properly resolved, all we shall be doing is engaging in wishful thinking.\(^{29}\)

The federal government, nevertheless, reemphasized its commitment to provide financial support not only for new universities, but also for the existing ones. In his Budget Speech delivered at the joint session of the National Assembly on 24 November 1980, the president expressed the hope that the improved revenue from oil sale would help his government to fund education adequately. According to him, “The prospects for the economy in 1981 are good. The 1980 success will, I believe, constitute a launching pad for further achievement.”\(^{30}\) He, therefore,

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earmarked the sum of ₦300 million to fund existing universities as well as to establish three new federal universities of technologies in Imo, Benue, and Bauchi states. This amount represented about 54 percent of capital allocations to the education sub-sector. The spirit behind this huge allocation, emphasized in the revised National Policy on Education, revealed government’s preference to encourage the study of science courses. This explained why it devoted a greater proportion of education expenditure to Science and Technology, and required universities, including other levels of education to pay greater attention to the development of science.  

To achieve its objectives of human resource development, the federal government launched the Fourth National Development Plan (Fourth NDP) in 1981. The Fourth NDP covered the period between 1981 and 1985, and envisaged a program of ₦82 billion, the largest since planning began in 1960. It also projected student enrolment of over 103,000 in the federal universities by 1984/85 session, the establishment of seven new universities of technology and one conventional university at Abuja. In addition, the plan envisaged a capital expenditure of ₦2.2 billion on education, representing about 5.5 percent of projected total federal government capital investment during the period. The planned expenditure for universities was ₦1.25 billion, representing 56.6 percent of the total investment in the sector. This allocation was disproportionate, but as the Fourth NDP observed,

…development in the universities more than in any other level of education was seriously constrained by Government budgetary stringencies during the later years of the Third Plan period. In the last few years, very little or no capital projects were implemented in the older universities. This situation did not augur well for the growth of the universities especially in areas concerned with

academic programmes and research. Moreover, the level of demand for university places has increased beyond proportions.\textsuperscript{33}

The large financial allocation to the university education sector under the Fourth NDP sought to consolidate and expand the existing university facilities for its expected service to the nation.\textsuperscript{34} However, the plan had hardly taken off before the parameters on which the federal government based its revenue expectations changed dramatically following the collapse of international oil market.\textsuperscript{35} Although the Fourth NDP operated amidst a grave threat to the national economy, the federal government still maintained its commitment to university education. Eager to secure a second term in the 1983 elections, the government was determined keep its campaign promises of free education at all cost. In addition, it funded the establishment of three new universities of technology in Bauchi, Benue, and Imo states in October 1981 largely through external borrowing.

Although the Shagari government pursued the doctrine of free education, the enrolment of students, especially those from educationally disadvantaged regions, did not improve substantially. Regional education imbalance in student enrolment continued. Statistics of admission in 1980 revealed that out of 17,729 students offered admission, only 4,068 students were of northern origin. To achieve the objective of ensuring geographical balance among the various geopolitical components in the interest of national unity, the federal ministry of education issued guidelines on the implementation of a quota system for university admission to

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} For more information, see Federal Republic of Nigeria, First national Rolling Plan 1990-92, Volume 1 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Budget and Planning, 1990), 3.
JAMB in September 1981. The quota system, like affirmative action in the United States of America, was designed to democratize access to university education by promoting equal participation of underrepresented groups in Nigeria in keeping with the federal character principle enunciated by the 1979 constitution.

The new guidelines did not change the basic qualifying requirements for university admissions, which included minimum passes in some prescribed Ordinary Level GCE subjects. In addition, it stipulated four criteria for securing admissions based on the University Matriculation Examinations (UME). First, it allocated forty percent of yearly admissions to Academic Merit. Universities determined this criterion usually by ranking candidates based on their scores in the examination. Forty percent of the entire applicants in a year who scored highest were selected for various courses. The second criteria, Educationally Disadvantaged States, reserved twenty percent of yearly admission for candidates from states such as Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Gongola, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto. So, twenty percent of students from those states who scored a minimal average pass mark prescribed by the JAMB were selected.

The third criteria, called Catchment Area, allocated thirty percent of admission to students from the immediate vicinity of an educational facility, which in most cases were the geographical or socio-cultural areas contiguous to the institution. As with the second criteria, thirty percent of students from a university’s catchment areas with minimum pass marks were offered admission. This criterion was designed to help such students from surrounding states to

37 For more information about the guidelines, see M.S. Abdulrahman, “Admission Policy and Procedures.”
38 The criteria for selecting these states, especially the inclusion of three southern states (Rivers, Cross River, Lagos), was not mentioned in the guidelines, but it was perhaps related to low enrolments of these states at the secondary school level and the concomitant low demand for university education.
enjoy preferential treatment in admission.\textsuperscript{39} The Fourth criterion was Discretion, which reserved 10 percent of admission to be based on the circumstances of the applicant. Benefiting students must meet with JAMB’s minimum pass mark, but individual universities determined students under this category using different yardsticks without necessarily ranking the candidates.

As an illustration, if the JAMB pass mark in a given year is 200 points, candidates who scored 200 or more were likely to secure admission. If 300 candidates whose scores ranged from 200 to 330 points sought for 100 available places in history, only forty students with the highest points would be admitted under academic merit. Although students who scored below 280 passed UME, they would not be admitted under merit. However, such candidates could be admitted if they meet any other quota criteria. Since twenty percent was allocated to candidates from educationally disadvantaged states, history would fill the admission quota by ranking relevant candidates by their scores and select twenty students. Similarly, thirty students from the catchment area of the university would be selected after ranking them by their scores. Finally, the university administrators select the remaining ten students without necessarily following a ranking format, bringing the total number of students to 100—though the selected students must score above 200 points.

The quota system, which had been resisted for so many years, was ultimately incorporated into the admission requirements of Nigeria. The approach to it was quite democratic although quite diplomatic as well. Wary that the south would reject it, other criteria such as Academic Merit, Educationally Disadvantaged States, Catchment Area, and Discretion were included to blunt the impact of quota system. Northerners, who had detested JAMB since its

\textsuperscript{39} For instance, the catchment states for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, were the neighboring states like Imo, Cross River, Rivers, Bendel, Benue, and Anambra. The catchment states for the University of Ibadan and Lagos were all the Nigerian states. The catchment states for the University of Sokoto were Sokoto, Niger and Kano. Similar pattern existed for the remaining universities.
establishment in 1978 because it offered admissions to students solely on academic merit, changed their attitude because the provision of the Educationally Disadvantaged States criteria was not only sensitive to their peculiar interest, but also did not necessarily discriminate against the South or brilliant students. In reality, a bright student had a better chance--if not admitted on Academic Merit, such students could still gain admission through Catchment Area, and Discretion admission criteria since selection would be based on ranking. In comparison, a dull student had fewer chances.

However, it was common for a bright student from the south who applied to a university in North to be denied admission. For instance, following the example of admission above, if a student from the South scored 279 points, he would not secure admission under merit because the cut off point was 280. In addition, since he was from one of the educationally disadvantaged states as well as catchment areas, he would still be denied admission. Unless the student could influence the university authority to grant a discretionary admission, which was usually difficult, he may end up losing admission that year. At the same time, a less brilliant candidate with lower points (for example, 201) from one of the educationally disadvantaged states could secure admission. A notable example was T. Fagbulu, a candidate from Edo state who, after scoring a high point, was denied admission because he came from an educationally advantaged state. Fagbulu sued the JAMB for discriminating against him and thus impinging on his fundamental human right. As the *National Concord Newspapers* wrote: “An ambitious 16-year old fearing for his future, has taken on the moulders of the nation’s educational policy, over the quota system of

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40 Discretion admission criteria, many universities administrators extended favor to their friends in top government position as well as their relations. Oftentimes, offer of admissions under this criteria was commercialized. For instance, Imo State University and Ogun State University once put a price tag on any one wishing to be considered under this criteria to generate revenue for their universities.
admission into universities.” The counsel for the complainant begged the court “to declare as unconstitutional, null and void, the policy of admission as practiced by JAMB. The appellant’s counsel told the court that JAMB had declared some states educationally disadvantaged. As a result, he argued that universities were forced to employ preferential cut off points in admitting students from such states as against higher and more restrictive standards for others.” Similar cases existed but the federal government did not yield its ground.

Like the establishment of JAMB, the introduction of the quota system of admission under President Shagari (of Northern extraction) was controversial. Many from the South perceived it as a strategy to help the educationally disadvantaged states, mostly in the North while at the same time halting the educational advancement of the South. According to J.M. Kosemani, JAMB policy was an “aggravated parody and a fraud on the nation, designed to kill initiative in some areas and encourage mediocrity in other areas.” Similarly, T. Megaforce had suspected that JAMB admission policies were deliberate attempts to stem the tide of educational advancement in the South so that the North could catch up. Michael Angulu, the first Registrar of JAMB, also stated that the Quota system was anchored on cheating, the cheating of states in the south. In an interview with Newswatch Magazine, he pointed out that he came from one of the most educationally backward states in Nigeria [Benue], but he, together with three other candidates from the same region, gained admission into Ibadan in 1957. He stressed that the number of candidates of northern origin who demanded higher education before and after independence had remained comparatively low, which partly inspired the introduction of quota

\[\text{References:}\]
\[\text{41 National Concord, “Youth takes JAMB to Court,” 20 March 1984, Back Page.}\]
\[\text{42 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{44 Megaforce, “Federal government, teachers, students,” Nigerian Tribune, 6 September 1999.}\]
system in 1981. Nevertheless, he stressed that it would have been much better if the federal government went out of its way and strengthened education in the North over a period of time. For

…that would be cheating the rest of the country but in the end; I think it is a fairer cheating than the quota system. I think it will be better for the federal government to spend extra money over and above the allocation to states to strengthen education in those places so that after a period, they will be in a position to compete with everybody else. Now, this is likely to cause less resentment than what is now generally called the quota system.

The division of Nigeria between the educationally advantaged and disadvantaged states constituted the main source of controversy in the newly introduced quota system. In dividing Nigeria along those lines, the federal government seemed to ignore the factors that accounted for the source of difference in educationally advantageous or disadvantaged status. One of the main sources rested with the political will of state governors in the South to commit large resources to education. Compared to their northern counterparts, the southern governors allocated huge amount to education. For instance, Bendel State, tagged an educationally advantaged state, spent N82.00 per capita in relation to their population on education in 1982. The amount increased to N86.00 and N95.00 respectively in 1983 and 1984. Similarly, during the same period, Imo State spent N59.00, N51.00, and N65.00. The story was similar in Lagos State. The state spent N126.00, N128.00 and N152.00. In contrast, Benue state, described as educationally disadvantaged, spent only N44.00, N32.00 and N47.00 per capita of its population over the same period. Borno and Sokoto states spent far less. For Borno, the figures were N33.00, N39.00 and N37.00; Sokoto, N28.00, N26.00 and N24.00. Given this pattern of expenditure, the

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46 Ibid.
sacrifices of Southern states resulted in greater enrolments in primary and secondary schools as well as increased demand for university education, which placed them at an advantaged position.

Although the federal government introduced the quota system as part of its efforts to use university education as laboratories for national unity, the Southern states frowned at it. They believed that students of northern origin were given unfair advantage by exclusively granting them automatic admission since they came from educational disadvantaged states--a privileged their counterparts from the South did not enjoy. Thus, the application of education policy that was designed to unite Nigerians had a negative impact on the notion of unity and patriotism. According to T.M. Yesefu, a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, a Nigerian who was deprived of an educational opportunity after meeting the qualifications for entrance because he came from the so-called educationally advantaged state, “has had the tenets and principles of a united Nigeria, demonstrably transformed into a mockery, if not totally and irrevocably destroyed within him.” As he further noted, “[n]o amount of singing the national Anthem, nor voluble recitation of the Pledge, would ever again make him a complete Nigerian. Henceforth, he is native of his state first, and being a Nigeria becomes secondary.”

To the beneficiary of quota system, consequences, though unintended, were the same. According to Yesefu, “…the practice would have the same resultant effect on the student who, because he came from the disadvantaged state benefited from the admission exercise.” Having benefited based on his state of origin, “[h]is first loyalty would be to the state which apparently gave him the rare

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49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
opportunity, not the Federal Government."^51 Given this scenario, the goal of national unity, which was the intended objective of the policy, would be compromised.

While the controversy generated by the introduction of the quota system raged on throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, enrolment of students witnessed great improvement, especially from the educationally disadvantaged states as shown by Ayotunde Yoloye.\(^52\) However, the introduction of the quota system alienated many states and students in the South.\(^53\) Reactions were immediate. Affected states moved swiftly to set the process in motion toward establishing their own universities. Indeed, one of the consequences of federalization of universities education since 1975 and of placing higher education on the concurrent legislative list in 1979 was the conscious attempt made by the nineteen states in Nigeria to establish their own universities. One of the major projects prominent on the minds of every state governor in 1979 was to establish a university. This action always enhanced the reputation of a governor as an effective leader, even though almost all of them eventually sited state universities in their own villages as the case with Mkakwe of Imo State and Ambrose Ali of Bendel state. Under the 1979 constitutional arrangement, both the state and federal government were granted the power to legislate on the establishment of institutions of higher learning. With prompt exercise of this power, Anambra and Bendel state had established state universities in 1980: Anambra State University of Science and Technology and Bendel State University, Ekpoma.

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^51 Ibid.

^52 See Ayotunde Yoloye, “Federal Character and Institutions of Higher Learning,” in Peter Ekeh and Eghosa Osaghae, eds., Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 68. However, he noted six northern states such as Bauchi, Borno, Gongola, Kano, Niger, and Sokoto had no representation in certain universities in between 1981 and 1983.

^53 For bright students from the South to increase their chances of securing admissions, they were better off applying to neighboring universities were they were at least sure securing admission either on merit or catchment area criteria.
Perhaps, determined to overcome the limited opportunities for state indigenes evident in the quota system and eager to fulfill campaign promises of free education for all, other states, especially in the south, pressed ahead to establish their states universities, often with limited resources. In Imo State, which had recorded the highest number of university applicants, the gap between demand and supply was wide. In response to his electoral promise, the Imo State Governor, Sam Mbakwe, made a strong case for the establishment of a university in Imo state to provide opportunities for qualified indigenes, hitherto denied opportunities in the federal universities. According to him, out of 113,162 candidates that sat for the JAMB examination in 1978/79 session, “Imo State had 19,702 candidates but only 2,126 or about 10% of them was offered admission. Therefore, we need our own University.”

In addition, during the 1979/80 session, the number of applicants from Imo State increased to 20,485, but yet again, only 2,334 candidates successfully secured admission. Before Mbakwe, other prominent Imo indigenes had made similar cases. For instance, earlier in 1978, Dr Jaja Wachukwu, former Federal Foreign Affairs Minister, speaking in a press conference, noted that the federal government’s decision to transfer higher education from the Concurrent List to the Exclusive List stifled Imo state. He stated that the Imo State had the greatest number of post-primary school products yearning for university education yearly more than other states. As he stressed, “…no state has a better case for a new university than Imo State because it produces more students ripe for university education than any of the newly created states.”

Criticism from states without universities continued to grow since the early years of the new civilian administration. The senate of the federal government in Lagos debated the rising

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55 See Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, Lagos, as reproduced in the Report of the 5th Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, 68.
demand for state universities, including the idea of transferring the control of all the universities
to the state governments. Professor Akintoye, a senator, proposed that the Federal Government
should grant money to the seven states—Ondo, Niger, Gongola, Ogun, Imo, Bauchi and Benue—
without a university.57 “A university was needed,” Abubakar Barde, governor of Gongola State,
told the local College of Preliminary Studies in Yola “…due to the hardship encountered in
seeking admission to the country’s [federal] universities.”58 Such sentiments were common in
Nigeria during the early 1980s.

In view of the limitation imposed on the students from the educationally advantaged
states, the desire to fulfill electoral promises to remain relevant politically, and to exercise their
constitutional power, which permitted states to establish their universities, the following state
universities were established in 1981: Imo State University, Etiti (now Abia State university,
Uturu), and Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt. These
universities emerged in an atmosphere of severe economic constraints and, therefore, political
reasons played a larger role in their establishment. In their desire to score political advantages,
governors in these states were compelled to commit more of their increasingly scarce resources to
university education. Given the fact that revenue from oil began to decline in 1981, state
universities became a financial burden to their states.

Similarly, worried about the financial implications of free education and the increasing
demand for university education, the federal government set up two presidential commissions to
address the issue of funding. The first was Onabamiro Commission on Alternative Sources of
Funding in 1981.59 Essentially focusing on higher education, the Commission recommended the

chapter five, 102-118. Similar commission, Eke Commission, which focused on primary education and submitted its
sharing of funding of education among the three branches of the government: local, state and federal, with education taxes to be levied on all. It advocated, among others, the abandonment of the notion of free education and the introduction of fees at all levels. This recommendation was economically realistic, but given the country’s mood, it was politically unrealistic. Thus, the federal government ignored these recommendations. Nigerians were made to believe that education could be free, and as Jubril Aminu, noted, “It is doubtful if any civilian government would wish to entertain the commotion that would follow any attempt to reintroduce tuition fees or to increase charges in our educational institutions.” 60

The second commission was the Presidential Commission on Salary and Conditions of Service of University Staff otherwise called the Cookey Commission. The Commission submitted its report in 1981, which condemned the proliferation of universities in Nigeria, and advised the government to build a fewer center of excellence. According to Ladipo Adamolekun, a professor of Public Administration at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, the recommendation of the Cookey’s Commission “tilted the balance somewhat in favor of university education for an elite.” 61 Regardless of the recommendation, two more state universities emerged in 1982 -- Ondo State University, Ado Ekiti and Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye. However, considering the fact that Nigeria had eighteen Federal universities (with firm commitment for four more) and six state universities (with more states likely to establish their own later on), the movement, according to Adamolekun, “…appears to be inexorably in the direction of university education for the masses.” 62 Moreover, by 1983, Lagos and Cross River states established Lagos State
University and Cross River University. The federal government established four additional universities of technology, bringing the total number of public universities to twenty-eight.

Besides the expansion of federal universities and the emergence of state universities, the two other trends that characterized massification of university education during the Second Republic were the appearance of private universities and the establishment of an open university. The emergence of private universities was a unique phenomenon in the drive towards mass university education. Even though the 1979 constitution permitted the federal and state governments the right to establish universities, it was silent on similar right for private individuals. Encouraged by this loophole and in realization of the unmet demand for higher education by Nigerians, particularly by Imo indigenes, Dr. Basil Ukaegbu established the Imo Technical University in Owerri, Imo State, in 1983. Immediately, the Imo State Government challenged the legality of Ukaegbu’s university in the court, but the Supreme Court ultimately ruled in Ukaegbu’s favor stating that it was perfectly legal for individuals or private concerns to establish private universities. In addition, the Supreme Court stated that the National Assembly had the power to legislate on the standards of the programmes to be offered in such institutions. The Supreme Court based its decision on section 38 of the 1979 constitution, which entitled “right to freedom of expression and the press,” and held that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.” The section further noted thus: “Without prejudice to the generality of subsection 1 of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish, and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas, and opinions.” 63

The idea of private universities in the early 1980s seemed strange to Nigerians. Since the federal government had since the mid 1970s provided free university education and the state

63 1979 Constitution, Section 38.
governments likewise charged minimal fees, it was assumed that private universities would commercialize university education and consequently water down standards. However, Professor N.A. Nwagwu, Dean of Education at the University of Benin, supported the emergence of private universities. He recognized that governments’ ability to fund university education solely was not sustainable, and that the best universities in the world (for example, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Cornell, Yale, and Stanford) were founded and supported by private endowments. According to Nwagwu, the competition from private universities would first “reduce the complacency of Federal and State-owned universities which at times operate without much regard for efficiency and standards.” Second, it would show the possibility and viability of “alternative methods of organizing and financing higher education apart from dependence on government funds.” Third, it would ensure that “the stupefying centralized control and dominance of government officials and politicians...give way to dynamic initiative and innovation in private universities.”

Encouraged by the 1983 Supreme Court ruling, 26 private universities were established or proposed in Nigeria within 6 months of the court ruling. These universities shared two

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65 I. O. Oladapo, “The Emergence of State and Private Universities,” in *25 Years of Centralized University Education in Nigeria* edited by A.U. Kadiri (Lagos: National Universities Commission, 1988), 64-65. The list of private universities that emerged were as follows: National College of Advanced Studies, Aba, Imo State; Theological College(Sponsored by the Christian Association of Nigeria—in various locations); Afro-American University, Orogun, former Bendel State; Ekpoma University, Ikeh Ekpoma, Edo State (Not Edo State University at Ekpoma); Uzoma University, Ajowa Akoko; Pope John Paul University, Aba, Imo State; Azodogu International University, Abuja; A University at Akokwa Ideato, Imo State; University Courses College, Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Ajomi Middle Belt University, Ibadan, Oyo State; Afendomifok University, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State; World University, Owerri, Imo State; Institute of Open Cast Mining & Technology, Auchi, Edo State; Imo Technical University, Owerri, Imo State; Akoko Christian University, Akungba Aoko, Ondo State; Open University College, Kaduna, Kaduna State; Laity School of African Thoughts, Nenbe, Rivers State; Feyeson University, Ijobu ode, Osun State; Epe Graduate Teachers University, Epe, Lagos State; West African University, Nkwere, Imo State; trinity University, Owerri, Imo State; Zena University, Owerri, Imo State; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Onitsha; God’s University, Umuezezma, Ojota, Anambra State(with campuses all over the world); Technical University of Aba, Imo State(with campuses all over the world); and Islamic University of Nigeria, Alabata, Ogun State.
goals--mass education and profit making. The establishment of these universities within a very short time period was significant. It demonstrated the rising demand for university education, which the existing public universities had not met. Thus, private individuals came to fill the gap created by government’s inability to satisfy demand. The Imo state situation was remarkable because in that state alone, eight private universities emerged. This was not a surprise because the state had produced the greatest number of applicants who failed to secure admission in the existing federal universities. The state governor had used that as part of his reason to establish Imo State University in 1981. Again, it showed that the accommodating capacity of the newly established state universities was low. Similarly, more than 90 percent of these private universities were located in the south, designated educationally advantaged. This further strengthened the notion that the quota system, in great part, limited the opportunities of students of southern origin in securing admissions in the federal universities. Finally, it showed that the desperation of Nigerians for university education was phenomenal and overwhelming such that the private sector came to ‘assist.’ However, not all those seeking to establish universities were billionaires with disposable money for endowment. Most of the proprietors believed that fees would sustain their universities, and possibly, provide them with additional profit.

In view of the progress made for private universities, the National Open University was revisited in 1983. The Senate had vetoed the National Open University Bill in 1981, but Nigerians continued to mount pressure on the senators. For instance, the Daily Times editorial of 13 December 1982 strongly called on the Senate to pass the Open University Bill to help thousands of young Nigerians who desired opportunities for university education. It declared: “Senators as elected representatives of the people cannot afford to kill a bill which will be
beneficial to thousands of the electorate.” 66 Ultimately, in order to create more facilities for university education and move Nigeria towards universal university education, the Senate reconsidered and passed the bill on 20 April 1983. Thus, the Nigerian National Open University (NOU) acquired a legal status on 22 July 1983; it prepared to commence its operations in Abuja, the proposed federal capital territory. 67

By mid 1983, Nigeria witnessed intense educational activities, particularly at the university level, intended to provide university education to the masses. The federal government was committed to the massification of university education with special emphasis on science and technology courses as well as making university education accessible to all Nigerians through the National Open University. The state governments, especially those in the south, were committed to providing opportunities for their indigenes who were denied university places in the federal universities, owing to the regulatory and restrictive quota system of admission. Yet, the insatiable demand for university places led to the emergence of private universities to fill the gap by indiscriminately establishing universities without guidelines. However, despite these efforts, and although great improvement was made in doubling student enrolment to 116,822 in 1983, demand for university education continued to outstrip supply. 68 For instance, during the 1980/81 session, out of the 145,837 students that applied for admissions, only 20,429 students (14 percent) gained admission. In 1981/82, 180,685 students applied whereas 22,460 (12.4 percent) were offered admission; 1982/83, 191,583 applied while only 19,897 (10.07 percent)

67 NOU started broadcasting on radio on 6 February 1984 and on television on 2 April 1984 under a new government.
were successful. In 1983/84, 191,583 applied while only 19,897 (10.4 per cent) were admitted.  

Although the government intended the quota system to facilitate and equalize access to universities, the south still dominated educational opportunities between 1979 and 1983. In 1979/80 session, the total number of application from students from the former Northern Region was 15,449 and 23.1 percent were offered admission. During the same period, 97,989 students from the former south applied for admission and 75.7 percent gained admissions. The statistics remained same during the 1982/83 session when out of 26,747 northern students who applied for admission, 22.7 percent received admission offers while 177,618 students in the south applied, of which 76 percent gained admission.  

In the area of science and technology, the universities did not make significant progress. For instance, between 1975 and 1979, the combined average output of agriculturalist and technologists in all the Nigerian universities accounted for only 14 percent of the yearly total of graduates during the period. During this period, the percentage of students enrolled in the faculties of Agriculture, Engineering, Architecture, Medical and Natural Sciences were few compared to those enrolled in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, and Education. In 1980, 55 percent of students were enrolled in Nigerian universities to study in the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Law, and the trend continued up to 1983. As a result, up to 1983, Nigerian universities trained a yearly average of only 30 scientist and engineers. This number did not meet the government target of training relevant personnel to execute the technologically oriented programs it embarked upon such as the modernization of agricultural development (Green Revolution), steel development, petro-chemical technology, urban and rural electrification and

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69 The Guardian, 8 September 1984, 8.
the development of a new federal capital in Abuja. Even other African countries trained more scientists and engineers than Nigeria: Senegal trained 106 scientists and engineers per million inhabitants of the population; Seychelles 250 and Mauritius 254.\textsuperscript{72}

Although the government desired to train more scientist and engineers, the demand for science courses was low. One major factor that accounted for this was that science education at the primary and secondary school was not funded adequately. Therefore, they lacked quality teachers and facilities to prepare candidates for university education in the sciences. Unable to attract enough qualified students, many universities relied on remedial programs to train candidates to fill up the admission quota in the sciences. This practice, however, did not address the root of the problem because it was a misplaced and cosmetic approach to solve the problem. In fact, the money spent on remedial programs, if applied to the primary and secondary schools, would have transformed them in order to guarantee steady supply of candidates for science courses in universities. As Professor M.J.C. Echeruo, the first Vice-Chancellor of Imo state university remarked, “…if I was given a million naira today to admit one hundred remedial students into Imo State University, I would immediately donate the money to ten good secondary schools in this state and I can assure you that they will produce more than enough sound and qualified university applicants for this country at a fraction of what it would cost the university.”\textsuperscript{73} The logic of Acheron’s position as he noted was: “Good education is best established early in life. It costs less to do so anyway.”\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, displeased with the low enrolment and output of science oriented students in the University of Lagos, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Akin Adesola, stated in his 1983 convocation address that Nigeria

\textsuperscript{73} Address by Professor M.J.C. Echeruo, Vice-Chancellor, Imo State University, on the Third matriculation Ceremony on 11 February 1984, 4.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
“…cannot build [its] technological pyramid from the top without due regard to the nature, structure and strength of the base--the Primary and Secondary Education systems.”\textsuperscript{75} Because the government neglected the base, “there were fewer students with necessary scientific and technical orientation to fill available engineering quotas in our universities [constituting] one major limiting factor in [Nigeria’s] efforts to meet [its] manpower needs in the area of technology.”\textsuperscript{76}

Nevertheless, the economic recession of 1983 affected the renewed zeal for mass university education pursued by the federal and state governments since 1979. The overreliance of government on oil revenue and the instability of the international oil market took a toll on government social programs, including university education. The price of oil, which was below $2.5 a barrel from 1958 to 1970, rose to $3.20 from 1970 to 1973. In January 1974, it jumped to $12.40; declined afterwards, but rose to $29.97 in 1980. It was $40.00 in early 1981; $35.50 in late 1981 and in late 1982, it slumped to $30.00.\textsuperscript{77} Consequently, the federal government revenue declined considerably. The level of oil production averaged 1.75 million per day by 1981 while an average of 2.3 million barrels per day was used in the projections for the Fourth National Development Plan. The combined effect of falling prices and production levels was to drop export earnings from oil from ₦4.199.7 million in 1980 to ₦10.529.5 million in 1981. The 1982 figures fell further to an estimated level of ₦8.000 million, and in 1983, the estimated total federal government revenue was only ₦5,561 billion. When matched against an estimated total expenditure of ₦12.095 billion, made up of ₦3.435 billion recurrent expenditure, ₦1.44 billion

\textsuperscript{75} See Daily Times, 29 March 1984, 7.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} P.C. Asiodu, “Nigerian and Oil Technology,” in The Proceedings of the 1983 Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, held at the University of Maiduguri, 24-26 February 1983,49. See Inspectorate Division, NNPC.
consolidated revenue fund charges, and ₦7.22 billion for capital expenditure, it became clear that the picture was gloomy.\(^78\)

The resultant economic crisis of the 1980s worsened and dramatically affected the external sector. For example, between 1981 and 1983 the average monthly import bill was US$2.0 billion while exports averaged US$1.5 billion. Nigeria's foreign debt increased from ₦3.3 billion in 1978 to ₦14.7 billion in 1983. By 1983, the nineteen state governments had run up a combined debt of ₦13.3 billion. The ratio of debt service to exports ratio climbed from 9.0 percent in 1981 to 18.5 percent in 1982, 23.6 percent in 1983. Arrears on letters of credit accumulated, and in 1983, some US$2.1 billion of such arrears had to be refinanced over a 30-month period. For political reasons, government spending continued to accelerate, and the frictions among the political parties and between the federal government and the states only reinforced financial irresponsibility. The existing universities suffered from under funding arising from severe economic recession. National newspapers in Nigeria confirmed the financial strain of Nigerian universities when it reported increases in hostel fees and cancellation of bursary awards, among other things.\(^79\)

To address the funding problems in the universities, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors organized a seminar to discuss the apt and relevant subject of “Nigeria: The Universities, the Nation, and the Economic Recession.” In his keynote address, the Vice President, Alex Ekwueme, compared the recession of the 1980s with world economic slumps of the early 1930s. He argued that the recession, a product of sharp increases in oil prices, was not peculiar to Nigeria: it was a worldwide phenomenon. For instance, in the United States, unemployment rose

\(^78\) Alex Ekwueme, 200. See also First national Rolling Plan 1990-92, Volume 1, 3-4.
to more than 10 percent, the highest in more than forty years. In West Germany, the unemployment rate was 8.2 percent; France, 8.6 percent; Italy, 10.4 percent; Canada, 12.2 percent; United Kingdom, 14.3 percent, and Japan recorded a budget deficit of over $60 billion in 1982. Furthermore, Ekwueme argued that the Nigerian governments during the era of oil boom in the 1970s were unmindful of the trap set by the industrialized countries, which lured them into indiscriminate and heavy borrowing from governments and financial institutions of the industrialized world. Thus, Nigeria’s external debt rose to $15 billion in 1983. However, he forgot to mention that just as the military government in the 1970s undertook ambitious projects with the hope that the revenue from oil would flow endlessly, the civilian government in the early 1980s suffered from similar mentality; massive corruption by government officials worsened the situation.

The civilians apparently ignored the advice of the Ashby commission which emphasized that “The sine qua non of university work is quality and quality is expensive….if the staff are underpaid, or if there are too few members of staff, the work of the university quality will not be done.” The Ashby commission listed the prerequisite for research, which include excellent working condition, less teaching work for professors, books, especially journals, and equipment, and argued thus: “It is no exaggeration to say that it is a waste of time and money to set up any university which does not make provision for these.” For instance, the estimate for establishing a new university with 2,000 students in Nigeria in the 1960s required the financial capital of ₦

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80 Alex Ekwueme, “Universities, The nation and Economic Recession,” Opening Address at Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, held at the University of Maiduguri, 24-26 February 1983, 197.
81 Ibid. Other oil exporting countries equally suffered during the same period. For instance, Mexico, the fourth world oil exporter, was burdened with a debt of $83 billion; Argentina, $39 billion; Brazil, $89 billion; Chile, $17 billion.
83 Ibid.
10 million. However, in 1977, the cost for 10,000 students was estimated at ₦350 million with recurrent cost of about ₦35 million. The cost more than tripled in the 1980s.

The 1983 economic recession revealed the peculiar extravagance that characterized civilian administrations at both federal and state government levels. The civilian regime, in its Fourth National Development Plan, stated as its policy objectives ‘the building of new [universities],’ but it was apparent even to a layman that it would be cheaper and more cost effective in the long run to expand the facilities in the existing universities to cope with increased demand than to establish new ones. On the contrary, the civilian regime had by 1983 established seven new federal universities and eight state universities, and upgraded five Advanced Colleges of education to university degree awarding institutions, attached to one or other of the existing federal universities. Why would the Federal and State Governments establish fifteen new universities within a short period of four years when the existing ones were inadequately funded? The probable answer was politics, for education became vulnerable to mass politics and pressure. “Politics, as Dan Agabese noted, “remains a strong determinant in the development of Nigeria’s social institutions—health, education, transportation.”

Since the 1979 presidential system invested sufficient powers in the chief executive to discharge the high functions of exalted office, the state and federal governments responded to the yearnings of Nigerians for higher education by setting up universities and, indeed, “saw universities as amenities and so opted for mushrooming them.” The politicians failed to read the economic signs of the time. Instead of operating the political system with the economic

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84 See Adesina, 200.
85 They include the following: Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo (attached to Ife); Advanced Teachers College, Kano (attached to Zaria); Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri (attached to Nsukka); College of Education Port-Harcourt (attached to Ibadan) and Advanced Teachers College, Zaria (Zaria).
discretion of statesmanship, “they thrived in personal aggrandizement...”88 Instead of expanding facilities in the existing universities to accommodate more students, they expended resources to build new universities; each with its own jumbo bureaucracy without significant increase in school population. As Achike Okafo argued:

> There are no half measures in the running of universities. A university cannot be established and yet run like a college for it is not the name that makes it a university but the kind of facilities it has and the functions it performs with them….That implies that if we are inclined to proliferate the country with universities, we must be prepared to provide what it takes to make them proper universities. That is the inescapable truth. 89

There was no evidence of long-term plan for the future sustainability of government’s massification policies. In a paper presented at the National Conference on Education Since Independence, held at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in March 1983, N. A. Nwagwu, a professor at the University of Benin rightly noted: “What passes as policy-making in education in Nigeria is often a mere attempt to rationalize political decisions and actions hastily and expediently conceived and executed.”90 The NPN-controlled federal government embarked on politically expedient but uneconomic projects such as establishing a federal university in every state, commissioning iron and steel plants, and indiscriminately awarding contracts to build the new federal capital at Abuja. Faced with the fall in oil revenue, the federal and state governments

88 Adamu Baike and Osaren S.B. Omoregie, “University Education: Perspectives of an Educationist and Planners,” In Tekena N. Tamuno and J.A. Atanda, eds., Nigerian since Independence: The First 25 Years Vol.11, (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 285. Part of the reasons for the low funding of universities as well as the economic downturn was official corruption. Corruption was a dominant issue in the execution of social and economic policies of the civilian regime, laying the foundation for future economic difficulties. As Ray Ekpu noted, since “…the leadership was patently unpatriotic, mentally and morally bankrupt, the system was used and misused in building a concrete grave for the burial of Nigeria.” Politicians were more interested in the kickbacks they would receive from contracts awards than the actual execution of projects, including university projects. See Ray Ekpu, “The End Justifies the Means,” Newswatch, 6 October 1986, 25. For more information on corruption associated with contracts awards during the Second Republic, see Ogechi Anyanwu, “Indigenous Contractors and Nigeria’s Economic Development (1970-1992): A Case Study of Chief T.I. Ozoemenam’s Construction Company,” (BA Thesis: Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria, 1994).


90 See Newswatch, 6 October 1986, 49.
secured foreign loans to prosecute their ambitious social spending and anticipated an oil-price recovery that never came.

The economic decline since the late 1981 owing to the collapse of crude oil prices in the world market and the external borrowing to prosecute the governments’ ambitious social programs demonstrated that politicians of the Second Republic had failed to learn useful lessons from the educational policies and programmes of their military predecessors after the end of the Nigerian civil war. They could hardly claim that “Nigeria’s economic recession, obvious to vigilant observers since 1976, would not materially affect their calculations and over-generous promises in the manifestoes for the 1979 elections.” By first abolishing fees and then pegging boarding and lodging charges in most of the educational institutions, governments lost enormous sources of revenue for education. More importantly, they lost the participatory spirit of Nigerians in education. In 1978, the attempt to increase boarding charges from 15 kobo to 50 kobo per meal cost Nigerians countless lives from student riots. Similarly, in 1981, attempts to remove rice from the menu of one University claimed the lives of two students. According to Jubril Aminu, it was doubtful if any civil government in this country would have wished to entertain the commotion that could follow any attempt to reintroduce tuition fees or to increase charges in our educational institutions.

However, the civilian government failed to realize that there were limits to expansion, and that it was impossible to expand indefinitely and more importantly, to do so at an accelerated pace even for limited periods without a sustainable means of funding. Nigerian governments failed to realize the wide gap between policy and implementation, between wishes and realities.

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The free education policy under the military in the 1970s led to unrealistic expectations from Nigerians who hoped to obtain education without making sacrifices. This mindset was heightened under the civilian government of Shagari when the goal of massification of university education accelerated without adequate long term strategic planning. Nigerians, for political reasons, were “…encouraged to believe that Government can do anything and everything for them…Therefore, everyone wants education and, of course, see no reason why they have to pay for it.” With the large number of secondary school graduates; salary structure and qualifications for work, which placed emphasis on university education as the doorway to the upper social and economic strata; the increased provision of public and private grants; government doctrine of free education and the need for trained workforce, the demand for university education remained phenomenal during the Second Republic. Unfortunately, in 1983 Nigeria was “…caught in the web of recession just when [it was]….still at the threshold of mass university education.”

Given the reality of Nigeria’s ailing economy in 1983, the question was “can [Nigeria] meet the financial obligations for those demands by free mass university education?” Shagari, inaugurated on 1 October 1983 for a second term in office, did not think so. As President Shagari cautioned in his 1983 State of the Nation Address, “…our economy can simply not survive if we insist on living the styles we had been living in 1981 and part of 1982. …It is obvious that the public sector cannot go on with a spending spree which is beyond the absorptive capacity of the economy.…” Similarly, in his budget speech delivered on 29 December 1983, the president

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93 Ibid., 29.
95 Ibid.
declared that given the economic recession, a structural adjustment of the economy was inevitable. Accordingly, he enumerated a number of measures which included “…reduction of public expenditures; diversification of revenues sources; privatization of government parastatals and companies; generation of more revenue through imposition of new or higher fees for public services; securing a World bank structural adjustment loan as well as an IMF balance of payment loan; and payment re-scheduled short-term debts.” The implementation of these policy choices carried the implication of suspending massification, but before the newly elected administration settled down to implement them, General Mohammedu Buhari led a successful coup that toppled the Shagari regime on 31 December 1983.

What makes the history of massification of university education between 1979 and 1983 significant is the manner in which the federal, state, and private individuals seized the opportunity provided by the Constitution to usher in an unprecedented expansion of the university system. The federal government was committed to accelerated decolonization of the British elitist system of higher education when it provided free university education to all Nigerians and established the National Open University. It also engaged university education in the service of rapid economic development when it established seven universities of technology. In addition, when it introduced the quota system of admission in 1981 and located the new universities to reflect the country’s federal character, the federal government expressively identified itself with the notion that equal opportunities for university access was vital in promoting greater national unity and closing the educational gap between the South and North. However, since state governments, particularly those in the south, felt alienated by the quota system, they established eight universities to cater for the interest of their indigenes. Yet, the demand for university places continued to outrun its supply by the federal and state governments.

97 New Nigerian, 30 December 1984, 3.
Conscious of the existence of the unmet demand, and inspired by their support for mass university education and the likelihood of profit making, private individuals established twenty-six private universities. However, economic depression, occasioned by the decline in oil revenues and aggravated by official corruption and mismanagement of public funds, set in in 1983. In response, the federal government decided to suspend its massive spending on social services, including university education, but before it implemented this new policy, the regime was overthrown in a coup.
CHAPTER V


To speak of the expansion of the university system in any way now, is to ignore [Nigeria’s] economic indicators. The choice must be in favor of the consolidation of means and of excellence as against mindless growth and dissipation of resources.  

During the Second Republic, 1979-1983, the federal and state governments embarked upon an unprecedented establishment of universities. The federal government established seven universities of technology and one Open University; the state governments established eight universities and twenty-six private universities were also founded. Thus, by late 1983, fifty-three public and private universities existed in Nigeria. The increase from thirteen to twenty-eight public universities led to appreciable increase in student enrolments requiring more government financial allocations. Ironically, as the universities and student population increased, the nation’s economy continued to suffer a balance of payment deficit owing to the drastic decline in oil revenue. Funding of the existing institutions consequently constituted a heavy burden on the country’s weak economy. When the economic downturn became acute in late 1983, President Shehu Shagari’s administration approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an extended fund facility of about $2.5 billion to help the country overcome its balance of payments problems. Before Shagari could conclude negotiation with the IMF, a successful bloodless coup terminated the civilian regime on 31 December 1983.

The mismanagement of Nigerian economy by the civilian administration of Shagari was one of the excuses advanced by the coup plotters. The coup announcer, Brigadier Sani Abacha,

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1 Alhaji Yahaya Aliyu, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Keynote address at the opening session of the British Council/NUC Third Workshop for Senior University Administrators, held in the University of Jos, 1985. See Bulletin of National Universities Commission, December 1985, 5.
bemoaned the poor state of the economy as well as the educational system thus: “Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged; we have become a debtor and beggar nation….Our educational system is deteriorating at alarming rate. Unemployment figures including the undergraduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions.”\textsuperscript{2} Shortly after the announcement, General Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the new Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The urgent task before the new administration was to initiate steps designed to restructure the economy before funding the universities to meet public expectation. Instead of involving the external financial bodies such as IMF and World Bank, as Shagari attempted, Buhari sought self-directed economic belt-tightening measures. Dubbed austerity and stabilization measures, the step tightened the financial spending on social programs, exchange rate, trade, and administrative controls. Consequently, taxes were increased and spending drastically cut, resulting in a retrenchment of more than 10,000 public service workers. For the country, it promised to be a remarkable departure from the profligate spending that characterized the preceding governments, particularly since the 1970s.

The country’s economic downturn negatively affected the normal funding of universities. Since independence, the government had solely funded university education and it was not surprising that the economic recession would have direct implications for the proper functioning of universities. The implications of Nigeria government’s sole financing of university education were far reaching. It meant that the amount of education to be provided in a given year would be determined solely by the amount the government was prepared to allocate. Therefore, allocation of grants to universities would be pruned down when the government declared its inability to

meet the financial requirements of the system. For instance, due to financial crisis, the senate of the University of Ibadan resolved to postpone indefinitely the resumption date for the 1983/84 session because of what it described as “…very serious financial situation facing the university and its consequent inability to effectively perform its duties.”\textsuperscript{3} This trend was common in many Nigerian universities in the early months of 1984. It was a direct consequence of the vigorous funding of university expansion since 1970s based largely on unreliable oil revenue. The decline of oil revenue and the resultant economic recession in the early 1980s, worsened by official corruption as well as the often-neglected mismanagement and misapplication of funds by university authorities, led to the drastic reduction in the funding of universities.\textsuperscript{4}

Having inherited an expanded university system, the Buhari and Babangida regimes faced a choice to either establish more universities in response to social demand, or to suspend further establishment, rationalize the system, and share the cost of university financing with the public. The federal military government chose the latter. Under the successive leaderships of Buhari (1983-1985) and Babangida (1985-1990), further establishment of universities was suspended. The policy of rationalization was initiated and pursued to reduce the number of existing universities and control further expansion to guarantee proper funding, cost sharing, quality education. Moreover, it was meant to re-position Nigerian universities to make greater contributions through research to facilitate economic recovery and promote economic development. Under the rationalization policy, the government was required to withdraw its education subsidies, remove the duplication of courses in the universities, and re-introduce fees aimed at controlling growth as well as to share the cost of education with the public. This policy

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Daily Times}, 24 January 1984, 7.
\textsuperscript{4} Research is needed to determine how the recklessness of university administrators negatively affected the expansion of facilities to accommodate demand during the Second Republic and beyond.
meant that the military officials sought to determine the process and rate of expansion based on their own criteria.

Between December 1983 and August 1984, the Buhari administration initiated a number of actions designed to downsize and restore ‘discipline’ in university expansion. The first step was to address the issue of the unregulated establishment of private universities. Twenty-six private universities had earlier emerged in late 1983. These universities were still in the process of securing facilities to accommodate and admit students when the Buhari regime closed them down. In his new briefing in January 1984, the Chief of General Staff Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon, announced government’s decision to promulgate a decree that would abolish all private universities and ban the establishment of new ones in the future.\(^5\) Shortly afterwards, the federal government promulgated Decree No. 19 of February called “Private Universities (Abolition and Prohibition) Decree 1984.” The Decree declared unlawful any attempt by “any person or group of persons to establish any private university or similar institution of higher learning in any part of the country.”\(^6\) It also provided a penalty of not less than three years and not more than five years imprisonment for any one who contravened the decree.\(^7\) The promulgation of Decree No. 19 signaled the beginning of the federal government’s rationalization program. However, the swiftness of the government’s decision to close down private universities without consultation and after barely two months in office was utterly shortsighted.

Furthermore, by criminalizing the establishment of private universities in Nigeria, the military government chose to ignore other options and seemed to offer a misleading impression

\(^5\) See Bulletin of the National Universities Commission, September 1984, 1.
\(^6\) Federal Republic of Nigeria, Decree No. 19, 9 February 1984. In addition, the decree demanded that all the existing private universities surrender registers, forms, emblems, syllabuses or other documents of the private universities to the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology.
\(^7\) Ibid.
that the emergence of these private universities had contributed to the financial difficulties that confronted the university system in particular and the nation in general. If anything, the existence of private universities was supposed to save the government of the headache of being the sole provider of university education, with its attendant financial implications. It was difficult to understand Buhari’s justifications in abolishing private universities when it had the option of restructuring their operations with stiff guidelines stipulated by NUC to ensure quality and standards. Of course, pursuing this option would have gone a long way to meet the increasing demand for university places. Perhaps, the idea of commercially run universities was strange to an average Nigerian in 1984 because the government had monopolized the sector since independence and was unprepared to shift its position regardless of the economic depression. However, private participation in the provision of primary and secondary school education had been an accepted and successful option for parents who could afford to send their children to them.

The need for private universities in 1984 was compelling given the poor state of the economy as well as unmet demand for university education. One out of every ten students who applied for admission actually secured admission into the existing public universities. Even if the government discounted the numbers of unqualified applicants and incidence of multiple applications, there existed considerable number of frustrated candidates who could finance themselves in a private university. However expensive, private universities had the potential of discouraging many wealthy Nigerians from sending their children abroad for university training. A logical choice for the government would have been to initiate minimum guidelines for the operations of private universities. Granted that the private universities did not provide adequate facilities to guarantee high standards, however, “…when the provision [1979
Constitution] for the establishment of private universities was made, there were neither adequate guidelines nor minimum academic standards for their proper functioning.”

The military government miscalculated. This was revealed when the same government that abolished private universities on 9 February 1984 requested the private sector to help government in funding education as evidenced in a goodwill massage the Head of State sent to the third convocation ceremony of the University of Port Harcourt. Indeed, banning the private sector from participating in the provision of university education without financial readiness to provide adequate funds for university education show the lack of strategic thinking by the Buhari regime. Given the poor state of Nigerian economy, the emergence of private universities was a timely and welcomed opportunity to satisfy rising demand for university education while relieving the government of the financial burden of funding many universities. In banning them, the government merely postponed what was inevitable.

With the fate of private universities sealed, the heavy cost associated with providing free education, especially at the university level, remained a source of growing concern for the federal government. The Minister of Education, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdullahi, noted that free education at the primary and secondary school levels throughout the country cost the government about ₦6 billion a year, excluding an estimated ₦674 million that would be needed to fund one conventional university with 10,000 students. Since the economy was bad, the federal government could not afford free education. Indeed, all the papers presented at the Committee of Vice-Chancellor’s seminar in February 1984 strongly argued that government could not fund

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9 See Daily Times, 10 March 1984, 3.
10 Weighed down by the burden of funding universities, the military government under Ibrahim Babangida revised this decision in 1991, thus allowing private individuals to own universities.
education alone. The Daily Times editorial of March 7 1984 strongly urged the government to debunk the concept of government as a free giver, arguing that “[T]he unrealistic idea of getting something for nothing has always been sold by politicians as a calculated ploy for winning votes, but has remained suspect nonetheless.” The benefits of a free education policy to any nation are incontestable, but the central issue in 1984 lay in the practical ability of Nigeria to carry it through. For the first time, Nigerians need to consider the concept of free education on its merits without political considerations.

Mindful of public awareness that free education was untenable, the federal government issued a directive to the National Universities Commission in March 1984 to withdraw its subsidies on student feeding in order to save the government of the heavy wage bill of catering staff, cafeteria facilities, and cost of food. It also directed federal universities to re-introduce accommodation fees to help defray the cost of hostel services. Though state universities from inception charged tuition fees ranging from ₦250 to ₦400, it had taken the federal government five years to implement the 1978 decision to introduce some form of fees in the federal universities. Obasanjo administration made the decision following the report of the Justice Mohammed Commission of Inquiry into the nation-wide students’ unrest in 1978; Obasanjo’s administration did not implement the decision. Worst still, the Shagari administration complicated the problems by establishing more universities and continuing with a free university policy. Although Buhari introduced feeding and accommodation fees, tuition remained free; but he later set up a committee to address the issue.

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12 See Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Proceedings of the Annual Seminar held at the Alhadu Bello University, Zaria, 17 February 1984.
15 Ibid., 127.
In pursuit of its cost-saving programs, the military government closed down the National Open University (NOU). Although the NOU was established in 1983, the university commenced lectures on 6 February 1984 through electronic broadcast over *Radio Nigeria*. There were many complaints by students over the poor services provided by the university owing to poor radio reception. For instance it was difficulty, especially for those living outside the Federal Capital (then Lagos), to locate the frequency of the radio station.\(^{16}\) Apparently, poor communication infrastructures accounted for this, and since the federal government was unprepared to address this problem due to the economic meltdown, it suspended the NOU on 7 May 1984, precisely four months after it began operations. The compelling factor was economic; the desire to avoid additional burden on the declining financial revenue of the government. As Buhari confirmed in the 1984 budget speech:

> The administration has given serious consideration to the National Open University Programme. Because the infrastructure to make the programme succeed is either not available or inadequate, the government has decided that in the present financial situation, Nigeria could not afford the Open University Programme. The National Open University Programme has therefore been suspended.\(^{17}\)

The administration’s crusade to rationalize universities and consolidate them for sustained growth manifested eloquently in its decision to restructure the existing federal universities of technology. According to a release issued in May 1984 by the Cabinet Office, Lagos, the federal government expressed its intention to merge four federal universities of technology with some conventional universities. The release questioned the rationale behind the

\(^{16}\) See *Daily Times*, 7, 9, 23, 20, February 1984 and *Democrat Weekly*, 1 April 1984, Letters’ page.

\(^{17}\) *Daily Times*, 11 May 1984, 12. In addition, Buhari announced also that the staff of the Open University would be suitably re-deployed and that the existing universities with schemes for part-time students should be encouraged to expand their programs and take in more students.
continued maintenance of seven universities of technology in Nigeria “taking into account the need to provide a good quality technological education [and] the stark realities and socio-political circumstance of the country.” In addition, the release noted that since the existing universities of technology operated at their “temporary sites, ill-equipped and lack[ed] basic facilities in terms of human and materials resources for achieving the objectives for which they were set up,” their merger was necessary. Accordingly, the federal government directed the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the NUC and the affected universities to work out modalities for effecting the merger as well as for the rationalization of university programmes and courses to ‘create centers of excellence’ and make them cost-effective and efficient. The decision to merge four universities was clearly conscious of the poor economic health of the country and aimed at reducing the government’s burden in funding the universities.

In response to the government’s directive, officials of the federal ministry of education, the NUC, and the federal university of technology met between 4 and 6 June 1984 and agreed on 1 October 1984 as the effective date of the merger. It prescribed the merger of four federal universities of technology in Abeokuta, Bauchi, Makurdi, and Yola with some conventional universities while retaining the ones in Akure, Minna, and Owerri. The merged universities henceforth were to function as campuses of their foster universities, served by one council, one senate, and one chief executive-vice-chancellor. By this decision, the number of federal universities in Nigeria was reduced from twenty to sixteen. Together with state universities, twenty-four universities existed in Nigeria. Although the federal government justified its

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 6
21 The Federal University of Technology (FUT) Abeokuta became University of Lagos Abeokuta Campus. FUT Bauchi became Tafawa Belewa campus; FUT Makurdi, University of Jos campus, and FUT Yola, Madibbo Adamu campus. See Bulletin of the National Universities Commission, Lagos, 3 December 1984.
decisions on the need to provide good quality technological education as well as the socio-economic circumstances of the country, given the declining revenue of oil, it was clear that the economic justification was more compelling than the former.

Why the federal government chose universities of technology instead of conventional universities for merger is difficult to explain, especially when countries around the world had recognized the role of technology in national development and according invested in science and technology education. The heavy cost of running universities, especially universities of technology would seem to be a possible factor. However, if reducing the number of Nigerian universities was the decisive consideration, there was no reason why the government would not administer all the Nigerian universities from one campus just like the California State University, which had more students scattered in various campuses than all Nigerian universities. By merging some universities, the government thought it would save money. Ironically, this arrangement maintained the status quo because NUC allocated funds directly to the affected universities, giving them the financial autonomy regardless of the merger.

In keeping with its policy of reducing the cost of funding university education as part of the austerity and stabilization measure, the federal government set up two study groups in 1984: one on funding of education, and the other on higher education curricula and development. The study group on funding was to advise government on a realistic funding of education based on the notion that education “should be the responsibility of the federal, state, and local government

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22 See Daily Times, 30 August 1984, 3. In 2005, the California State University system was comprised of 23 campuses with a population of 405,000 students. See http://www.calstate.edu/ (accessed 21 May 2006).
and parents, each contributing its share and conscious of the prevailing economic situation.”

The government requested that the group specifically review, among other things, the existing arrangements for funding education at all levels; ascertain the extent of the financial involvement of the federal, state and local government in education at all levels. In addition, in light of the prevailing economic realities, the government expected the group “to propose an arrangement for funding education which would involve voluntary organizations, communities, individuals, and parents.”

After two months of meetings, consultations, and extensive visits to all the states, the group submitted its report to the federal government on 7 November 1984. In its report, the Study Group acknowledged that universities enjoyed a high priority in government spending compared to other levels of education during the preceding civilian era. Identifying with the economic realities of the country and responsive to the mindset of the federal government that set it up, the group declared, “...the beneficiaries of higher education in Nigeria should be partners with government in funding education.” Accordingly, it recommended the following:

- payment of fees in all institutions of higher learning;
- award of scholarship to about 10 percent of new entrants based on merit;
- and award of bursaries for certain courses designed for national emergency (e.g. tertiary science teachers education).

Furthermore, it recommended the establishment of an elaborate student loan program for those who were not qualified to receive

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25 Ibid. See S. Adesina, 264.

26 For instance in 1981, higher education alone claimed 65 percent of the entire federal government recurrent expenditure on education, broken into 1.1 percent for Colleges of Education and Schools of Basic Studies, 6 percent for Polytechnics and 57.9 percent for the universities. Similarly, during the same year, federal government Capital Expenditure on education showed that higher education controlled 81.9 percent. Universities claimed the loan share of nearly 90 percent of the allocated amount. See Bulletin of the National Universities Commission, Lagos, December 1985, 12.

27 Ibid. See S. Adesina, 266.
scholarship and bursary awards. Finally, it proposed that government should free the universities of any obligation to provide accommodation for its staff (teaching and non-teaching). Since students had been accustomed to receiving education free, and since university staff had customarily benefited from a university-subsidized accommodation, these recommendations were quite radical.

While the government considered the report of the study group on university funding, the second group on higher education curricula and development, conducted its study in 1984. As a central part of federal government’s rationalization program, and concerned with the present high level of graduate unemployment in the country, the Federal Military felt that there was the need to conduct a study with the objective of reviewing the curricula and development of universities and similar institutions in the country. Committee members were drawn from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Employment, Labour and Productivity; Manpower Board; and the National Universities Commission.

28 Ibid.
30 Federal Republic of Nigeria, The Report on the Study of Higher Education Curricula and Development in Nigeria (Lagos: NERC Press, 1984), 1. Membership of the committee was dominated by officials from ministries. They were: Alhaji Ganibo Gubio - Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, (Chairman); Alhaji Yahaya Hanza - Co-ordinating Director (Education), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Mr. F.Z. Gana - Director (Technology, Technical and Vocational), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Mr. A.B. Olaniyan - Director (Schools and Educational Services), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Mrs. T.E. Chukuma - Director (Higher Education), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Mr. I.I. Iwang - Executive Secretary, National Board for Technical Education; Mr. O.A. Ajai - Director (Labour Inspectorate and Training), Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity; Mr. C.C. Okoye - Asst. Director (Manpower Board), Federal Ministry of National Planning. Mrs. V.O. Adebekun - Assistant Director (Universities and Students’ Affairs), Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology; Dr. B.C.E. Nwosu - Assistant Director (Science), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Mrs. O.F. Okusami - Asst. Director (Academic Planning), National Universities Commission; Mr. P.E.O. Towe - Director (Programmes), National Board for Technical Education; Mr. O. Sokunbi - Chief Labour Officer, Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity; Mr. C.C. Mmereole - Chief Planning Officer, National Manpower Board; Mr. J.O. Ige - Asst. Chief Education Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, (Secretary
The group’s recommendations, submitted to the government in June 1985, called for changes in university curriculum that would privilege the funding of science courses. In its report, it noted that since Nigeria lived in an era of global economic recession and limited financial resources characterized by mass retrenchment and lay-offs in the public and private sectors, one option open to graduate job seekers was self-employment. It therefore suggested the overhauling of university curricula to reflect the need for self-employment by graduates based on the “changing structure of the society.” It therefore called a limitation on the number of student enrolment in Nigerian universities, especially in the arts and humanities. The idea was to slow down the rate of expansion of university education in those disciplines, which by far outstripped the rate of employment of graduates. Apparently, this decision was based on the assumption that graduate unemployment was the result of the over-production of graduates in the arts and humanities from Nigerian Universities, which explains why the report demanded that

... government should through the instrumentality of the National Universities Commission (NUC) considerably slow down the rate of increase in university student enrolment in the Arts and Humanities to not more than 10% per annum in contrast to slightly over 20% annual increase recorded during the 1978/79-1980/81 period.

Furthermore, the committee also recommended that the older universities slow down expansion rates while at the same time the new universities be allowed to increase their enrolment for cost-effectiveness. It stipulated a 60:40 admission ratio in favor of science-based disciplines. To control expansion, the committee recommended that the recent government decision to ban private universities and merge some federal universities should be extended to include a ban on the establishment of new Universities (whether Federal or State) during the next

32 Ibid., 24.
five years. In addition, the committee strongly recommended the phasing out of the following courses from university curriculum: Classical Studies and African Religious Studies in the Universities of Ibadan and Ife; Language Art/Linguistics (German, Portuguese, French, and Russian), Arabic, and Islamic Studies in all the Universities offering them; and the newly established Law faculties in the Universities of Ibadan and Ilorin. It recommended that graduate output in Law, Library Studies, Geology, Geophysics, and Pharmacy should be kept at the 1983 level, and no other University should start courses leading to the award of degrees in Law.  

Similarly, to underscore its determination to guarantee success in curriculum reform in favor of science courses, the committee recommended that the government’s allocation to the universities should be tied to specific courses and projects, particularly in the sciences, to ensure the realization of expected results. Finally, it emphasized that the universities should intensify their efforts at internal revenue-generating activities such as corporate consultancy services, investments and so on to further reduce the financial burden of the government.  

Except for Mrs. O. F. Okusami, who represented the NUC, the university community was not represented on the committee. This was odd given the fact that its recommendation would not only have a potential effect on university education, but would be implemented ultimately by the university community.

While the federal government studied the report of the study group, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) sharply criticized it. ASUU affirmed that the reorganization of university curricular was “...a very transparent attempt to cover up the obvious failure of the neo-

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33 Ibid., 40.
34 Ibid., 81.
35 Ibid., 39.
The driving force behind the reorganization of university curriculum was based on the perception that Nigeria’s higher educational system was lopsided in favor of liberal courses scarcely needed by a developing country like Nigeria and whose graduates dominated the number of unemployed graduates. This claim on the part of authorities, according to ASUU, would only hold water if graduate unemployment were limited to graduates of arts disciplines and spared graduates of science disciplines. This scenario was not the case, and as ASSU revealed, all kinds and manner of graduates roamed Nigerian streets “...wearing the soles of their shoes out in search of jobs that are unavailable because of the bankruptcy of the economic system which the imperialists imposed on us and which, rather unintelligently, are maintained.” That unemployment existed among graduates in those disciplines that were most needed for economic development meant that the curriculum review was a misplaced exercise intended to shift the blame on to the educational sub-system. ASUU therefore cautioned, “...enough of these diversionary tactics, this movement in circles, this running after shadows, this avoidance of the heart of the matter.”

In its response, the CVC rejected the parts of the report dealing with phasing out some courses in some universities. Since French-speaking countries surrounded Nigeria, CVC reasoned that it was in the long-term interest of the country to emphasize French language even at the secondary school level. The CVC also stressed that many of the recommendations of the group, inspired by the need to save cost for the government, was present-minded. It affirmed that they were “induced by panic and solely on considerations of then present economic situation,

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
and its attendant problem of unemployment.” In spite of criticisms against the proposed curriculum reform, and to underscore its resolve to implement the rationalization policy based on the recommendations of the study group on curricula, Buhari promulgated Decree No 16 of 1985 on Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions). The Decree empowered the NUC to set minimum standards for all academic programs currently taught in Nigerian universities. In addition, it mandated that the NUC undertake periodic accreditation visit to universities to determine the viability of programs run in all Nigerians universities not only to ensure that minimum standards were maintained but to guide the government’s allocation of funds to them.

The radical recommendations made by the committees on funding education and curricula understandably were in line with Buhari’s austerity and stabilization measures intended to help reduce government funding on what they perceived to be unviable programs in the universities. The objective was to curtail government expenditures on social services, save money to service external debts, and ultimately avoid entering into negotiations for external assistance from world bodies such IMF and World Bank. However, since the Buhari administration did not enter into agreement with the IMF, Nigeria did not reschedule its debt service payments; the regime partially serviced the debt. Consequently, unpaid interest arrears on external debt built up and the stock of debt grew fivefold such that the economy, including the Nigerian universities, groaned under the weight of the austerity program. High inflation became a common economic outcome of Buhari’s economic program while at the same time government subvention to federal universities remained almost at the same level.

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39 Confidential, Committee of Vice-Chancellors: Rationalization of Courses and Programs of the Universities. (nd)
Due to the economic downturns, funding of universities stagnated. There was a sustained decline in the capital and recurrent subvention to federal universities between 1984 and 1985. Starved of funds, Nigerians universities searched for alternative ways of securing funds. Many national dailies acknowledged such plans. For instance, under the caption “Varsities in Search for Funds,” the *Daily Times* commended the efforts of the Universities of Nigeria Nsukka and Ilorin for embarking on profitable commercial ventures such as university bookshops and printing presses, guest houses, pilot bakery projects, commercial farms, gas stations and consultancy services. In 1985, the University of Maiduguri launched its consultancy services center. Buhari’s austerity and stabilization measures brought untold hardship to Nigerians characterized by inflation, hunger, and unemployment. The policies failed to either restructure the economy or cushion the effects of the government’s severe policies. They did not address the question of withdrawal of the petroleum subsidy, trade liberalization, and the true value of the national currency, the naira. As a command economy, the extensive system of direct controls suppressed market signals and discouraged private sector activity. Import shortages led to rising social and political discontent. Nigerians groaned under Buhari’s regime. Another coup became inevitable.

On August 27, 1985, a military coup replaced General Buhari’s government. The justification for the coup was that “The present state of uncertainty and stagnation cannot be permitted to degenerate into suppression and retrogression.” Shortly after the announcement, General Ibrahim Babangida emerged as the head of state. The economy Babangida inherited was

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41 Ibid.
42 *Daily Times*, 6 December 1984, front page.
43 Daily Times, 23 January 1985. However, the extent to which these economic ventures solved the funding problems of Nigerian universities deserves more study than I would be able to in this present study. That university financial difficulty continued afterwards perhaps revealed how either inadequate or poorly managed the revenue from such economic ventures were.
characterized by huge foreign and domestic debts, a rapidly declining per capita income, a high
rate of unemployment, severe shortages of raw materials and spare parts for industries, and a
high rate of inflation. In his first address to the nation, Babangida stressed the need to depart
from the limited economic policy of his predecessor. As Babangida declared, “It is the view of
this government that austerity without [comprehensive] structural adjustment is not the solution
to our economic predicament. The present situation whereby 44 per cent of our revenue earning
is utilized to service debts is not realistic.”  

He, therefore, promised to take steps “to ensure comprehensive strategy of economic reforms.”  

To continue to fund university education adequately Babangida was faced with three policy options, namely to maintain the status quo, (which meant a continuation of the austerity measures without structural adjustment reforms); to accept IMF Structural Adjustment Facility, including its conditionalities; or to reject the IMF loan proposal but adopt a modified variant of the traditional structural adjustment package, designed and implemented by Nigerians. 

Babangida regime weighed its options carefully, but still faced the reality that the regime’s “survival hinged on the availability of revenues, which in turn depended upon its ability to negotiate a rescheduling of debt service payments.”

Accordingly, Babangida opened a public debate on IMF, focusing on whether the government should accept the IMF loan or not. After months of debate, Nigerians, conscious of the need to maintain economic independence from what they perceived as the ‘economic imperialism’ of external bodies, rejected the IMF loan and its conditionality. Instead, they requested the government to embark on a ‘homegrown’ adjustment measures designed to ensure

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46 Ibid.
48 Jeffrey Herbst and Charles C. Soludo, 663.
economic reconstruction, social justice, and self-reliance. Faced with this public verdict, Babangida declared a fifteen-month national economic emergency on 1 October 1985, and as he later elaborated in the 1985-budget speech, the decision would allow the country time to reflect on the social and economic problems facing the country, and seek solution through indigenous efforts. Such efforts, he noted would be “...at our own pace and our volition, consistent with our own voluntary national interest.” According to Babangida, “We are determined more than ever before to harness our own homegrown efforts to solve our problems and set a new path for the future. In his search for homegrown efforts at national development, Babangida confronted the doctrine of rationalization in his policy on university education.

The underlying reason behind rationalization policy as initiated by Buhari’s regime was to save the federal government the cost of funding universities. Babangida found the idea very attractive. Since the Buhari administration had not implemented the recommendations contained in the report on curriculum reform before it was overthrown, Babangida was determined to adopt the principle of rationalization to guide his university policies. In an address delivered to selected members of the academic community in November 1985, Babangida endorsed the principle of rationalization and emphasized the historic role of the universities in championing not only economic development but aiding economic recovery instead of remaining a burden to the state. According to him:

…it is true that part of the underlying causes of this (economic) crisis, apart from mismanagement and corruption, has been the burden of rapid and spectacular growth of development expenditure over a very wide field. The pattern of growth in expenditure on university education has been part of that story. As the moral and intellectual

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50 Ibid.
trust fund of the nation, you will be relied upon by the Administration to make a serious contribution to efforts necessary to restore normalcy to the economic system. In this connection, you should give greater cognizance to what is feasible and what produces results as opposed to what is ideal, for we are not in a position to please ourselves. In as far as this affects the university system, you have to examine and reconsider aspects of the administration and financing of university education.  

Subsequently, Babangida issued a directive to the federal ministry of education to review the report of the committee on curriculum reforms submitted to Buhari regime in 1985. The review became necessary because officials of Nigerian universities and polytechnics did not participate in preparing it. Thus, at the meeting of the committee of vice chancellors in November 1985, the minister for education suggested a second look at the report. Following the directive, a Ministerial Committee was formed in February 1986 under the leadership of Professor Akin O. Adesola, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, to convert into a White Paper the recommendations of the study group on curricula, the comments earlier made by the CVC, and other additional recommendations for the consideration of the Honorable Minister of Education and the Federal Executive Council. The CVC circulated the report to all vice-chancellors of Nigerian universities for their comments, and in May 1986, the committee submitted its report to the government.

In the meantime, while Babangida government considered the report of the Adesola-led committee, it decided to impose an IMF-induced economic reform called the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in June 1986 under the pretense that it was a Nigerian initiative. Even though SAP was a core part of the IMF reform package, official rhetoric insisted that it was homegrown. In launching the program, he stated that Nigeria’s “international creditors

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51 Address delivered by the President, Ibrahim Babangida, to selected members of the academic community on 16 November 1985. Meanwhile, in December 1985, the federal government elevated the Nigerian Defense Academy to the status of a military university, bringing the total number of universities to twenty-five.

52 Committee of Vice-Chancellor of Nigerian Universities, Office of the Secretary, Letter to all Vice-Chancellor of Nigerian Universities, 20 February 1986.
appreciate our commitments in the path of agro-structural adjustment which we have started for ourselves.” Babangida praised these institutions because they “have come to recognize and to agree with this administration’s position not to take the IMF loan, and not to devalue the naira overnight.” Unlike the economic measures adopted by the preceding administration, SAP aimed to promote the “restructuring and diversifying the productive base of the economy in order to reduce its dependence on the oil sector and on imports and achieving in the short to medium term fiscal and balance of payments viability.” Other objectives of SAP were to lay “the basis for a sustainable non-Inflationary growth; and reducing the dominance of unproductive investments in the public sector, and improving that sector’s efficiency and enhancing the potential of the Private Sector.”

The major reason for the adoption of the SAP in Nigeria was to open the door to official debt rescheduling, which was a topmost priority of the government. Fortunately, the federal government entered into three standby arrangements with the International Monetary Fund under a five-year plan (1986-1991), spanning a non-continuous period of 42 months. Under this standby arrangements, agreement was reached on three debt reschedulings with the Paris Club of creditor countries; (a) a 1986 agreement that rescheduled/refinanced debt worth about US$4.6 billion; (b) a 1989 agreement that rescheduled about US$5.2 billion; and (c) a 1991 agreement that rescheduled about US$3.3 billion. Ultimately, the World Bank also supported the

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54 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 The following countries are permanent Paris Club of creditor countries: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.
adjustment program through a US$450 million trade policy and export diversification loan.59

With the introduction of SAP, the federal government reduced its funding of university education since the program implied that government must reduce spending on social services, including education.

The Fifth National Development Plan (Fifth NDP) 1986-1990, reflected the character of SAP when it required governments to avoid further establishment of institutions of higher learning, stressing that the existing institutions would undergo internal structural reforms intended to improve their operational efficiency and effectiveness. 60 The Fifth NDP also echoed the prevailing official government’s mindset; it was austere and less grandiose than its immediate predecessor. This ideological shift had a profound impact on all sectors of the economy, especially higher educational institutions that had until then, run on a non-competitive and non-profit basis. Rationalization, consolidation, and effectiveness--supported by the World Bank and IMF--were the key words of the Fifth NDP, dictating subsequent steps taken by the federal government on university expansion.

The World Bank had always advocated for rationalization of African universities since the early 1980s when many African countries suffered severe economic decline. Notably, at the meeting of African Vice-Chancellors in Harare in 1986, the World Bank representatives argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury and that African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas. Since this call appeared politically untenable, the World Bank instead called on African leaders to trim and restructure their

universities to produce only those skills, which the "market" required. Since the Nigerian economy, from the standpoint of the federal government, needed more science graduates to help facilitate economic development and recovery, Babangida found the World Bank advice attractive. During the Silver Jubilee Celebration and Twenty-first Convocation of the University of Nigeria, at Nsukka on Saturday, 6 December 1986, Babangida stressed his government preference for science courses because of its crucial role in national development. According to him, “…while numbers are still important, in this era of science and technology, quality has now assumed greater significance...emphasis would henceforth have to be shifted to science and technology, and to quality.”

Along with SAP, three other decisive events that had implications on university development occurred in 1987. They were the NUC/CVC visit to UK; a World Bank study on Nigeria’s higher education reforms; and the study by the Political Bureau on Nigeria’s political reforms. First, as part of the review of university curricula, and in anticipation of rationalization of university programs, the Executive Secretary of NUC and the Chairman of CVC, under the auspices of the British Council, traveled to the UK between 30 March and 5 April 1987. The purpose of the visit was to “gain a first hand knowledge of the British Universities scene and in particular to find out how the universities [in Britain] have responded to rationalization and continuous shortage of funds for their operations,” introduced in 1979 by the Thatcher administration. Under this program, the British government had cut the financial allocations to the universities, almost forcing them to close down. However, the universities came back strong

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62 An Address by the President on the Occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration and Twenty-first Convocation of the university of Nigeria, at Nsukka on Saturday, 6 December 1986 (Enugu: University of Nigeria Press, 1987), 11.
63 Minutes of the various meetings held by the Executive Secretary, NUC, and the Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of the Nigerian Universities on the occasion of their Study-Visit to Britain from 30 March to 4 April 1987, 2.
through total commercialization of their entire operations. Managers of university education in Nigeria believed that they would gain useful insights from the British experience, which would help them to handle Nigeria’s impending rationalization policy.

The trip involved a series of meetings, which revealed the potential challenges and steps Nigerian universities would take to respond proactively to rationalization. For instance, at the meeting with the University Grants Committee (UGC) on 30 March, Mr. N. T. Hardyman, the Secretary of the Committee, informed the visitors that the initial cuts in the financial allocations to British universities were a reduction in the ‘value’ of the grants. According to him, the British government justified the cuts based on the philosophy of making the universities ‘leaner and fitter.’ As he further declared, the negative result of rationalization was that for the first time since the Middle Ages students numbers were cut in British universities. In order to allow the universities to survive, the UGC in 1984 came up with a strategy of saving universities from further financial cuts by recommending the closure of one or two of them. At the meeting with Dr. J. B. Lowe, the Secretary and Registrar of St Andrews University, it was stated that the commercial projects embarked on by the university could serve as a model for Nigeria. Similarly, Professor Ashford, Vice-Chancellor, University of Salford, stressed the need for vigorous fund raising through a strong managerial ethos. This visit showed that under rationalization program, universities would not survive unless they become innovative and less dependent on the government for financial support.

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65 The UGC was a body, similar to the NUC, which coordinates university development in Britain.
66 Minutes of the various meetings held by the Executive Secretary, NUC, and the Chairman of the Committee, 3.
67 Ibid., 3-4. Mr Hardyman talked about the criteria for financial allocation to British universities: number of students for each subject for each university; units of resources for each subject taking consideration for teaching and research elements; grants for Research Councils.
68 Ibid., 6.
69 Ibid., 11.
However, concerned with the deteriorating conditions in Nigerian universities, the federal government invited the World Bank to carry out a study on how to salvage the situation and advise it on the most cost effective way of running the operations of the federal universities. The World Bank study group conducted its fieldwork from 19 January to 6 February 1987 and a follow-up visit also took place from August 17 to 29, 1987. The group submitted its report to the government in October 1987. The report observed that despite tremendous expansion of university system since 1960, higher education in Nigeria faced a crisis. The crisis, at least, was partly due to the unplanned, ad-hoc expansion of enrollments, universities, and faculties during periods of peak oil revenues resulting in higher overall costs and unit costs. The report revealed two areas of excessive costs: the proportion of expenditures devoted to administration, and the high costs of running postgraduate programs in all subjects at all universities, even when there were few students in each course. The study found that Nigerian universities spent about 46-57 percent of its allocations on administration and much less on teaching.

The World Bank report endorsed the doctrine of rationalization. Largely echoing the spirit behind SAP, it recommended the freezing of a number of departments and faculties in all federal universities at their current level until it attained the economies of scale in existing departments. It also recommended the closure of all postgraduate programs where enrolments failed to reach a cost effective level; an increase in the number of courses for which an economic level of fees can be charged, and the gradual introduction of tuition fees to cover 15 to 20 percent of the unit recurrent cost of the university for all undergraduate students. To encourage the study

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70 This sub-sector study was prepared by Nicholas Bennett, education planner and mission leader, and Richard Johnson, special advisor—both World Bank staff, and Keith Hinchliffe, economist, and Christopher Modu, evaluator—both consultants. Although focused on federal universities alone, the report of this group had implications for state universities.

71 World Bank, Nigeria: Cost and Financing of Universities, October 23, 1987, Confidential report No. 6920-UNI, Western Africa Department of Population and Human resources Division.

72 Ibid., vi.
of science courses, it asked the government to charge a lower percent of total costs for students in priority science fields and a higher percentage for those in non-priority arts fields as well as 100 percent of direct teaching costs for all postgraduate students. To save cost, it requested that the government ensure that user fees for housing, schools, water, health services, etc were at least as high for university staff as for similar occupational groups. Finally, it suggested that frequent workshops be conducted and recommendations made on how the university system and its functions could be rationalized so as to become less of a burden on federal and state budgets, while maintaining or even improving quality and effectiveness. The report also indicated the readiness of the World Bank to grant Nigeria a loan to help it consolidate the quality and effectiveness of university education.

The subject of rationalization featured prominently at the international seminar organized by the NUC, CVC, and the British Council at the end of the UK study visit. Titled “Management of University Resources,” rationalization dominated the proceedings of the seminar held at the Congo Conference Hotel, ABU, Zaria, on 9 November 1987. In his address at the seminar, the federal minister for education, Jibril Aminu, highlighted the government’s resolve to pursue the policy, indicating that the anticipated white paper on curriculum reform would reflect that. Additionally, all universities would be required to draw plans of rationalization of academic programs which will remove duplication of similar courses within and between universities and provide modalities for phasing out, where necessary, programs that are neither attractive to students nor to the economy. The communiqué at the end of the CVC meeting subscribed to government’s vision of university as contained in Aminu’s speech and emphasized the need for

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73 Ibid., viii-x.
the universities to explore alternative sources of funding as well as the need for industries to support the rehabilitation of university education.\footnote{Ibid.}

After due consultation, the federal government released the White Paper on higher education curriculum and development in December 1987. The Paper was mindful of the objectives of SAP; the support for rationalization contained in the observations and recommendations of the World Bank study group; and the willingness by the NUC and CVC to accept the policy. It expressed the federal government’s acceptance of the principle of rationalization as a compelling blueprint in the development of Nigerian universities “...in view of the present economic recession and the scarcity of funds as well as the Structural Adjustment Programme now being pursued by Government.”\footnote{Federal Republic of Nigeria, \textit{View and Comments of the Federal Military Government on the Report of the Study Group of Higher Education Curricula and Development in Nigeria} (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1987), 3.} The paper endorsed the vigorous pursuit and implementation of the 60:40 admission ratio by both Federal as well as State Universities because of the importance of sciences in technological development. It therefore required universities to submit a schedule for achieving that ratio by the year 1990. The required schedule, it stressed, must satisfy the approved admission ceiling. It approved 2.5 per cent overall growth for first generation Universities and 10 per cent overall growth for second generation Universities. In addition, it approved 15 per cent overall growth for Federal Universities of Technology (FUT), including four campuses/colleges resulting from merger of 4 former FUT.\footnote{Universities in Ibadan, Nsukka, Ife, ABU, Lagos and Benin were regarded as first generation universities. Universities in Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Kano, Ilorin, Calabar and Port Harcourt were regarded as second generation universities.} For the State Universities, it directed the NUC to ensure that they adopt the same principles in their development.
Additionally, the paper directed the universities to draw up a plan of rationalization of academic programs in order to remove duplication of similar courses within and between Universities and provide modalities for phasing out, where necessary, programs that were neither attractive to students nor to the economy.\textsuperscript{79} On this note, the paper discarded the recommendations of the 1984 Fafunwa-led study group that some disciplines be phased out, but on the contrary, stressed that with Decree No 16 in place, the NUC had the powers to regulate the establishment of courses and standards in all universities. The NUC was to determine that by having a “….complete inventory of facilities available in various faculties and departments of universities ….and draw proposals for broad areas of concentration [forming] the nucleus of the concept of centers of excellence”\textsuperscript{80} These directives were inspired by economic considerations occasioned by SAP. It provided the federal government the opportunity to slow down the rate of growth in Nigerian universities, especially in the arts.

Nevertheless, phasing out some courses in the arts in preference to science and technology courses did not address the reasons for the high demand for arts courses. For instance, the number of applications and admissions from 1978/79 to 1984/85 showed higher demand for various subject areas, especially in the arts and social sciences. In 1978/79, for example, the number of applications for Arts, Social Sciences, Law, Engineering/Technology, and Medicine were respectively 12,143; 20,815; 10,648; 10,606; 14,814. But by 1984/85, these figures more than doubled. Thus, in 1984/85 there were 25,389 applications for Arts and Social Sciences 35,743 for Laws, 20,200 for Engineering and Technology, and 25,302 for Medicine. The total number of applications for all the various areas increased from 79,388 in 1978/79 through 122,576 in 1981/82 to 151,101 in

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 13.
However, the overall average level of admission during the 1978/79-1984/85 period was only 11.9 per cent in Agriculture, 12.8 percent in Engineering/Technology, 9.8 percent in Medicine, and 28.4 percent in Science. In the Liberal Arts, the proportion of applicants who gained admission was only 17.1 percent in Arts, 10.1 percent in the Social Sciences, 16.3 percent in Education, and 5.5 percent in Business Administration. Law recorded the lowest of admission—only 4.2 percent. Though demand existed in all fields, more students secured admission in art related courses. Thus, what the White paper sought to do was to reverse the admission trend to favor science related courses. However, it should be noted that enrolments in Arts were not overwhelmingly higher than other fields. Only when other disciplines—social sciences, law, education—are included as Arts is the demand be higher than that obtained for the sciences.

Furthermore, the aggregates data for the entire 1978/79-1984/85 period revealed that the total number of applications for university places was 1,151,018. Percentages of admissions spread across disciplines reveal shortages of university places. Social Sciences accounted for the highest proportion, 16.3 percent, followed by Law, 14.9 percent. Medicine was 12.6 percent, Education 12.5 percent, Business Administration 12.0 percent, Arts 11.2 percent, and Engineering and Technology 10.4 percent. Yet, in terms of the distribution of admission, Education ranked highest—18.0 percent, followed by Arts—17.0 percent, Science—15.3 percent, and Social Sciences—14.5 percent. Engineering and Technology achieved an 11.8 per cent admission rate while the corresponding figure for

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Medicine was 11.0 percent. The admission rate for the discipline of Law, which ranked second in the level of demand, was only 5.6 per cent or eight out of nine in terms of ranking. Apparently, these numbers showed that the demand for university places in all the disciplines was higher than its supply and as such there was need for more places as well as more courses to satisfy demand. Rationalization would further hurt student intake. As Festus Iyayi puts it, the solutions are far from “…programme closures, mergers or concentration with their attendant and apparent implications for reduced student enrolment in the universities, but the expansion of existing programmes and opening of new ones to ensure that a greater level of demand is satisfied.”

The White Paper’s insistence on 60 - 40 (Science - Arts) were doomed to failure unless government addressed the root of the problem--funding for the primary and secondary schools. Since the 1960s, the governments had failed to make adequate efforts to invest in science subjects at the primary and secondary schools, which accounted for the continued low demand for science courses. The existing secondary schools were ill equipped to produce scientifically minded candidates for university education. The situation remained since there was no policy change regarding primary and secondary education. As Professor B.I.C. Ijeomah noted:

Even with the best legislation, unless the primary and secondary schools are science oriented, unless technocratic consciousness permeates the h0ne, primary and secondary levels, unless the teachers themselves \textit{ab initio}, think and teach scientifically the 60-40 ratio will remain a twentieth century mirage.

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\item \textsuperscript{84} Festus Iyayi, “The Dimensions of programme rationalization in Nigerian Universities,” In Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, University Education: Its Standard and Relevance to the Nigerian Community, The Proceedings of a Joint Seminar organized by the CVC and NUC held at the Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 17-19 March 1986, 62.
\item \textsuperscript{85} B.I.C. Ijeomah, “Manpower Development for Science and Technology: The Crisis of Bureaucracy and technocratic Consciousness,” in Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, “Mobilizing Nigeria’s
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Although the development of universities in the late 1980s was sensitive to the needs of the economy, the emphasis on sciences generated constant debate. It was argued that the discrimination in favor of science and technology courses was not an assurance of economic development. Just as over-production of bureaucrats subdued the timely appearance of technocrats, Ijeoma further argued those government’s efforts to train more technocrats to the neglect of the bureaucrats, “would breed incompetence in the management of human resources. The sanctity of bureaucracy has been profaned under the bombardment of the technocrats.” 86 Moreover, the emphasis on science and technology, he insisted “is the tragedy of modern trend in university education.” 87 Nevertheless, the White Paper believed that the lopsided university enrolment in favor of arts-related disciplines was not good for the country. It therefore adopted the rationalization policy to correct enrolment imbalance, address the problem of duplication of courses so as to not only re-position university education to relieve government of the burden of funding, but also to contribute to economic recovery through high quality teaching and research.

Supposedly, in fulfillment of his promise for a transition to civilian rule, Babangida inaugurated a Presidential Political Bureau (PPB) that was designed to prepare the ground for “mounding the block with which Nigeria’s third republic would be built.” 88 Comprised of seventeen distinguished Nigerians, drawn largely from Nigerian universities, Babangida charged the PPB to “review Nigeria’s political history and identify the basic problems which have led to our failure in the past and suggest ways of resolving and coping with these problems.” 89

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86 B.I.C. Ijeomah.
87 Ibid., 67.
88 See Newswatch, 13 April 1987, 15.
89 Ibid. Members of the Political Bureau included the following: Samuel Cookey, Eme Awa, Ali Yahaya, Haroun Adamu, Ibrahim Halilu, Pascal Bafyan, Rahmatu Abdulahi, Oyeleye Oyediran, Tunde Adeniran, Sam Oyovbaire,
addition, he required the PPB to “...gather, collate and evaluate the contributions of Nigerians to
the search for a viable political future and provide guidelines for the attainment of the consensus
objectives.”90 The Bureau met 149 times in 1987, visited all the 301 local governments areas and
received a total of 27,324 contributions, among them 14,961 memoranda, 1,723 recorded
cassettes and video tapes and 3,933 newspaper articles, among other things.91

The PPB submitted a report in December 1987, which contained, among other things, an
examination of the challenges of university enrolment in Nigeria. The PPB’s report identified the
application of a federal character and quota system in admission into federal educational
institutions and employment in the public service as a major source of division in the country. It
noted that while the Southerners regarded the system as further entrenchment of ‘political
domination’ of the country by the north, essentially because they felt that its application ignored
merit and seniority in appointments and admissions, the north thought differently. The north
perceived it as a necessary imperative to correct the historical imbalance in the federal
bureaucracy weighted in favor of the south, thus serving as a counterpoint to the south’s
stranglehold on the economy.92 It recounted, for instance, that while the south grumbled over the
northern domination of Buhari’s government (12 out of 20 members of the Supreme Military
Council were northerners), the New Nigerian published a report showing the ‘gross imbalance in
federal jobs’ that favored the South.93

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Bala Takaya, and Ola Bolagun. Others were Muhammed Sani Zahradeen, Edwin Madunagu, Okon Uya, Hilda
Adefarsin, and Abdullahi Rafi Augi.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 27.
93 Ibid. Similarly, the December 20 editorial of the paper concluded that “These disadvantaged sections(the northern
states) need special consideration for the sake of this country...and the much despised quota system is one way of
brining them in...Quota and merit are not necessary mutually exclusive. See New Nigerian, 20 December 1984. In
support of quota system, the New Nigerian newspapers managing director wrote that for Nigeria “to remain united,
competence must be balanced with quota system.” But the president of National Council for Unity, Peace and
Progress, E. A. Tugbiyeye, disagreed. He stated that the use of quota system particularly in admission into post-
It has been argued that the refusal to implement a quota system forced the JAMB registrar, Michael Angulu, out of office in 1987. *Newswatch* magazine reported that Angulu was forced to resign his position by the then controversial Minister of Education, Jubril Aminu, who accused him (Angulu), of employing mainly southerners and refusing to lower the score quota for northerners to allow for a higher intake of northerners into Nigerian universities. This story appeared credible given the position of the minister on the quota system when *Newswatch* interviewed him on 17 December 1987. During the interview, Jubril maintained that Nigerians could not pretend that there was no problem in the educational disparity between the north and the south. According to him, “When we came to Ibadan in 1960-1961, the number of secondary schools in Ibadan alone virtually was the same as the number of secondary schools in the whole of Northern Nigeria at that time.” And, when he became NUC secretary, he simply found “other means by which to increase the participation of all parts of the country.” Angulu, a northerner, disagreed with Aminu arguing that the sustainable policy for the government would have been to strengthen education in the north so that after a period, they would be in a position to compete with the rest of the country. Regrettably, Aminu’s position prevailed but Angulu’s assessment remained correct up to 2000 because the north continued to complain about educational disparity. Conscious of this debate, the bureau argued that the ultimate solution to the problem was a good government that would honestly apply equity in sharing of national resources, allocation of social projects, and the promotion of equal opportunities and rights.

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secondary institutions “is a policy of discriminatory unity” stressing that the nation’s wealth should be measured by “the quality of its human resources and not by number.” See *Newswatch*, 13 April 1987, 28.

94 Aminu was the architect of quota system in Nigerian university. As shown in chapter three, as the Executive Secretary of the NUC, he authored a 35-paged paper requesting the government to impose a quota system to redress what he perceived as imbalance in university enrolments that favored the southerners.

95 *Newswatch*, 20 October 1986, 29.

96 *Newswatch*, 18 January 1988, 19. In the same paper, the opinion of Aminu was placed side by side with that of Angulu.

97 *Newswatch*, 13 April 1987, 28.
In his 1987 budget speech, Babangida announced the decision of the federal government to review the situation of the four federal universities of technology that were merged by the Buhari’s administration in 1984.98 This decision, according to the president, was due to new demands for their autonomous development. In addition, he promised to establish a conventional university in Abuja and announced that the federal capital would be re-located from Lagos to Abuja. Ever since the federal universities of technology at Yola, Bauchi, Makurdi, and Abeokuta were merged as campuses of other universities, the affected states had continued to exact pressure on the federal government to restore their status as autonomous universities. Following his promise to revisit the situation, Babangida appointed a six-man committee under the leadership of Professor Nurudeen Adedipe and charged it with the responsibility of making recommendations on demerging the campuses at Yola, Bauchi, Makurdi, and Abeokuta from the conventional Universities. The committee was also asked to explore the possibility of converting two into specialized universities of Agriculture, and to consider the financial, physical and academic implications.99

After conducting a study of all the federal universities of technology, the Adedipe-led committee revealed that nothing had really changed for the better after the merger of the four universities. On the contrary, the Committee noted that the merger promoted “…high administrative cost and the risk to life and property occasioned by physical separation by long distances involving frequent commuting of staff between them and foster Universities.”100 The Committee revealed that in spite of the merger, “the NUC has continued to fund the merged

98 Babangida also created two additional states, Akwa Ibom and Katsina, bringing the total number of states to 21. Other states were Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Gongola, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Lagos, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Abuja, the Federal Territory. Shortly afterwards, Akwa Ibom began to demand for a university, which did not materialize until 1991.
100 Ibid., 3.
FUTs with hardly any change,” retaining their financial autonomy while they bear the names of their parent universities. 101 Acting on the committee’s report, the federal government restored the former federal universities of technology at Bauchi and Yola to their autonomous status in 1988 and also re-established those in Abeokuta and Makurdi as specialized universities of Agriculture. 102 Since the NUC allocated funds directly to the four universities even when they were merged, the decision to demerge them did not involve additional financial allocations to them; it was merely a change of names.

In addition, the federal government established the University of Abuja (UA) in 1988. The establishment of the UA followed the federal government recognition that the new Federal Capital Territory required an institution of higher learning that would cater to the educational needs of the inhabitants of the territory in particular and the nation in general. UA was established as a dual University with the mandate to run both convectional and distance learning and part time programs. The intention was to reflect the metropolitan setting of Abuja with a large number of gainfully employed Nigerians wishing to improve their education through part time learning and that of their children through full time education. In a way, the kind of university proposed in the federal capital partly satisfied some of the purposes for which the banned National Open University was established, which was to provide opportunities for Nigerians to obtain university degrees as part time students. However, it seemed odd that a government that downsized the number of universities, invested in austerity, rationalization, and restructuring policies would end up expanding university facilities. Nevertheless, given the poor state of the economy, the establishment of UA was not immediate. In fact, it took the federal government two years to establish the minimum necessary facilities for the university to open for

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
academic activities in 1990 at its temporary campus located in Gwagwalada. With the demerging of four former universities in Yola, Bauchi, Makurdi and Abeokuta universities and the establishment of AU, the number of universities in Nigeria became thirty-one.

Funds, as always, were vital to ensure adequate facilities for effective operations of Nigerian universities. The allocations of funds to universities were below the expectation of universities since 1986 when SAP was introduced. The funding statistics for funding the thirty one universities provide a priceless window into the decay of university facilities. Stephen Akangbou, the director of Academic Planning, National Universities Commission provided statistics to show that the funds the government approved for the universities were far below the amount they requested. For instance, in 1986, all the federal universities requested the sum of ₦720,922,533. While the NUC recommended ₦499,712,000, the federal government allocated ₦347,940,519. In 1987, the universities requested ₦731,077,751, the NUC recommended ₦522,865,000 but the government approved ₦270,356,000. In 1988, ₦805,284,664 was requested, ₦740,436,000 was recommended but ₦434,356,000 was allocated. Finally, in 1989, ₦1,061,087,497 was requested, ₦778,622,300 was recommended, but ₦505,808,681 was allocated. Much of the allocation received by the universities went to payment of salaries and other administrative expenditures. The pattern of allocation to universities led to the suspension of further expansion of facilities as well as gradual decay of existing facilities due to lack of maintenance.

Regardless of poor funding, the president strangely enough requested the universities to champion technological development. In 1988 at the 11th Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors on the theme: Mobilizing Nigeria’s Education Towards

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103 Stephen D. Akangbou, “Funding of Higher Education,” Paper Presented at the seminar on Challenges of Higher Education in the 1990s held at the University of Lagos from November 28 to December 1 1989.
Technological Self-Reliance, the President charged the universities to champion economic development and economic recovery. He insisted that universities would do that by supporting the government’s policy on science and technology mindful of the need for Nigeria to take its rightful place in science and technology among advanced countries in the 21 century. As Babangida stated, Nigeria

...cannot continue to depend indefinitely on the advanced countries for our technological needs. In our attempt to achieve self-reliance, we have taken a number of measures, one of which is to encourage our universities to restructure their programmes to make them more relevant to the needs of the nation. This need to be self-reliant is very pressing now - perhaps more so now than it has been at any other time. The economy is in a bad shape, occasioned by the international economic crisis, and, yet, as a nation, we cannot afford to be left behind in the march towards technological advancement.  

Concerned that the universities could not properly function let alone fulfill the responsibilities outlined by the president given the crippling effects of under-funding, the vice-chancellors of Nigerian universities scheduled a meeting with the president in July 1988. At the meeting, the CVC appealed to Babangida to extend more funds to the universities to help accommodate candidates’ demand and ensure quality contribution to national development. Adamu Nayaya Mohammed, Chairman, Committee of Vice-Chancellors, and the leader of the delegation notified the president of the dilemma facing Nigerian universities. As Mohammed puts it, “Given the increasing number of potential University students, the shortage of financial resources and the necessity for redefinition of the contents, distribution and method of delivery of academic programmes, what should we do in the

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104 An Address by the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida at the 11th Annual Seminar of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, held at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, 10-11 March 1988, 11-12.
Universities in order to survive and ensure that the system is sustained.” However, given the poor state of the economy, the president did not make a commitment to immediately increase funding.

As part of efforts to redeem the universities, the federal government moved quickly to accept the World Bank loan as suggested by the World Bank study group in 1987. Shortly after meeting with the president, the CVC met with the World Bank team in Nigeria, led by Nicholas Bennett. The central purpose of the meeting was to exchange views on the nature and form of assistance the bank would be willing to render to the federal universities. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed the World Bank would extend a policy-based loan to the Federal Government intended to make foreign exchange available for the provision of facilities such as library books, journals, provision and maintenance of science-related equipment, and the completion of uncompleted academic spaces. The aim was to equip the federal universities with quality laboratories and research facilities, especially to champion the country’s scientific and technological development. As condition for the extension of the loan (called eligibility criteria), the World Bank demanded that universities reduce all the uneconomical and unviable faculties and departments; retrench some supporting and administrative staff. In addition, they were required to increase post-graduate fees, make hostels self-financing, and increase revenues from non-governmental sources. Eager to rescue the university system from the decay...

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105 An Address presented by Professor Adamu Nayaya Mohammed, Chairman, Committee of Vice-Chancellors, to the President General Ibrahim B. Babangida, During a Courtesy Call on the President by the Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, 4 July, 1988.


107 Policy-Based Loan, sometimes called ‘Sector Adjustment Loans,’ provides flexible support for institutional and policy changes on the sector or sub-sector level, through fast-disbursing funds.

108 During this period, emphasis was on federal universities. State universities suffered more. More research is needed to determine the level of under funding of state universities.

occasioned by under-funding, the committee of vice-chancellors, in support of government efforts to revive university education by obtaining a loan from the World Bank, reached an agreement with World Bank officials to receive a credit of $120 million, which was dubbed the Federal Universities Development Sector Adjustment Credit.¹¹⁰

By insisting on the structural adjustment of universities as a condition for the $120 million loan, the World Bank reaffirmed its position on investment in higher education. Since the 1970s the World Bank had advised African governments to redirect funds from its “incompetent, inefficient, and inequitable” higher education to basic education, and allow privatization to fill the gap.¹¹¹ Drawing social rates of return analyses to emphasize the importance of basic education, it insisted that it was more productive for African countries to invest the meager resources at their disposal in primary and basic education. Nigeria resisted the pressure to give in to World Bank prescriptions in the 1970s and early 1980s because resources were available to fund education at all levels. The federal and state governments’ preoccupation was to ensure that as many young people as possible benefited from primary, secondary, and higher education. However, in 1986 when the government of Babangida was in dire need of World Bank/IMF assistance to resolve its balance of payment deficits, it accepted their conditions, which insisted on diverting resources from higher education to primary and basic education. This trend of thought consequently guided post-1986 higher education policies as state support for higher

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The fund was not granted until 1990.
education declined. University education became one of its casualties “…for it was said to be an expensive luxury.”\(^{112}\)

The drastic reduction in university funding had negative consequences on the university system. Expansion of facilities halted while enrolment grew faster than the absorptive capacity of the universities. The result was overcrowding, infrastructural decay, and a horrible learning environment for both students and faculty. Besides, irregular payment of faculty salaries created related problems as faculty either engaged in part-time jobs or received bribes from students. Quality of education received by the students declined considerably compromising the relevance of higher education to societal needs. In its 1989 annual conference on the theme “The Role of universities in National Recovery,” eminent scholars highlighted the negative effects of SAP on Nigerian universities and their ability to champion development.\(^{113}\) Proper funding of universities was essential to their smooth development and needed to equip and service the facilities for quality instruction and learning. Denying them funds badly disorganized the universities’ central nervous systems and consequently produced an agitated academic climate.

As Ray Ekpu confirmed:

> This cash crisis has resulted in jammed classrooms, suffocating hostel accommodation, congested laboratories and empty libraries…. These pressures on facilities are not merely physical, they are psychological as well. They raise the blood pressure of

\(^{112}\) Ebrima Sall, “Academic Freedom and the African Community of Scholars: The Challenges,” News from the Nordic Africa Institute (2001) <www.nai.uu.se/newsfromnai/arkiv/2001/sall.html> (accessed 10 June 2005). In addition, Prosper Godonoo had stressed the negative impact of World Bank policies in the development of educational system in Nigeria. Prosper Godonoo, “Educational policy making in Nigeria: A case study of the impact of foreign funding on Nigerian universities,” (Ph.d Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 1994). I. Sadique also noted that the World Bank recommendation influenced the federal government in reallocating resources in order to shift emphasis from arts and humanities to science, engineering, and accountancy.\(^{112}\) He further reported that the World Bank even insisted on choosing the contractors who were to supply the needed materials (books, journals, laboratory consumables) and that all of these contractors were foreign companies. See I. Sadique, The Image of the World Bank within Nigerian Universities. In B. Brock Utne, ed., States or markets? Neoliberal solutions in the educational policies of sub-Saharan Africa. Proceedings from a seminar. Rapport Nr. 3. (Oslo: Institute for Educational Research, 1995), 108-135.

\(^{113}\) The Communiqué for the 12th Committee of Vice-Chancellors’ Annual Seminar held at the Federal University of Technology Minna, on 2-3 March 1989.
teachers and the taught and render them easily irritable, frustrated, angry and the cumulative effect of these pressures is that if a little match is struck they catch fire.\textsuperscript{114}

Faced with these problems, and frustrated with governments’ inability to address them, many university teachers began to leave the system for the private sector as well as overseas for higher salaries and better conditions of service. The Presidential Committee on Brain Drain set up in February 1989 to examine the problem, defined it as “…the departure of highly trained professionals, intellectuals, talents and specialists in any field of endeavour … as a result of frustration from poor or inadequate remuneration, or from not having opportunities to fulfill professional aspirations in the given social context.”\textsuperscript{115} The Committee’s report revealed a sustained exodus of intellectuals from Nigerian universities from 1987 to 1990. For instance, data from seven universities indicate that 45 left from the sciences while 37 left from the arts in 1987/88 session. In 1988/89 session, 82 left from the sciences while 43 left from the arts. In 1989/90, 46 left from the sciences and 90 from the arts.\textsuperscript{116} An \textit{African Concord} editorial of 25 September 1989 observed that in Obafemi Awolowo University (former University of Ife), many academic departments were in danger of being closed down because of the mass departure of lecturers and the devaluation of the Naira.\textsuperscript{117} Though the annual student enrolment increase in the universities was low, faculty increase was far lower. While student enrolment in universities grew at annual rate of 7 percent, academic

\textsuperscript{115} Federal Republic of Nigeria, \textit{Report of Presidential Committee on Brain Drain}, February 1989, Vol. 1, 3. The departing brains were the dissatisfied with the state of the national economy and the consequent devaluation of the Naira, which effectively reduced the purchasing power of university staff members. They were also dissatisfied with the ‘ghetto-like work environment characterized by inadequate facilities (offices, lecture and seminar rooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, water, electricity) and short supplies in equipment, reagents, current books and journals, teaching/learning resources and basic furniture.” See Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities (1982/83-1992-93), Report of the Study Group Submitted to The World Bank Project Implementation Unit, National Universities Commission, September, 1994, iv.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. This statistics covers two first generation federal universities, two-second generation federal universities; two federal universities of technology and one state university.  
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{African Concord}, 25 September 1989, Vol. 4, No. 22, 2.
staff number increased by only 2 percent. Academic staff strength increased as follows: 8770 in 1984–/85, 9014 in 1985/86, 9103 in 1986/87, 9216 in 1987/88, 9547 in 1988/89, and 9621 in 1989/90.\textsuperscript{118}

In 1990, 180,871 students enrolled in the thirty-one existing universities.\textsuperscript{119} Annual percentage increase in enrolment, which was 10.9 percent in 1986, dropped to 6.7 percent in 1987/88, 7.2 percent in 1988/89, and 4.9 percent in 1989/90.\textsuperscript{120} According to Sam Aluko, a top Nigerian economist, when the number is expressed as a percentage of our estimated population of eligible university age group between 15 and 25 years and who constituted about 25 percent of the total population, it meant that only 0.8 percent of the were in School in 1990. Compared to other countries, Nigeria fell below Kenya’s 2 percent, Ghana, Liberia, Zambia and Ivory Coast’s 4 percent, Morocco’s 8 percent, India’s 12 percent and Egypt’s 15 percent. In more developed countries, it was 18 percent in the Philippines, in most Latin American Countries of Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Guatemala, among others. In the highly developed countries, it was 22 percent in the United Kingdom, 29 percent in USSR, Japan, and Netherlands, 30 percent in Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland, and 56 percent in USA.”\textsuperscript{121} In keeping with government science policy, enrolments in science courses surged between 1984 and 1990. Students enrolled in the sciences and related courses were more than those in the Arts. While the number of students enrolled in art related courses increased from 60.818 in 1984/85 to 81.339 in 1989/190, enrollment in science related courses

\textsuperscript{118} Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities, 49. The quality of university education obtained under this circumstance was clearly questionable.


\textsuperscript{120} Higher education in the 90s and beyond, 34 and 148.

\textsuperscript{121} See Sam Aluko, “Do We Need More Universities in Nigeria,” in The Federal University of Technology Akure, 1st Convocation Addresses and Symposium Papers and Special Lecture, 7 November, 1987, 48. Aluko called for the establishment of more universities to accommodate demand.
increased from 52,920 to 91,736 during the same period. While this statistics suggest that government efforts at promoting science courses yielded dividend, ironically, there were more graduate output in arts than in the sciences. While graduate output in science related courses increased from 11,403 in 1984/85 to 16,080 in 1989/90, the number in art related courses jumped from 15,269 to 21,410 during the same period.

Reaffirming its emphasis on technological and science-based discipline, in January 1990 the federal government launched the First National Rolling Plan (FNRP), 1990-1992. The FNRP was based on the doctrine of rationalization, consolidation and cost effectiveness “as guiding principle in the overall strategy to use the available resources to maintain and improve existing infrastructures and the internal efficiency of the entire educational system.” It stressed that the federal government was still committed to the development of high-level human resources through the Universities. However, given limited resources available and the scarcity of paid employment in the organized labor market, the FNRP would “aim at consolidation and maintenance of existing facilities. For this reason no new universities will be established during the rolling plan period 1990 - 1992 and any state government wishing to do so will receive no assistance whatsoever from the federal government. The FNRP also maintained that the various cost reduction and cost recovery measures started during the preceding plan period such as removal of subsidy on student feeding and movement towards off-campus accommodation for students would be continued.

123 Ibid.
124 First National Rolling Plan, 1990-92, 214
125 Ibid.
The FNRP reduced allocated a total amount of N285 million for all the Federal Universities, including the National Mathematical Centre at Abuja. This allocation accounted for about 35 percent of the total allocation for the education sector, showing a reduction in the previous pattern whereby universities received a predominantly higher amount. This reduction was explained by the federal government’s new emphasis to train middle level technical workforce from the polytechnics and technical colleges. However, the FNRP underscored government’s determination to reduce poverty and hunger when it stated that the newly established Universities of Agriculture at Makurdi and Abeokuta would be “sufficiently funded in order to make the desired impact on the nation's food production programme.” By converting two universities of technology to universities of agriculture and making huge financial allocations to these universities, it was clear that the federal government sought to produce agriculturalist to help in alleviating hunger. However, this did not constitute massification since only few segments of university eligible candidates wanted to study agriculture.

At the thirteenth annual seminar of the CVC in 1990, the president reaffirmed his commitment to implement the provision of the FNRP and cautioned the academic community, except the universities of agriculture, against excessive optimism. He informed the Vice-Chancellors that the problems facing the universities were the direct consequence of the government’s “shrinking financial resources.” According to the president, “the insatiable demand for university education” had combined with the “economic difficulties facing the country” to affect the proper funding of universities. As he declared, “This development notwithstanding, the universities should always bear in mind that they constitute only a part of the national education system…in spite of the competing demands from other sectors of our public life, the Federal

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126 Ibid., 219
127 Ibid., 216.
Government remains resolutely committed to ensure that the universities survive." By using the word ‘survive,’ it was apparent that the president was not prepared to embark on further establishment or expansion of universities facilities, but instead sought to cope with the consequences of past experiments with massification as well as to control massification.

However, based on the 1988 agreement, the World Bank released $120 million to the universities under the Federal Universities Development Sector Adjustment Credit scheme in 1990. The scheme credit was the Bank's first attempt to assist major university reform in Sub-Saharan Africa, targeting Nigeria, the country with the largest university system in Africa. It came during the time of low supply of university places and declining government financing for the sector caused by the sharp fall in petroleum prices, and the consequent deterioration of university quality and standards. Although this project was followed by other Bank credits for higher education in Africa, it remains the Bank's largest and most complex project for the development of a national tertiary education system on the continent. Yet, it was restricted to the procurement of books, journals, and other materials, including rehabilitating facilities to promote quality higher education rather than constructing new facilities to accommodate more students.

As the universities continued to decay, the economic and social crisis deepened, leading to an abortive coup led by Major Gideon Okar in April 1990 to topple Babangida’s regime.

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129 Prior to this project, the Bank had a limited role in Nigeria's educational development. Three education projects amounting to US$91.3 million were approved in 1965, 1972, and 1973. Following a fifteen-year hiatus, World Bank assistance to education sector development resumed in 1989 with a credit for Technical Education for US$ 23.3 million. Balanced support to the sector following the Federal Universities credit was completed through subsequent investments in Primary Education in March 12, 1992, for US$ 120 million, and for Development Communications in July 1, 1994, for US$ 8 million. A credit for Junior Secondary Education was also prepared, appraised and negotiated in 1994, but was withdrawn by Government just prior to Board submission. Shortly thereafter, persistent differences between the Government and the Bank over the country's macro-economic policies led to a cessation of lending which remains in effect. See Document of the World Bank, Implementation Completion Report, Nigeria: Federal Universities Development Sector Adjustment Credit, 5 June 1997, 2.
Terrified and yet relieved, Babangida thanked the members of the armed forces who helped to save his regime; praising them for the gallant and professional manner they contained the situation. 131 The country’s economic fortunes changed dramatically after August 1990 following the American led war against Iraq (Gulf War), which resulted in a sudden rise in oil prices. The war had a positive effect on Nigerian finances. The World Bank estimated that the total oil export revenue in 1990 was US$14 billion, a 49 percent increase over the 1989 level. 132 Having successfully rescheduled Nigerian debts, there was far less fiscal pressure for the federal government. Consolidation of power through patronage of members of the armed forces became a top priority for the government. Motivated by the oil wealth and determined to sustain the loyalty of the armed forces, Babangida regime launched a huge spending program intended to rehabilitate the police and military barracks, and to increase spending on security. A World Bank report completed in early 1991 noted that “…there was a breakdown in fiscal and monetary discipline in 1990 . . . not only characterized by additional spending and monetary expansion but also by a major surge in expenditures bypassing budgetary mechanisms for expenditure authorization and control.” 133 This pattern of expenditure, which continued without corresponding allocations to the universities, became a central justification for the protracted showdown between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the federal government.

Nevertheless, the new oil wealth brought a dramatic change of policy in favor of expansion of universities. Babangida, who, had painted a gloomy picture for universities during the CVC seminar in March, suddenly became willing to invest in university expansion. Then, of

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131 General Ibrahim B. Babangida's speech after the aborted coup - April 1990 available at http://dawodu.com/ibb1.htm (accessed 20 July 2005). Earlier Major-General Mamman Vatsta along with other suspected coup plotters were executed by Babangida.
course, the government needed another blueprint. This time it was not to provide a short term panacea to save the university system from crumbling under the heavy weight of under funding, but to undertake a comprehensive review of the university education since 1960 and articulate a proposal, as the Ashby commission had accomplished in 1960, for possible federal government’s long-term sustainable engagement with university expansion. For that reason, Babangida set up a commission in November 1990 to review Nigeria higher education for the ‘1990s and beyond.’ The Commission was the first comprehensive review of higher education in Nigeria since the Ashby commission. Its assessment of Nigeria’s higher educational scene since 1960 and its radical recommendations set the tone for the fifth wave of massification of university education, 1990-2000.

What is remarkable about the period between 1983 and 1990 was the implications of the decision of the federal military governments of Buhari and Babangida to rationalize university education as part of their economic policies designed to revamp the depressed economy. These steps suspended further establishment of universities and sought to consolidate existing universities to make quality contributions to national economic recovery. Accordingly, the federal government drastically reduced financial allocations to universities, re-introduced various fees, and established only two universities, the Military Academy in Kaduna and University of Abuja during the entire period of six years. Owing to the drastic reduction in government financial grants, the universities lacked sufficient funds to build new facilities, let alone maintain the existing ones. Consequently, the existing facilities in virtually all universities deteriorated. Massification suffered. Nevertheless, the new oil boom in August 1990 compelled Babangida to re-think its university policy. The resulted in the fifth wave of massification, 1990-2000.
CHAPTER VI


Should all who are eligible be admitted into different forms of higher education?....the answer is yes. Can all who are qualified to be admitted be offered places in our institutions? The response here is unquestionably no….¹


Between 1983 to 1990, the federal military government under Buhari and Babangida checked the massification of university education by reducing financial grants to universities. Further expansion of universities ceased. Facilities in the existing universities deteriorated. Student enrolment declined. However, the huge revenue brought by the first gulf war encouraged Babangida administration to address the problems of higher education in Nigeria. Thus, he set up "The Commission on the Review of Higher Education in the Nineties and Beyond," otherwise called the Longe Commission. This chapter examines how the federal government’s reactions to the Commission's recommendations on private universities, university funding, and the quota system shaped the fifth wave of massification, 1990-2000. It notes that the impact of Nigeria’s economic crisis and political instability of the 1990s on the universities and the resultant radicalization of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) were essential in understanding and explaining massification policies during this period.

The terms of reference of the Longe Commission were to "[r]e-examine the developmental role of higher education in a developing country such as Nigeria; [r]eview the development of Post-Secondary and Higher Education in Nigeria since the last comprehensive report of the 1960 Commission; [i]nvestigate the nature, sources and criteria of funding in higher

education institutions with a view to improving the situation and guaranteeing a steady source of funds for optimal funding of these institutions." In addition, the Commission was asked to "[r]eview the admissions requirements for post-secondary and higher education institutions and advise changes where necessary… [and] propose eligibility criteria for the establishment of future universities in Nigeria." 2 The federal government hoped that the commission’s study and recommendations on these issues would not only help improve access to university education but also reposition it to champion Nigeria’s future economic development. Chaired by Gray Longe and comprised of a wide range of eminent Nigerians, the Commission commenced its study in November 1990. 3 Members of the Commission visited all the institutions of higher education in Nigeria between 20 January 1991 and 24 March 1991 to consult with various groups within them. Besides, through newspaper publications, it invited the public to make submissions to it. By March 1991, the Commission had received two hundred and forty eight memoranda from the public. 4

Many of the submissions and representations the Commission received, particularly from the South, questioned the basis for the controversial quota system of admission, which mandated twenty percent of intakes from defined educationally disadvantaged States. Particularly irksome to Southern opinions was the issue of basing admission on the “disadvantaged status” and “catchment area” formula. Many of the submissions argued that quota system was morally

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2 Longe commission report, 15-16
3 Chief Gray Longe was a former head of civil service. Members include Professor O. O. Akinkugbe, Alhaji Abdulhamid Hassan, Ambassador James Kolo, Professor O.O. Ladipo, Professor R. O. Ohuche, Professor I. A. Akinjoogbin, Mr Mark Odu, Professor Flora Nwapa Nwakuche, Dr Rex Akpofure, Dr A. R. Augi, Engr. Otis Anyaeji (Representing Nigerian Society of Engineers), Mr V. N. Egungwu (Representing Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA), Professor C. I. O. Olaniyan (Representing Nigerian Academy of Science) Professor N. E. Obioha (Representing Nigerian Academy of Education) Mrs Clara Osinulu (Representing National Council of Women's Societies), Dr O. D. Umoh (Representing Nigerian Union of Teachers), Chief N. O. Nsefik (Representing the Nigerian Bar Association), Professor E. O. Olurin (Representing Nigerian Medical Association) Alhaji Yusuf Aboki, (co-opted member), Mr E. J. Akpan Registrar, University of Calabar.
4 The memoranda were received in the following order: Universities, 20; Polytechnics, 13; Colleges of Education 15; Student Associations/Unions/ 5; Staff Associations/Unions/ Committees, 36; Federal/State Ministries, 6; Government Parastatals/Professional Bodies, Companies/Commissions/ Boards, 23; Individuals, 130.
indefensible and contrary to the spirit of the Nigerian Constitution. The argument was that if the system was justified two decades ago because of imbalance in educational opportunity, the creation of thousands of primary and hundreds of secondary schools following the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 National Policy on Education ought to have given the so-called disadvantaged States the opportunity to catch up.⁵

The quota system, intended to close the educational gap between North and South did not result in a substantial increase in the enrolment of students from the North due to their negative attitude towards Western education and inadequate K-12 schools. According to the Emman Shehu, the publisher of Envoy, a weekly newspaper, “…the feudal order has made it difficult for parents to allow their children to stay in school. You want to bridge the gap, yet you tell people that Western education is evil.”⁶ However, Shehu perceived the quota system as an insult to the North, identifying it as inherently inferior to the South. As he said, “I write the same examination with somebody from another state. Then you say because I am from Sokoto, my cut-off is 20 percent while the other man’s cut-off is 60 percent. This is an insult.”⁷ Nevertheless, although the Northern states had been classified as disadvantaged since independence, the status was not meant to confer on them a permanent advantage. In fact, the underlying philosophy of the quota system was to place the north ultimately at the same advantaged position as the south. Yet, the most sustainable approach to closing the educational gap between the North and South was to set a timeframe when the implementation of the quota system would stop while at the same time addressing the root causes of the North’s disadvantaged status. Chimere Ikoku, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, affirmed that the idea of quota system is

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⁵ Longe commission report, 151.
⁶ See Newswatch, 8 October 1990, 58.
⁷ Ibid.
…that someday in the future, the policy will dissolve. And we should ask the question, how have these states fared? Yes, state X is disadvantaged today. If we really want to remove the disadvantage, we must time the process. When will that state stop being disadvantaged? …What is responsible for the disadvantaged status? Is it classrooms, books, or teachers?”

Although the introduction of quota system was introduced as part of the government’s efforts to guarantee equal representations of all Nigerians to promote national unity, it was not a sustainable solution to the existing educational disparity. Rather, it seemed to be an easy way out for the disadvantaged status of the north. As Kassey Odubogun of the University of Ibadan stated, Nigeria “…will still talk about this national question for a long time to come. For now, we are not yet in a mood for a final answer.”

The Commission also received memorandum on university funding, which suggested increases in the federal government’s financial allocations to the universities. For instance, the CVC’s memo advised that the recent oil “windfall should be institutionalized and made at not less than N20 million for at least 5 years from 1990, specifically for the provision and maintenance of projects of a capital nature.” The CVC knew that oil sales had brought increased revenue to the government and called on the government to apply the money to maintaining and expanding university facilities. Judging by past experiences whereby the federal government went on a spending spree in similar circumstances, the CVC had good reasons to demand the institutionalization of grants over a five-year period.

While the Commission deliberated, the President emphasized the importance of university education to his administration and pledged his commitment to adequately fund the universities in order to provide additional facilities for increased access, improve quality of

9 *Newswatch*, 8 October 1990, 58.
learning, and enhance the contributions of the universities to the Nigeria’s economy. In his 1991 Budget Speech, the president declared to pursue the “policy of self-reliance and in accordance with [government’s] commitment to economic reconstruction, the development, and utilization of indigenous human resources constitute an integral part of our recovery programme.” To that end, Babangida affirmed his determination to ‘refurbish tertiary institutions,’ and facilitate the process of access, teaching, and learning. For him, “...the universities have been identified for special attention in this regard [because] [t]hey are the apex of our educational system and a veritable lever for national cohesion and development.” Thus, before the Gray Longe Commission submitted its report, Babangida announced in April 1991 the federal government decision to establish a federal university in Akwa-Ibom State. Akwa-Ibom State was created in 1987 out of Cross River State, which was one of the educationally disadvantaged states, and it had continued to call on the federal government to establish a federal university for them. Influenced by state pressure, and in keeping with its commitment to expand access to university education and to promote national unity, Babangida announced the establishment of University of Uyo in May 1991.

Furthermore, the federal government through the NUC instructed the universities and JAMB to increase student intake by 20 percent. Nigerians aspiring for university education jubilated because the directive was expected to reduce the pressure mounted on JAMB and various universities by qualified candidates to secure admissions. For instance, a very high number of candidates sat for UME exams yearly owing to the cumulative carry-over of unsuccessful candidates from the previous years who, even though they passed the exam, failed

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11 President Budget Speech, as cited in Gray Longe Commission, 120.
12 Ibid.
to secure admissions because of limited admission slots.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, the federal government’s directive was aimed at boosting the supply of university education. In any case, the implementation of this directive without an urgent and corresponding expansion of facilities was certainly not in the interest of universities. If anything, it would strain already overstretched facilities.

While the issue of higher education remained alive, the federal government took a decisive action in 1991 to reshape Nigeria’s geo-political configuration. That was the creation of ten additional states on 27 August 1991: Taraba State, Yobe State, Osun State, Kebbi State, Kogi State, Jigawa State, Enugu State, Delta State, Adamawa State, and Abia State, bringing the total number of states to thirty-one. While quite political in its motivation, this action had implications for university expansion. Although the Federal Military Government did not see states as a tool for decentralization, the beneficiaries of state creation saw them as federal handouts or their fair share of the national cake. Because Akwa Ibom, created in 1987, had secured a federal university, the newly created states equally demanded equity, including the location of a federal university in their states. Notably, some of the newly created states were fortunate to inherit existing universities within their territories, and leaving the parent states without either a state or a federal university. For instance, Imo state forfeited Imo State University located in Okigwe to the newly created Abia State. Consequently, Imo state commenced plans to establish its state university.

As Imo state and other states initiated steps to establish their own universities, the Gray Longe Commission submitted its report to the federal government on 11 October 1991. In the report, the Commission observed that the problem with Nigerian universities originated in the

1970s and 1980s when the military and civilian governments pursued an extravagant and unrestrained proliferation of universities in a mistaken faith in the continuity of oil revenue. The subsequent decline in oil revenue and the introduction of SAP adversely affected the funding of universities and adequate supply of university places. Conscious of the increasingly limited opportunities for securing university admissions, especially since the early 1980s, the Commission advanced the doctrine of mass access to university education for all ‘eligible and qualified’ Nigerians.

The Gray Longe Commission’s report made far-reaching recommendations on university admission, funding, and establishment. The subject of limited university places as well as a quota system in university admissions dominated both the memoranda sent to the Commission as well as its deliberations. The Commission observed that since independence the demand for admission into universities far outstripped the supply, owing to insufficient facilities in the universities to accommodate high demand. As the report showed, Nigeria’s estimated population rose from 55 million in 1963 to 110 million in 1990. Out of that number, 88 million were classified as "youth" (ages 6-35 years), representing 80 per cent of the entire population. One-third of this "youth" population (i.e. 30.8 million) belonged to the age bracket eligible for access into tertiary education. If the population continued to increase at the rate of 2.5 percent per annum as UNESCO predicted, the enrolment ratio for the 18-23 age cohort would be 9 per cent of 30.8 million, which would be 2.77 million (in the age bracket for tertiary education).\(^\text{14}\) However, in 1990, there were 180,871 students in all the universities; 75,468 students in the polytechnics; 90,971 students in the colleges of Education.\(^\text{15}\) Thus, the total student


\(^{15}\) Longe commission report, 118.
enrolment into higher education in 1990 was approximately 360,000, constituting 0.36 percent of the population.

Although the total student enrolment in the universities was low, the demand for admission slots was high. For instance, in 1990, JAMB received 290,296 applications for placement in Universities, out of which only 48,504 gained admissions. This represents only 16 percent of applicants. More than 80 percent of candidates denied admissions were from the south. Consequently, a high-pressure bottleneck developed for new candidates with each passing year.\textsuperscript{16} Besides, the incidence of cancellation of JAMB results due to massive exam malpractices prevented many potential candidates from securing university admission. This situation has continued annually since the establishment of JAMB in 1977. Often, malpractices involving a dozen students led to the cancellation of results of an exam center of 500 to 1000 candidates.\textsuperscript{17}

Demographically, therefore, enrolment of Nigerians in the institutions of higher education was low when compared with some developed and developing countries. For example, Britain, with a population of around 57 million, had 46 public sector universities with student enrolment of 317,290 in the 1986/87 session.\textsuperscript{18} The United States of America with a population of 245 million had about 3,600 universities and degree awarding colleges, which in 1990 alone admitted 277,000 students.\textsuperscript{19} Cuba, a country of 11 million people had 47

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 115.
\textsuperscript{17} Having supervised JAMB exam myself, I am familiar with this situation.
universities with a student enrolment of 276,000. In addition, Brazil with 144 million people had 74 Universities. With a population of about 70 million, Egypt had 21 higher institutions with a total enrolment of 1.5 million students. Compared to other developing countries in and outside Africa, Nigerian situation was an exception.

After what the Commission described as a ‘considerable soul-searching’ and ‘careful weighting of the pros and cons,’ it proposed a formula that would hopefully correct many deep-seated prejudices and mollify justified indignation in quota system. According to the Commission’s report, the case for a reduction of the percentage allocated for merit was overwhelming. Thus, it recommended a complete discontinuation of geographical concession by 2000 and a decrease in Catchment Area criteria. The Commission proposed a timetable for percentage admissions into Federal Universities. The percentage allocated to Merit criteria was phased to increase as follows: 40 in 1990, 50 in 1992, 55 in 1994, 60 in 1996, 65 in 1998, and 70 in 2000; Catchment Area criteria to decrease as follows: 30 in 1990, 25 in 1992-1996, and 20 in 1998-2000. Furthermore, the percentage allocated to Disadvantaged States criteria was phased to decrease also as follow: 30 in 1990, 15 in 1992, 10 in 1994, 5 in 1996-1998, and completely wiped out in 2000. Finally, the percentage allocated to Discretionary criteria to remain at 10 from 1990 to 2000.

Not all the members of the Commission accepted this gradual process. For instance, Rex F. O. Akpofure argued that the majority report, with respect to quota system, was insufficient in addressing the issue of quota system. In a minority report, Akpofure stressed that the quota

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20 A.A. Gwandu, as reproduced in Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Proceedings of the 14th Annual Seminar on Management of Nigerian Universities in the 1990s in the University of Benin, 6-7 March 1991, 78-91.
23 Longe commission report, 153.
system had continued to harm the minds of Nigerian youth precisely because its implementation contradicted the spirit of social justice. For him, “I have no doubt in my mind that the system should be ended quickly, before it does more harm to our ethos as one people.”²⁴ Akpofure affirmed that since quota system was first introduced in 1967 in admissions to federal government secondary schools, “…it should substantially have solved or reduced the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged States. That it is said not to have done so, is in my honest view because those it was intended to assist, no longer see the need for that special effort to close the gap.”²⁵ It is noteworthy that none of the three Northern members of the Commission, Alhaji Abdulhamid Hassan, Alhaji Yusuf Aboki, and Dr. A. R. Augi, attempted to counteract this minority observation with another minority report to provide Northern perspectives on the quota system. This seems to suggest that many northerners had realized that the system had outlived its usefulness. It also validates Emman Shehu’s indictment of Northern parents who discourage their children from seeking Western education, explaining why Northerners accepted a compromise through a majority view on the quota issue.

Another major recommendation of the Gray Longe Commission was on the conditions and criteria for future establishment of universities. The Commission recognized the existing pressure to establish new institutions as well as expand facilities in the existing ones to help provide opportunities for access. It noted that Nigeria’s “higher educational institutions have grown far more rapidly in numbers than the Ashby Commission could possibly have projected.”²⁶ Although many factors accounted for this expansion, the Commission located ‘political considerations’ as the ‘predominant single factor.’²⁷ It further stated that for the next

²⁴ Ibid., 189.
²⁵ Ibid., 189.
²⁶ Ibid., 178.
²⁷ Ibid.
ten to twenty years, Nigeria would not be able to afford the luxury of indiscriminate
establishment of institutions because of the “far reaching and often irrevocable
consequences of inadequate planning for such institutions.”

Such consequences, as the World Bank noted, include the incidence of “extravagance in physical development of the universities, with many grandiose projects started without the fund needed to complete them.”

The Commission confirmed that the cost of unfinished projects in 1988 was ₦1.2 billion, and at 1991 rates, “the cost of completion could be up to ₦3.0 billion.”

However, it must be stressed that the Commission did not suggest that government should stop establishing universities; rather it cautioned government to avoid ‘indiscriminate establishment of institutions’ and embarking on grandiose physical development, which were often abandoned. The Guardian special report on the “Sorry State of the Universities,” revealed abandoned projects in many universities, which limited student enrolment.

What the Commission implied in its recommendation was that adequate financial and physical planning ought to precede the establishment of universities and they were fundamental to sustainable massification.

Furthermore, the Longe Commission observed that the federal and state governments were eager to establish more universities. While the federal government had established a new university in Akwa Ibom State, some states considered similar actions. The Commission noted that the number of universities would likely increase in the near future with the recent creation of ten new states. While recognizing the right of the federal and state governments to establish universities, the Commission added that private individuals and

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28 Ibid., 175.
30 Longe commission report, 116.
corporations should be allowed to establish universities.\textsuperscript{32} This recommendation sought to supersede the ban on private universities by Buhari regime in 1984, and it was based on the recognition that private universities would complement public universities in providing more opportunities for university training. However, the Commission emphasized the need for evidence of adequate and diverse sources of capital and recurrent funding by the sponsoring body, public or private before the government would approve the establishment of a new university.\textsuperscript{33} At the same time, the Commission urged the government to weigh carefully the chances of institutional success and counter-balance against that the political gains which university establishment might bring as part of the decision on whether new or existing facilities would be the right answer to a perceived need.\textsuperscript{34} By emphasizing adequate funding, the Commission underscored its awareness of the financial problems of universities and hoped that government would carefully execute its policy of establishing new universities or increasing facilities in the existing ones. Regardless of the course of action the federal government might decide to take, the Commission strongly encouraged the government to provide adequate funds for the proper functioning of existing universities. Members of the Commission were aware of the improved financial strength of the federal government owing to the 1990 oil boom. In recognition of the economic strength of the country, the Commission asked the Federal Government to provide “80 percent of the annual recurrent expenditure of each of the Federal Universities and those institutions should find the balance of 20 percent from internal revenue generation efforts and other sources.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Longe commission report, 180.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. The Commission encouraged institutions to set up income-generating enterprises to encourage the spirit of self-reliance from the earliest stage.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 177.
Gray Longe’s report was far-reaching. By endorsing private universities, the phasing of quota system of admission, the provision of 80 percent of the financial needs of universities, and adequate planning before founding new universities, the Commission sought to advance massification on a sustainable basis. The report would have been a blessing to massification except that after review by the federal government it issued a White Paper in 1992, which flatly rejected the recommendations on funding and the quota system. On funding, the federal government categorically rejected the proposal to have the federal government provide 80 percent of university financial needs, but instead stated that it would “continue to make its contributions towards Higher Education within its budgetary constraint [while]…[e]ach institution should work towards self-sufficiency.” 36 It also rejected the recommendations on a quota system on the basis that inequality is an inescapable ‘fact of life,’ and the government’s duty was to “recognize and address the problem pragmatically. Government will therefore, continue to review the admissions formula from time to time within the context of our development.” 37

Furthermore, the federal government rejected Longe’s timetable on the proposed quota system, but upheld the application of quota system in the meantime as follows: Merit criteria (40 percent), catchment area (30 percent), disadvantaged States (20 percent), discretionary (10 percent). In addition, it approved the use of special needs in university admission, defined to mean that admissions to higher institutions would cater to the interests of candidates from all parts of the country who might apply for rare courses in a particular institution. In applying this criterion, the government directed universities to fill unfilled vacancies by merit. The government then proceeded to provide a regional definition of “catchment area” by allocating

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 44.
admission priorities of universities to states within the immediate vicinity of all federal universities, a policy decision which, of course, failed to alter the system as the Longe’s commission envisaged; it reinforced the already prevailing practice.

That the federal military government rejected the phasing of the quota system is not surprising. The quota system was introduced to enhance equal representations of Northerners and Southerners in all the universities. The educationally backward North hoped that the system would help them to catch up with the educationally advanced South. The phasing of the quota system would affect Northerners, who, of course, dominated the apex of the federal government. Therefore, it was only logical for the federal government to reject this aspect of the Commission’s recommendations. Since the federal government was conscious of closing the educational gap between the North and South, regional and ethnic considerations overshadowed the decision of the government.

Although the White Paper declined to make fundamental changes as the Longe Commission recommended, it nonetheless endorsed the Commission’s recommendation to lift the 1984 ban on the establishment of universities by the private sector. Clearly, the federal government knew that the establishment of private universities would further expand opportunities for university education as well as ease its burden of financing university expansion. Thus, it whole-heartedly accepted the idea and stressed that “individuals that satisfy the eligibility criteria can establish higher institutions.” Having declared its position regarding the recommendations of the Longe Commission, the federal government promised to set up a committee to advice it on how to implement the provision of the White Paper. Indeed, the provisions of the white paper apparently showed that the Babangida administration was fully committed to funding universities adequately. However, while the government rejected the

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38 Ibid., 50.
idea of providing 80 percent of the financial needs of the universities, it allocated US$50 million to purchase 3,000 Peugeots for the private use of captains and majors in the Nigerian army in 1992, and even promised to extend a similar gesture to the officers of the Navy and the Air Force. This apparent disregard of the plight of universities piqued the ASUU. Since the introduction of SAP, the ASUU had made unsuccessful demands on the government to provide adequate funds for the universities, often citing the decay of infrastructural facilities. The government rejection of the Longe Commission recommendation to increase its financial allocation for universities while it continued to spend on the military as well as mismanage the oil revenue, compelled the ASUU to embark on institutional actions on May 1992, forcing all the universities to close down.  

The demands of the ASUU echoed the objectives of Longe’s report. The union proposed three ways the government could fund the universities, namely, (i) A Stabilization (or Restoration) Grant of at least 5% of total government revenue to be earmarked for universities and phased in over five years. (ii) An Endowment Fund totaling ₦1billion, administered by NUC, under an appropriate Trust Deed to finance research, which would insulate the universities against "variability in grants and assure them of the funds needed to pursue their objectives vigorously." (iii) A three year Rolling Plan for recurrent grant allocations to the universities.  With the universities closed down, the federal government was compelled to commence negotiation with ASUU in June. As the ASUU/Federal Government negotiation commenced, the Minister for Education inaugurated the National Implementation Committee on the Report of the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria (NICRHEN) on 19 June 1992. Part of the role of NICRHEN was to

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39 Babangida regime was alleged to be the most corrupt in Nigeria. He was instrumental to the culture of "settlement," a slogan for bribery and corruption in Nigeria. His administration embezzled over $12.5 billion during the gulf war from the oil 'windfall' money.
advise the federal government on all financial, material and other implications of Longe’s recommendations as well as the legal framework for the establishment of private universities.\textsuperscript{41}

The ASUU strike, which paralyzed university activities, delayed the work of the committee. However, due to intense pressure from the civil society, between 25 May and 3 September 1992, Babangida accepted the ASUU proposal and signed the agreement that embodied their demands.

While NICRHEN deliberated, both the federal and state governments established five universities. In September 1992, the federal government established the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra State. In addition, it established the University of Agriculture, Umudike to balance the location of the Federal Universities of Agriculture in the former Northern and Western Regions.\textsuperscript{42} Similarly, four state universities were established in 1992: Imo State University, Owerri; Benue State University; Bagauda University of Science and Technology, Kano; and Delta State University, Abraka. The universities established in 1992 had one thing in common: they followed the creation of new states. For instance, the creation of Abia State from former Imo State and subsequent forfeiture of former Imo State university (established in 1981) to Abia State, compelled Imo to establish its own university. The same applied to all other universities. The politics of state creation were, therefore, an essential part of the politics of establishing universities.

Having resolved the crisis between the federal government and ASUU, which paralyzed academic activities in the universities for 5 months, the Implementation Committee finalized its

\textsuperscript{41} Federal Republic of Nigeria, Report of the National Implementation Committee on the Report on Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, Volume 1, Main Report, December 1993. The committee was comprised of Professor O.O. Akinkugbe as the Chairman. Other members include Dr. (Mrs.) A. S. Afolabi, Professor C. O. Njoku, Chief B. Kotun, Dr. P. T. Mirchaulum, Professor A. Akindoyeni, Dr. (Mrs.) H. Ali, Chief M. S. N. Mbajiorgu, Dr. G. C. Ezimora, Dr. N. A. Yakubu and Alhaji T. A. Abdulkadiri.

work by mid November 1992. Thereafter, it sent nine draft legislations to the Minister of Education for further action. By January 1993, the federal government had approved the legislation, which became law on 1 January 1993. Three of these laws favored the process of massification of university education. The first was The National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions (Amendment) Decree No 9 of 1993. This decree amended the Education (Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Decree 1985, and repealed the Decree No 19 of 1984 called “The Private University (Abolition and Prohibition) Decree 1984.” Decree 9 of 1993 not only granted the state and federal governments the power to establish higher education institutions but also local governments, companies incorporated in Nigeria, and even individuals or associations of individuals who were citizens and who meet the criteria for founding new universities. Decree 9 legitimized the involvement of the private sector in the provision of higher education.

Unlike the emergence of private universities in 1983 without prescribed regulatory guidelines, Decree 9 of 1993 stipulated rigid criteria for future establishment of private universities. The criteria include, among other things, evidence of concrete and guaranteed sources of financial support for university to the tune of N200 million and a minimum land area of 100 hectares. This criterion recognized that lack of sustainable funding of public universities affected the maintenance and expansion of facilities. Buhari had similar choice in 1984, but he had chosen to abolish the twenty-six private universities that were established in 1983. Thus, after nine years of banning private universities, the federal government decided to permit their operations. It was, therefore, because of the inadequate funding of universities as well as the rising demand for university places in the face of deteriorating facilities between the

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43 Ibid., 9.
late 1980s and 1990s that Nigeria, including many African countries, welcomed private sector involvement in the provision of university education.

To guarantee sustainable financing of public universities, and in line with its agreement with ASUU, the federal government promulgated Decree No 7 of 1993, which established the Education Tax Fund (ETF). Among other things, the objective of ETF was to provide funding for educational facilities and infrastructural development in all universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, both federal and state, including the construction and renovation of lecture theatres, auditoriums, administrative blocks, and hostels. The decree required companies registered in Nigeria to pay 2 percent of yearly profit to the ETF fund as an education tax. In addition, it stipulated that 50 percent of the total collectable revenue would go to higher education and shared in the ratio of 2:1:1 for universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education respectively. When the government imposed the education tax, many foreign oil companies demanded exemption, arguing that the policy run contrary to the Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT) Act of 1959, which precluded oil companies from paying any other tax after paying the PPT. The oil companies subsequently petitioned the then Finance Minister, Anthony Ani. After a series of meetings, the federal government exempted the foreign companies from paying the education tax for 1993, but demanded that they would still pay it to the tune of N2 billion in 1994 and 1995. However, since the federal government did not appoint an ETF board until 1998, there was no assessment for the education tax for all companies in 1993 and no collections were made as well.

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47 Ibid.
48 See *The Guardian*, 2 July 2000, 29. However, collections were made subsequently as follows: N4.5 billion in 1994-95; N6.6 billion in 1996-97; N6.4 billion in 1998-99. Nevertheless, it was in 1999 that the money was allocated to different levels of educational system.
To alleviate the financial burden on prospective university candidates, the federal government further promulgated the Nigerian Education Bank (NEB) Decree No. 50 of 1993, which replaced the Nigerian Student Loan Board (NSLB) of 1972. Because the NSLB failed to recover the outstanding loans of over N40 million awarded to students from 1972 to 1991, the federal government suspended the program in 1992 and, in its place, introduced the NEB.\(^4^9\) The NEB was expected to serve as a major intermediary between students and the government in Nigeria’s education credit market; to exploit private sector resources for the funding of education; and to take over part of government’s responsibilities of funding education. Specifically, the NEB was to become involved with lending for student, publishing, equipment leasing, project financing, funds mobilization, and provision of advisory services for educational purposes.\(^5^0\) The Federal Government fully subscribed NEB with the share capital of N400 million with the long-term plan of privatizing the Bank and make it a stockholder-owned corporation.\(^5^1\)

In the meantime, Nigerian response to Decree No 9, which allowed the private sector to establish institutions of higher education, was overwhelming. Within a short time, twelve private individuals and organizations collected applications from NUC in 1993 for their proposed universities.\(^5^2\) Since Decree 9 provided stiff criteria that interested applicant had to meet before

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\(^5^0\) E.J. Chuta, 423.

\(^5^1\) Ibid., 426. Loans to undergraduates are designed to place a likely debt burden on students ranging from NGN 24,000-NGN 32,000 (US$ 201-268) for four years in 1998. Within this range, student loans are assumed to vary according to the type of course taken, duration, level (e.g. professional, or non-professional), degree, or non-degree. Loans are structured to meet the higher costs of students in professional fields such as medicine, law, accountancy, architecture, quantity surveying etc.

\(^5^2\) National Universities Commission Report, available at <http://www.nuc.edu.ng/> (1/6/2005). The proposed universities were Madonna University, Anambra State; Institute of Christian Studies, Gboko, Benue State; Educational Co-operative Society of Nigeria, Lagos; Northern Institute of Management and Technology, Kano; Prof. T. M. Yesufu; Adventist University of West Africa; African University of Technology, Akwa Ibom State. Other applicants were Pan-African Homoeo Medical College; Catholic Institute of West Africa; Bell University,
receiving operating licenses, they began to provide the necessary facilities in line with NUC guidelines. The requests to establish private universities heightened the prospect of increasing access to universities. Regardless, funding continued to constitute a major obstacle to the expansion of access in the existing public universities. Due to the strike embarked on by the ASSU in 1991, the federal government committed itself to increase the capital and recurrent grants to the federal universities from 3,055,864,940:00 in 1992 to 3,905,915,278:00 in 1993.\textsuperscript{53} However, this increase did not have significant impact on the universities partly because the value of the national currency had gone down such that the huge budgetary allocations amounted to little in real terms. According to the executive secretary of NUC, “…the rate at which the Naira value has been deteriorating has been faster than the rate at which we have been able to utilize the new funds that have been allocated to the universities for both recurrent and capital needs.”\textsuperscript{54} Besides, given the widespread corruption in the Babangida administration, there was a gap between what the government budgeted and what they eventually disbursed.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, the ASUU accused the government of non-implementation and violation of the 1992 agreement and embarked on another four-month strike (May-September) in 1993.

Worst still, due to the financial irresponsibility of the federal government in the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program, the IMF withdrew its adjustment support, which led to the termination of the program. The attendant large fiscal deficits and economic stagnation worsened the plight of universities and showed that Nigeria’s economic

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\textsuperscript{53} Peter Okebukola, \textit{Issues In Funding University Education in Nigeria}, NUC Monograph Series Vol.1 No 7, 2003, 8.


\textsuperscript{55} Kunle Amuwo, 3.
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problems were not necessarily fiscal as the World Bank/IMF suggested and as Nigerian leaders believed. According to Baunsgaard, “A fiscal rule is no panacea for all fiscal-related ills in Nigeria; unless a rule is supported by measures to strengthen the quality of spending, addressing corruption and transparency issues, little real improvement is achieved.”\(^\text{56}\) As Alexander Bamiloye further commented, “The structural adjustment...is academic. The real adjustment is that of the mind as a people and as a nation... The country will work if we want it to work.”\(^\text{57}\) Therefore, the real problem was human not fiscal, and any solution that failed to address the human problem was bound to fail as SAP demonstrated. Again, there was nothing wrong with the “Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else,” as Chinua Achebe insisted; Nigerian problems resulted from “the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenges of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.\(^\text{58}\) Is not that simple.

Nevertheless, the economic and political crisis resulted in the resignation of Babangida on 27 August and the emergence of General Sani Abacha on 18 November 1993 after three months of a transitional government headed by Ernest Shonekan. Yet, the Abacha government did not implement the 1992 ASUU/FGN agreement. ASUU embarked on another strike, paralyzing academic activities for five months (August 1994-January 1995) to secure a firm commitment by government to respect the 1992 agreement. However, in his 1995 budget Abacha promised to devote huge amount of funds to rehabilitate facilities in the existing universities in line with ASUU agreement with government in September 1992.\(^\text{59}\) Aware that no


social and economic program would be executed successfully without addressing the causes of
Abacha recognized that under SAP, debt rescheduling imposed a burden not only because it
bunched up payments at a later date, but it also attracted an extra annual sum of $2.5 billion in
interest payment.\footnote{“Economic Recovery Programme, 1996-1998: An alternative to the Medium-Term Programme of the World
Bank/IMF,” http://www.dawodu.com/neic2.htm} However, despite Abacha’s economic recovery policies, the condition of
universities did not improve; the government ignored ASSU’s consistent demand for improved
condition of service and better funding of universities. Consequently, the union embarked on a
seven-month strike in 1996. Incensed by the frequent suspension of academic activities in the
universities due to ASUU strikes, Abacha proscribed ASUU, including other university staff
unions; dissolved their executives and asked them to forfeit their assets to the government.\footnote{New Nigerian, 4 September 1996, front page. See also Academic Staff Union of Universities: University of Lagos Branch http://www.asuulag.org/ (accessed 4 July 2006).}
ASUU was silenced, and this ban remained until 1999.

Partly in search of a solution to social, economic, and political problems and partly to
divert Nigerian attention from the dictatorship and corruption of the administration, Abacha set
up the Vision 2010 Committee to chart a new direction for government policies. In addition,
during Nigeria’s 36\textsuperscript{th} Independence Anniversary, he promised to set up a committee to review
the current situation of higher education, particularly why it had failed “to meet the nation’s
developmental aspirations.”\footnote{Federal Republic of Nigeria, Committee on the Future of Higher Education in Nigeria, Volume 1 Main Report, June 1997, 1.} In his address, Abacha, as usual, expressed concern about the sad
situation of universities, emphasizing the need for immediate action “to address the issues so as to
lay a solid foundation for the emergence of a befitting educational system that will help propel the
nation into the 21st Century.”\footnote{Ibid.} As promised on 1 October 1996, Abacha set up the Committee
Abacha’s decision to include five traditional rulers in COFHE was instructive. In Nigeria successive military governments since 1983 have relied on the support of traditional rulers for their own legitimacy. Abacha’s regime went further to grant the traditional rulers throughout Nigeria five per cent of local governments’ monthly allocations. The traditional rulers were seen at the government house winning and dining with the dictator. Among those who supported Abacha’s continued stay in power were the traditional rulers; they unequivocally said that Abacha was the only viable candidate to lead Nigeria. Thus, by involving traditional rulers in the COFHE, the government hoped to receive recommendations that would reflect its preferences.

The terms of reference of the COFHE were similar to that of the Longe Commission except that the Commission was also required to review the entire higher educational system, identify areas of duplication of courses, facilities, and institutions, and make detailed recommendations aimed at rationalizing the system and optimizing the utilization of scare resources to meet national needs. The Longe Commission had already addressed other terms of references centered on university funding, admissions, and private universities. This is odd because even though the commission’s recommendations had not been fully implemented, Abacha still set up another committee. In fact, the setting up of higher education committees, especially since 1983, had become a favorite pastime of the military rulers who were not necessarily motivated...
by sheer love of higher education but used them as tools for political distraction and diversion of Nigerians.\(^67\) This often accounted for discontinuity and public ruse in policy formulation and implementation.

Both the COFHE and Vision 2010 Committee submitted their reports to the government in 1997. The Vision 2010 Committee, among others, declared that the acquisition of science and technology education and its efficient application would place Nigeria en route, by the year 2010, to becoming a developed nation in terms of economic prosperity, political stability, and social harmony. It regretted that higher education entrusted with that responsibility was marred by cycles of crisis as identified by preceding committees and commissions.\(^68\) Similarly, the COFHE showed that the duplication of courses in the universities constituted a waste of government financial resources. For example, in some instances, undergraduate programs in education were offered in the Faculties of Education and then by other units within the same university such as the Institute of Education, Continuing Education Centre, Correspondent and Open Studies Programs, etc. In addition, there was a University of Agriculture in Abeokuta and Faculties or Colleges of Agriculture at Ibadan, Ago-Iwoye, Ife, and Ogbomosho at the same time. Another form of duplication, which is intra-sectoral, occurred between tertiary educational Institutions. For instance, Institutes, Polytechnics and Colleges meant to develop middle-level manpower, ran degree programs in affiliation with Universities in Education and Engineering courses, etc.\(^69\) The COFHE noted that the rationalization program introduced since 1984 and the results of accreditation exercises were not implemented.

\(^{67}\) Meanwhile, to win popularity and in response to agitation for more states, on the Independence Anniversary on the 1 October 1996 Abacha created six states: Bayelsa State, Zamfara State, Nassarawa State, Gombe State, Ebonyi State, Ekiti States, bringing the total number of states in Nigeria to thirty six.


\(^{69}\) Ibid.
Also, the Committee observed that most Nigerians, including university administrators, believed that some form of rationalization of the University System was necessary. Idris Abdulkadir, the NUC secretary had advocated a reduction of the number of universities in the country to fifteen. According to him, “[t]he nation’s lean resources cannot adequately sustain this number of universities. We should not harbor sentiments or political considerations in education matters.” However, Abdulkadir’s arguments did not take into account the issues of corruption, misappropriation, mismanagement, inefficiency, and lack of coordination that affected public institutions in Nigeria such as Railway Corporation, Water Board, ministries, etc. Universities were not exceptions. Nigeria had the money to fund these universities adequately, but corruption, government and public apathy and mismanagement of funds plagued the universities. Therefore, reducing the number of universities would still not address the root of the problem.

Furthermore, the COFHE highlighted the several options for restructuring and rationalization based on submissions made to it for reduction in the number of universities. The first suggestion was for all Nigerian universities to be reduced to fifteen, made up of six first-generation Universities, seven second-generation Universities, University of Abuja and the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA). The second suggestion advocated for fifteen universities, made up of five Federal Universities of Technology (FUTs), five Federal Universities of Agriculture (one additional university in Jigawa and Kebbi States) in the Sahelian region, and Universities of Abuja, Calabar, Lagos, Maiduguri and Uthman Danfodio University, Sokoto. The third suggestion advocated eleven universities, University of Abuja; four comprehensive universities (Ibadan, Nusukka, Zaria, Jos); three Universities of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Makurdi, Maiduguri, or Sokoto to be converted to University of Agriculture; and three

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Universities of Technology, one in Owerri, Federal Universities of Technology, Mina, FUT, and Katsina. Other submissions advocated for six, twelve, or eighteen Universities, consisting respectively of one, two or three each from the six geo-political zones. Ultimately, the committee recommended that the first-generation, second-generation and the University of Abuja should maintain their status as universities, while the others namely: Federal Universities of Technology, Federal Universities of Agriculture, University of Uyo, and Nnandi Azikiwe University would be merged as University Colleges. This recommendations was aimed at ensuring realistic and sustainable funding of fewer universities by reducing the administrative cost of running universities, as the 1987 World Bank study group identified, and utilize the money to maintain and build more facilities in the universities. The COFHE recommended the development of infrastructural facilities and adequate funding to promote access.

The COFHE endorsed the idea of private universities in Nigeria but noted that private firms in Nigeria experience two major problems, which may affect private universities. The first problem was that they relied too largely on a single individual, and such firms survive only in the lifetime of the individual, even where the firms are incorporated. In addition, the firms were over-dependent on patronage by the governments as the main financier of the economy, thus making their fortunes unstable, with each change in government. This factor, including the stringent requirement established by the NUC, must have accounted for why many individuals who obtained forms for private universities were reluctant to submit them. Of the 29 applications forms collected from 1993 to 1996, only 6 were completed and duly returned to the National Universities Commission. Part of the reasons was the skepticism of the public who saw what

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71 Ibid., 28.
72 Ibid., 29.
happened to private universities in 1984 coupled with the uncertainties of the country’s political arena. The COFHE held that it was unhealthy for one individual to own an institution and therefore suggested the amendment of Decree 9 to forbid any one individual from owning a university. In addition, it recommended that no one individual should own more than 40 percent of equity share of a private university. The COFHE’s conscious desire to please the government informed its recommendations to reduce the number of universities, reduce grants to universities, and save Abacha the financial nightmare of demands by the universities. However, until Abacha’s regime ended in 1998, these recommendations were not implemented.

The increases in financial allocations to the universities since 1994 remained inadequate to pay staff salaries regularly let alone maintain and expand facilities to accommodate increasing demand. Admission statistics revealed that demand for university places continued to outstrip its supply. For instance, in 1996/97, 472,362 applied for admission into all Nigerian universities but 76,430 secured admissions (16 per cent), 1997/98, 419,807 applied but 72,791 admitted (17.3 per cent). The major reason for low intake was caused by inadequate facilities arising from low funding and mismanagement of resources. A 1997 special report titled “The Sorry State of the Universities,” published by the Nigeria’s top newspaper, the Guardian, emphasized that the infrastructural decay in all Nigerian universities affected not only the quality of learning but also limited the intake of students. It noted for instance that since the establishment of the Lagos State University in 1984 with 300 students, the institution had increased in population to around 15,000 without any meaningful improvement in the initial infrastructural facilities.

“Consequently, the classrooms, laboratories (where they exist), offices, and equipment have

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74 Ibid., 149.
become overstretched.” The story of lack of facilities was the same. The head of the petroleum and chemical engineering department while bemoaning the sorry state of the university declared that “…the system is dead and buried. No other comment.” In the University of Jos, the report noted that “There are no seats to accommodate [students].” The report also observed that due to insufficient classrooms in Imo State University, many lecturers fight over classrooms located at C and D blocks. These problems were common in all Nigeria universities and they affected enrolment.

Faced with tight resource constraints as well as rising demand for university opportunities, universities, especially those that were state-owned, mounted satellite campuses around the country to expand access and generate enough revenue to meet their financial obligations. Satellite campuses were not new in the 1990s. In fact, many universities had begun as satellite campuses of existing universities. Notable among them was the University of Ibadan, Jos Campus, which later became University of Jos in 1975. However, the satellite campuses that emerged in the 1997 were different. The government did not establish them, rather respective universities did. Lectures were held in primary or secondary school buildings--sometimes in business centers. The original idea of establishing satellite campuses was to turn them eventually into full-fledged universities. However, the satellite campuses that emerged in the 1997 negated this idea. Most satellite campuses were located in major cities, notably Lagos. Institutions with campuses in Lagos include, among others, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Delta State University, Ogun State University, University of Calabar, Nnamdi Azikiwe.

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77 Ibid., 15.
78 Ibid., 14.
79 Ibid, 15.
University, and Obafemi Awolowo University. These campuses were established without NUC approval.

The proliferation of satellite campuses was motivated partly by profit and massification of university education. The phenomenon followed increasing demand for part time university training by full-time workers. According to Sola Dixon and Victor Onyeka-Ben, “Because of the resources at the disposal of such working candidates, the universities in no time began to see in them opportunities to boost their revenue and thus supplement their lean purses.” Thus, due to the government insufficient funding of universities and in their bid to look for alternative sources of revenue, universities rushed to establish many learning centers in major cities to keep afloat. Dr. Maduabuchi Dukor, a senior lecturer in Lagos State University stated that “the proliferation of satellite campuses, certificates and Diplomas has a primitive capitalist underpinning. It is symptom of the overall greed and avarice in the Nigerian society.”

On the other hand, the proliferation of satellite campuses was motivated by the desire of universities to satisfy the yearning of a large number of citizens to further their education. Professors O. Eruvbetine sp. and Bamidele Folarin of University of Lagos argued that the proliferation of satellite campuses was “necessitated by the law of demand and supply in the face of the inability of government and the conventional university system to cope.” For instance, at the matriculation of the Lagos satellite students of Delta State University, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Pius Sada, affirmed that the popularity of the program was manifest in the number of applicants for the program. According to him, out of the 6,000 qualified applicants, only 2, 736

\[81\] Ibid.
\[82\] Ibid.
secured admission. He further noted that in due time when facilities of the campus located at Ikorodu Road expanded, more students would secure places. Therefore, the universities were responding to mounting demand.

Although the proliferation of satellite campuses under questionable circumstances and learning environments had a potential effect of expanding access, it threatened the quality of university education. Therefore, the NUC, whose responsibility it was to advise government on the establishment of universities, ordered all satellite campuses to close down in January 1998. A letter signed by Professor I.I. Uvah, director of academic planning for NUC, alleged that the satellite campuses were established without due clearance from government. He further insisted that such a development was contrary to the requirements that all degree courses be domiciled in academic departments. As Uvah warned, “It is illegal for any university to set up a satellite campus or study center outside the location approved at its inception by the federal government for its academic activity towards the award of degree of whatever nature without fresh clearance.” The federal minister for education, Alhaji Dauda Birma, later endorsed this decision. Since over 90 per cent of the satellite campuses were located in the south and largely dominated by southerners, critics from the south such as Dr. Kachi Ozumba dismissed the decision as anti-southern and largely inspired by political considerations. However, the reduction of the issue here to regional politics is inappropriate. Indeed, satellite campuses were a disgrace to higher educational development in Nigeria, and it did not matter whether the Minister was a Northerner or Southerner.

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 See *The Guardian*, 25 February 1998, 15
Yet, the idea of private universities remained attractive to both proprietors and students. Before the end of 1998, more Nigerians submitted applications for private universities. The transition to civil (democratic) rule in 1999 under General Abdulsalami Abubakar (who succeeded Abacha in 1998), accelerated the establishment of private universities in Nigeria. In April 1999, Abubakar approved the establishment of three private universities--Igbinedion University, Okada, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Madonna University, Okija. Subsequently, the NUC issued licenses to these universities in May 1999, the month Olusegun Obasanjo was inaugurated as the new civilian president. The philosophy of these universities recognized the unstable and decaying atmosphere under which students studied in the existing universities, the limited intake of students, and the need to make a change. Madonna University sought to “provide higher education and well balanced training in an atmosphere of peace without discrimination.” The philosophy of Igbinedion University was to “provide opportunity for young men and women to learn under the most conducive atmosphere, imbibe the highest moral and ethical values and to develop their entrepreneurial instincts.” Babcock University’s mission was “to offer high quality professional, pre-professional, general and vocational education to prepare men and women for responsible, dedicated and committed service to God and humanity.”

Many Nigerians found private universities very attractive because they believed that academic activities would not be affected by industrial actions, as obtainable in the public universities. Also, some of these private universities, such as Babcock and Madonna, were

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90 Ibid., vi.
91 Ibid.
founded by religious organizations, and parents expected them to have an impact on their children in both academic knowledge and high morals. Moreover, many parents whose children were denied admissions in the public universities due to limited and inadequate facilities hoped that the private universities would provide an alternative route. As a *Punch* editorial noted, since only 15.31 percent, 16.71 percent and 14.73 percent of the total applicants secured admission into the few Nigerian universities in 1990, 1991, and 1992 academic years respectively, the establishment of private universities became “a normal and commendable supply response to a huge and growing demand for university education.”

With the establishment of three private universities, the total number of universities in Nigeria climbed to forty-five in 2000 with a total student enrolment of about 526,780. This number was huge but the pressure for expansion remained largely due to high demand. For instance, out of the 550,399 candidates that applied for admission to all the universities in 1999/2000, only 60,718 secured admissions (11.0). States from the South accounted for the highest number of applicants and admission while those in the North accounted for the lowest. That the South maintained its lead in university enrolment showed that the quota system had failed to address the educational disparity. Besides, the fact that the demand for university training remained high despite graduate unemployment occasioned by economic downturn, demonstrated the importance Nigerians attached to university education both as a means to an end and an end itself. According to Y. Lebeau, “Even if the university as a direct passport to becoming an elite in the country is no longer a reality…higher education as a pre-requisite to

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social climbing is an ideology that is still widely supported in Nigeria.”95 This is the most formidable driving force behind the demand for university education.

Although there was a high demand for university education, it was largely unmet because funding and development of facilities did not keep pace with the expansion in demand. As Bello A. Salim puts it, “[t]he greatest problem of admission into universities in Nigeria today is the limited vacancies for the large number of eligible candidates aspiring to study in these institutions.” 96 After his visit to some Nigerian universities, Jonathan Fanton of the MacArthur Foundation stated that there was a ‘deep reservoir’ of human talent in Nigeria. However, according to him “the conditions are clearly not equal to the potential of the people: under-maintained buildings, empty library shelves, over-crowded classrooms, science laboratories without modern equipment. We know there is a lot to do to bring your universities to its full potential - to make them the best they can be.”97 Reviving Nigerian universities, Fanton advised, would only succeed if the government abandoned the prevailing “incremental coping through a steady stream of compromises and rationalizations.”98

Although in 1991, the Longe Commission had recommended better funding of universities, phasing of quota system, and allowing the private sector to provide university education, the federal government only pursued the private sector involvement in the provision of university education. Thus, the issues of funding and the quota system continued to constitute

98 Remarks by Jonathan Fanton about Strengthening Higher Education in Nigeria, 1 May 2001 http://www.macfound.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=IkLXJ8M0QKrH&b=1137397&ct=1270225
99 Ibid.
bottlenecks in student enrolment. Denied funds to expand facilities, many universities designed
to accommodate 10,000 students, ended up enrolling many. Data from the Planning Office of
the University of Ibadan shows that “whereas student enrolment was 9,176 in the 1982/83
session, it had risen to about 100 % to 18, 228 by 1998/99 session without any corresponding
expansion in facilities.”99 This situation was common in all Nigerian universities. The situation
in state universities was even worse. In fact, many state universities were merely glorified high
schools.

Another major obstacle in the drive to massification was JAMB. The ASUU blamed
JAMB for its discriminatory admission policies that excluded potential candidates and also
compromised merit. At its 11 National Delegates Conference held in Benin City in 2000, ASUU
called on the federal government to scrap JAMB and allow individual universities to conduct
admission examinations through a process to be determined by their senates.100 ASUU argued
that JAMB had outlived its usefulness and would no longer cope with the explosion in the
population of candidates seeking admission higher education institutions. Besides, it noted that
the board had not answered the problem of cheating and leakage of its examination papers,
which had led to cancellation of centers.101 ASUU’s position implied that if individual
universities were granted complete autonomy in student admission, it would eliminate the JAMB
inefficiency that cost many students admission yearly as well as improve the quality of intake.

The reduction in university funding since 1986 was largely due to the IMF conditionality
for SAP and the World Bank reports since 1970s, which had encouraged Africans to divert funds
meant for higher education to fund primary education because it believed that public investments

99 Olusegun Agagu, “The Nigerian Universities: Reviving,” being a text of a lecture to mark the 30 anniversary of
the university of Ibadan Alumni Association, at the auditorium of the federal polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, on Tuesday 11
November 2000.
100 The Post Express, 14 March 2000, 25.
101 Ibid.
in universities and colleges brought meager returns compared to investment in primary and secondary schools. This advice influenced the drastic reduction of grants to universities under the ill-fated rationalization program. However, the World Bank eventually realized that this economic analysis was both narrow and misleading. In its 2000 report the World Bank affirmed that the prevailing “traditional economic arguments are based on a limited understanding of what higher education institutions contribute.”

It stressed that “educated people are well positioned to be economic and social entrepreneurs, having a far-reaching impact on the economic and social well-being of their communities. They are also vital to creating an environment in which economic development is possible.”

Having accorded high priority to higher education, the World Bank encouraged governments around the world to invest in higher education because “...higher education is no longer a small cultural enterprise for the elite. Rather, it has become vital to nearly every nation’s plans for development.” This is because, as Malcolm Gills, President of Rice University, stated, “Today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth-or poverty-of nations depends on the quality of higher education. Those with a larger repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to lifetimes of unprecedented economic fulfillment.” However, as Gills stressed, the poorly educated would face hard times in the coming decades.

In support of renewed attention to higher education, the World Bank president, James D. Wolfensohn, emphasized that “it is impossible to have a complete education system without appropriate and strong higher education system.” For him:

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102 Higher Education in Developing Countries: Perils and Promise, 39. See also Kingsley Banya, “Are private universities the solution to higher education crisis in sub-Saharan Africa” Higher Education Policy 14 (2001)

103 Ibid.

104 The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, 2000)


106 Ibid.
You have to have centers of excellence and learning and training if you are going to advance the issue of poverty and development in developing countries…the key is…higher education, not just on the technological side, but to create people with enough wisdom to be able to use it.  

Training people with ‘enough wisdom’ to champion economic development was one of the major goals of Nigeria’s massification program since 1960. The World Bank’s recognition of the critical importance of higher education for development thus became a renewed slogan for the revitalization of Nigeria’s university education for the development needs of the 21st century. Until its ban in 1996 by the Abacha regime, ASUU was in the forefront of that effort. When General Abubakar lifted the ban on ASUU in 1998, it continued its call for better funding of universities to ensure high standards and provide adequate facilities to accommodate increasing demand. ASUU demands were sometimes selfish since they often compromised their position on adequate funding of universities when they reach agreement on salaries and conditions of service. For instance, ASUU commenced negotiations with the federal government in 1999 by first negotiating for better “salaries, wages and other conditions of service in the university system.” Though the government and ASUU signed an agreement on these three issues on May 25 1999, the government’s negotiating team promised to negotiate other aspects of university problems. The agreement was “…intended to be an interim palliative measure to enhance the income of academics, without prejudice to a comprehensive negotiation at a future date.” The agreement only adjusted allowances; it did not cover basic salaries, funding and autonomy.

Ultimately, a comprehensive negotiation between ASUU and the federal government took place in 2000. The Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Prof. Munzali Jibril, informed ASUU of Obasanjo’s approval of the composition of the Federal

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107 James D Wolfensohn, “Constructing Knowledge Societies,” 76.
Government Team to negotiate with ASUU. The agenda for negotiation was arranged in order of importance with the funding of universities at the top followed by basic salary, university autonomy, academic freedom, and other matters. Government negotiation team and ASUU’s team began negotiation on 28 August 2000 and reached an agreement on 11 September 2000. The agreement was comprehensive. It addressed the contentious issues of funding, basic salary, university autonomy and academic freedom. It provided specific funds for recurrent and capital expenditure, and also restoration and stabilization funds. It also included a clause providing for the subversion of state universities by the Federal Government. It was also agreed that the Federal and State Governments shall allocate to education a minimum of 26 percent of the annual budgets, subject to an upward review beginning in 2003. In addition, it agreed that 50 percent of the 26 percent Annual Budget Allocation would be allocated to the Universities. Finally, it provided for the restructuring of NUC and JAMB with additional admission requirements to be stipulated by the Senate of each university. The implementation of these agreements was designed to stabilize and restore universities, enhance opportunities for university education, halt brain drain, and promote high standards.

By the 2000 ASUU/Federal Government agreement, the federal government committed itself to “...reverse the decay in the universities, in order to reposition them for greater responsibilities in national development….the restoration of Nigerian universities through immediate massive and sustained financial intervention [and] a vast improvement in the living 

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110 The head of the Government Negotiating Team was Prof. Ayo Banjo, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt with 14 others majority of which were Pro-Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of Universities. There were 10 Advisers to the Government Team. Dr. Oladipo Fashina, ASUU’s National President, led ASUU’s Negotiating Team with 23 others drawn from the various universities across the country.
and learning conditions of university students.”¹¹² Thus, in his speech at the CVC annual seminar in 2000 President Obasanjo reiterated the federal government commitment to honor the August agreement, declaring that “[i]f we must join the league of developed nations, we must expand access to twelve times the present [university] size in the next decade.”¹¹³ Similarly, the president promised to re-visit the Open University and Distance Learning to help in delivering university education to the doorsteps of every Nigerian. By implication, the president envisaged the enrolment of about five million students in the universities by 2010. To make that possible, the communiqué at the end of the seminar insisted that “[o]pen access based on the principle of social demand for university places, remains the best option for providing entry to university education.¹¹⁴ These pronouncements reflect the post-colonial pursuit of university massification aimed at expanding, democratizing, and liberalizing opportunities for university education not only to train high-level personnel for economic and technological development of Nigeria but also to promote national unity and cohesion. In addition, they demonstrate the awareness of government and other education stakeholders of the place of highly educated Nigerian in the 21ˢᵗ century knowledge-driven world.

In sum, from 1990 to 2000, massification of university education suffered many setbacks owing to government’s continued under-funding of universities despite the recommendations of the Longe Commission. The situation was worsened by high inflation induced by SAP, mismanagement of oil revenue occasioned by corruption, misplaced priorities of the successive governments, and constant institutional unrest. Faced with increasing demand for the few available places, Nigerian universities in 2000 faced thorny odds. The odds notwithstanding, the

¹¹² Emmanuel Edukugho.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 184.
existence of these universities and their remarkable expansion embodied great achievements and
great promise.
CONCLUSION

Massification of university education dominated post-colonial higher education policies in Nigeria. Following the report of the Ashby Commission, which recommended ‘massive, unconventional, and expensive’ expansion of university education, the federal government, at independence in 1960, realigned university education policies to serve Nigeria’s post-colonial labor force, economic development, and national integration needs. Thus, the period between 1960 and 2000 witnessed the expansion and liberalization of access to university education.

This study has shown that the period between 1952 and 1959 set the stage for post-colonial massification agenda when Nigerian nationalists expressed disenchantment over the unresponsiveness of the UCI to expand demand for university education in Nigeria. Although the British colonial government upheld the elitist and conservative traditions of UCI until Nigeria’s independence in 1960, three constitutional changes of the 1950s facilitated not only the process of independence but also massification. The creation of regional legislatures by the 1951 Macpherson Constitution with power to legislate on primary and secondary school education enabled the Western and Eastern regions to declare universal free education in 1952 and 1953 respectively. The steps underscored the importance that Southerners attached to the expansion of educational opportunities, a mood depicted by S.O. Awokoya as “a national emergency, second only to war.” However, while the Eastern and Western Regions aggressively expanded educational opportunities, the Northern Region was rather slow in pushing for expansion. Predominantly Muslims, Northerners had resisted Western education because they believed it to corrupt the recipients. To them, education and Christianity were interwoven since the Christian missionaries dominated the provision of education throughout most of the colonial era. The reluctance of the Northern Region to expand educational opportunities further widened the

1 NAI, Sessional Paper on an Education Policy presented to the Western House of Assembly, July 1952, 5.
educational gap between it and the South. It was on this basis that the policy of equal educational opportunity that characterized post-colonial massification of university education was pursued.

Educational development in Nigeria took a dramatic turn in 1954. Encouraged by the Lyttleton Constitution, which granted the regions legislative power over higher education matters and the World Bank’s endorsement of higher educational expansion, the Eastern Region aggressively pursued the establishment of a regional university in 1955. Other regions embarked on similar plans. Although the regions independently pursued education policies without yielding to central coordination, the scheduled independence of Nigeria, adopted at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference, implied that the three regions would be merged into one country. Therefore, educational concerns assumed a national dimension. With the dire shortages of high-level personnel and the regional disparity in educational attainment, the need for higher education reforms became compelling. Accordingly, when the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which had previously advocated the expansion of education in British colonies, particularly in Nigeria, offered in 1958 to sponsor a study on the higher education needs of Nigeria, the national and regional governments enthusiastically accepted it. This study established that the Carnegie Corporation played a fundamental role, beginning in 1954, in advocating for a study on higher education reforms in British colonies, particularly Nigeria, as a means for American future involvement in the emerging African nations. It argued that the mutual understanding on higher educational reforms reached by the departing colonial officials, Carnegie Corporation, and emerging Nigerian leaders led to the setting up of the Commission on Post-Secondary and Higher Education (Ashby Commission) in 1959.

The Ashby Commission was asked to “conduct an investigation into Nigeria’s needs in the field of post-secondary and higher education over the next twenty years, and in the light of
the Commission’s findings to make recommendations as to how these needs can be met.”\textsuperscript{2} The timing was significant. The Ashby Commission was established on the eve of independence when the role of university graduates in the process of national development had become imperative. Besides, the Commission was established when the Northern Region had reconciled with the inevitable need to embrace Western education in order to avoid Southern domination of top government administrative and managerial positions. Thus, Nigeria’s new leaders reformed the inherited university system in line with the new circumstances.

In September 1960, the Ashby Commission submitted its report to the newly elected federal government headed by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The report called for the massive expansion of university education. This study has revealed that the implementation of the Ashby recommendations marked a turning point in the development of higher education, particularly between 1960 and 1969. During the period, the federal and regional governments expanded opportunities for university education to train available human resources for economic development and engaged university education in a conscious attempt to integrate the Nigerian pluralistic society. What followed was the first wave of massification. Consequently, the federal government approved the establishment of four universities at Nsukka, Zaria, Ife, and Lagos between 1960 and 1962, and expanded the university curriculum to include courses in African studies, commerce, and business administration, teaching, engineering, medicine and veterinary science, agriculture, law, and extension services.

The federal government underscored the importance of enhanced access to universities, particularly in science and technology courses, when its extended the Ashby Commission’s projection of 7,500 student to 10,000 students in 1968, adding that “7,580 should be taking

\textsuperscript{2} PRO: CO 554/2029, Announcement on Survey of Nigerian Education, Colonial Office Information Department, 27 April 1959.
courses in pure and applied sciences in view of the shortage of qualified Nigerian in those fields of study.”³ This work revealed that by establishing more universities and projecting higher enrolment in sciences, the federal government demonstrated its belief that the training of the labor force in the universities was a vital component of national economic development. Besides, the emphasis on science courses reflects the trend of thinking in the 1960s when many political elites and scholars believed that the wonders of the Western world derived from the sciences. Therefore, to sustain independence as well as justify it to Nigerians, the government sought to train Nigerians in diverse fields to help in the transformation of the economy. The emphasis on science subjects was a radical departure from the British concept of university education, which Ashby report described as “too inflexible and too academic to meet national needs.” ⁴ Thus, the pursuit of diversity, modeled after the American land-grant colleges, coupled with the federal and regional award of scholarships and external financial support, greatly increased student enrolment from 939 in 1959(excluding about 1,000 that were studying overseas) to 9,695 in 1969 (excluding enrolment in UNN).

However, even though top the government officials, policy makers, and other proponents of change emphasized applied sciences and vocational subjects as obtainable in America’s land-grant colleges, the actual implementation, with the exception of University of Nsukka, did not support their pronouncements. Unlike UNN which admitted candidates with GCE Ordinary Level Certificates, other universities still followed the British pattern by insisting on Advanced Level. Candidates for A’ level examinations were prepared in the few available sixth form

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schools. Since the cost of expanding these schools to train enough candidates for university education was enormous, there were shortages of candidates, especially for science courses. Consequently, fewer Nigerians demanded for courses in the sciences compared to the humanities, law, and liberal arts disciplines. As this study demonstrates, sixth form was largely responsible for this. Thus, six years after the report of the Ashby Commission, the chair, Eric Ashby, stated that it was an unwise decision to have retained the sixth form. According to him, “[t]he consequences are already unfortunate: a valuable opportunity to provide flexibility in the educational system has been lost, and one university [UNN] has found it advisable to circumvent the rigidities of the British pattern of schooling by admitting students at O level.  

By spreading university facilities to all the regions, the federal government sought to promote national unity through the provision of equal educational opportunity to all Nigerians. Since the 1960 Constitution granted both the regions and the federal government equal powers over higher education, it enabled the three regions to cater for the higher education interests of their indigenes. Besides, regional autonomy in higher education enabled the regions to define their own educational policies, which sometimes compromised the unity envisaged by educational planners. A notable example was the call by Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Ishaya Audu and other lecturers of the institution to scrap the inter-regional scholarships awarded to poor students under the Indigent Students Scheme simply because it benefited candidates from the South, who had maintained higher enrolment in all Nigerian universities.  

Instead of helping to unite the country, the regional universities became axis of bitter inter-regional rivalries. The animosities became full-blown when the Eastern Region decided to separate from the country, resulting in the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). The war

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exposed the absence of national unity and also disrupted educational expansion, particularly in the Eastern region. The desire to promote national integration compelled the federal government to set up the Dina Committee and the Curriculum Conference in 1968 and 1969 respectively, which, among other things, recommended the centralization of universities, free education, education for national unity, and the abolition of sixth form. These recommendations dictated post-civil war massification policies.

The desire for national reconciliation after the bitter experiences of the civil war and the sudden oil wealth of 1973, occasioned by the Yom Kippur War, influenced the direction of the second wave of massification between 1970 and 1979. In 1970, Gowon’s regime committed itself to building “a land of bright and full opportunities for all its citizens,” by providing education not only for its own sake as a means of developing an individual’s full potentials, but also to prepare Nigerians for specific tasks and employment functions needed to transform the country. Thus, massification of university education assumed greater importance to Gowon’s administration as he embarked on the goals of promoting national unity, closing the educational gap between the North and South, establishing more universities, and training scientists for facilitating economic development. As this study demonstrates, Gowon’s search for a common inter-regional educational policy persuaded him to convene the Seminar on a National Policy on Education in 1973. The Seminar proposed free education, education for national unity, geographical spread of educational facilities, abolition of the British sixth form, and the introduction of the American style 6-3-3-4 system of education. These recommendations were essentially influenced by the recommendations of the Curriculum Conference of 1969, the UNESCO report of 1972, and increased Nigerian interest in the American system of education.
This study showed that it was in search of greater national unity through “fairer spread of higher education facilities,” and in keeping with the Dina Committee’s recommendations that Gowon sought to centralize control of higher education by transferring it to the exclusive legislative list in 1972. Furthermore, he centralized university education by granting statutory powers to the National Universities Commission in 1974 and locating the five universities (established in 1975) in the educationally disadvantaged states, mostly in the North. To remove the bottlenecks that impeded access as well as promote national unity, the Obasanjo regime further centralized university admission by setting up the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in 1978, introduced a free university education policy, and adopted O’ level certificates as the minimum entry requirements to all universities. These were based on the understanding that “there can only be true unity where educational opportunities and resultant facilities, amenities and benefits are evenly distributed.”

Due to the federal government expansionist policies in the 1970s, the second wave of massification was marked by an accelerated expansion of university education leading to increase in student enrolment from 9,695 in 1969 to 57,742 in 1979 and the number of universities from five to thirteen as well.

Nigeria’s vast revenues from the oil export motivated the federal government to commit enormous financial resources for the expansion of the university system during the second wave of massification. Oil became a major foreign exchange earner and contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1973, and the buoyant oil revenue provided the basis for huge increases in government expenditures intended to expand infrastructure and non-oil productive capacity. Amid the euphoria of the oil price boom, Gowon outlined grand plans to expand agriculture, industry, transport, housing, water supplies, health facilities, education, rural electrification,

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7 Minutes of Special Meeting of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors with the Head of State at Dodan Barracks on Saturday, 18 September 1976, 2-3.
community development, and state programs. The expansion of the productive base of the economy simultaneously required the production of skilled labor to manage the expanding economy. Educating Nigerians, especially in the sciences, became central in fulfilling Gowon’s plans and greatly influenced the federal government’s deliberate pursuit of a 60:40 Science/Humanities ratio in university enrolment. Gowon underscored the importance of science to the country when he declared: “….it is perhaps not too much to hope also that if it ever becomes necessary for the human race to transfer en masse to some other planets, like Mars, our scientist and technologist would be ready with the necessary means of transport for Nigerian citizens!”  

Nevertheless, despite the government’s determination to promote science education, students enrolled in the arts/social sciences predominated in all the universities because the government failed to pay attention to the teaching and funding of science education in the secondary school level.

After thirteen years of military dictatorship in Nigeria, a new civilian government headed by Shehu Shagari assumed power in 1979. The provisions of the 1979 Constitution and the 1979/81 oil windfall shaped the government’s higher education policies during the third wave of massification, 1979 to 1983. The 1979 Constitution endorsed the doctrine of free education, equitable spread of educational facilities and opportunities, and the participation of both federal and state governments in establishing universities. The policy of free education dominated the 1979 electoral campaigns and its pursuit by Shagari regime was designed to expand access to the universities. The federal government established seven universities of science and technology between 1981 and 1984. The location of the new federal universities in Bauchi, Gongola, Niger, Imo, Ogun, Benue, and Ondo reflected the federal government’s sensitivity to those states.

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8 Address by his Excellency Major-General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government and Visitor of the University during the 21st Anniversary of the University of Ibadan, in Ibadan, No. 28, July 1970, 17.
without universities. Besides, these universities were established as specialized institutions
designed to help champion scientific and technological development in Nigeria. Indeed, the
universities that emerged between 1970 and 1983 were established to meet Nigeria’s growing
needs for scientific and technological developments. However, notwithstanding the collapse of
crude oil prices in the world market in 1982, the federal government borrowed from external
financial institutions in order to prosecute its ambitious social programs, including free education
and more universities.

Furthermore, since the expansion of facilities did not close the educational gap between
the North and South, the Shagari regime introduced the quota system in university admissions in
1981. The British and Southerners in the 1950s and 1970s respectively had strongly resisted the
idea of a quota system. While the British rejected it because of its insistence merit and high
academic standard, the Southerners feared that it would halt their educational advancement. Of
the four criteria for securing university admission under the new system, the educationally
disadvantaged criteria, which allocated twenty percent of admissions into the federal universities
to students from the twelve educationally disadvantaged states (ten from the North), was the
most contentious. Perceived as a form of discrimination to favor the under-represented states, the
‘advantaged’ states, mostly in the South, were exasperated. By all accounts, the introduction of
the quota system was not a sustainable solution in closing the educational gap between the South
and North. As the data of university enrollment revealed, it did not result in any significant
impact on the enrolment of Northerners in universities. Nevertheless, the increasing number of
qualified candidates and the introduction of the quota system compelled state governors, mostly
in the South, to establish state universities. It was essentially what they perceived as limited
opportunities to their indigenes in federal universities that compelled Southern states to exercise
their constitutional rights to establish their own universities. Although the politics of state
creation were identical with the politics of university expansion, it was more pronounced during
the third wave of massification. Between 1981 and 1983, eight states in the South established
their own universities, even when their financial capability declined sharply due to the fall in oil
revenue.

One of the most significant steps in the massification of university education during the
third wave was the establishment of National Open University (NOU) in 1983. Conceptually,
NOU was at the heart of massification because it sought to bring university education to the
doorsteps of all Nigerians regardless of age and location. But due to Nigeria’s poor
communication infrastructures, and students’ complaints that inundated the operation of the
university, the NOU was abrogated. In 1983, however, massification took an interesting twist
when private individuals and corporations, who were apparently inspired by the desire to make
profit and expand access to university education, established twenty-six private universities
within six months. The third wave of massification was characterized by an unprecedented
expansion of university education. Between 1979 and 1983, the number of institutions increased
from thirteen to fifty-three; student enrolment also doubled from 57,742 to 116,822. However,
economic depression of 1982/83 occasioned by the decline in oil revenue and aggravated by
official corruption and mismanagement of public funds forced the Shagari regime to reduce the
government’s social expenditure and imposed higher fees for public services, including
university education. The military administrations that ruled between 1983 and 1990 built upon
this policy initiated by Shagari in 1983. This study shows that government’s response to the
economic meltdown of 1983 shaped the rationalization policy instituted by the Buhari and
Babangida administrations during the fourth wave of massification, 1983 and 1990.
The austerity and stabilization measures introduced by Mohammadu Buhari (1983-1985), and the IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Program introduced by Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1990) to revamp the economy implied a reduction in the government’s social expenditures. Massification suffered as the federal government introduced fees (excluding tuition), in universities; drastically reduced grants allocated to universities and required them to generate income to supplement government grants. This was the thrust of rationalization policy. The consequence was a limited massification of university education during the fourth wave. The total number of universities was reduced to thirty-one. Although student enrolment increased from 116,822 in 1983 to 180,871 in 1990, the annual percentage increase in enrolment dropped from 10.9 percent in 1986 to 4.9 percent in 1989/90. Worse still, this study establishes that the increase in enrolment without improvement in funding or the establishment of more universities and maintenance of existing facilities resulted in the overcrowding and deterioration in university facilities, a decline in academic quality, brain drain, and the radicalization of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

Inconsistencies and discontinuities dominated federal government university policies. Although Buhari regime hastily promulgated a decree that abolished all the private universities, it soon requested the private sector to help the government to fund education. Furthermore, while Buhari merged four federal universities in 1985, Babangida demerged them and converted two of them into universities of agriculture in 1988. The establishment of universities of agriculture reflected Babangida’s idea of targeting university training to national economic recovery. Nigeria’s dramatic economic recovery occasioned by the oil wealth derived from the first gulf war influenced Babangida to set up the Gray Longe Commission in November 1990 to articulate a proposal for the possible federal government’s long-term sustainable support of universities.
The recommendations of the Commission favored massification. Its proposal for the government to provide 80 percent of the capital and recurrent needs of the universities, make adequate plans before establishing new universities, phase out the 20 percent admission quota allocated to candidates from disadvantaged states, and permit the operations of private universities, had the potential of advancing massification. Except for the proposal to allow the operation of private universities, Babangida’s rejection of other recommendations and their non-implementation by Sani Abacha’s regime (1993 -1998), engaged ASUU in a six-year confrontation with the federal government. During this period-1991-1996-the institutional action embarked by ASUU to get the federal government to fund university education disrupted academic activities in all universities and led to government’s proscription of ASUU in 1996. Also, notwithstanding the failure of the quota system in closing the educational gap between the North and the South, the federal government’s refusal to phase it shows that the policy performed a political rather than an educational work.

Nevertheless, the federal government established more universities, and as more states were created, they established their own universities, bringing the total number of universities to forty-two. However, in April 1999, a year after General Abdulsalam Abubakar became the head of state, he approved the establishment of three private universities, bringing the total number of universities to forty-five. Private university education was a welcome innovation; they pointed the way to the future course of massification. Although the total student enrolment of 526,780 represents a remarkable increase in access to university education in 2000, less than 20 percent of qualified and aspiring candidates secured admissions yearly due to the lack of available spaces. Strapped of funds to expand facilities, many universities mounted satellite campuses around the country to expand access and generate revenue to meet their financial obligations.
Nonetheless, satellite campuses made a mockery of higher education since they were established under questionable circumstances and learning environment.

Yet, universities enrolled students beyond their absorptive capacities. Data from the Planning Office of the University of Ibadan shows that “whereas student enrolment was 9,176 in the 1982/83 session, it had risen to about 100% to 18,228 by the 1998/99 session without any corresponding expansion in facilities.”\(^9\) This situation was common in all the universities. Contending with the problem of overcrowding engaged much of the time of university administrators. As Kole Ahmed Shettima puts it, “If you ask any Vice Chancellor of a Nigerian university what keeps him awake in the night, the response is likely student problems: accommodation, electricity, water and classrooms.”\(^10\) These problems were strictly non-academic. As Shettima further stated, “The other core responsibilities of the university such as research, innovation, and publications are not on their radar not because they do not care but it reflects the reality of the day-to-day existence in campuses.”\(^11\) Certainly, the massification of the system in terms of increase in enrolment was not matched by adequate funding for expansion of facilities. The situation in state universities was even worse, as most of them became merely glorified high schools.

The return to civil rule in 1999 raised hopes for a renewed expansion of university education. The new democratic regime of Obasanjo signed a comprehensive agreement with ASUU in 2000 to reverse the decay in the universities and promised to expand student enrolment twelve times the present size, and establish additional private universities and also an open


\(^11\) Ibid.
university. The implementation of these promises bodes well for the future of massification, and although more public and private universities, including the National Open University, were created from 2000 to 2006, it is premature as well as outside this study to attempt a historical account of recent events. The desire to satisfy the critical needs for human resources, socio-economic development, and national integration compelled Nigerian governments to re-align the purposes of a university, as the British originally conceived it. However, to facilitate the process of massification, and engage university education in promoting economic development and nation building (which the higher education policy makers hoped for since 1960), it was essential for the Obasanjo’s administration to keep its agreement with ASUU, overhaul the battered university system and rescue it from further decay. As Ekpu cautioned, “If we don’t rescue education, we can’t rescue anything, not the economy, not democracy, not development, not our values.”12 Revitalizing the public universities while permitting the establishment of additional private universities may well be the direction of massification in the 21st century Nigeria.

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