

ECONOMICS CURRICULUM WITH RESPECT TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES THAT ARE BEDEVILING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the Economics curriculum with respect to contemporary issues that are bedeviling educational system at secondary school level in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that Economics has a great benefit because its curriculum acquaints students with the international problems. The findings also help students to understand basic economic principles and concepts as well as the tools for sound economic analysis, provide experience to students to be able to make rational choice and decisions, make students know that they are the potential leaders of tomorrow. These can only be achieved through inclusion of the contemporary issues that bedevil the educational sector in the Economics curriculum and fully implemented. These include; Boko Haram, Voters' education, Corruption, Cultism, HIV/AIDS, Kidnapping among other issues that bedevil the implementation of Economics curriculum in Nigeria. The study recommended among others that Government should ensure full implementation of Economics curriculum in Senior secondary level not to pay lip service on educational matters. There is need to encourage Economics authors by the government to publish books that covers recent contemporary issues in educational sector. Proper awareness workshop and seminars should be organised by ministry of education and Area Directorate branches for Economics teachers on the best method of teaching students on contemporary issues bedeviling the educational sector

Keywords: Contemporary issues, Curriculum, Economics, Educational system, and Secondary school.

Introduction

Economic or Political economy as it was called before 1890, has not been able to set a definite or concise definition as the case may be. As a school subject, Economics has been defined by various Scholars based on the type of economic structure prevalent at the time they lived. Smith in Oko (2014) viewed Economics as an inquiry into the nature and cause of the wealth of nations. Smith wrote during the industrial revolution in the Europe when great wealth was being made from coal mines, cotton, iron works and pottery industries. James Mill in Oko and Oziegbe (2018) defined Economics as the practical science of production and

distribution of wealth. That is, all about how people produce and distribute various commodities that are required for the maintenance of human existence (the society).

Among these definitions, the acceptable one is that of Lionel Charles Robbins in Oko (2014) which affirmed that Economics is a social science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. This was the most acceptable definition by economists world over because it contains importance elements as; Scarcity, Choice, Opportunity cost, Want and Scale of preference. From the definition, we are living in a world of scarcity, and numerous wants in economics arises in the face of scarcity.

Oko & Oziegbe (2018) viewed that Economics was taken seriously in the world and to schools due the 1st and 2nd world war (1914-1919) and (1939-1945) respectively which brought about the 3Rs (Reconcile, Reconstruction and Rehabilitate the world ravaging economy. That is, to train people with the basic economic tools to contribute in national development. Also, the great depression of the economy in 1920 created a good ground to study economics.

Economics came late into the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria because of the combination of factors from outside and within the country. With this, it was accepted in Nigeria in 1966 and was first taken in the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) in 1967 because certificate economics was two years course. This brought so much hope and enthusiasm to students, business organisation and the government.

The general belief of Economics was to provide students training on how to make rational use of scarce resources to satisfy their unlimited wants, helps us to build up theories and tools for economic analysis, provide a rational guide to the firm and government in the allocation of scarce resources, help us to understand and appreciate economic problems facing the society and suggest ways of rectifying them, to solve the fundamental problems of what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce and to help build a strong and dynamic economy our dear nation Nigeria. This seems to have failed because of the contemporary issues bedeviling the Nigeria's educational sector. For examples, unemployment level is increasing every day, inflation level is rising daily, cashless policy that brought hardship to citizenry, corruption among leaders and followers among others. These issues raise some level of curiosity only the nature of Economics curriculum, its content, implementation and its significance in national development (Oko & Oziegbe, 2018).

Conceptual View of Curriculum

The term curriculum means different thing to different people. However, in this paper Offorma in cited in Oko and Oziegbe (2018) viewed curriculum as plan or blue print that guides an academic programme with the aim of bringing about positive change in the behaviour of the learners. The school curriculum can also mean the instrument by which schools seek to translate the hope of the society in which they function into concrete reality. In addition, Ivowu in (Oko and Oziegbe, 2018) defined curriculum as a tool for translating societal values from generation to generation. This definition summarises the organized knowledge given to learners in a school setting, every element in the learning environment, the subject matter to be learned, how to learn it, the learners and the teachers.

Afangideh in (Oko and Oziegbe, 2018) viewed curriculum as a planned, implemented, achieved or hidden. It is planned when it is based on the choice made by experts at different

levels concerning what value is to be impacted, how it should be taught and for whom it should be taught. Obanya in Irimiya (2018) viewed curriculum as dealing with the real nitty-gritty of the practical activities needed to ensure the realization of the lofty goals of educational programme. Michael cited in Irimiya (2018) position that curriculum means all learning experiences of the learner under the auspices of the school. This shows that both planned and unplanned learning experiences are important. Curriculum in this case represent an attempt to pass vital principles and features to an educational proposal in such a way that it is opened to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice in the school system. These definitions show that curriculum area of economics is a purposeful and educative programme which seeks to answer the major purpose and aim of education within the society generally.

Curriculum implementation

Implementation can be seen as a means to execute a task or plan. It is the actual use of a programme to fulfill the expectations of the designers. Curriculum implementation simply means putting into practice the officially prescribed syllabi. It is the practical stage in the curriculum process (Okoko and Oziegbe, 2018). Afangideh in Okoko and Oziegbe (2018) viewed curriculum implementation as the actual engagement of individual with planned learning opportunities. Curriculum implementation takes place in the classroom, the teacher states the instructional objectives, scope of the content, identify the key resources to be used and also determined the evaluation procedures that will enhance the execution of the plan. The teacher plans instruction for the learners on daily basis as over a long period of time. The teacher uses variety of teaching methods and strategies to deliver the lesson needed by the learners (Agwu in Okoko and Oziegbe, 2018).

It is no doubt that Economics is a powerful tool for national growth and development. Teachers are the major determinant of whether or not Economics can actually fulfill this purpose. Ogunyemi in Okoko and Oziegbe (2018) opined that there is a belief that Nigerian teacher most especially primary and secondary school teachers are curriculum illiterates or handicap in relevant competences for curriculum participation, implementation and evaluation. To buttress this fact, Ubanatu (2016) observed that teachers are hardly involved in curriculum projects only during implementation. Corroborating this, Umeala (2015) observed that since Economics was introduced in Nigerian education system in 1966, teachers are yet to participate fully at the planning and development states of Economic curriculum.

Senior Secondary School Economics Curriculum

The Economics at this level is structured with intended learning experiences to broaden students' knowledge for national growth and development (Ede, Odebahiele&Modebelu (2016). The structure of the new Economics curriculum includes emerging issues such as human capital, Economic lesson from Asian Tigers, manufacturing and construction and service industry derived from the need for value re-orientation and economic reform programmes (Ande, 2015). With these, the knowledge of economics is desirable for our social growth irrespective of who and who is in the society, ranging from the highly illiterate persons and highly claimed literate persons in the society. Whatever disciplines a person specialises at, he/she desires some knowledge of Economics. Why

economics gained ground is due to; economic problems (inflation, unemployment, recession etc), tackling poverty, development of human resources, birth control, deliver dividend of democracy, balance of payment, vocational skills, cultural values among others.

Economics as a discipline in secondary schools is relatively new, compared to the other subjects in the social science to which economics belong. Up till date, it is still not clear as to which level of the subject 'Economics' be introduced in the secondary schools. Although is presently being taught in Senior Secondary classes.

For effective teaching and learning of Economics, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in Oko and Oziegbe (2018) outline the following as objectives of teaching Economics at the senior secondary school.

1. To acquaint students with the international problems: The students need to understand why nations of the world are not independent of one another. No nation is good enough to stand on its own (isolation). Nations have to depend on some other nations for some requirement and by that, the problems of some countries can affect other countries e. g. war, famine, earthquake, epidemics, flooding etc.
2. To provide experience to students to be able to make rational choice and decisions: Due to the scarce resources in relation to wants, students need to arrange their wants according to priority in order to achieve maximum satisfaction.
3. To make students know that they are the potential leaders of tomorrow. As leaders, students need to plan effectively to enable them rule properly. The knowledge of economics ideas will prepare them for the position of leadership in the societies in which they find themselves.
4. To enable students know that economics is a living subject. That is, a subject of life because it deals with the basis of life in the society. It changes the position of man anytime by making him rich or poor depending on the rational decision taken by man. Hence, the subject gives some experiences how to build up in life for better living.
5. To enable students solve practical problems. Since economics deals with matters that affect daily life of individuals within the society e.g. how to buy commodities that are economical (being wise in purchasing and consumption of commodities) i.e. good value and less cost.
6. To acquaint students with national economic problems. These help students to be aware of national problems with understanding. That is, all nations of the world are faced with one economic problem or the other and also appreciate the effort of the government to solve some of these major economic problems e.g. inflation, unemployment, underemployment, recession, deflation, balance of payment deficit, unequal distribution of national resources amongst others.
7. To contribute to the critical thinking and scientific approach to economic excursion (journey out of the usual way). Students need to know that the knowledge of economic is key to any nation that wishes to develop. Nigeria is a developing nation and so we need people with the knowledge of economic to developed fast e.g. Good economic planners, good advisers, good administrators, managers of resources, policy makers, policy implementers' etc.

Looking at the above objectives, it shows that the Economics curriculum is quite rich but the challenge of underdevelopment and poor economic growth still persist in our nation. Presently, the nation's economy is in jeopardy and the objectives are being defeated. Olusola

(2014) observed that despite the good intention of both government and teachers, one still doubts the extent to which the objectives of Economics particularly at the senior secondary school have been achieved. Also, inability of a country to handle its economic problems after years of producing graduates of Economics was a clear signal that Economics was yet to given its proper place in the nation's education system.

Emerging Issues in Secondary School Economics Curriculum

Ande (2015) observed that one of the recent issues that emerged in the secondary school Economics curriculum is the economic lessons from the Asian Tigers (developed economies of Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan). The Federal Government of Nigeria has decided to adopt certain development strategies employed by the Asian Tigers. The introduction of systematic and rigorous education, the nation can develop its human resources and exploit same to build an enviable nation.

Another issue was the introduction of vision 2020 in the Economics curriculum. This aims at launching Nigeria towards the direction of sustained social and economic prosperity which will help to accelerate the emergence of a truly prosperous and self-reliance nation. The students are taught to recognize the huge human and natural endowments of the country and how to use it to be among the top 20 economies of the world. Also, economic development challenges were introduced to discuss issues of poverty, methods of poverty alleviation and eradication, agencies for poverty alleviation such as National Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) and National Directorate for Employment (NDE). Others include HIV/AIDS, corruption and the economy, the role of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices (ICPC) in the economy (Ande, 2015).

The government through the education system tries to accommodate these issues in the school curriculum to enhance its awareness but the Economics teachers lack the good textbooks that will treat the issues in details. Also, the external examination bodies are yet to recognise them as they are developed within the purview of Nigerian economic goals and challenges (Oko, 2014).

Contemporary Issues that are Bedeviling Nigeria's Educational Sector

1. Boko Haram

This was formed on the basic belief that western education is evil. Shehu in Nuhu and Kuden (2015) viewed that the group emanate from an orthodox teaching slightly similar to that of the Taliban in Afghanistan Pakistan. Boko Haram believes that western influence on Islamic society is the basis of religious weakness. It was founded in 2012 in Maiduguri, North Eastern Nigeria by one Islamic fundamentalist named Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. This movement is against the objective that education is a gate way to nation building. The insecurity should be introduced in Economics curriculum in order to give people more awareness about their evil strategies against humanity. They engaged in sophisticated attacks, suicide bombing, killing of people and destruction of property which create more havoc on government and the people (Omolade, 2014).

Ahmed (2014) observed that the poor state of our educational system, which is characterised by persistent strikes, cult activities, no hope for employment after graduation,

widespread of malpractices, prostitutions among others gave Yusuf Mohammed the opportunity to lure many youths to abandoned school and embrace the new and emerging state that promise to offer them a better education. The leader also took advantage of the irresponsible leadership at the level of government, unemployment, poverty, corruption and insecurity. The leader pointed out these inadequacies by quoting relevant portions of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the prophet to substantiate his claims. Ahmadu (2013) opined that there has been a truncation of educational activities in the country due to the threat and fear of being killed while in school.

The school curriculum has been negatively affected by the activities of Boko Haram. Omose in Nuhu and Kuden (2015) observed that due to the incessant closure of schools and intermittent break in schools' activities, many days and weeks are lost in the course of a term or semester. Children that have watched others being killed may decide not to go back for their studies for fear of being killed (Ikechukwu, 2014).

2. Voters' Education

Titus, Sunday, Istifanus, Joseph, Zwalfa, Nandom& Yusuf (2016) viewed that voters' education involves the enlightenment of prospective voters on how to conduct themselves before, during and after voting of the process of educating voters on all the things that they need to do to ensure free, fair and peaceful election electoral system, most people don't go to vote due to the little or no proper knowledge on voting. It should be included in the curriculum to spell out all the rules and regulations guiding election.

3. Corruption

The wrongdoing by people in special positions of trust or self-benefiting conduct by public officials and others dedicated to public service. This has brought Nigeria backward because resources that supposed to be used for development, only few individuals are enjoying it due to selfishness. This should be included in the Economics curriculum to help check some of the irregularities of workers (Titus et al, 2016).

4. Cultism

Cult or alternative religion is clearly dangerous. They provoke violence or antisocial acts or place their members in physical danger. A few have caused the death of members through mass suicide or have supported violence, murder against people outside the cult. This should be included in the Economics curriculum to educate students and the public the dangers of being a cultist.

5. HIV/AIDS

Human Immune deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune deficiency Syndrome has killed so many people due to little or no knowledge on how to prevent themselves from the disease. This should be included in the Economics curriculum to educate the students on the spread, signs and preventive measures of the disease.

6. Kidnapping

This is the act of hand pick somebody for so many reasons which could be for money, hatred, position, ritual among others. This inflicts pains on the relatives of the victim. This

should be included in the Economics curriculum to educate students on ways to identify kidnapers' persons (Titus et al, 2016).

Some Challenging Factors regarding Economics Curriculum Implementation in Senior Secondary Schools

Curriculum implementation is seen as a way of achieving the objectives of Economics as a subject. It is obvious that these objectives can be affected by certain factors. These include:

1. Inadequate library and important economics textbooks

As we know in all subjects, books are key for effective teaching of the subjects. For economics, most schools' textbooks are either outdated or few in supply which does not help the teachers that are ready to teach and also the students are not finding it easy.

2. Lack of sponsoring teachers to take part in workshop

The economics teachers need workshop or seminars to equip them on the present economic issues and also motivate them to be effective in teaching the subject not using their knowledge gotten in the higher institutions.

3. Poor attitude of students toward mathematics

Some students hate any subject related to mathematics, and so they find it difficult to solve calculations, interpret graphs or the little statistics in economics due to fear. This makes them to be failing the subject which is not good for the economics teacher.

4. Inadequate commitment by the teachers

Some economics teachers are teaching the subject for the purpose of the stipend at the end of the month and so they don't put in their effort and some even avoid some topics that are difficult for them to handle without looking for help from the other teachers.

5. Poor teachers' qualification to teach

Some teachers don't have the knowledge and experience to teach economics as real economists due to lack of proper screening before recruitment. Some teachers teaching economics are not real economics graduates e.g. arts or science teachers.

6. Inadequate teaching aids

The teaching of any subject can never be effective without instructional materials because it improves students' knowledge, abilities and skills, also it makes the teachers work effectively or easier. Teaching aids such as charts, graphs, textbooks, pictures, tables.

7. Curriculum Overload

Economics curriculum has often been reviewed due to the changes in the Nigerian economy. Davis (2013) observes that the new issues include; corruption, the role of EFCC and ICPC, MDGs or MSGs, NEEDS, Vision 2020, Poverty alleviation and eradication, HIV/AIDs, Power and energy inadequacy. Umena in Oko and Oziegbe (2018) observed that senior secondary school one and two are expected to offer minimum of sixteen (16) and register nine subjects in Senior Secondary Certificate Examination.

Conclusion

The paper examined Economics curriculum with respect to contemporary issues bedeviling educational system at secondary school level in Nigeria. Economics has a great benefit because its curriculum acquaint students with the international problems, it also helps

them to understand basic economic principles and concepts as well as the tools for sound economic analysis, provide experience to students to be able to make rational choice and decisions, make students know that they are the potential leaders of tomorrow. These can only be achieved through inclusion of the contemporary issues that bedevil the educational sector in the Economics curriculum and fully implemented. These include; Boko Haram, Voters' education, Corruption, Cultism, HIV/AIDS, Kidnapping among others. Therefore, proper Economics curriculum implementation in senior secondary schools will bring great development to the nation and the objectives of Economics as a subject will be fully achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The federal government should ensure full implementation of Economics curriculum in Senior secondary level not to pay lip service on educational matters.
2. There is need to encourage Economics authors by the government to publish books that covers recent contemporary issues in educational sector.
3. Proper awareness workshop and seminars should be organised by ministry of education and Area Directorate branches for Economics teachers on the best method of teaching students on contemporary issues bedeviling the educational sector

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