

ECONOMICS EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

OJEDIRAN Oladele Adeyi

Department of Economics, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo.

Abstract

This paper examines Economics education and its impact on sustainable development. The main data used for this study are secondary data from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Statistical Bulletin 2010. The paper provides insight into various challenges confronting Economics education in Nigeria such as poor remuneration and poor working conditions of Economics teachers, inadequate instructional materials, overcrowding of students in classrooms, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor funding of Economics education, poor teaching methodology, teacher incompetency, etc. Also, this paper suggested that government should be innovative in the design of Economics education curriculum and improve teachers' professional competence. Based on the above, it is recommended that for a nation to achieve sustainable economic development, the quality of Economics education should be improved, enough funds should be allocated to various educational institutions, and teachers should attend seminars, workshops and conferences, among others.

Introduction

Most people in the world today have an immediate and intuitive sense of the urgent need to build a sustainable future. The state of education in Nigeria continues to dominate our national discourse at all levels. The implication of the declining education quality at all levels has far-reaching implications for our cultural and economic sustainability. The utmost importance attached to education in Nigeria is clearly stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). The Federal Republic of Nigeria in this policy adopted education as an instrument “par excellence” for effecting sustainable economic development.

Economics has human culture and society as its main object of study, and by definition ought to be in the fore front of the quest for Nigeria's recovery and renewal for better development. Economics has as its main goal the development and

improvement of social lives of people in the society as a whole. Economics education in Nigeria concentrates on the teaching of economics concepts, principles, theories and logic as well as the inter-relationship among various economic units in the society among others. The importance of Economics education continues to expand the range of financial services available to consumer and money management becomes increasingly complicated. It helps consumers navigate this sea of financial products. When households are capable of building wealth, they are also capable of building more economically stable neighbourhoods and communities. Hence, Economics education is vital to the future health of our national economy (Santomero, 2003).

Despite the importance of Economics education for sustainable development, Nigeria lacked sustainable Economics education since its

independence and as a result, Economics education has not been able to move the country into industrialization and above poverty level. According to Momeke (2007), Economics education has failed to produce skilled human resources needed for transformation of a nation into national prosperity. This implies that most of Nigeria's development in the direction of modernization has been haphazard leading to acquisition of obsolete technology. Sustainable Economics education development therefore represents a catalytic process for social, educational, training and public awareness-the values, behaviour and life styles required for a sustainable future.

Concept of Economics

Economics is an essential and vital discipline. This is because it deals with problems and issues that are critical to members of society. It deals with nearly every aspect of our life from buying food, to getting married and bearing children. However, Economics has never been a field noted for consensus among its practitioners, there are always controversies. One area of controversy relates to the definitions of Economics. Among the various definitions of Economics are the following: Adam (1776), in Anyanwuocha (2005), defines Economics as an inquiry into the nature and causes of wealth of nations. Also, Mill (1843), in Anyanwuocha (2005), says Economics is the practical science of the production and distribution of wealth. He had interest in the determination of wealth possessed by individuals.

Alfred (1890), in Akintoye and Akintoye (2013), views Economics as a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life. He regards Economics as the study of man in relation to wealth creation. Lionel (1932), in Anyanwuocha (2005), defines Economics as a social science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between

ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. The definition given by Robbins is an all - embracing one because it highlights some key concepts in Economics like wants, scarcity, choice, scale of preference and opportunity cost. Also Akintoye and Akintoye (2013) assert that Economics is concerned with man and the social system by which he makes arrangements for the satisfaction of his basic materials needs such as food, shelter and clothing and other non-material wants such as education knowledge and beauty.

Concept of Education

Education, at all levels and in all its forms, constitutes a vital tool for addressing virtually all global problems. There have been different definitions and interpretations of education by philosophers and scholars right from ancient time till the present time. At the moment, there has not been a universally acceptable definition of education. Bajaj and Chiv (2009) define it as a key instrument for bringing about changes in knowledge, values and behaviours and life styles required to achieve sustainability and stability within and among countries. Education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge (Abdul-Kareem, 2001). In this regard, education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument for change: any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution. The potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends imbued with instrumental values of

nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy.

Concept of Economics Education

Economics education is that field within Economics that influences on the Economics curriculum at all educational levels; and on research into factors that influence the level of economic literacy. It focuses on allocation of scarce and substitutable resources available for education and training. Also, Economics education is a field within economics that focuses on the current state of and efforts to improve the economics curriculum, materials and pedagogical techniques uses to teach economics at all educational level; and research into the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques in economics, the level of economics literacy of various groups, and factors that influence the level of economics literacy (Adeogun, 2003).

According to Oguntoye and Alani (1998), Economics education deals with the production and distribution of knowledge, skill, mind and character by the process of formal schooling. While Economics of education (or Education economics) is the study of economic issues relating to education, including the demand for education, the financing and provision of education, and the comparative efficiency of various educational programmes and policies.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Development like any other concept is a complex issue, with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. In this light Chander (2007) sees development as a broader concept that recognizes psychological and material factors that measure human wellbeing. Sen (2008) defines development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people

enjoy. According to her, development requires the removal of major sources as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states. According to Utomi (2006), development simply put is discipline. It is about how discipline drives the human spirit to triumph over odd of poverty trap, physical geography, fiscal trap, governance, cultural barriers, geopolitics, lack of innovation and demographic trap. Kambhampti (2004) argues that development requires growth and structural change, some measure of distributive equity, modernization in social and cultural attitudes, a degree of political transformation and stability, an improvement in health and education so that population growth stabilizes, and an increase in urban living and employment.

From the above, it is clear that development is a multifaceted phenomenon and man at the centre. There is a general consensus that development will lead to good change manifested in increased capacity of people to have control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology; and obtain physical necessities of life (food, clothing and shelter), employment, equality, participation in government, political and economic independence, adequate education, gender equality, sustainable development and peace (Igbuzor, 2005).

Sustainable development is an emerging and difficult concept to define because it is still in the process of evaluation. It is a novel concept in the development literature. Sustainable development is defined as an economic development which meets the needs of present generation without endangering or compromising the needs of future generation (Bruntland Commission, 1987). The World Commission on Environment

and Development (2000) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similarly, Tounes and Griban (2011) view sustainable economic development as a worthy attempt by environmentalists, economists and scientists to come up with new models of exploiting the environment and its resources in a manner that guarantees long-term economic, social and environmental progress.

Furthermore, sustainable development is a process in which the natural resource base (of a nation) is not allowed to deteriorate but utilised optimally for the benefits of the current and future citizens (Munsasinghe, 2004). The term aims at ensuring the effective utilisation of physical environment and its diverse natural resources in a manner that the environment and its resources would provide continuous stream of benefits to both current and future generations. A critical analysis of the views above shows that sustainable development has three major components: environment, society and economy, which are contingent on the eighteen principles espoused by the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

Age (2005) identified some objectives which sustainable development is expected to realize. These include increasing capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, satisfying basic needs and protecting the environment. Considering the path of future generation, achieving equity between rich and poor and participation on a broad basis in development and decision making is important. From the above definitions, there is a common phenomenon which they all shared and that is prioritizing the development of the present generation without compromising the future

generation.

Role of Economics Teachers in Economics Education

Economics teachers create various opportunities for students to engage in activities that will enable them make much of the world around them, make new discoveries, solve interesting problems and develop skills that are sustainability driven. Effective and consistent implementation of the Economics curriculum will lead to poverty alleviation, increase in productivity and rapid economic growth. This will surely reduce the capital flight incurred on importation of goods.

Economics teachers are increasingly realizing the necessity to become agents of change in order to better meet the needs of students, families and communities they serve and thus fulfill society's expectations about Economics educators' civic responsibility. Economics teachers play vital role in shaping the students' minds towards sustainability as they impart the knowledge of economics. Economics teachers assist in the development of vital skills in students such as; mastery of subject matter in economics and the spirit of team work, as well as motivating students to learn the subject.

Economics Education and Sustainable Development.

Education is one of the instruments for attaining sustainable development. Economic development is promoted through Economics education, which is an important aspect of national development. Economics education entails broadening of people, is knowledge about critical economic issues affecting their lives. Development is associated with a positive change in the condition of either individual groups, communities or even a country as a whole.

Economics Education And Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges

Economics education and sustainable development are interconnected and interwoven. Development is geared towards producing or creating something new or more advanced for the society and its members. Economics education is a tool which can enhance the desired sustainable development. Economics education deals with mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society. The goal of Economics education in manpower development is national growth and development. For any country to attain sustainable development there is need for skilled manpower and those skills required are basic ingredients for sustainable development and can only be acquired through education.

Economics education provides consciousness, awareness and enlightenment to individuals in order to properly pursue their aspirations and yearnings. Sustainable development may be seen as the target goal since it is meant for the society and its members, Economics education however remains the instrument for achieving and attaining the target goal.

From the above explanation, Economics education seems to directly determine whether sustainable economic development is going to be achieved or not and therefore, the need for a well structured educational system that will enhance the achievement of the aforementioned development.

Challenges of Economics Education in Nigeria

The Nigerian educational system has fallen into crises in a general sense despite various recommendations and reforms that targeted repositioning Economics education in the country for optimal performance. The challenges facing Economics education in Nigeria are still numerous. While some of these emerged with the changing socio-

economic and political condition of time others evolved as a result of government neglect of the education sector especially as it concerns keeping pace with emerging realities, such as, servicing Nigeria's growing population, education demand and needs with matching supply of education services and facilities.

Also, in Nigeria, teachers' conditions of service do not hold enough incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigerian schools (Osokoya, 2012). As a result of the weakening attraction to the teaching profession and by extension the resultant dwindling enrolment in the Economics teachers' programme, those who remain in the profession maintain relatively low social status with accompanying psychological problems. It is a known fact that optimal working condition for Economics teachers like their counterparts in other subject areas, directly contribute to the good quality of public education. This could be done by enhancing teachers' packages, teachers' housing, and accommodation and utility allowances. Consequently, within the remaining pool, some Economics teachers either seek opportunities in other sectors (within the economy) with better service incentives or even migrate to other countries where teachers' conditions of service are much better, in search of greener pastures.

The teacher-pupil ratio is a very great challenge to teachers of Economics. According to Okoli and Obiajulu (2013), as posited by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), that the teacher-pupil ratio should be 1:35. This is contrary to the ratio experienced by most primary and secondary schools in southwest, Nigeria. In primary school, Ondo state has the highest teacher/pupil ratio and qualified teacher/pupil ratios of 1:58 and 1:64 respectively while Ekiti state has the lowest with 1:15 and 1:16 respectively. In Junior

Secondary School (JSC), Lagos state has teacher/student ratio and qualified teacher/student ratios the highest student/teacher ratio as well as student/qualified teacher ratio of 1:40 and 1:44 respectively (UBEC, 2010). For Economics teachers to carry out their teaching effectively, they should be able to encourage the students positively, show love, recognise individual differences and plan cooperative teaching with students. Large number of students under the umbrella of a teacher incapacitates and creates interactional gap between the teacher and the learners. Okoli and Obiajulu (2013), quoting Mbakwe (2007), opined that the type and quality of interaction that exists in the classroom does not only determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning situation but also the attitudes, interest and even the personality of learners. Effective teacher/student relationship may not be possible in an over-crowded classroom. This probably explains why teachers in higher institutions of learning resort to the use of handouts.

Inadequate learning and institutional materials is another challenge. UNESCO (2000) stated that instructional materials are important in the actualization of the curriculum. Odin and Omofonmwan (2007) stated that the availability and use of instructional materials have significant effect on the performance of the students.

Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) opined that lack of maintenance of the physical facilities in schools is one of the problems in Nigeria's education system. They further posit that educational and living conditions have deteriorated in many of this school. Classroom, libraries and laboratories are nothing to write home about, all leading to decline in academic standard. Most secondary schools in Nigeria are in a poor state in terms of infrastructure. They are characterized by dilapidated

classrooms, school building without ceilings, absence of well - equipped libraries and laboratories, overcrowded classrooms with insufficient furniture, workshops, playfields, school farms and gardens as well as provision of water and sanitation, et cetera.

Furthermore, Addendoff, Foster, and Walter (2008) found that challenges of Economics education in Nigeria include poor funding of Economics education programmes, which leads to poor application of methods of teaching and learning the subject, poor instructional materials, poor research attitudes, lack of academic commitment and devotion to the study of Economics on the part of the students, less attention to the practical aspects of teaching and learning of the course such as excursion and media programme.

To Victor, (2000), Bolag and Umoh (2000), Economics education in Nigeria is also affected by incessant strike actions resulting from non payment of teachers' salaries and other allowances. The underfunding has been criticized and attributed to several factors ranging from military rule, diversion and mismanagement of funds and lack of focus

The knowledge and use of computer technology as well as the internet is a necessity for all teachers to guarantee the relevance of the system and its products in the 21st century. Many schools still operate the traditional education system with little or no adoption of ICT. To benefit from the ubiquity of information and to facilitate communication among professional networks, school teachers need not only be trained and re-trained in ICTs, but facilities must be provided by government to enable teachers and their students have access to ICT, more so that the world is becoming a global village.

According to Abubarkar (2012), in Wasagu (2006), teachers are the way to improvement since they are the final brokers when it comes to educational policy. Economics education teachers therefore are key factors to be considered when talking about the development of Economics education in any nation but there is shortage of qualified Economics education teachers in Nigerian schools (UNESCO, 2006). Some read Science Economics and not Economics education but find themselves in teaching. They have been teaching for many years without updating their knowledge. They do not go for in-service training, hence constituting a menace.

Adeagbo (2013) defines brain drain as a movement of highly skilled or professional people from their own country to a country where they can earn more money or be fully utilized. It is the movement of lecturers of Economics education, which are needed for the socio-economic advancement of Nigeria, from one university to another or to other professionals including politics calling for better conditions of service.

Brewer (2000) noted that the focus of a programme should extend beyond technical skills and emphasize the personal capacities of students to interact well with one another, assume responsibilities, reason logically, think creatively, embrace ethical standards, conduct and communicate effectively. Hence Economics education must be structured to achieve this objective. The curriculum for the Economist education must produce products who have acquired broad array of skills; interpersonal communication, intellectual and other skills for society. The carrier must also possess knowledge in organizational administration and business apart from general knowledge. These attributes are essential to ensure that the Economists are able to use data, exercise judgements, identify and solve real world problems. However, the current curriculum

is not flexible enough to incorporate these new developments in Economics standard, guidelines, theories and information technology and this has affected the quality of graduates from the various higher institutions of learning.

Furthermore, most of colleges of education where the course is taught have problems of conflicting lecture time and venue with other departments due to lack of enough classes and lecture halls which also leads to poor teaching condition.

Solutions to the Challenges of Economics Education in Nigeria

Teachers' professional and academic competencies are tested in their ability to make use of the learning opportunities available in their environment. This means, their willingness to take active part to analyze changes in the environment with other members of the work community, to see these changes in relation to Economics teachers and the possibility of the school to determine which changes and outcomes are of relevance to the socio-economic and political development of the community. Economics teacher's competence will be enhanced as they have close contact and diverse interaction with the environment as well as being able to anticipate and have influence on factors which may affect teaching in future.

There is the need to have necessary research and development that would improve Economics education in terms of quality. Also, establishment of more higher institutions of learning with specification for minimum academic standards would solve the problems of professional teacher supply and quality of instruction. With enough teachers, overcrowding will be effectively handled.

There is the need to create and enrich existing Economics resource rooms, if Nigerian lecturers and students must teach

and learn modern programme and undertake socially relevant researches. As been suggested, Nigerian colleges and universities can fill this lacuna by interacting with foreign funding agencies, use of UNESCO book purchase coupons, reprinting relevant books that are out of stock, encouraging new book projects and launching of endowment funds for new libraries and books.

Conclusion

Challenges of Economics education in today's Nigeria are not insurmountable. The development of any country depends directly on its level of social scientist literacy. Economics education curriculum, if fully implemented will accelerate the sustainable development of Nigeria by providing the bedrock upon which technological advancement of the nation is built. For any nation, including Nigeria, to attain sustainable development, there is need to recognise Economics education as a priority area of education for her citizens. It is therefore, imperative for education at various levels to prepare future leaders and develop the high level technical capacities needed for economic growth and development (Osokoya, 2008).

All the stakeholders in the education industry i.e. Government, private schools owners, school heads, parents and students are joint collaborators in the decline observed in the educational standard in the country today, with the government playing

a leading role. Furthermore, with the right direction and work, Economics education has bright future. That future depends upon the actions we take today.

Recommendations

Various attempts have been made towards improving Economics education in Nigeria for the country's sustainable development, but the following will also be of help if integrated into the country's policy.

Government should improve teaching and learning facilities such as building classrooms, laboratories and libraries for schools, regular payment of teachers' salaries and allowances which will serve as motivation.

Furthermore, government should endeavour to implement the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stipulation that pupil/teacher ratio should be 1:35. This will enhance effective teaching and learning processes.

In addition, in-service training to update teachers' knowledge should be encouraged most especially in this global ICT world.

Governments at all levels should also find lasting solutions to challenges of dwindling resource allocation to the educational sector.

Periodic employment of Economics teachers to fill the gap of those retiring yearly should be made.

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