

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE NEED FOR REVIEWING THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ECONOMICS CURRICULUM IN KOSOFE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Nigeria is faced everyday with economic crisis and challenges, despite the teaching and learning of economics as a subject in secondary schools and tertiary institutions. There was a need to investigate the state of the curriculum used, especially at the secondary level. Thus, this paper examined the perception on the need for reviewing the senior secondary school economics curriculum. The study was guided by two research questions. The phenomenology qualitative research approach was adopted. Five public secondary schools in Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State were selected using the simple random sampling technique. Ten Economics teachers were purposively selected from the schools for the study. Interview sessions were conducted using 'Interview Guide on the Perception of Teachers about the Economics Curriculum (IGPTEC)'. Thematic approach was used to analyse the data collected. Findings revealed that, current Economics curriculum content has not been updated since year 2008, teachers' privy to the curriculum opined that there is a need for the integration of recent economic issues such as SDGs 2030, SMEs drive, enlighten about agriculture's impact on Nigerian economy. Hence, it was recommended that Economics curriculum needs to accommodate recent economic realities in order to achieve positive changes peculiar to economic concepts.

Keywords: *Economic concepts, Economics teachers, Teachers' perception, Economic realities, Economics curriculum*

Introduction

There is a growing recognition around the world on several factors that play positive roles towards economic growth and social development in the modern "knowledge society". Hence, it is essential to have a good knowledge of Economics in preparation of an elite member of the society with updated information on economic realities and for the production of highly skilled personnel required by industrial, technological and economic developments. More so, Economics is a major key to the future strength of every nation's economy. Economics is one of the vital subjects in secondary schools which sees to the fitness of a nation's economy, physical and human resources management and stability of societal development. Profound understanding of Economics plays a vital role throughout one's lifetime, because every citizen will be involved in economic issues directly or indirectly. Individuals and organizations will be able to build a successful financial future with the knowledge of Economics. Consumers will be more enlightened on how to rationalize available resources and also make wise investments so as to further strengthen the economy.

In emphasizing the importance of Economics to nation building, the World Bank (2007), stated that it is a necessity for both leaders and citizens to understand basic economic concepts and principles well enough to enable them understand, appreciate and seek to improve economic development. Hence, the guiding principle of the Economics curriculum is the need to equip graduates of the Senior Secondary School with the basic knowledge and skills that will enable them to better appreciate the nature of economic problems in any society. In the light of this philosophy, the following are the set objectives for the Senior Secondary School Economics course:

To understand the basic principles and concepts as well as the tools for sound economic analysis, Contribute intelligently to discourse on economic reforms and development as they affect or would affect the generality of Nigerians, Understand the structure and functioning of economic institution, Appreciate the role public policies on national economy, Develop the skills and also appreciate the basis for rational economic decisions, Become sensitized to participate actively in national economic institutions, Understand the role and status of Nigeria and other African countries in international economic relationships, and Appreciate the problems encountered by developing countries in their effort towards economic advancement

In essence, Economics as a study should be given priority in our secondary schools, in order to enhance economic literacy and ensure that learners are competent to make personal economic choices in their various day-to-day economic activities (James, 2016). To stress this further, secondary school graduates should be able to make rational decisions, discuss recent economic realities fluently and comfortably and also, have maximum understanding on happenings in the economy. Therefore, the curriculum used to teach Economics in secondary schools should be carefully examined to see if it is meeting up with the universal standard and present status of individuals and the society in year 2020, because the last edition being used in schools currently as at March 6, 2020 was last reviewed in the year 2008.

Economics is a very crucial subject that many of our nation's schools tend to overlook (Van Wyk, 2012). The importance of economic education goes far beyond the goal of improving an understanding of the basic principles of supply and demand and the workings of the economy. Economics can be taught by generating new knowledge with the help of exposing students to real-life learning environments and experiences (Van Wyk, 2014). Furthermore, the teaching of Economics in 21st century Secondary Schools goes beyond making academic success alone but rather to make well-informed citizens who can make effective economic decisions on their own and understand government economic policies (Gbadamosi and Akanni, 2016; James, 2016).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) affirmed that no nation can attain economic, social and technological progress without a stable and sound system of education to sustain its advancement. Hence, profound knowledge of Economics among citizens has the potential to further promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. Learning of Economics will improve students to participate effectively in economic, social affairs and to take intelligent decisions. In the interests of our own survival and of the nation, there is no education more important than that which helps us to understand our economic problems and reflect our economic problems. In view of this, the significance of studying Economics in secondary schools cannot be overemphasised, therefore, this prompts the need to frequently update new changes and developments in the society into our Economics curriculum because as things changes in the society, we should keenly keep up-to-date our curriculums at least three to five years intervals.

Megbo and Saka (2015) asserted that to meet all the needs and aspirations of the society, the curriculum should be quantifiable and measurable and subject to regular reviews, and offer a viable range of learning options for the students. The curriculum designers should be prepared to screen the National Curriculum for comprehensiveness in terms of adequate provision for the basic needs for learners before such curriculum is approved for school use. The dynamic nature of the society is obviously, part of the driving forces which makes curriculum review to become inevitable. The review process ensures that the eventual curriculum is not out of tune with economic situations. The progressive argument is that the National Curriculum should consider changes in learners' needs, characteristics, mental and emotional states as well as their experiences in order to remain relevant as time goes by. It is through continuous re-evaluation of the curriculum contents with respect to immediate economic situations that the society can be well updated on economic issues. Without no doubt, there is no curriculum that can be effectively planned nor developed without considering the overarching philosophy and objectives of the society. Hence, Megbo and Saka (2015) emphasised that as the goal and aspiration of the society changes, there

has to be changes in such curriculum. The Economics curriculum should then be geared towards self-realization, individual efficiency and society development because, teaching and learning of Economics is very resourceful, cogent and highly significant for economic and society development. Therefore, considering the multitude benefits of understanding a nation's economy through Economics, its curriculum should be reviewed as time goes by, in order to keep students informed on recent innovation and issues happening in the society.

Statement of the Problem

To achieve a solid foundation for Economics graduates, the current curriculum of Economics used in secondary schools should be a matter of concern to education stakeholders because the contents in this curriculum was last reviewed in the year 2008. This 2008 edition is rarely keeping students updated on recent economic issues happening in the society such as SDGs 2030, SMEs awareness, recurring unemployment, underemployment issues, entrepreneurship ideas, oil fluctuation in the FX market for GDP increase and more recent economic realities. The curriculum is thus necessary for re-modification in order to meet up with the universal standard and present status of individuals and the society in year 2020 and beyond. The mission of an up-to-date curriculum in the secondary school is to give effect to the nation's drive for self-reliance, preparing a world class creative workforce and provide better understanding of the economy to achieve the positive change that are peculiar to our ever dynamic economic concepts in Nigeria realities.

Economics curriculum revision is imperative in order to accommodate current issues in the economy from 2008 till date since the last economics curriculum in Nigeria by the NERDC (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council) was 12 years ago. As a result, this paper examined the Senior Secondary School Economics Curriculum Review as a way to enhance active understanding of economic issues in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the general perception of teachers' on the current Economics curriculum in public secondary schools in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos State?
2. What relevance will review of economics curriculum bring to the society?

Methodology

This study adopted a phenomenology qualitative approach in engaging Economics teachers'. Five public secondary schools from Kosofe Local Government Area in Lagos State were selected through the simple random sampling technique. Two economics teachers were purposively selected from each of the schools. Thus, ten Economics teachers took part in the study. The teachers were selected for a semi-structured interview using an interview guide tagged 'Interview Guide on the Perception of Teachers about the Economics Curriculum (IGPTEC)'. This interview guide was presented to two experts of measurement evaluation for face and content validity. Their suggestions and criticisms arising from the review was used to fine-tune the interview guide for effective data collection. The researcher personally visited the schools and sought permission from the management and teacher by presenting the University identity card. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed. The data were coded and concepts derived to have five themes using Thematic analysis.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

Participant	Gender	Qualification	Years of Experience
Participant 1	Male	B.Sc, PGDE	8years
Participant 2	Female	B.Ed	6years
Participant 3	Male	M.Ed	12years
Participant 4	Male	B.Ed	10years
Participant 5	Male	M.Ed	3years

Participant 6	Male	B.Ed	11years
Participant 7	Female	B.Sc, PGDE	6years
Participant 8	Male	M.Ed	9years
Participant 9	Male	B.Ed	7years
Participant 10	Female	M.Ed	5years

Results

Research Question 1: What is the general perception of teachers' on the current Economics curriculum in public secondary schools in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos State?

The perception of the selected teachers interviewed about the current economics curriculum in public secondary schools in Kosofe Local Government Area in Lagos State could be categorised into the following themes:

- i. Undue emphasis on foreign-based theories
- ii. Unavailability of the curriculum
- iii. The need to incorporate poverty relief schemes in the curriculum
- iv. Illogical sequence of topics
- v. The need to review the curriculum to accommodate the Nigerian economic realities
- vi. Lack of relevant instructional materials for some topics

Undue Emphasis on Foreign-based Theories

An array of teachers interviewed perceived that the current economics curriculum is foreign based in theory. This shows that the theories and principles of economics the students in the secondary schools are meant to be exposed to are propounded and developed by foreign scholars. It is good to note that the economic realities in the societies of these scholars are quite different from that of Nigeria where the students would be required to apply the theories. Therefore, many of the teachers perceived that the content taught in secondary school economics is not that relevant to the economic realities, issues and problems in Nigeria. One of the interviewees indeed said that:

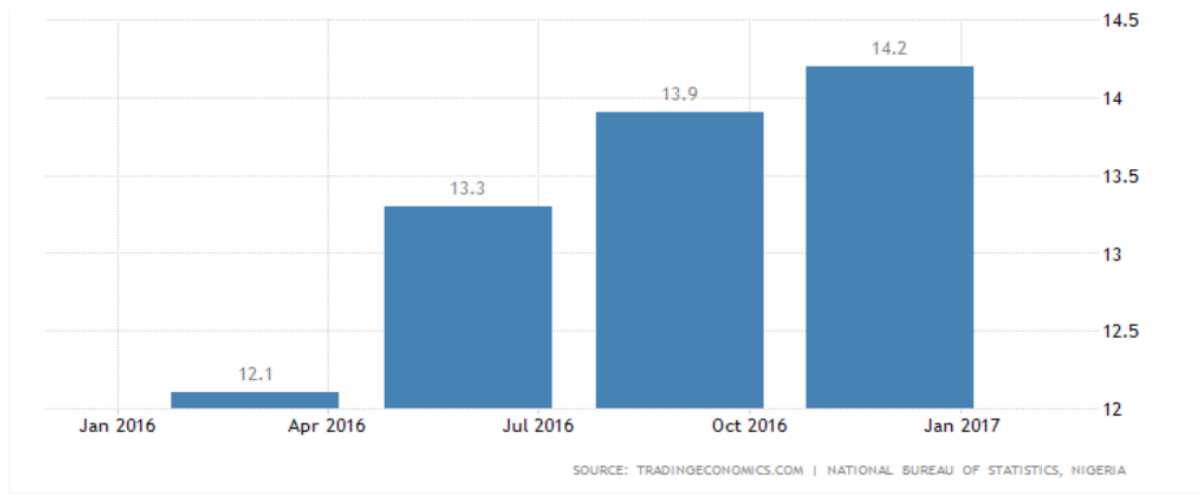
I don't think what they are teaching in the class correlate to what is happening in the society. Theories are only taught and not applied. The theories were propounded by foreigners to suit their economy. We, applying the theories to our economy is catastrophe. Current curriculum is foreign based and not applicable to Nigerian economy. (Semi-structured interview, Participant 1, Lagos, 18/10/2019)

For instance, one of the teachers made mention of the Philip's curve which is used in teaching inflation and deflation in Nigeria. Obviously, Philip's curve explains an inverse relationship between unemployment and inflation. This states that with economic growth comes inflation, which invariably would lead to more jobs. However, available data in Nigeria has proved that high inflation does not bring about low unemployment in the country. Using the 2016 charts of inflation and unemployment below, as inflation increases in Nigeria, unemployment level was also increasing. This negates the principle of Phillip's curve which says the relationship between the two variables must be inverse.

Hence, it can be deduced that the Phillip's curve often accurately reflects economic situations of developing nations. This is because, inflation in developing nations are not necessarily driven by economic growth, but by inconsistent fiscal and monetary policies by respective apex bank.



Figure 1: 2016 Inflation rate in 2016 NIGERIA INFLATION RATE Nigeria



2016 NIGERIA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Figure 2: 2016 Unemployment Rate in Nigeria

However, though the curriculum is foreign-based in theory, one of the teachers interviewed perceived the theories and principles in a positive way, especially if they are adopted and/or adapted to the peculiarity of the Nigerian economy. The teacher said that:

With the current curriculum we have now, it is not totally useless. We can make use of the theoretical background that we have to build our own principles that would help solve our economic issues. We need to adopt the principles and make them fit into our own economic conditions. With that we can solve our economic problem better. We cannot rely on the curriculum totally but we can build on them. We need to look at how foreign models could be used to develop our own models that would help address our economic issues. (Semi-structured interview, Participant 3, Lagos, 18/10/2019)

It is thus important not to throw away the curriculum totally on the basis of the foreign theories, as perceived by the teachers. The teachers perceived that few of the economic issues of our society like getting loans for businesses and the like are well dealt with in the curriculum. Therefore, it could not be absolutely said that the curriculum does not relate to what is obtained in our society. Hence, it can be suggested that relevant theories can be adapted into the economy while irrelevant should be left behind during curriculum review.

Unavailability of the Curriculum

The teachers interviewed lamented the fact that the curriculum is not always handed over to them for interpretation and implementation but all they have is the scheme of work which has already been drawn by the Lagos state government. The teacher is the sole implementer of the curriculum objectives. How then would the teacher be able to carry out activities that would seek to the achievement of the objectives of the curriculum she/he has no access to? Most of the teachers interviewed perceived the non-availability of the curriculum document for teachers as a major factor mitigating against the implementation of the curriculum. One of the teachers even claimed that he did not know the year the curriculum was published since he has no access to it. This corroborates the works of Gbadamosi (2017) and Obanya (2011) who remarked that since teaching is carried out by the teacher, good mastery of Economics curriculum contents by the Economics teacher is very important in teaching and learning of the subject. It guarantees adequate level of competence in teaching ability and influences students' perception of their economy. Teacher, however, cannot so much master the objectives and content of the curriculum they do not have access to.

The need to incorporate poverty relief schemes in the curriculum

One of the teachers lamented during the interview session that

Since I heard about Npower, National Social Investment Programme, SDG 2030 and other poverty relief schemes in the news, I have been thinking that things like this should have been incorporated in the economics curriculum so that students can be aware of societal issues happening in the economy, but it has not because we are still using the NERDC 2008 curriculum to teach children in 2020. It is so pathetic that twelve years after, we still use the same thing to teach students. I pray it gets better someday.” (Semi-structured interview, Participant 10, Lagos, 23/10/2019)

Another also said,

These days of advancement in technology, it should reflect in our economics curriculum because a nation's economic efficiency is determined and ranked by its technological advancement. So, we ought to update our students on how technology has a corresponding positive or negative effect on Nigeria economy. And make sure that other topics in the structure of Nigerian economy should also address the oil and gas sector. .” (Semi-structured interview, Participant 6, Lagos, 22/10/2019)

Illogical Sequence of Topics

The teachers interviewed also perceived that the topics in the curriculum are not logically sequenced, though this is based on the scheme of work which was handed over to them by their state school. The teachers lamented the fact that the topics in the curriculum do not follow as a topic does not properly link with the next one. The selected teachers also perceived that the curriculum is not adequately structured as per each class topics, hence, it does not follow the term-system of the secondary schools. Therefore, it does not accurately fit into the secondary school system if the scheme of work is not meticulously drawn

from it because some topics are supposed to be taught in SS2 which are in SS3. Meanwhile, more relevant topics needs to be added to the SS3 themes.

Similarly, it was also perceived by the teachers that some topics are placed in the class they are not supposed to be. A teacher said that:

Most of the topics in SS 3 should be in SS 2. The arrangement of the topics is not properly done. For instance, initially National Income was in SS 3 but they have brought it to SS 2. (Semi-structured interview, Participant 5, Lagos, 24/10/2019)

Another teacher also perceived the same by saying that:

There are some topics that are supposed to go to SS 2 or SS 1. For instance, production is not well sequenced, the factors of production. Another example is firm and how it does not follow with the next one. (Semi-structured interview, Participant 7, Lagos, 24/10/2019)

The sequence of the topics is such illogical, according to the teachers, because teachers who are the sole implementer of the curriculum were not involved in the process of developing the curriculum and even when the curriculum by the federal ministry of education was going to be broken to scheme of work for teachers. Teachers are thus reduced to mere consumers of the product.

The need to review the curriculum to accommodate Nigerian economic realities

The bottom line of the aggregate perception of the teachers about the current economic curriculum is that the curriculum needs a review to accommodate the Nigeria economic realities. It was gathered from the interview conducted with the teachers that the current curriculum is not totally useless, though it requires a review so as to address the peculiarity of the Nigerian economy and society. The teachers interviewed perceived that the curriculum was developed before the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and as such contents in the curriculum only promote the attainment of the MDGs. Now that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the order of the day, there is a need to tailor our education towards achieving the goals. This corroborates findings of Opoh (2015) which called for a review of the curriculum to meet contemporary need of the society, with the provision of more qualified and competent teachers to meet the challenges of the envisaged curriculum. In the new curriculum, examinations should be de-emphasized while competency should be tested by employers of labour.

Lack of relevant instructional materials for some topics

Another dimension to the teachers' perception of the current economics curriculum is the lack of adequate instructional materials in implementing the content of the curriculum. This always makes it difficult to achieve easy and facilitative teaching. The curriculum indeed suggests some instructional materials for each topic. However, the unavailability of the curriculum to the teachers incapacitates them to be aware of the suggested instructional aids and how they could be made use of. As opined by the teachers, there are some topics in economics that require specific instructional materials in teaching them. The teachers most times do not have access to these materials and cannot teach the topic effectively. For instance, a teacher made mention of scale of production as an example of topic that the teacher may not readily be able to think of a suitable instructional material for.

Research Question 2: What changes and relevance will review of economics curriculum bring to the society?

From the interview sessions had with the selected teachers for this study, it could be extrapolated that reviewing economics curriculum would bring about positive changes to the society. The teachers perceived that economics, as a social science subject, is not supposed to be taught and learnt in abstract,

hence, the content of any viable economics curriculum must reflect the economic realities, issues and problems of the society where the curriculum would be implemented. The teachers perceived that the current curriculum is replete with foreign theories and principles which are not totally wrong but need a review so as to conform to our society. With that, students would be taught what measures could be taken in solving the economic problems they daily face in the society.

This corroborates findings of Alade (2012) who submitted that there is the need for a regular value orientation and re-orientation of all and sundry towards skill-oriented curriculum, and honest pursuance of curriculum policies along this direction at all levels of education in Nigeria. The changes and innovations in the curricula in this world of globalization should give room to open ended systems which emphasize interdisciplinary approaches and discourse to curricular issues and implementation. There is urgent need for a paradigm shift from theoretical teaching and literary application to a practical application of knowledge necessary for employment and skill development. Modern pedagogical approaches to curriculum implementation in Nigeria educational institutions should be installed in curriculum delivery and the implementers of curriculum should update their knowledge and skills from time to time so as to keep pace with modern trends on curriculum issues and educational reforms in Nigeria, and in the wider world. And lastly, there is the need for consistency in policy formulation and sincere pursuance of its objectives through the curriculum implementation.

Hence, this current curriculum also requires a review so as to accommodate the sustainable development goals that every developing nation ought to achieve in order to attain economic development. There should not be a gap between what is taught in school and the societal realities in terms of economy, politics and other spheres. As such, the positive changes, especially in the economic sector, people clamour for in the society could be achieved if the current economics curriculum is properly reviewed.

The interviewed teacher from this study said:

“Topics that addresses economic problems should be initiated in our economics curriculum. We all know that Nigeria has been going through a lot of economic problems in the recent years. Some challenges of Nigeria’s economy problems, like ineffective leadership and corruption, over reliance on oil, power supply, change of policies whenever government changes, and economic insecurity should be introduced as topics in our economics curriculum so that students can be familiar with these problems and their solutions.” (Semi-structured interview, Participant 8, Lagos, 21/10/2019)

Another teacher also said:

“Since I heard about Npower, National Social Investment Programme, SDG 2030 and other poverty relief schemes in the news, I have been thinking that things like this should have been incorporated in the economics curriculum so that students can be aware of societal issues happening in the economy, but it has not because we are still using the 2008 curriculum to teach children in 2020. It is so pathetic that twelve years after, we still use the same thing to teach students. I pray it gets better someday.” (Semi-structured interview, Participant 10, Lagos, 23/10/2019)

From the teachers’ semi structured interview, it was deduced that, when the curriculum is being reviewed as time goes by, the beneficiaries of the curriculum will be able to actively understand and

partake in concerned economic issues, maximally achieve optimum pace with modern trends on recent economic issues and realities.

Conclusion

This paper was aimed at surveying the perception of economics teachers about the need for reviewing the current economics curriculum. The paper had empirically found that the current curriculum is not adequately suitable for learners in the year 2020; hence, the teachers that are privy to the curriculum suggested that the curriculum needs an integration of new realities in our economy. The curriculum therefore needs to accommodate the recent Nigerian economic issues, problems and solutions in order to achieve the positive changes that are vital for development.

Recommendations

Based on these findings and conclusion drawn, the paper recommends that:

1. Curriculum experts and education stakeholders should endeavour to carry out at least a biennial appraisal on the Economics curriculum, so as to reflect economic trends, issues, realities and contemporary economic challenges in Nigeria.
2. National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should see to the review of curriculum so as to replicate current economic and societal issues.
3. Education stakeholders should organise a strong and viable curriculum conference like that of the 1969 national curriculum conference where experts will meet to deliberate on recent issues in education.

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