

ECONOMICS EDUCATION

By
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Introduction

When economics was introduced into the secondary school curriculum, its popularity grew rapidly because the first few schools which offered it in West African School Certificate Examination [WASCE] had unexpectedly good results. There was a positive relationship between the quality of results in economics and the number of candidates that offered it in subsequent years in the WASCE. In this unit, you will learn the factors that caused the late introduction of economics, and its acceptance in the school system, Economics was first taken in the West African School Certificate Examination as a school subject in Nigeria in 1967. Since school certificate was a two year course, it may be said that economics came into the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria in 1966, much later than most other secondary school subjects. Economics was, however, taken by private candidates in the General Certificate Examination before it became a secondary school subject. It was recognized that economics problems were at the heart of modern society.

Ever since economics was first taken, as a school subject in West African School Certificate Examination in 1967, the number of schools that teach it and the number of candidates that take the examination has witnessed a phenomenal increase. For example in 1967, it was 0.07% of the total number of candidates that sat for the examination, in 1969 it was increased to 12.56%, in 1970, it was 17.16% and by 1976 exactly 10years of its inception, the population has risen to 76.95%. For further confirmation by more recent entries, we have that in 1985, 441,448 school candidates entered for economics while in the same year English had 373,507. In 1996 it was 711,377 for economics, 748,239 for mathematics, and 748,984 for English language. By this analysis it is probably understatement that English Language and Mathematics top the list of entries. It may be said that economics is probably the most popular subject in the secondary school curriculum if the popularity of a secondary school subject may be determined by the number of schools that teach it and the number of candidates that offer it in school learning certificate examination.

It may be said that economics comes after English language and Mathematics. Furthermore, when it is appreciated that economics became a secondary school subject in Nigeria in 1966, it may be said that the growth in its popularity as a secondary school subject in Nigeria has been monumental.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ECONOMICS

Economics is concerned with human behaviour such as how people earn their living and make a choice between alternatives to satisfy their wants. It focuses on the study of firms and the government whose activities are geared to the production of goods and services for the satisfaction of human want since economics is concerned with human behaviour. So economics is a social science, and like any science subject, the reasoning procedure in economics is methodological, its analysis is systematic, and the validity of its various theories

can be tested. Thus an attempt has been made to integrate the theoretical foundations of the subject with their practical applications. Economics is one of the electives or group of subjects expected to be studied at the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level under the new National Policy on Education. This curriculum according to Osunnaiye (2005) has been designed by the Comparative Education study and. Adaptation centre (CESAC) to meet the requirements of Economics in the new system. The guiding principle of this 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 Economics course:

- (i) to equip students with the basic principles of Economics necessary for useful living and for higher education,
- (ii) To prepare and encourage students to be prudent and effective in the management of scarce resources
- (iii) To raise students respect for the dignity of labour and their appreciation of economic, cultural and social values of our society and
- (iv) To enable students acquire knowledge for the practical solution of the economic problems of society; Nigeria, developing countries and the world at large.

According to Obemeata [1980] the importance of economics education to any nation, is very clear. It enables both leaders and citizens to understand basic economics concepts, principles as well as to understand, appreciate and seek to improve the economic situation for their own social good. The understanding of economics is a pre-requisite for good citizenship. To him the principal objective for teaching economics should be "to provide economics understanding necessary for responsible citizenship". Being a responsible citizen involves the ability to take rational decision on important economic issues with a good basis for doing so Furthermore, Obemeata [1991] stated that the position of economics in secondary school curriculum has been strengthened because it has been accepted that it has some civil values because of some topics as "the element and determinants of national income, the structure and activities of labour unions, the working and influence of financial institution". These prepared one adequately for life in modern society.

According to Adu [2002] the study of economics serves a useful purpose in modern life. It gives us facts and shows us what may be expected to be the outcome of certain lines of conduct; it helps us to decide which of several alternatives to choose. It charged its recipient to make wise choice that will satisfy their needs in the presence of unlimited wants and resources. Obemeata [1991] says economics as a subject has various values to the learners and these values according to him include;

i) The Cultural Values: - Economics has some intrinsic value that makes it appealing as a school subject for example; there is a great logic in it. It connects learners to the essentials of everyday life and it is also concern with almost tropical events such as International Monetary Fund [IMF], Structural Adjustment Programme [SAP] and so on Pause and justify the above assertion in your own understanding

ii) Intellectual Training: - Economics also contribute to intellectual training because it involves looking at issues in a way which foremost new

to people. Economics is not primarily a body of knowledge, it is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of mind, a technique of thinking which helps its possessors to draw correct conclusion

iii) Vocational Training: - The vocational nature of economics made it readily acceptable to students. Economics as a subject is of direct utility in many branches of industries and commerce. It is also an essential part of most professional examination like Banking, Accountancy, and Secretariat.

Critique of Secondary School Economics Curriculum

In economics activities, the individual does job to earn a living and study his many wants or needs which include food, clothing, housing and so on. For example, there are individual farmers, business people and other workers who produce goods and services to satisfy the needs of consumers. The government strives to provide services for the welfare of the citizens in the state. Nations trade among themselves, and many international organizations exist to promote the economic wellbeing of mankind

Economics is one of the electives or group of subjects expected to be studied at the senior secondary school (SSS) level under the new National policy on Education. The guiding principle of the Economics curriculum is the need to equip graduates of the Senior Secondary School (SSS) with the basic knowledge and skills that will enable them to better appreciate the nature of economic problems in any society. The underlying philosophy of this is to present Economics as a subject that has relevance to everyday life. Thus, an attempt has been made to integrate the theoretical foundations of the subject with their practical applications. This curriculum has been designed as a teaching syllabus with built-in teaching schemes and some suggested strategies to facilitate the teaching and learning process. This approach is expected to ensure the effective handling of the subject in the classroom by inexperienced or untrained teachers while reinforcing the knowledge of teaching methods of the trained teachers.

The conceptual approach was adopted in identifying the relevant topics essential for the achievement of the set objectives; the structuring of the content was also based on the spiral spread thus making it possible for a concept or topic to be learnt in its basic form Year 1 to its complex nature in Year 3. An innovation in the programme is an introduction of elementary mathematical and statistical tools of analysis for this level.

The conceptual approach was adopted in identifying the relevant topics essential for the achievement of the set objectives. The structuring of the content was also based on the spiral spread, thus making it possible for a concept or topic to be learnt in its basic form from year 1 to its complex nature in year 3. The major topics of the Economics syllabus are as follows:

- 1) Economics Meaning and Basic Concepts
- 2) Basic tools of economic analysis
- 3) Basic economic problems of society
- 4) Production
- 5) Business organizations
- 6) Population.
- 7) Labour market

- 8) Distributive trade
- 9) Money
- 10) Agriculture
- 11) Inflation
- 12) industrialization
- 13) Alternative economic systems
- 14) Theory of costs
- 15) Theory of consumer behaviour
- 16) Demand and supply and price determination
- 17) Public finance
- 18) Financial institutions ...
- 19) Market Structures
- 20) Elements of National Income Determination
- 21) Elementary Theory of Income Determination
- 22) International Trade
- 23) Balance of Payments
- 24) International Economic Organisations
- 25) Economic Development
- 26) Petroleum and the Nigerian economy.

The twenty-six topics above have been structured into thirty-four (34) teaching units distributed over the three-year period of the SSS course as follows'

Year 1- Ten (10) teaching units

Year 2- Thirteen (13) teaching units; and

Year 3- Eleven (11) teaching units

These teaching units have been spread over the three years on the basis of the nature and complexity of the topics and the total teaching time available in each year. In the light of this, ten units have been allocated to year 1 in order to give more time for the treatment of each topic so as to provide adequate foundation for subsequent work. Thirteen units are allocated to Year 2 on the understanding that there is a greater familiarity with the subject. Only eleven units are allocated for Year 3 because the effective teaching period is shorter than in Year 2.

In the area of evaluation, continuous assessment and final examinations would constitute an adequate mode of evaluation in this subject. However, in the course of teaching, teachers would be expected to involve students in discussions. Major Curriculum Innovations in the Secondary School Economics When economics was introduced into the secondary school curriculum, its popularity grew rapidly because the first few schools which offered it in West African School Certificate Examination [WASCE] had unexpectedly good results. There was a positive relationship between the quality of results in economics and the number of candidates that offered it in subsequent years in the WASCE. In this unit, you will learn the factors that caused the late introduction of economics, and its acceptance in the school system. Economics was first taken in the West African School Certificate Examination as a school subject in Nigeria in 1966⁷. Since school certificate was a two year course, it may be said that economics came into the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria in 1966, much later than most other secondary school subjects. Economics was, however, taken by private candidates in the General Certificate Examination before it became a secondary school subject. It was recognized that economics problems were at the heart of modern society.

Ever since economics was first taken as a school subject in West African School Certificate Examination in 1967, the number of schools that teach it, and the number of candidates that take the examination have witnessed a phenomenal increase. For example in 1967, it was 0.07% of the total number of candidates that sat for the examination, in 1969 it was increased to 12.56%, in 1970, it was 17.16% and by 1976 exactly 10 years of its inception, the population has risen to 76.95%. For further confirmation by more recent entries, we have that in 1985, 441,448 school candidates entered for economics while in the same year English had 373,507. In 1996 it was 711,377 for economics, 748,239 for mathematics, and 748,984 for English language. By this analysis it is probably understatement that English Language and Mathematics top the list of entries. It may be said that economics is probably the most popular subject in the secondary school curriculum if the popularity of a secondary school subject may be determined by the number of schools that teach it and the number of candidates that offer it in school learning certificate examination. It may be said that economics comes after English language and Mathematics.

Furthermore, when it is appreciated that economics became a secondary school subject in Nigeria in 1966, it may be said that the growth in its popularity as a secondary school subject in Nigeria has been monumental. A lot of changes have been witnessed in the Secondary School Economics. The changes include the following: Policy changes Right from attainment of independence, the need for change and innovation had always been prevalent in the educational systems of developing countries. According to Fafunwa (1967, 1974), changes and innovations were needed in Nigeria educational system after attainment of independence. The type of education imported to Nigeria under British control reflected the needs of the colonial government. Thus, we had the 7-5-4 which represents 7 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary education and 4 years of tertiary education. While in some regions, it was 6-5-4 across the three tiers respectively. This system was later replaced for the entire country in 1983 by the 6-3-3-4, that is, 6 years of primary education, 5 years of Junior secondary School (JSS), 3 years of Senior secondary School (SSS) and, 4 years of tertiary education. The difference is the additional one year to the secondary education and its split to 2-tiers: junior and senior secondary. This system sought to correct the structural imbalances in the of education. When the policy was 7.5.4 system, many people regarded the subject as a subject that had no career opportunities, Therefore parents did not always advise their children to offer Economics, However this has changed (Adeniyi, 2001)

Changes in Content

Juan Manuel Moreno (2006) states that: 'Educational reform all over the world is increasingly curriculum-based, as mounting pressures and demands for change tend to target and focus on both the structures and the very content of school curricula'. Arising from the revolution in objectives, some radical changes were made in content. The content of economics was reviewed so that they would gear toward achieving the set objectives. The provision for a constructs emerging from the current economics challenges is also a significant change. The aims of these changes are to equip learners with skills and knowledge required to meet the economic problems of the 21st century.

Changes in Learning and Instructional Materials

These changes require teachers to question their traditional subject practices and classroom routines. New teaching technologies require teachers to reflect on the basis of their work, which are the pedagogical assumptions of their practices and, these changes challenge teachers' existing practices. For these reasons it became difficult for many schools to adopt this pedagogy, one of whose virtues is that it is highly compatible with community orientation since in nearly all cases the problem to be solved especially in public orientation and community values are located in the

Community. Furthermore, because of the need for schools and colleges to meet the requirements of certain examining bodies, Nigerian educational institutions, particularly at the pre-tertiary level have to change their syllabuses from time to time even when the national subject curricula are constant for some years, the school subject syllabuses are subject to change or modification by teachers, particularly where subject teachers are changed frequently.

Changes in Evaluation Strategies

With the introduction of the National Policy on Education adopted in 1981, and revised in 1995 and 2006, some special emphasis have been placed in the use of comprehensive and continuous assessment in schools. Besides, objective multiple choice questions have also been provided at secondary levels. However, in most cases these changes were hurriedly done and problems associated with such changes surfaced when applied on a large scale. Lack of initiative, innovation, skills, independent/constructive mind and creative ideals characterize today's system of Nigeria education. This is a system that encourages memorization in learning processes and theoretical explanation to areas that need practical illustration. The system favours cognitive development above other domains of education. It is pathetic that Nigeria's school system is geared toward building pupils with cultural orientation with deficiency in problem-solving approach that requires more than simply recall or performance of rudimentary skills (Bolaji, 2007).

Problems Facing the Teaching and learning of Secondary School Economics

The practical problems facing the teaching of economics are as follows: Obsolete Textbooks with the exception of a few, the economics textbooks written in Nigeria are badly written, sketchy and lack the in-depth content. They are largely descriptive. They are poorly illustrated and contain lots of inaccuracies and they are mostly produced in a hurry.

Lack of Teacher's Commitment.

The issue of teacher commitment and effectiveness is now a perennial one in educational discourse. The teachers today occupy a paramount position in the teaching learning situation. It is agreed that no education can rise above the quality of its teacher. Teachers need to be committed and dedicated to teaching profession. Teaching requires a cultivated ability. To be done exceptionally well, it also requires a special talent and a sense of vocation.

Students Poor Attitude and Interest

The kind of attitude a child has affected his school work and learning in general because, if he has a positive attitude about the teacher and the subject, success is inevitable. It is observed that student's attitudes to economics determines the degree to which they pass economics and negative attitude towards the subject

and teachers will definitely have adverse effect on their academic achievement in the subject.

Bias and Objectivity

Economics teachers find it difficult to eliminate bias and subjectivity while teaching the students. They try to influence the decision of the students, to suit their personal interest, and this is common when teachers are teaching topics like consumer behavior, division of labor, inflation, etc. This leads to the following:

Value Judgments Students cannot distinguish between fact and opinion,

Since economics is concerned mainly with means and ends, one is interested with how best one can compete unlimited wants with the limited resources. At times it is difficult to make judgment about moral implication behind individual choice and sacrifices e.g. Law of demand i.e. rise in demand will lead to an increase in price, with this, it is argued that economics can be taught without bringing in subjectivity.

Logic: - This involves the teaching of economics in a way that it applies to real life situation of the learners. The teacher has to apply economics teaching to solve the problems encountered by the learners in a convincing manner.

Preferences: -Teachers do select topics based on personal interest and how the topics appealed to them. The choice of topic to be taught is therefore being influenced by their subjectivity.

The Difficulty of the Subject

There had been controversies over the teaching of economics in secondary school. This was based on the belief that economics is too now pause and think about more practical problems facing the teaching of economics and then write them out. difficult to teach. The argument is that, since the power of deduction and abstract reasoning do not usually develop much before the age of sixteen, economics can not be effectively taught to students before this age.

The Need for Simplification

At lower level, economics should be based on selection to make it simple but care should be taken not to further create abstraction which may lead to the exclusion of some advanced theory from the syllabus if the tendency is to teach what the student would understand, what remains might not be economics e.g. the case of Oligopoly and Monopolistic competition, an attempt to avoid this from secondary schools syllabus because it involves analysis which may be too difficult for the students therefore we concentrate on perfect competition and monopoly both of which do not exist anywhere, the real situation is the Oligopoly and Monopolistic Competition

Negative Attitudes of Education Ministry

The Ministries of Education in Nigeria show no interest in the subject. There was a time when they appointed subject inspectors such as inspectors of Mathematics or English Language. A survey was undertaken to determine whether inspectors were appointed for Economics by the various state ministries of education. It was found that only three states, Bendel, Rivers and Kwara had inspectors for economics.

However, it was not certain whether they were appointed as inspectors of economics or they were just economics graduates who were appointed as inspectors of schools.

No Specific Conferences or Workshops for Economics Teacher.

Ministries of Education in the country have not thought it necessary to organize or sponsor refresher courses or workshops or even conferences for secondary school teachers of economics. If and when economics is sufficiently recognized as a secondary school subject, the various state ministries of education should sponsor or organize conferences, workshops and refresher courses for secondary school teachers of economics as they have done for other secondary school subjects such as Nigeria language, history and sciences. A subject which is taught by virtually all schools and offered in the examination by about 90% of all the candidates annually, should have been of special interest not only to principals of secondary schools but also to officers of the ministries.

Few Universities offer Economics Education

Until recently, only one University's Faculty of Education i.e. the Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan offer courses in Economics methods to undergraduate students and post graduate diploma in education. Two other University Department's of Education are known to have started to offer courses in economics methods. Similarly, of the numerous colleges of education in the country, only about few are known to offer courses in the teaching of economics.

No Collaboration of Economics in Secondary School and Economics in Universities

If economics which is probably the most popular subject in the secondary school curriculum had been given its rightful place, there would have been some contact between secondary school teachers of economics and teachers of economics in Universities. In many if not most of the universities in Nigeria, the department of economics have refused to recognize secondary school economics as economics partly on the grounds that the secondary school economics syllabus stresses descriptive economics.

No Association of Secondary School Teachers of Economics in Nigeria.

All secondary school subjects which are regarded as established and important have associations for example; there are associations for subjects like English language, History, Geography and Sciences. Even the teachers of French in Nigeria are known to have only a few secondary school students yet they have an association. The points highlighted above can be regarded as institutional professional factors responsible for the low recognition of Economics as a subject.

Inadequate Teaching and Learning Materials on the teaching of Economics

The teaching of economics in Nigeria is characterized by many inadequacies. Nigerian Secondary school teachers of economics have few materials on the teaching of economics to work with. For example, audio-visual aids for the teaching of economics are either not available in sufficient quantity or that what is available is usually in- appropriate. With the exception of a few, the

economics textbooks written in Nigeria are badly written, sketchy, and lacking in in-depth for economics analysis.

Review Questions

1. Discuss the importance of economics as a school subject.
2. Examine the extent to which the conceptual approach has been used in the economics curriculum.
3. Comment on the innovations in economics curriculum with reference to policy changes and changes in content.
4. (a) List Five problems facing the teaching of economics at the school level;
(b) Critically examine any two of the problems.

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