

Vision and Mission of Economics Education in the 21st Century

Nehemiah Wokji Gotip
Department of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education
University of Abuja
08067035467
gwokji@gmail.com

Dr Maxwell O. Ede
maxwellokwdili@gmail.com
ede.maxwell@mouau.edu.ng

And

Dr Eric O. Oleabhiele
ivyese1414@gmail.com
oleabhiele.eric@mouau.edu.ng
Department of Educational Management
College of Education
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Abia state

Abstract

The paper examined the vision and mission of Economics Education in the 21st century. It defined Economics Education as a discipline that involves the use of the appropriate teaching and learning methodology in improving the comprehension and understanding of Economics as a subject. The visions and missions of Economics Education in the 21st century is to make people become aware of basic economic principles and concept as well as the tools for sound economic analysis and inculcate in them an attitude of mind that will contribute intelligently to discourse on economic reforms and development as they affect or would affect the society. Equip students with

appropriate tools of analysis to tackle issues and problems of economic policy. Develop in students, through the study of Economics, a range of transferable skills that will be of value in employment and self-employment. Economics Education and the Challenges of the 21st Century identified include: economic scene; population growth; globalization and; inadequate number of qualified Economics teachers. Thus, it is recommended among others, that Economics curriculum should be reviewed and re-develop to incorporate global economics issues:

Keywords: 21st Century, Economics, Education, Mission & Vision

Introduction

Economics is one of the Social Science subject offered at Senior Secondary School (SSS) level in Nigeria. Economics as a subject was introduced into the Nigerian Secondary School curriculum in late 1960s. Specifically the acceptability of the introduction of the subject at Great Britain necessitated its introduction in Nigerian Secondary School curriculum in 1966 and was first taken in West African School Certificate Examination as a school subject in Nigeria in 1967 (Adu in Ede, Oleabehie & Modebelu, 2016).

The subject Economics has been defined in many ways by various economists as a social science which studies human beings and their behavior. However, the most generally accepted definition of Economics is the one put forward by Professor Lord Lionel Robbins. He defined Economics as “the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses”. This definition is all embracing because it covers some major aspects of Economics such as scarcity, wants, human behavior and choice (Anyanwuocha, 2010). The ends in the definition refer to human wants, desires or needs. Human wants are numerous or many relative to available resources required to satisfy them. The word scarce refers to the limited available resources used in satisfying the numerous human wants. In other words, the resources required to satisfy human wants are scarce or not many, relative to their demand. The alternative uses in the definition means that these scarce resources can be used for different purposes (Ande, 2018). In other words, the more pressing needs have to be satisfied first leaving others that are less important.

The objectives of studying Economics in Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria according to the Federal Government of Nigeria through National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is to: equip students with the basic principles of Economics necessary for useful living and for higher education; prepare and encourage students to be prudent and effective in the management of scarce resources; raise students respect for the dignity of labour and their appreciation of economic, cultural and social values of our society and enable students acquire

knowledge for the practical solution of the economic problems of society; Nigeria, developing countries and the world at large.

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2012) stated that Economics is a non-vocational elective Social Science subject to be taught in Senior Secondary Schools in the country to provide trained manpower who shall be well-equipped with critical knowledge, skills and abilities to analyze economic problems and provide solutions to solving personal and societal economic problems and policies.

The Concept of Economics Education

Economics is one of the Social Science subject offered at both Senior Secondary School and the tertiary levels of education. Economics Education on the other hand is offered at the tertiary level of education. Economics education focuses on two main themes: “Economics and Education”. Economics is defined as the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, habits and attitudes through teaching especially at a school. Put together, Economics Education is a field within education that deals with the present state of, and efforts to improve and make better the Economics curriculum, teaching and learning materials, pedagogical techniques used to teach Economics at all educational levels; and research into the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques in Economics, the level of economic literacy and factors that influence the level of economic literacy (Becker, 2001).

Economics Education is a discipline that involves the use of the appropriate teaching and learning methodology in improving the comprehension and understanding of Economics as a concept and makes easy an in-depth residual knowledge of the learners in order to make them contribute significantly to the growth and development of the Society. It is an aspect of education that is mainly concerned with the teaching and learning of Economics. It is a curriculum designed to produce experts in the field of Economics Education to develop Economics curriculum, instructional methodologies and materials for effective teaching and learning of Economics at the various educational level and for the training of manpower in order to promote growth and development in the society.

Economics education can also be seen as a:

- i. course of study which process includes a time period of inculcating the needed skills and values on the learners, (the preparation of learners for would-be-Economics educator (teachers) and disseminating of valuable Economics information on learners in order for them to improve their standard of living by engaging in meaningful endeavor)
- ii. science: which means that it is a body of organized knowledge which is subjected to scientific proves/test;

- iii. product: which involves the inculcation of saleable values/skills/disposition on the learners which are desirable by employers of labour.

The Vision of Economics Education

Nigeria's national policy on education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals, which can be achieved using education as a tool. No policy on education, however, can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation. The overall five (5) national goals of Nigeria have been endorsed as the necessary foundations for the national policy on education, which include the building of a;

- i. free and democratic society;
- ii. just and egalitarian society;
- iii. united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- iv. great and dynamic economy; and
- v. land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2012)

The stated national goals of education provided the basis for policy statements that further explain the vision of Economics Education. The national goals of education were out of the strong believe that Economics Education would be used as instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of Economics ideas, their integration for national development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of Education. Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society. The National Policy on Education acknowledges that "no country can go beyond its curriculum". For Economics Education to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals, Economics Education have been geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards economic, political, social, cultural, scientific and technological progress.

Economics as a subject was introduced into the Nigerian Secondary School curriculum in the late 1966 and was first taken in West African School Certificate Examination as a school subject in Nigeria in 1967 (Adu in Ede et al, 2016). Economics curriculum was first developed in 1985 by the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) and now reviewed by the National Education Research Development Centre (NERDC). The curriculum is based on the principle of equipping the recipients with the basic knowledge and skills to appreciate the nature of economic problems in any society and adequately prepare them for the challenges in the Nigeria economy (NEDRC in Oleabhiele, & Oleabhiele, 2015). Therefore, the vision of Economics Education reflects that of the national goals of education that follows. Economics Education is a vehicle that would be used to make people become aware of basic economic principles and concept as well as the tools for sound economic

analysis and inculcate in them an attitude of mind that will contribute intelligently to discourse on economic reforms and development as they affect or would affect the society.

The Mission of Economics Education

Mission refers to the core purpose of an institution, organization, group, association or society. It is a summary of the aims and the core values. A mission clearly tells what an institution or organization do. A mission is comprehensive but also very specific to set an institution or organization apart from other organizations (Dragon, 2020)

The specific task of Economics Education differs from society to society because the problems people encounter in the society while attempting to satisfy their numerous wants with the limited resources available to them differ. According to the National University Commission benchmark (2018), the objectives of Economics Education are to;

- i. produce graduates equipped with critical skills and abilities to undertake a synthesis of Economics with other subject areas such as Geography, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Politics, History and Law;
- ii. equip students with ability to identify models that underlie the essence of a problem; analyse and reason – both deductively and inductively;
- iii. provide training in the principles of Economics and their application appropriate to the type of degree concerned: single joint and combined studies;
- iv. stimulate students intellectually through the study of Economics and to lead them to appreciate its application to a range of problems and its relevance in a variety of contexts;
- v. provide a firm foundation of knowledge about the workings of an economy and to develop the relevant skills for the constructive use of that knowledge in a range of settings;
- vi. develop in students the ability to apply the analytical tools, knowledge and skills acquired to the solution of societies economic problems;
- vii. equip students with appropriate tools of analysis to tackle issues and problems of economic policy;
- viii. develop in students, through the study of Economics, a range of transferable skills that will be of value in employment and self-employment;
- ix. provide students with analytical skills and the ability to develop simplified frameworks for studying the real world;
- x. provide students with the knowledge and skills and ability to develop simplified frameworks for studying the real world;
- xi. provide students with the knowledge and skill base, from which they can proceed to further studies in Economics, related areas or in inter-disciplinary areas that involve Economics; and

- xii. generate in students an appreciation of the economic dimension of wider social and political issues.

Economics Education and the Challenges of the 21st Century

- i. **The Economic Scene:** The 21st century is faced with various economic problems ranging from the effects of covid-19 virus, economic recession, debt problems, unemployment, poverty, hunger and mal nutrition, terrorism, economic recession, debt problems, oil prices drop, depreciation of currency, rapidly growing population etc. Economics Education should help individuals to think rationally and become aware of the effect of their actions on their quality of life

There are a number of basic issues to which a society has to address itself. These basic issues pose to society. They arise because of the scarcity of resources. For instance what to produce, how much to produce, how to produce, the problem of distribution, efficiency of resources use, how much to consume and save for investment and the problem of unemployed resources amongst others. Economics Education should help individuals to build up a body of economic principles and equips him/her with the tools of economic analysis which will enable him/her to understand current issues and problems confronting the society and also proffer solutions to these economic problems.

- ii. **Population Growth:** Economics Education must recognize the economic effect of a large population. Nigeria's large population can be a liability because it means so many people to educate. There would be outrageous growth of population especially school-going age children. This would eventually reflect in the growth of class size. Coupled with this is the increasing number of under aged pupils in our schools. Teachers should also think of grappling with problems of large population class, delinquency, absenteeism and truancy. Teacher-student contact may be minimal which can obviously impede effective teaching. The population pressure may also affect the availability and adequacy of teaching facilities. Available text books and other teaching facilities may be seriously inadequate. The demand for education will be relatively higher than what is available, inflation may result from excess demand over supply, and the cost of living most especially education will be high. People will pay more to learn in school. There will be a high dependency ratio, there will be many people –most especially children who depend on the income earners. The heavy dependence of these children who are the unproductive population or the working population would constitute an economic liability. The income earners would have their standard of living reduced. They may also have little or no money left for education. Again the government would spend more money on

providing on education and other social amenities since those existing will not be enough to meet the total demand.

- iii. **Globalization:** Nigeria has failed to update its Economics curriculum so that it can keep pace with globalization and techno-scientific developments. The outdated course content cannot and does not satisfy the needs of the present age but instead promotes unemployment. Globalization has exposed Nigeria's economy to a greater worldwide competition. This requires a strategy geared towards upgrading the quality of human resource through Economics education (Sulaiman, 2020).
- iv. **Inadequate Number of Qualified Economics Teachers:** In Nigeria, the number of qualified teachers of Economics is still considered inadequate. This is as a result of the fact that only few state-owned Colleges of Education in the country at the present offer Economics while Federal Colleges of Education no longer offer Economics (Ede et al, 2016). Again, it is only few Universities that offer Economics Education as course of study, the few Universities that offer Economics Education do so at the undergraduate level. Presently, a small number of them offer Economics Education at the postgraduate level. Such low number of higher institutions that offer Economics has brought about shortage of qualified teachers of Economics produced every year. The shortage equally resulted at graduates of other closely related courses like Financial Accounting, Entrepreneurship Studies, Banking and Finance, Business Education, Social Studies and Geography teach Economics. These graduates are unqualified since they did not study Economics and the methodologies of teaching (Ede et al, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Economics Education has a very significant role to play, particularly, in a rapidly changing society like Nigeria. Global competitiveness in the 21st century has changed the conduct and scope of Economics education in the country where change is constant and inevitable. In today's knowledge economy, Economics education curriculum can play a vital role in improving the economy. It can provide solutions to the country's pressing condition and problems such as the rapidly growing population, unemployment, under-employment, under-utilization and over-use of resources, high dependency ratio, high rate of unskilled and semi-skilled labour.

Recommendations

In the light of the vision and mission and challenges examined, the following recommendations were made.

- i. Economics education curriculum should be reviewed and re-develop to incorporate global Economics issues

- ii. Government should also build more classrooms in high populated schools and also, approved teacher quota of one teacher per class and ratio 1:40 should be allowed to remain but should be properly used in the distribution of Economics teachers to schools.
- iii. Seminars and workshops should be organized for Economics teachers periodically to sharpen their teaching skills especially in teaching large classes.
- iv. Shortage of Economics teachers in Nigerian schools need to be treated as a national crisis worthy of serious attention from states and Federal Government. Government should increase investment in education to enable Universities that do not offer Economics Education to introduce Economics Education as course of study at both under-graduate and post-graduate level so as to increase the number of qualified Economics teachers in the country.
- v. Change pedagogy from fact-based traditional lecturing to interactive teaching: Economics teachers in the country should adopt innovative participatory teaching and learning methods because, authentic learning takes place when there is an active engagement of the learner in producing or reproducing knowledge and understanding (Mosha in Omollo, Nyakrura & Mbalamula, 2017). Teaching the subject Economics today requires new approaches that favour generic learning and the ability to develop intellectual skills far beyond memorization of facts, formulas and events Omollo, Nyakrura & Mbalamula, 2017). For Economics education in Nigeria to achieve its aims and objectives innovative teaching and learning methods should be participatory teachers act as the facilitators.

Economics education in the 21st century is about acquiring knowledge, higher order skills, such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, teamwork, and communication. As information and facts proliferate, the ability to navigate across a wide range of issues in Economics to critically evaluate, extract and communicate meaning have become essential attributes for success in modern society. Increasingly, the most important element of modern pedagogy in Economics education is not simply the teachers transmission of information and the students' retention of facts. Now, Nigeria Economics teachers' must teach students how to handle and interpret concepts, evidence and ideas, how to think and act as experts and, ultimately, how to produce original insights and valuable knowledge for the benefit of society. As a result, Economics education is entering a new and exciting period. Economics teachers need to change pedagogy from fact-based traditional lecturing to interactive teaching with the aim of fostering durable skills such as critical thinking, developing and expert mind set, and problem-solving. Economics teachers in the country should learn to improve students' experience and be at the forefront of global development in Economics education.

References

- Adu, E. O. (2002). Two-problem based learning strategies, quantitative ability and gender as determinant of students' academic achievement in Economics. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan.
- Ande, C. E. (2018). *Essential Economics for senior secondary schools*. Lagos: TONAD Publishers Limited.
- Anyawuocha, R. A. I. (2010). *Fundamentals of Economics for senior secondary schools*. Lagos: Africana First Publishers Limited.
- Becker W. E. (2001) Economics education. Retrieved March 4th, 2020 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economics_education#cite_ref-1.
- Dragon, B. V. (2020). Mission definition. Retrieved January 14th, 2020 from <https://www.dragon1.com/terms/mission-definition>
- Ede, M. O, Oleabhiele, E.O & Modebelu, M. N. (2016). *Fundamentals of Economics education*. Akwa: SCOA Heritage Nigeria Ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Sulaiman M. M (2016). Globalization and Educational Challenges. *International Journal of Applied Research* 2016; 2(9): 474-478
- Mosha H.J. (2004). New directions in teacher education for quality improvement in Africa. *Papers in Education and Development*. 2 (4), 45-68.
- National Universities Commission (2018). *Benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities (Education)*. Abuja: National Universities Commission Publishers.
- Oleabhiele, E.O. & Oleabhiele, E. P. (2015). Extent of Implementation of Post-Basic Economics Curriculum in Senior Secondary Schools in Edo State. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3 (3). Retrieved from www.apjmr.com on 21/06/2018.
- Omollo A, Nyakrura B & Mbalamula Y. S. (2017). Application of participatory teaching and learning approach in teacher training colleges in Tanzania. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*. 16 (6),1-10.