



The Role of Curriculum in Achieving Sustainable Economic Development

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to stress the role of curriculum as an instrument for achieving sustainable economic development, following the federal government's call for diversification of economy due to the crash in the price of oil at the international oil market. The study looked at Nigeria's national economic goals in relation to the curriculum, the role of curriculum in economic development were seen to include the provision of knowledge, skills, social and cultural patterns of behavior that encourage ingenuity and industry which enable citizens to participate in building the economy among other roles. The learner, teacher, society and government were seen as having significant roles to play but not without challenges while fostering economic development. Recommendations made were that learners should be willing to unlearn non-functional economic principles and learn relevant, functional innovations, entrepreneurial knowledge and skills which would be put to use after school; curriculum designers should find out if there is need for renovation or total change in the present curriculum so that the same things are not repeated while expecting a different result; government should make use of research and technology developed in institutions of learning for the economic development of the nation.*

Key words: *curriculum, national economic goals, economic development*

Introduction

It is no news to say that the period of oil boom in Nigeria is over and total dependence on oil as the main stay of the Nigerian economy is irrational. Therefore the clarion call on diversification of the economy to the non-oil sector and giving heed to same will be a more appropriate venture for sustainable economic development. To make this happen there has to be an attitudinal change towards what is sustainable having experienced the resultant hardship that the big fall in oil price has brought on the citizens. According to Uzonwanne (2015), mono-economy has to give way to the productive development of various sectors of the economy. Diversification of economy means not concentrating on only oil and gas but engaging also in other sectors of the economy for revenue generating operations. This shift from what has been for decades will require a reorientation of the mentality and attitudes of the people in order to entrench a new and more sustainable economy. The introductory page of the National Policy of Education has it that education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development (FRN, 2013). This means that to effect any meaningful development in a nation, the tools of education will be used. To get this done the curriculum designers will have to direct

school subjects, lesson contents, subject matters and bodies of knowledge to teaching the need for diversification, areas for diversification, benefits, and how to be actively involved in the various areas of diversification. Except the citizens are well informed and made willing to adopt the new way of helping to grow and develop the economy, it will be an uphill task for economic development to take place.

Using the curriculum will give diversification the needed impetus, substance and sustainability. This implies that for any meaningful development to take place education will be the vehicle with which this will be delivered. The same thing goes for change, as it is now that we want to change from an economy that mostly depended on oil and gas for revenue to one that generates revenue from other sectors of the economic. For change to be meaningful and beneficial, educating the citizenry using a well planned strategy with a focus on the national objectives of the federal government and its philosophy of education, will be most strategic. The curriculum is a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center (Wiles and Bondi, 2011). The sets of learning opportunities are the courses, subjects and learning that the school offers as education to learners. The broad goals are the overall philosophy and goals of our nation Nigeria as clearly stated by the federal government in the national policy on education, while the identifiable population is the citizens of the country.

The discussion on the study will be done using the following sub-headings as a guide:

- Nigeria's national economic development goals and the curriculum.
- Explaining economic development.
- The role of curriculum in economic development.
- How to use the curriculum for economic development.
- The challenges of curriculum in fostering economic development.
- Recommendations.
- Summary/conclusion.

Nigeria's national economic goals and the curriculum

The five main national goals of Nigeria, as enshrined in section 1 sub section 3 of the National Policy on Education are the building of: (a) a free and democratic society; (b) a just and egalitarian society; (c) a united, strong and self reliant nation; (d) a great and dynamic economy; (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2013:1). (c) – (e) above indicate the goal of the nation as it concerns her economy. These goals can be achieved using the tool of curriculum via school programmes of studies, activities and guidance.

To build a united, strong, self reliant nation, that has a great and dynamic economy with a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens require real time education. The citizens have to be groomed by way of teaching them those things that will help to build a united, strong and self reliant nation that has a great and dynamic economy with a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. This will have to take place in both a formal and non formal setting and here education stands out as a veritable tool. By way of definition, the author defines education as a process of imparting and acquiring skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and habits.

Offorma (2014) opines that the essence of education is to transfer these components (knowledge, facts, skills values and attitudes) from one situation to solving problems in another. To ensure that the “what” and “how” of education are given adequate consideration, the content of the entire educational process has to be planned, implemented and evaluated. This is all about developing the curriculum. What then is curriculum? Dike and Eze in Okoro (2016) define curriculum as an embodiment of all the knowledge, skills and attitudes which a nation impart to her citizens through her schools. It is the tool used in accomplishing individual and society’s set goals. Looking at the nation’s goal of building a strong self reliant nation with a dynamic economy where all citizens have bright opportunities, it will be expected that the citizens be taught those skills and knowledge that will make this possible. The content of what will be taught, how it will be taught and how to measure the success or otherwise of the effort will have to be identified and formally stated. This is what is referred to as curriculum. Obih & Oleribe (2016) affirm that the curriculum should reflect the needs, goals, values, culture and aspirations of a given society, in other words, the curriculum is a consistent and conscientious effort to align society’s needs with educational content.

“The curriculum is meant to take care of the all the issues raised in the country’s philosophy and national goals in conjunction with that of education. In furtherance to this, curriculum should set all machinery in motion to make sure that the country’s needs are met at the required time” (Okoro 2016:41).

This definition refers to the formal curriculum, which is planned a head of time, bearing in mind the characteristics of the curriculum recipients, the philosophy and goals of education, the environment, the resources, methods of teaching, and evaluation procedures. It is the road map to attainment of the goals of education which invariably should be the goals of the nation. Looking at the conventional practice around us, there seem to be a mismatch of society’s needs and the core direction of the educational content. For instance we train graduates in almost all aspects required for health, social, technological, economic and other areas of our needs but we import foreign “experts” with the same level of qualification, pay them huge sums even at the detriment of our economy, while our indigenous graduates remain unemployed even when they ask for stipends for a pay. Does this suggest that there are irrelevances in our curriculum? When we produce what the people don’t buy/use, it could be said that our products are not good enough or that we produce what are not really useful. This then will imply that our efforts are not useful. It has been noted severally by researchers and other interested analyst that the problem of most developing nations is the traditional western education curriculum which they inherited from their colonial masters that encouraged white collar jobs after graduation from school. These same nations will go all out to look for those who have practical knowledge and can produce what is needed and as required without having a rethink on how they could reform their educational system from theory to practice and effectual production that will meet their socio-economic needs. Nigeria’s educational system is often condemned as placing undue emphasis on theoretical knowledge against practical and vocation oriented training that will boost production and encourage self reliance.

The curriculum should work out the achievement of the nation's economic goals by producing saleable graduates at all levels of education who will meet the desired need for technocrats, industrialists, scientists and innovators in all sectors of human endeavor such that we could be self reliant, exporters of innovative industrial and technology based products.

Economic development

It is certainly possible to have growth without immediate development but economic development creates the conditions that enable long run economic growth. Vesal (2014) opines that for growth what matters is the number of jobs while for economic development the focus is wages, career advancement opportunities, and working conditions. This implies that for economic development it is not the number of jobs that matter but the wages attached to these jobs, the quality of life lived by the workers, their working and living conditions and the prospects for advancement feasible for the jobs. If in a population of 160 million, over 140 million get employed within a period of 3-5years with a minimum wage that is far below international acceptable practices and living under very poor conditions, this will signify growth in employment without a commensurate growth in economic development. The idea of doling out ₦5000.00 (five thousand naira) to every unemployed youth in the country does not depict economic development nor does it pave way for it. It is like the proverbial giving a fish to a child instead of teaching him how to fish.

Economic development can be described as the creation of jobs, wealth and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well being of a community (IEDC, 2002).

The word sustainability connotes the ability to carry a weight or pressure, hence sustainable economic development refers to creating a steady process of gradual improvement that can carry the weight and pressure of the socio-economic and material well being of the society. Turning out millions of graduates from the universities is much pressure and making provision for only a few thousands to be employed is not sustainable so also is training them for white collar jobs. Sustainable economic development involves turning out graduates whose employment are guaranteed because there are available jobs or because they have been trained to be self employed. It also involve ensuring that brilliant students are not drained out of our country to go and become inventors and epoch making professionals in developed countries just because we had nothing for them to do. Our economy will not be sustained if we allow this to be the trend for a long time, we need to sustain the available human and material resources to keep our economy aglow. Section 1 subsection 4 the national policy on education (FRN, 2013: 6) states that in Nigeria's philosophy of education it is believed that: (a) Education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education; (b) Education fosters the worth of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society.

The role of curriculum in economic development

1. The curriculum provides citizens with knowledge, skills, social and cultural patterns of behavior that encourage initiative and industry which enable them to participate in building the Economy.
2. Builds innovation and creativity into the psychic of learners/citizens through subject content and imbedded teaching styles and methods.
3. The curriculum teaches financial prudence and good decision making. The economic security and well being of educated and well informed individuals will increase as they will be able to make financial decisions for themselves and their families. At school, subjects like mathematics, economics accounting/ book keeping increase the knowledge of how to record, collate, manage and run businesses or finances. When people are educated they can make better decisions for their families obtain better jobs, make money and increase their economic security and well being. Secured families are better able to contribute to vital, thriving communities, further fostering community economic development (Hogarth, 2006).
4. Teaches discipline, hard work and peaceful co-existence which are the bed rock of any sustainable economic development. They are also the characteristics looked for by foreign investors. When citizens are disciplined there will be a drastic and significant reduction in corruption, robbery of all kinds, militancy, terrorism and other vices that are often mentioned. This will bring a prevalent calm in the land for business to thrive and investors will feel secured.
5. Through the school curricula, creditable labour force is made available for employers in industries, manufacturing firms, institutions of learning and other areas of needs. Education plans and provides the required knowledge in all fields so the products can fit into the labour market further fostering economic development. Education prepares a quality work force by offering instructions to the needs of industry and business and helping individuals learn throughout their lives (NIU, 2005).
6. Education provides support for on-going and thriving business and industry through organized seminars, workshops, symposia and other services offered through the school curriculum.
7. Curriculum innovation and reform is used to ensure stability and relevance in the system. As technology and the economic climate change, the curricular is changed or reformed so that education continues to be a relevant and valuable resource to firms and businesses both in the short and long run.
8. Research and technology transfer, which give birth to great economic reform and industry is a product of the curriculum. Research conducted by the universities and other Research institutes enhances economic development these researches and practical application based technology are needed to create sustainable economic development. Conducting economic and social research, facilitating technology transfer of basic and applied research will result in the design, development, production and commercialization of new and improved products and services with the ultimate outcome of creating new industries, capital ventures and jobs.

How to use curriculum for economic development

Curriculum designers should articulate properly the socio-economic needs of the people and by extension the nation, to get a comprehensive curriculum content that will cater for the needs of the people.

1. The curriculum should be designed to target large scale production and industrialization to absorb graduates from schools and cater for the growing population.
2. As much as possible teaching/learning should be made real and practical, while learners should be given opportunities for hands-on learning for gainful learning experiences. Practice should replace theory as much as possible.
3. Curriculum for teacher education should be such that reflect pedagogies that will enable practical, value oriented and entrepreneurial content.
4. Entrepreneurial education should be emphasized. Learners should be trained for a self-reliant after-school life. The idea of expecting a white collar job after graduation from school should be replaced with that of being a proprietor, chief executive officers of companies and employers of labour.
5. Curricular content should be replete with components of values education to ensure peaceful co-existence which is required for sustainable economic development. Values education means inculcating in the children a sense of humanism and a deep concern for the well being of others and the nations (Ogbu, Ibebuike and Okafor 2016). Curriculum should advocate peace and corporate existence for deep rooted and continual development.
6. Financial education which is the management of monetary resources should be incorporated into schools' curriculum. A financially educated person will exude such behavior as paying bills on time, having manageable levels of credit, setting financial goals and having a way or achieving these goals. These will in turn work out the economic development of the society. As the individual gets education and develops economically, it is the society and the nation at large that is by extension developing.
7. There should be a systematic and well articulated process of evaluating the extent of curriculum implementation vis-à-vis the national goals and aspirations. This will enable the authorities concerned to know the extent of achievement or otherwise of the system and then determine the aspects that require overhauling or total change and the direction of change (learner, teacher, content, resources,)

In using the curriculum as a means of sustaining economic development, four categories of people will have to be up and about their responsibilities in this regard. They are the learner, the teacher, the society and government.

The learner:

- I. The curriculum becomes a mere document where the learner is not available. Therefore right from the planning stage in curriculum development the learner has to be motivated to accept the principles of economic processes. The curriculum content for enhancing economic development must appeal to the learner since it is the desired change in the

behavior, attitude, lifestyle, beliefs, social and economic life of the learner that begins the process of economic development in the society.

- II. The learner on the other hand has the responsibility of actualizing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values learnt. In fact he/she has to be ready to unlearn (unacceptable knowledge) and learn that which is acceptable. The willingness of the learner towards new concepts of economic development is needed if the curriculum must be effective. For instance, for diversification of economy from oil based to agriculture or from a white collar jobs seeker to an entrepreneur and employer of labour, the learner has to unlearn the old idea of graduating from school to work in an oil company or any office work. Then learn entrepreneurial skills or have a mind of being self reliant after graduating from school. This means instead of learning agriculture to work in the Ministry of Agriculture, he/she learns how to work out modalities of feeding his/her family, the society and the nation at large. This process of using the curriculum to effect a sustainable economic development begins with the learner's willingness and responsiveness.

The teacher: The teacher is the one who sheds light on the content of the curriculum, therefore his/her ability to rightly interpret and then deliver accurately the curricular content as desired by the curriculum designers determines the success of any programme of instruction (curriculum) This will depend on the following qualities of the teacher:

- I. His knowledge of the curriculum content as it concerns economic development.
- II. His knowledge of the trend of events and needs in the society. For example a home economics teacher who teaches a child how to make beans balls as lesson, having a feel of the current need for self sustainability amidst the current national recession, will teach with the intent of making the learner make beans balls for income generation even if it is just as a part time engagement. So also an agricultural scientist teacher teaching animal husbandry would teach children to raise birds or any domestic animal as a way of improving their family menu, generating income, feeding the larger society. Large scale production should be encouraged from the classroom.
- III. The teacher's attitude and lifestyle will also have to be in tandem with current economic trend. Children or learners learn better and faster when the teacher is a model and practical example of what is taught. One principle of economic development is self reliance. A society or nation that is dependent on other nations for its daily human needs like food, shelter and clothing is very far from economic development. Therefore teachers in the face of current economic realities should teach their learners to appreciate home (Nigerian) made goods. This should be seen on the teacher. A fine arts teacher should be comfortable with the Nigerian tie and dye (adire), the home economics teacher should be able to wear clothes sewn by him/her, the agriculture science teacher should eat fish or meat from his/her animal farm. This should go down the lane for all teachers and by so doing the children will consciously and unconsciously imbibe the culture of helping the economy to grow by producing a

bit of what we need and also appreciating what comes from our environment. This is being practical and brings economic development to the grass root.

The society: The society is has of men and women who had passed through school curricular and also have children who are either in school or had gone through school. Therefore in the society it is expected that:

- I. Parents adequately sponsor their children for full attainment of curriculum programmes. Such learning programmes as cultural and creative arts activities, excursions and field trips for real life teaching and learning, home economics practicals and many other curricular activities that require extra cost. It is not uncommon especially in rural schools, to find parents and guardians who deny their children and wards the opportunities of taking part in these kinds of school activities because they are required to pay some amount of money to buy some items for hands-on learning.
- II. Members of the society should practice those economic principles they learnt at school that are supportive of a growing economy. The curriculum is geared towards realizing a great and dynamic economy by training learners in the school system on how to avail themselves of the materials and opportunities within their environment to create wealth and jobs. It is pertinent to remind members of the society to reminisce and practice what they learnt at school as it borders on economic development. The essence of this is to recall memories of that which they learnt in school like hard work, integrity, co-existence, accountability and responsibility. These are all ingredients of economic development which school leavers should live with all their lives.
- III. Again the society should lend support to those who graduate from school and want to establish one thing or the other that they learnt in school. This, the government is actually doing through the small and medium enterprises (SME) scheme of the federal government. Non-governmental Organizations and private individuals should stretch out their hands to young school graduate who have something to offer the society to boost economic development.
- IV. The society should support children who want to take to artistic skills rather than office enclosed jobs. It is sometimes unwelcomed when parents frown at children who want to get involved in self made activities like artistry and creative productions (music, theatre arts, handicrafts, clothing and textiles and others). Most families want to have medical doctors, lawyers, engineers and other “epoch making” professions. For a sustainable economic development we need all areas of life to be functional and productive.

The government:

- I. The curriculum is government birthed as an instrument for national development therefore it should be government sponsored. There should be proper funding of the demands of the curriculum content like laboratories equipments, staffing,

- scholarships and many others. Economic development is a process which requires time, money and effort, all these have to be adequately put in place for successful economic development. Schools should be given adequate funds and equipment that will make teaching and learning practical and result orienting. Again government should be ready to assist her citizens to put into practice what they learnt at school by providing soft loans, equipment, land, enabling laws and opportunities to enable them get established.
- II. Monitoring and evaluation for necessary change and innovation should be effectively done. It is not enough to have an arm in the ministry of education called supervision or monitoring and evaluation unit. There should be the actual field monitoring for both formative and summative evaluation to see if the demands of the National policy on education are met. Government should liaise with curriculum designers, state their aspirations in clear terms and lend credible support to education for the realization of such. Curriculum designers should be able to liaise with government on what is required and how to get what is needed. For instance now that the clamour is on diversification for sustainable economy pointers should be on what would make us productive enough as to be able to generate enough revenue that would boost the economy. Our educational system must move from theory to practice, from entrepreneurship to industrialization and subsequently from an importing to exporting economy.
 - III. The natural environment- air, water, land, and the sky is embedded with elements and substances that can be harnessed for the benefits of the socio-economic needs of man. Using available technology, resources abound as raw materials that can be converted to wealth of nations from the air, water, land and sky.

Challenges of using the curriculum for economic development

The challenges abound on the part of the learner, teacher and government.

- I. The unwillingness of learners to unlearn unacceptable economic principles (like having a flare for foreign products or getting involved in fraudulent acts) and learning the principles of hard work, initiative, honesty, co-operation and many others. The effectiveness and success of the curriculum in economic development depends largely on the positive change in the learner's attitude.
- II. The teacher's inability to update his knowledge in his/her area so that he/she could teach in harmony with the present economic demands in the society is a challenge. The "I don't care" attitude of some teachers towards their jobs could frustrate the realization of curriculum objectives.
- III. Families in the society wanting to have or maintain their status symbol, would always want to have their children read courses that have high-sounding professional symbols irrespective of the child's flare or ineffectiveness in that field. This does not go well with economic development. Some others would want to do all they can to have their people work in oil companies so that they would have their seats among the committee of the

wealthy. They would sell all they have to send one of their own to foreign lands not for any rational reason but just to bring in foreign currencies even if they are to go and do very degrading odd jobs. This is against economic development.

- IV. Government's unwillingness to fund education adequately makes the implementation of the curriculum very difficult and as such less effective.
- V. Lack of consideration and adoption of evaluation report by relevant education officials.
- VI. Lack of adoption of research findings and recommendations for improvement and subsequent development of the society.
- VII. Best brains from our schools look for greener pastures in foreign lands instead of reinforcing our economy. This brain drain is as a result of lack of enabling environment for professionals within the country creates a sieve that releases the best of ours to foreign lands where they are allowed to express their creative powers with fascinating attraction.

Recommendation

1. Learners should be willing to unlearn non-functional economic principles and learn relevant and functional innovations whenever they have the opportunity. Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills should be put to use after school.
2. Teachers should attend workshops and seminars to update themselves and not become obsolete.
3. Parents and members of the society should encourage young school graduates to be established in areas of their capabilities instead of roam about idly.
4. Members of the public should always remember the values and economic principles they were taught in school and learn to appreciate their environment and what is produced from there.
5. The curriculum should be geared towards innovative technology and industrialization because the society is becoming revolutionized.
6. The curriculum designers should find out if there is need for a renovation or total change in the present curriculum so that the same things are not repeated while expecting a different result.
7. Teacher education curriculum should reflect non-oil sector economy, self-reliance, innovation and creativity, so that they will pass same to their learners.
8. There should be a balance of the required needed man power, proportions for each sectors/fields of need and the products from schools both in number and quality.
9. Government should not give room for brain drain. Brilliant graduates from all fields, whether formal or non-formal sectors should be adequately and conveniently employed and encouraged to remain within our shores to build our economy and earn us a pride of place among nations.
10. There should be a balance between the population turned out from schools and number of job opportunities created. Increased education requires complementary efforts to increase opportunities to support a growing and developing economy that will provide

jobs. Focusing on education without supporting the development of industry creates a brain drain as skilled labour will migrate to where there are opportunities (Beine, 2001).

11. Government should work with other stake holders of education, curriculum planners and designers to ensure that necessary machineries required for birthing an economy that is strong and sustainable are put in place.
12. Government should not kill ingenuity and local technology but should help to establish, expand and upgrade it.

Summary

This study looked at the role of curriculum in achieving sustainable economic development. The need to diversify the Nigerian economy is glaring and to effect a lasting change through the instrumentality of the curriculum cannot be overstated. There has to be a re-orientation of the minds of the citizens. The learner must be willing to unlearn and learn new economic principles for economic growth; the teacher must be knowledgeable to be able to adapt to changing economic situation.

Government should be supportive of the curriculum demand and society must be objective in their judgment of which profession is more prestigious. The curriculum provides the workforce for the nation by equipping them with skills and knowledge in various fields of human endeavor there by making the citizens gain economic freedom and also contribute positively to the economic development of their nation.

Conclusion

Nigeria has been endowed with a lot of natural resources oil and gas being a part. If we prospered so much in oil and gas, we would also flourish in other sectors if we go into them with same passion using the curriculum as a base and pillar. The curriculum stands to empower people with knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and beliefs that will make them productive in all aspects of life and contribute meaningfully to the economic life in the society and by so doing increase the gross domestic product.

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