

CHALLENGES FACED BY ECONOMICS EDUCATORS IN THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

P. O. Oru

Abstract

Economics education is an academic programme that equips learners with knowledge and skills that could make them self reliant thereby making it possible for them to contribute to sustainable development. This paper highlighted the roles economic education plays in sustainable development and the challenges confronted by economic educators. Based on observations from the study, the writer recommends that grouping of large class size, moderation of pace of instructional delivery, prompt evaluation of work after a task and several others could help to alleviate the challenges discussed.

Keywords: Economics education/educators, sustainable development, self reliance

Economics education has been hailed due to its ability to equip learners with knowledge and skills that are beneficial in sustainable development. The term which must not be confused with Economics of education involves the development that meet the need of the people. The goal is to meet the needs of today, without compromising the needs of tomorrow. What this means is that in the process of developing the economy the future generations must be considered.

Two fundamental elements of the concept of sustainable development, i.e. development and sustainability, preceded the creation of the concept itself (Tomislav, 2018). Tangi in Tomislav (2018) went further to state that the fundamental purpose of sustainable development is the creation of a stimulating environment in which people will enjoy and have long, healthy and a creative life.

There is no doubt that Economics education is a factor in the sustainable development programme that cannot and should not be ignored. It is against this background that the writer suggested strategies that could help to eliminate or to a large extent, reduce the challenges Economics educators face in the course of delivering their objectives.

What is Economics Education

Economics education is a field within Economics that focuses on two main themes: the current state of and efforts to improve, the Economics curriculum, materials and pedagogical techniques used to teach Economics at all educational levels. It also focuses on research into the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques in Economics, the level of economic literacy of various groups as well as factors that influence the level of economic literacy (Wikipedia).

Economics education can be seen as a process, science and product.

i) Economics education as a process: As a process, Economics education not only prepares learners to become Economics educators (teachers) but in addition, provides learners with valuable information that can make them engage in meaningful ventures which will in the long-run improve their standard of living.

ii) Economics education as a science: Economics education refers to a body of organized knowledge which is subjected to scientific process or test.

iii) As a product: Economics education has to do with inculcating saleable skills on the learners. These skills are often needed and sort after not only by employers of labour but also by the society at large.

In summarizing what Economics education is, Kingsley (2018) highlighted a number of essential characteristics of Economics education which according to him are:

- a) inculcates needed skills and values on learners
- b) adopts a scientific approach in the teaching/learning process
- c) helps in raising the standard of living of learners
- d) helps learners to engage in meaningful ventures
- e) prepares the learners for the world of work
- f) assist learners in the development strive of the society and the nation at large.

Roles of Economics Education in Sustainable National Development

Economics education plays vital roles in sustainable development of any nation be it developed, developing or less developed (Kingsley 2018). In his opinion, the following are some of such roles:

1) Inculcates managerial skills and competencies on the learners

We have been made to understand over and over again that resources are scarce. Based on this fact it is of utmost importance for managerial skills and competencies to be exhibited in all sectors of a nation and one sure way of inculcating these skills and competencies is through the teaching of Economics in Economics education. Where learners (individuals) are able to manage their resources, it could translate to a better management of the nation's scarce resources in the long-run. This will no doubt lead to sustainable development.

2) Prepares the learner to be self-reliant

Self reliance in the words of Djalma Lima (2016) is "the ability to think and act without the help or influence of others, the ability to decide what you should be or do". The community Empowerment Network (CEN) believes that self-reliance is important for individuals in developing countries like Nigeria to be able to govern their own lives as well as economies. Uwem (2016) buttressed this when he stated that self-reliance is the ability to think and act without the help or influence of others as well as the ability to decide what to be or what to do. In Nigeria today, a significant percentage of the working population depend on government to make employment opportunities available to them and this has no doubt led to the persistent increase in unemployment rate in the country. It should be noted at this juncture that Economics education has the capacity to prepare individuals to become self reliant by inculcating in them the opportunity to engage in meaningful small and medium scale businesses. By so doing, they can not only cater for themselves but also provide job opportunities for others.

3) Increase standard of living/welfare of learners

Akarowhe stressed that standard of living is the level of quality of life people in a particular society or country enjoy. This level he added is not only affected by their level of income but the quality and quantity of goods and services made available to them. He further stated that Economics education teaches learners to be able to take care of their needs by taking into consideration certain economic principles and laws.

4) **Encourages learners to make contribution to sustainable national development**

Okumana in Akarowhe stressed that “a well-equipped Economics education learner will assist in forecasting unseen economic cycle of recession/depression for government, and will proffer remedy to key economic issues facing a nation. This will help aggregate economic performance and increase welfare among members of the society.

Challenges faced by Economic Educators in the Teaching of Economics

Having enumerated the roles Economics education play in the sustainable development of any nation, it is sad to note that Nigeria has not been able to harness these benefits as a result of certain challenges Economics educators encounter in the process of teaching the subject. Some of these challenges are discussed by analyzing some research findings in this area.

Gbemisola and Vusy conducted a research on the factors affecting teaching and learning of Economics in some Ogbomosho High Schools, Oyo State, Nigeria. Their study adopted descriptive design the target population comprised of nine high secondary schools. They sampled three(3) teachers and five students from each of the nine schools and their findings were as follows.

1. **Very high teacher-student ratio**

Their findings revealed a ratio of 1:225 in the sampled schools and this made the teaching of Economics difficult in those schools. Their findings were corroborated by that of Sentumbwe (2018) who conducted a research on teachers’ perspectives of the challenges of teaching Economics: A case study of one public secondary school in Uganda. The study employed a qualitative research paradigm and sampled four Economics teachers at one selected secondary school in Kampala.

2. **Lack of adequate teaching aids**

Instructional material (also referred to as teaching aids) are all forms of information carriers that can be used in recording, storing, transmitting or retrieving information for purposes of teaching and learning (Kulo, Agbogo and Okudarie, 2017). The findings of Gbemisola and Vusy revealed that teaching aids were not available in most of the schools for the teaching of economic. They added that in the few schools where there aids were available, they were grossly inadequate.

3. **Qualifications/skills of Economics educators**

It has become obvious that some Economics educators do not possess the skills to operate some modern teaching facilities (e.g power point) and some statistical packages used in research. As a result, such educator chose to rely on their outdated manual method of teaching and worse still are unable to effectively and fully carry out any meaningful research.

4. **Teaching techniques**

Teaching techniques refer to procedures used to enhance the chosen teaching methods (Payal, 2017). In addition to this, Umungo in Simiku, and Patricia (2015) opined that the continuous use of conventional lecture method for teaching by most teachers has resulted to loss of interest, loss of participation in class as well as poor learning achievement of students. In most institutions in Nigeria, the conventional method of teaching Economics is the lecture method. This method makes the learners passive as a result of which the skills and competencies Economics educators are supposed

to pass on to the students are not mastered. Consequently, learners of economics find it difficult to contribute their quota to the sustainable development of the nation.

5. Class in size

National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) in Nwalado, Oru and Ayemhenre (2018), states that there is a correlation between the size of a class and the performance of its students. They stress that although group method of teaching is time consuming, it is the best way of making impact in a large class. This according to them is because this method stimulates creativity, enables learners to remember discussions better among others.

Adeyemi in Ayeni and Olome (2016) opined that class size refers to an educational tool that can be used to describe the average number of students per class in a school. They went further to state that class size is an administrative decision over which teachers have little or no control of. Over the years, the quest for education in Nigeria has resulted in an increase in enrolment in many institutions and this has obviously led to an increase in class size.

Teaching we know, is an interactive process that involves the learner, subject matter as well as the teacher and should be in a conducive environment. When this interactive process is effective, knowledge and/or skills can be acquired (Ferlec 2015). Economics education has an abundance of both knowledge and skills that has very significant roles to play in the sustainable development of Nigeria.

Ayeni and Olome carried out a research on the implication of large class size in the teaching and learning of business education in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. They used a population of thirty(30) lecturers and sampled five hundred and twenty final year students. Their major finding was that large class size has negative implications on effective teaching and learning of business education in tertiary institutions. Unfortunately, this is not limited to business education alone as Economics education is also being affected by large class size. This large class size continues to make it difficult for Economics educators to impact the knowledge and skills that learners need for them to be part of the sustainable development process.

6. Student Attitude and interest towards Economics Education

Sax, in Victor (2015) defines interest as “a preference for one activity over another”. Various reasons account for students' attitude towards Economics and one of such reasons is the undue emphasis on science subjects. This undue emphasis on science subjects has led to the negligence of Economics education and this has reduced the value one tends to place on it (Victor, 2015). This low value placed on Economics education has consequently led to reduced interest and a long-run poor attitude of learners towards the study of Economics. With a low interest and poor attitude, a student in the teaching and learning process of Economics, Economics educators find it more difficult to impact on the student the knowledge and skills which Economics education has to offer.

7. Mathematically unskilled nature of some Economics educators

There is no doubt that a certain relationship exists between mathematics and Economics. This is because Economics deals with both qualitative as well as quantitative analysis and in order to quantify something that things have to be measured. For this reason, mathematics makes it possible for Economics to make quantitative analysis (Goodluck 2019). There is no denying the fact that some economic educators are not properly grounded in the field of mathematics and as a result, those areas

of Economics that requires a significant knowledge of mathematics poses a great challenge in Economics education

8. Students perception that Economics in a difficult subject

Apart from the main science subject like physics, chemistry and the like, Economics is generally perceived by students as a difficult subject and this is worse seen with student who take Economics subject as electives as well as those for which Economics is compulsory but not their major. Accounting students mainly fall into the last category. This view has been supported by Dan and Andrew (2012). They conducted a research on student's perceptions of Economics: identifying demand for further study. One of their findings was that students who find Economics frustrating are less likely to study more of Economics. As a result of this, Economics student especially those who are not Economics major feel 'satisfied' with just getting any score so long as they are able to move to the next level. The resultant effect of this is that Economics educators feel frustrated when they are unable to impart the much needed knowledge and skill.

Strategies for Improving Teaching in Economics Education for Sustainable Development

In order to achieve sustainable development the significant roles of Economics education must be harnessed. One sure way of ensuring this is by finding possible solutions to the challenges faced by Economics educators.

For Economics education to play its vital and much needed roles in the sustainable development of the nation, knowledge has to be passed from Economics educators to the learners who in turn will put into practice the knowledge and skills they have acquired. This will be a mere fantasy if the challenges Economics education face are not effectively tackled. Some of such strategies are as follows:

1. Employment of more Economics Educators where needed

In schools/institutions where the student-teacher ratio is poor, as in the case of the study carried out by Ghemisola and Vusy (2016), more Economics educators should be employed to bridge this gap. By so doing, the Economics educators will find it less frustrating teaching their students. In the long-run, better skilled economists will be produced and they will consequently be able to contribute more effectively to sustainable development.

2. Provision of more and/or better Teaching Aids

In schools where facilities like power point, e-libraries etc are not available, government, as well as non governmental organizations (NGOs) should as much as possible provide them so that Economics educators can transfer knowledge faster and easier.

3. Training and re-training of Economics Educators

As a result of the fact that as at today, there are still some Economics educators from the analogue generation that are still in active services, training and re-training of Economics educators in the use of modern teaching facilities are inevitable. Economics educators who are not skilled in the use of computer softwares in conducting researches should be given opportunities to acquire such knowledge for onward transmission to their students. This will make them be able to be a part in the new potentials of imparting knowledge which the advancement in technology is offering on a regular basis.

4. Use of modern and effective teaching techniques

Effective teaching and learning demands more of student-teacher interaction rather than mere listening to instruction (Bolarinwa and Okolocha, 2016). When there is free flow interaction between

Economics educators and the learners, teaching and learning becomes more interesting and knowledge is transmitted faster and better. Another teaching method that could reduce the problem that arise as a result of using ineffective teaching method is the flipped classroom method.

5. Use of group method in teaching a large class

Marum in Nwalado et al (2018) opined that group method of teaching can be described as putting learners into smaller groups to discuss specific issues or work on specific task so as to achieve the expected goal. These goals are increasing understanding, co-ordination of activities or a solution to a shared problem.

6. Stimulating the interest of students

Economics educators can stimulate the interest of learners by making the classroom more interesting. In the event that learners do not meet the expected result upon completion of an assignment, test or examination, they should be given an opportunity or more to tackle the task again. In addition to this, students should be properly guided on how to achieve the expected result.

7. Instruction/Encouragement of use of team teaching

Team teaching could be introduced in Economics courses that are quite voluminous. An example of such Economics course is international economics and development economics. Team teaching, also know as co-teaching is when two or more educators work together not just to plan and organize but also to instruct and make assessments on the same group of students.

8. Moderation in the pace of instructional delivery

There is no doubt that learners in the same class have different pace of understanding. As a result of this, in a course like Economics that is already perceived as difficult and frustrating, Economics educators can make it easy for the learners by moderating the pace at which they deliver instructions. This could to a significant extent ensure that more students are carried along in the teaching/learning process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the discussions thus far, the writer concludes that despite the significant roles Economic education plays in sustainable development, Economics educators in the process of delivering their duties faces challenges that range from having to manage a large class size, poor interest and attitude of students to as weird as students perception that the subject is difficult. In line with the above observations, the following recommendations were made. Economic educators should:

- 1) Reduce large class by breaking them into groups for better interactive learning.
- 2) Moderate their pace of instructional delivery so as to as much as possible “carry” must of the students along.
- 3) Stimulate learners interest by giving them opportunities to re-address works that do not meet expected results.
- 4) Ensure prompt evaluation of students work after a task is completed. They should in addition to this ensure that the evaluation gives a clear and constructive feedback.
- 5) Ensure that those not majoring in Economics are not “saddled” with the expanded details of Economics topics. To this effect, efficient summary of the course content without missing out vital points should be encouraged. In addition to the above efforts to be made Economics educators, government should
- 6) Employ adequate number of Economics educators to handle large class size where they exist. This could ensure that cause content are effectively tackled.

- 7) Provide modern and adequate infrastructural facilities such as e-libraries to encourage teaching and learning of Economics education.
- 8) Train and re-train Economics educators from time to time on new and better methods of content delivery.

References

- Ayeni, O.G & Olome, M.O. (2016). The implications of large class size in the teaching and learning of business education in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(34).
- Bolarinwa, K.O. & Okolocha, C.C (2016). Influence of classroom interaction and students attitude on academic achievement in financial accounting. *Nigeria Journal of Business Education*, 3(2).
- Djalma, L. (2010). Community empowerment network. www.endruralpoverty.org.
- Don, J.N. & Andrew, M. (2012). Indents perception of Economics: Identifying demand for further study. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication>.
- Farlec (2015). Learning www.freedictionary.com
- Gbemisola, M.O. & Vusy, N. (2016). Factors affecting effective teaching and learning of Economics in some Ogbomosho high school, Oyo State. *Nigeria Journal of Education and Practice*, 7/28
- Goodluck, N. (2019). What is the relationship between maths and Economics? Quora <https://www.quora.com>.
- <https://en.m.w.kipeida.org>
- Kingsley, A. (2018). Roles pf Economics education in sustainable national development. *Journal of Global Economics*, 6(3).
- Mikipedia <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.
- Nwalado, S.H., Oru, P.O. & Ayemhenre, S. (2018). Using group method of teaching to address the problem of large class in business education in colleges of education in Delta State. *Delta Business Education Journal*, 8(1).
- Royal, B. (2017). Innovative pedagogy in Economics education. *International Journal of Research in Advance Engineering (IJRAE)*, 3(1).
- Tomislav, K. (2018). The concept of sustains in development: From its beginning to the contemporary issues. *Zagreb International Review of Economics and Business*, 21(1).

Urem, E.I. (2016). Perspectives on self-reliance and sustainable development in Nigeria. 2nd national conference – Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP).

Victor, E. (2015). Age – gender and students’ attitude towards the study of Economics in some selected secondary schools in Calabar municipality of Cross River State Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research*, 13(1).