

INNOVATION AND RENEWAL OF ECONOMICS CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: APPROACHES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum innovation is the product of feedback from curriculum cycle, which would give rise to modifications of existing curriculum document. This modification however comes with its positive expectations as well as the challenges. To this end, this study, with the use of a desk review method, among other things reviewed the objectives of economics curriculum in senior secondary schools in Nigeria, the concepts of curriculum innovation and renewal and some of the limiting factors to curriculum innovation and renewal. Specifically, it identified and discussed two of the approaches to innovative teaching and learning that could be incorporated into secondary school economics curriculum. These are flipped classroom and Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI). Among the recommendations are: teachers should be encouraged to use innovative methods of teaching such as inter alia problem-based learning, flipped classroom, use of guest lecturers and Computer Assisted Instructions; governments, heads of schools and educational bodies should make training and retraining programmes available for economics teachers as an avenue to improve their professional competencies and keep up with innovative methods of teaching and instructional materials.

Keywords: Economics, Curriculum, Curriculum Innovation, Curriculum Renewal, Innovative Teaching Methods.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been growing significance of Economics to the nation, which constitute a fundamental reason for the need to propagate economics as a subject and consequently, economic education as a course in the curricular of senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions respectively. The focal attention of Economics is the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. It studies how individuals, businesses, governments, and nations make choices about how to allocate scarce resources (Oleabhie & Oko, 2018). Economics focuses on the actions of human beings, based on assumptions that humans act with rational behaviour, seeking the most optimal level of benefit or utility. The purpose of economic education is to create responsible citizens and effective decision makers (Dixit, 2015).

Curriculum connotes a planned course of instruction to be operated in schools. The curriculum dictates the programme of events for the learner. The teacher works through the curriculum and is in position to understand the curriculum, operate it and make invaluable

suggestions, to engender better education for the learners. Amadioha (2016) averred that a curriculum is an embodiment of all the knowledge, skills and attitudes which a nation through her schools, imparts to her citizens. “*Knowledge*” in this context, means all facts, theories, principles/generalizations and rules needed to be acquired for a student to be certified as competent in a field. Thus, if a student is majoring in economics for instance, knowledge here refers to all facts or information about a money market, the rationality, cost benefit analysis etc. If a student is majoring in history, he may be exposed to the slave trade in all its ramifications. Economics curriculum as a policy document and academic programme was introduced to educational system in Nigeria with the aim to provide an understanding of the current state of, and efforts to develop the curriculum, material and pedagogical techniques of economics employed in the teaching of economics at all educational levels (Becker, 2001).

Teaching is a dignified vocation as well as an art of helping students to learn through a conscientious effort from teachers who are willing and able to give all their efforts into the job. It is an intricate action that stems from basic knowledge required for proficient teaching which is grounded in the broadminded arts and sciences. Ekpiken & Edet observed that the enormity of teaching necessitates that secondary schools’ teachers are competent of demystifying concepts, terminology and theories in comprehensible terms. This comprehension of the art of transforming subject matters into tangible term and efficient art of teaching as well as learning process is vital to successful execution of any curriculum. It is for this reason that the new electronic curriculum of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) incorporates and encourage teachers to collaborate with one another through the social network feature and exchange teaching experiences and ideas (NERDC).

Objectives of the Article

The main focus of this article is to explore the approaches, problems and the prospects for Nigerian secondary schools with regards to innovation and renewal of the economics curriculum. It also reflects how Nigerian government, secondary schools and all other stakeholders can make use of the recommendations to evolve curriculum renewal that would improve the creativity, thinking ability and interest of students of economics, in order to be relevant in the face of globalization and fourth industrial revolution.


Conceptual Clarifications

This section of the paper presents the explanations of the key concepts discussed in this article and in which they are used. Such concepts include economics curriculum, its objectives, as well as curriculum innovation and renewal. Thereafter, it discusses the objectives of innovations in Economics curriculum, and the accompanying problems. Lastly, the concepts are brought to a conclusion and recommendations made in accordance with the findings.

Economics Curriculum

Economics is a subject in Nigerian curriculum, categorized under humanities in the senior secondary school. Other subjects in this category are; Nigerian Languages, Literature-in-English, Geography, Government, Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, History, Visual

Arts, Music, French, and Arabic (NERDC). Economics curriculum as a policy document and academic programme was introduced to educational system in Nigeria with the aim to provide an understanding of the current state of, and efforts to develop the curriculum, material and pedagogical techniques of economics employed in the teaching of economics at all educational levels. And the research to determine the effectiveness of alternative instructional techniques in economics, the level of economic literacy of various groups and factors that influence the level of economic literacy. Economics curriculum hangs on the belief of the Reconstructionism Philosophical Foundation (RPF) which advocates that the curriculum should be constantly changing to meet the changes in the society, train students to engage in critical analyses, interpret, evaluate social problems and bring about constructive change (Yusuf, 2012) Figure 1.



NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
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E-CURRICULUM THEME DETAILS

Today : 7/30/2022

SUBJECT : ECONOMICS CLASS LEVEL : SSS 1 [Window Strip](#)

THEME 1 : PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMICS

Topic	Performance objectives	Contents	Teacher's Activities	Student's Activities	Teaching & Learning Material	Evaluation Guide
1 Meaning of Economics and related concepts	1 Explain the meaning of Economics. 2 Explain the basic concepts of Economics and show its relevance to day-to-day human activities and decisions.	1 Definitions, scope, importance and methodology of Economics. 2 Economics as a science 3 Concept of Wants, Scarcity, Scale of Preference, Choice, Opportunity Cost	1 Arrange a group discussion on how the knowledge of these concepts influence our daily choices	1 Group discussion to relate these concepts to the daily activities of individuals, firms and government		1 Students to: Explain how the knowledge of the basic concepts affect the decisions of individuals, firms and government.
2 Basic tools of Economic Analysis	1 Define basic economic tools, state their uses and importance 2 construct a frequency distribution. 3 calculate the mean, median and mode of any given set of data	1 Graphs, Charts and tables, measures of central tendency	1 Display various charts relating to the topic.	1 Solve practical problems	1 Charts graphs and other relevant materials	1 use the knowledge of mean, median and mode to solve practical economic problems.

Source: NERDC

FIGURE 1
SAMPLE OF E-CURRICULUM OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ECONOMICS

The Nigerian Senior Secondary School Economics curriculum is broken down to 25 themes (nine themes in SSS 1, eight themes in SSS 2 and SSS 3 respectively). The themes are then subdivided into 48 topics (SSS 1–15 topics, SSS 2–18 topics and SSS 3–15 topics). In the e-curriculum theme details, each topic is fractionalized in columns *viz*: Topic, Performance Objectives, Contents, Teacher’s Activities, Teaching & Learning Material and lastly Evaluation Guide.

Objectives of Economics Curriculum in Nigeria

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council highlighted the objectives of post-basic Economics curriculum are to enable students:

- i. Understand basic Economics, principle, concepts as well as the tools for sound economic analysis.
- ii. Contribute intelligently to discourse on economic reforms and development as they affect or would affect the generality of Nigerians.

- iii. Understand the structure and functioning of economic institutions.
- iv. Appreciate the role of public policies on national economy.
- v. Develop the skills and also appreciate the basis for rational economic decision.
- vi. Become sensitized to participate actively in national economic advancement through entrepreneurship, capital market and so on.
- vii. Understand the role and status of Nigeria and other African countries in international economic relationships and appreciate the problems encountered by developing countries in their effort towards economic advancement.

The above reasons for teaching economics are pointers to the fact that, every society is faced with certain fundamental Economic problems. Economists usually categorise these problems into three; What to produce? How to produce? And for whom to produce? These problems can find solutions through Economics and possibly are solved through the study of Economics. The objectives of teaching Economics are achievable if the teachers are adequately equipped because teaching of Economics requires the use of appropriate teaching strategies in order to foster the understanding of concepts, terminologies and dug out the inherent traits in each of the learners in order to make them contribute immensely and meaningfully to the economic growth, economic planning, and economic development. Economics is more of abstract expression and theoretical field of study in nature, beginning students especially find it difficult to learn the fundamental content easily. For this reason, it will then be the responsibility of the lecturer or teachers to teach the subject in a manner that will make the students grasp the content well and be able to apply it in solving problems or for examination purposes. The focus should not just be covering the overloaded syllabus, or demonstration of teaching skills rather on the learning skills of students and their achievement (Adu et al., 2014).

In the work of Dixit (2015) Economic education is said to impact significantly on the level of economic activity thereby increasing business output and sales volume. Every senior secondary school graduate should have been well prepared for higher education as well as acquired relevant functional economic skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation; and in the process strengthened further the foundations for ethical, moral and civic values acquired at the basic education level.

Meaning of Curriculum Innovation

It is important to broadly define curriculum, the term curriculum include goals for student learning (skills, knowledge attitudes); content (the subject matter in which learning experiences are embedded); sequences (the order in which concepts are presented); learners, instructional methods and activities, instruction resources (materials and setting); and adjustments to teaching and learning processes based on experience and evaluation (Amadioha, 2016). Similarly, Yusuf (2012), viewed curriculum as the plan and unplanned experiences to which children are exposed to within and outside the school environment for individual and collective growth. Oleabiele & Oko (2018) also aired their view on the subject when they submitted that “*curriculum simply mean a plan or blue print that guides an academic programme with the aim of bringing about positive change in the behaviour of the learners. It stands for all the subjects which learners are expected to undergo within a specified period of time*”.

Curriculum innovation occurs when a curriculum cycle is completed and feedback reveals a modification or a review of an existing curriculum. Various definitions have been

proffered to this concept. Mkpá & Izuagba in Amadioha (2016) averred that innovation is the introduction of novel factor, perceived as new by a given school and community, supported by a driving force, and implemented as a practical advance that deviates from established or traditional forms. Novel factor here means something new; it can be new concepts, new approaches or materials introduced to make it better or of more effective and relevant to those whom the curriculum is planned. Also, Olaitan & Ali (1997) viewed curriculum reform/innovation as the “*process by which curriculum planner delete irrelevant information or knowledge or skill of an existing curriculum and substitutes it with available improved ones, taking into consideration the required resources for its success.*” curriculum innovation becomes necessary when there is gap in the existing curriculum. In other words, it deals with improvement of the existing curriculum to meet current demands. Innovation can also occur as a result of knowledge explosion in our society; new concepts may be introduced into the curriculum package or obsolete ones removed.

Economics Curriculum Innovation and Renewal

Innovation and renewal of economics curriculum in senior secondary schools in Nigeria becomes necessary because the country is seemingly still struggling to fit in appropriately to the 4th industrial revolution while the developed countries of the world are now in the era of 5th industrial revolution in a new age. The revolution involves all aspects of life in a new age known as globalization era which is an invention of science and technology. Nigeria as a developing nation should have a positive responsibility in the globalization. The country has to prepare the citizens to face it, in order to be able to compete with other nations and not to be left behind. Preparing students in the senior secondary schools through the innovation and the renewal of the Economics curriculum is one of the solutions to face the globalization and to reduce its effects on the future of jobs in Nigeria.

For the purpose of teaching and learning economics, there have been some innovations in the last two decades that are capable of improving tremendously the curriculum of economics. The tools and drivers of innovation are effective teaching methods and materials. Two of such innovative methods will be examined in the paragraphs that follow:

Flipped classroom: Flipped Classroom is an instructional process wherein students watch lectures online outside of class time, instead of spending entire periods watching a lecture, and then use class time to do activities. Deng (2019) defined Flipped Classroom, after consulting numerous other literatures, as a “*pedagogical method in which students learn new knowledge through short videos, podcasts, e-books as well as internet outside class and consolidate what they acquired through classroom activities with the help of classmates and teachers*”.

The most important aspect of flipped classroom/learning is the interaction and the meaningful learning activities that occur during the face-to-face time. The flipped classroom was invented in 2007 by Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams when they began recording their classroom lectures so that students could access them at home, however, its notion and popularity, can largely be attributed to Salman Kahn, founder of the Kahn Academy which is a free online system that has videos covering a multitude of topics and subjects, including economics. This method of teaching is implemented in such a way that it brings the concept under investigation to fore in order for the learners of economics to be actively involved in the

classroom activities thereby changing from naivety to think like an economist.

Ways Flipped Learning Help Students to Become Innovative, Active and Creative Thinkers

- It allows classroom time to be geared more toward active and collaborative learning. In a flipped classroom, students are able to cover course material at a pace that conforms to their learning style. This makes them to own their time as well as becoming active planners.
- Flipped learning also has the ability to help students catch up on missed materials. While a student may miss the application and higher levels of learning that may be achieved during class time, students are still able to catch up on material by watching the week's lecture online at their leisure.
- In a flipped classroom also, unlike other online asynchronous classrooms/platforms, students are more active, because the instructor is able to speak with students in the classroom, and can intervene if a student is having difficulties applying the techniques or topics covered. Moreover, an instructor is able to appeal to both the students' "goals-defined" and "experience-defined" needs by explicitly showing or stating learning objectives in class during applications of the material learned online.

Practical Suggestion on the Way Flipped Classroom Can be Used

A practical way by which an Economics teacher can make use of flipped classroom as an instructional design in the teaching learning process could be in the teaching of the topic "*Money Market*". The following steps could be followed.

Teacher's activities

- Instruct students to watch and listen to stock market analysis on national televisions.
- Play the same clip of the stock market analysis in the classroom with the students.
- Use the content of the clip to engage students on the meaning of Money Market.
- Lead students to discuss the topic based on their understanding of the clips watched.
- Create deeper learning experiences using class activities such as quizzes, individual exercises, group/pair activity and any other suitable classroom activities for the topic under consideration.

Students' activities

- Watch and listen to stock market analysis on national televisions at home.
- Read physical or digital texts on the topic
- Participate in an online discussion with the teacher
- Perform research on the stock exchange market
- Discuss the topic in the classroom with the teacher based on their understanding of the clips watched

Computer – Assisted Instruction (CAI) in Economics Education

Introduced in the 1974, Computer assisted instruction is an instructional comparatively newly designed method of teaching to developing countries like Nigeria, where computer systems deliver instruction directly to learners by allowing them to interact with designed lessons that have been programmed into the system. Through this technique, different gadgets (soft & hard wares) are developed to aid in teaching and learning and analysis of data, which are capable of improving students' abilities, especially in the introductory economics courses to be able to think, "*in an economics way*". Information Communication Technology (ICT) in economics

education is capable of facilitating the acquisition of important cognitive skills required for effective economic analysis and evaluation. It provides the cognitive scaffolding for students to acquire complex concepts and understanding the connection between them. CAI is a medium through which students can observe the real-life implications of economics theories (Ogbuagu & Isaac, 2017). It is however surprising that despite having introduced about five decades ago, CAI in Economics is relatively not popular in this part of the world – Nigeria. This might not be unconnected from the financial implications of this method of teaching, which was envisaged at the inception of the findings by the first author Soper (1974).

Ways CAI in Economics help Students to Become Innovative, Active and Creative Thinkers

CAI as a method of teaching in Economics support learners' autonomy, and provide students with access to economics discipline in a global perspective. This removes the abstraction that is often experienced when students learn through discussion and dictation of notes.

It gives students the opportunities of visualizing the lesson by gaining access to pertinent information on the topic under focus. What this does is to open up the thinking faculty of the students, transforming their initial state of mimicry to full understanding of the concepts.

Studies on CAI in economics education have shown that ICT facilitates the acquisition of important cognitive skills required for effective economic analysis and evaluation, which translates to the ability of students to think “*in an economics way*”.

Practical suggestion on the Way CAI in Economics can be used

A practical way by which an Economics teacher can make use of CAI as an instructional design in the teaching learning process could be in the teaching of the topic “*Basic tools of economics analysis*”. The following steps could be followed.

Teacher's activities

- Arouse the interest of the learners by setting up the gadgets to be used (i. e. personal computers, projectors, pointers, interactives boards etc.)
- Prepare slides on the topic, well timed and created in a way that the slides will be flipped on mouse click.
- Assess students' prior knowledge on the current topic. This could be in form of related activities or oral questions.
- Use the content of the slides to engage students in the topic.
- Assist students to practice tables and graph plotting on their personal computers.
- Evaluate students based on the objectives of the lesson

Students' activities

- Participate actively in classroom instruction using their personal computers.
- Discuss the topic in the classroom with the teacher based on their understanding of the content of the slides.
- Provides correct answers to the questions asked by the teacher.

Critical Issues needed to be Incorporated into the Curriculum

An effort to improve and renew the existing curriculum in secondary school economics might be in futility if the current pressing issues of our time are not provided for in the renewed document. The following critical issues should be given consideration:

Innovative teaching methods: as mentioned above, Flipped Classroom and Computer Assisted Instructions are two of the innovative methods that can be effectively included in the theme details of the new e-curriculum under “teaching & learning material” considering suitability of the methods to the topics.

Professional skills and competencies of teachers: necessary skills such as communication, interpersonal, problem solving and competencies such as emotional and intelligence quotient are required on the part of the teachers for the teaching of economics in the era of globalization. If CAI is to be introduced as a method of teaching, it behooves on the teachers to be computer literate in order to pass knowledge onto students.

Insecurity and international wars: Innovation in the curriculum should also put into consideration the security state of the nation. In the face of the current insecurity ravaging our streets in Nigeria, appropriate provision must be made in the curriculum with the security of teachers and students in mind.

The fourth industrial revolution and the accompanying disruption to the “*chalk and talk method*” used by teachers to present instructions and evaluation must also be provided for in the renewed curriculum. Topics that make students relevant in the global space should be included in the curriculum (Tanner & Tanner, 1975).

Job creation and personal development: Investment in education and training can be effective only if the right jobs are made available. Training on job creation should be included in the curriculum so that learners of economics can also have the creative mind to bring up idea that would disrupt the market and make them employers of labour.

Reasons for innovations in the economics curriculum: When a curriculum is observed as not meeting the need it was set for at the target time; that is, if a curriculum is set to achieve a particular objective within a stipulated time, say ten years and at that target period, the curriculum is still very far from achieving those objectives, there is the need for a review of the curriculum document for possible renewal to reflect current issues of our time. Then, there is a need therefore, to identify the discrepancies in the curriculum because a renewal in such a threatened country’s curriculum is inevitable for the survival of the citizen.

Specifically, Ogbuagu & Isaac (2017) found that the general objectives of innovations in economics education were supported by the UNICEF joint committee for economic education in 2010, when it stated that the aim of economics education is to think in an economics way, and to provide students with an adequate knowledge and understanding of the tools of economics situation and the problems to which the tools are applied. Innovation is necessary then to translate into assessment objectives of skills to be tested, knowledge and understanding, analysis, application, interpretation, evaluation and presentation of economic and education facts (Meyer & Land, 2003).

Problems of Economics Curriculum Innovation and Renewal

The teaching and development of economic education face some problems which imposes limitation to the understanding and propagation of the subject.

Inadequate funding: Inadequate funding of the education sector with the attendant consequences occasioned by continuous drop in budgetary allocation to Education. According to Okeowo et al. (2022), the education sector has been deteriorating over the last 20 years due to inadequate funding. The allocation to the Education sector in the 2021 budget shows an allocation of N771.5 billion (including the UBEC allocation) out of a total budget size of N13.58 trillion. This means that the sector got a 5.68 percent allocation as against 26% benchmark recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The concept of free and compulsory Education is still elusive as the fund to make education what it should be is just not available.

Overcrowded programme: This makes covering the curriculum tortuous. A spillover of this frailty may mean that students might tend to mimic their teachers rather than having an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter (Edu, 2012).

Teaching students in abstraction: Students of economics are often taught in abstraction without meaningful and relevant teaching methods and instructional materials to arouse interest of the students. Lack of teaching learning resources such as the computer, overhead projector etc may tend to render the innovative teaching methods impracticable.

Professional development of teachers: There is very little effort on the part of the government to provide professional development for economics teachers to improve their competencies. Teachers of economics are also not exonerated from this frailty. They seem to have to have left their professional development in the hands of the government without making efforts for personal improvements.

Late production of the curriculum: For instance, in the case of the Universal Basic Education which started in 2001 while the curriculums came in 2008. This creates a great concern in the sense that, even if curriculum reforms were to be made, what is the assurances that it will reach the appropriate schools, as and when due.

CONCLUSION

Innovation in senior secondary school economics curriculum in Nigeria is sine qua non to the development of the citizens for the purpose of fitting in appropriately to the world of globalization and subsequently, the fourth industrial revolution. In Nigeria educational system, the stereotypic ways of teaching and learning such as dictating note, that is, “the chalk and talk method of teaching” without adequate explanation and application of the concept, but expect students to regurgitate it back seem pervade the system. The need to diversify teaching methods; as well as the ability to teach the subject effectively to enhance the achievement of the objectives of teaching economics, should be the preoccupation of teachers in Senior Secondary Schools. To this end, there is need to teach students of economics in Nigerian secondary schools with innovative methods for the purpose of exposure to the real world of the country’s economy and the global space. Flipped Classroom and Computer Assisted Instruction are examined in the body of the work as innovative methods of teaching to achieve practical teaching and learning of

economics.

Prospects for Economics Curriculum in Nigeria

The following are hereby recommended as prospects for the innovation and renewal of Economics Curriculum.

- Government and Educational bodies should provide orientation programmes for economics teachers to improve their professional competencies.
- Teachers should teach topics in Economics with the best method peculiar to them; Surveys, Project work, Computer Assisted Instructions, Flipped classroom, Seminars, and Preparation of tables. With the help of teachers, students can prepare their monthly budget based on their family income. This would help them to apply the basic economic concepts and the tools of economic analysis.
- The NERDC should make the e-curriculum accessible to all teachers without having to pay annual subscription fees. A cursory look at this new e-curriculum shows that the theme details have been made easy for teachers to interact with, but there is a caveat of annual subscription fee of about ₦9,000. Apart from the e-curriculum, teachers would also have access to teaching aids, interactive guidelines for teaching the new curriculum as well as collaborate with other teachers through the social network feature and exchange teaching experiences and ideas.
- Topics that are homogeneous in nature should be put together to reduce over crowded workloads for teachers.
- Schools should make provision for inviting prominent Economist, bank manager, business tycoon and top government officials, to talk to students as guest lecturers/resource person.
- Finally, one economics dictionary should be available in the secondary schools. Emphasis should be placed on threshold concepts. Meaning of some difficult terms should be given. Easily understandable inferences on tables should be given.

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