

Qualitative and Functional Teacher Education: a Viable Tool for Mitigating Economic Recession in Nigeria.

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Abstract

The central focus of this paper is that economic recession in Nigeria which is associated with high rate of poverty, increasing unemployment rate, high inflation and declining gross domestic product could be mitigated by improving the quality of education given to teachers in the country. This is not far-fetched as teachers are responsible for imparting requisite skills and knowledge to individuals to become self-reliant and positively contribute to the development of the society. The paper started with introduction and thereafter explained the meaning of qualitative and functional education, teachers' education in Nigeria and economic recession. Next, the causes of economic recession and ways of mitigating economic recession were discussed. Finally, the place of qualitative and functional teacher education in mitigating economic recession was discussed and way forward presented. It was concluded that economic recession is not new globally and in Nigeria but requires educated men and women to take the bull by the horn and stir this nation back on the right course toward economic emancipation from the pit of recession as the giant of African and a fast growing and developing nation of the world.

Key words; Economic recession, teacher education, qualitative and functional education,

Introduction

The importance of quality teacher education has been the hallmark of every major discourse among stakeholders of education and the governments of Nigeria. It is generally believed that quality teaching is akin to quality learning and that teacher education should be held accountable for developing quality teachers. Therefore well trained teachers are essential for quality education. This could be the reason the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stated that no education system can raise above ion is visited on the learners. This incidence seems to contribute to declining quality of education in Nigeria. In the same vein, Asaju and Adagba (2014) stressed that there has been agreement among scholars and other stakeholders that the education quality and standard in Nigeria has been declining. Asaju and Adagba added that lack of the functional education has placed Nigeria far behind in the modernisation process and the defect has been the mother and father of all evil that follows; poverty, debt burden, conflict, corruption, abuses of human right, abuses of power, killer diseases, epileptic democratic government among others.

Revitalization of qualitative and functional teacher education is a catalyst for reduction of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in the society. This makes it imperative to x-ray the current economic recession bedeviling the nation in the light of the quality and functionality of its educational system (Teacher education) with a view to finding the way forward. This paper therefore addresses the major concepts of the theme thus: education, qualitative and functional education, teacher education and economic recession. It aims at highlighting the place of qualitative and functional teacher education in mitigating economic recession; conclusion and recommendations are also made.

Concept of Qualitative Functional Education

Qualitative and functional education presupposes that knowledge and skills acquired through education must be employable, useful and functional in the world of work, organizations and industries.

Qualitative Education is multidimensional and lends itself to different interpretation subject to the discussant area of interest. It can be assessed from the point of:

- conforming with and meeting the requirement and intended purpose
- satisfying the needs of the stakeholders
- guaranteed realization of minimal standards and benchmarks (Enaohwo, 2008).

Qualitative education is the education that is relevant to the needs and aspiration of the society or nation. It can be determined by both the status and process variables: Thus

Table 1: Variables of Qualitative Education

Status Variables	Process Variables
Quality of School Facilities e.g. libraries, classrooms, textbooks, class size and school environment.	Mechanism of translating the status variable into desirable outcome e.g. method of teaching, supervision and management of human and physical resources, service delivery.
Teacher characteristics, e.g. training, qualification, experience, dedication and commitment.	Appropriateness, enriched and current relevant curriculum.
Student characteristics e.g. innate ability, readiness and willingness to learn, health and nutrition status and motivation.	Adequate funding and accountability.

Functional Education is a practical education that prepares and equips members of the society for an acceptable, profitable and worthwhile life in any community that they may found themselves. Etesike (2012) stated that functional education is practical or pragmatic education rather than decorative.

It empowers the recipients with the ability to sustainably explore, without doubt discover, functionarily derive and maximally utilize the available resources of the nation.

It equips man with appropriate skills and helps him develop his potentials to the fullest for the improvement of his productivity and maximum contribution to the development of his society.

Functional education is capable of producing citizens that are producers and manufacturers of goods (wealth creators) and not merely consumers. Thus, enlightening man to realistically live and appropriately face daily challenges prevalent in one's immediate environment.

Functional education must be geared towards learners area of interest and ability. This becomes the prerogative of a well trained and qualified teacher produced through teacher education programme.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education is a process that avails prospective teachers the opportunity to develop cognitive perspective, affective disposition and psychomotor competencies that will infuse with the qualities, capacities and capabilities for teaching. Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) defined teacher education as professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time. The focus of teacher education therefore is to professionally train teachers.

Teacher education in Nigeria dates back to 1859 with the establishment of the first teacher training college in Abeokuta by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Later, advanced teachers colleges were established. From this point, teacher education evolved over the years with series of reforms (in terms of type, certification, training, curriculum, duration, quality control measures and so on) geared toward production of quality teachers. Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013) recognized the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels of the educational system; and stated that teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. Hence the statutory responsibility for teacher education in Nigeria is vested in Colleges of Education, Instiutte of Education, Polytechnics, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Nigerian Universities Faculty of Education.

These educational institutions are charged with the responsibility of preparing and training professional teachers expected to meet the goals of teacher education. They are to be highly motivated, conscious and efficient teachers with the spirit of enquiry and creativity. Teachers that will fit into the social life of the society and effectively harness their intellectual and professional background in the discharge of their assignment. They are to be teachers that are dedicated and committed to the teaching profession. Commitment to the profession is of essence because effective teaching and learning depend on teachers whose influence is felt in every aspect of the society. There can be no meaningful socio economic and political development in any nation without teachers.

Moreover, the effectiveness of all educational programmes activities, development and growth depend on the quantity, quality, devotion and commitment of teachers. Expectations placed on the teachers are varied and vital. Their roles in nation building is never in question but the realization of this goal only becomes a reality through well planned and implemented teacher education. Adewuiyi (2012) asserted that what structurally becomes important in achieving the nations quest for self reliant society imbued with vibrant economy and productive citizenry is to put in place a comprehensive teacher education programme. This type of programme when adequately supported, supervised and managed will produce a crop of teachers well equipped to effectively and

efficiently discharge their duties. These teachers as curriculum implementers ensure that students graduate as good products by applying effective teaching methods, strategies and skills, techniques and approaches in instructional procedure to bring positive change in attitude of learners. The committed efforts of teachers are often times affected by a number of challenges that are either personal or institutional based.

Teacher education institutions in Nigeria are faced with myriad of problems. These include amongst others: inadequate funding, insufficient facilities and infrastructure, non functional ICT facilities, over population of students, low entry requirement, poor mode of admission, incompetent teaching personnel, poor work environment, corrupt practices. These undermine the achievement of goals of teacher education. Consequently the entire educational system is adversely affected as no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. A nation so adversely affected will definitely experience a lot of anomalies such as poor quality graduates, corruption and inevitably, downturn in economy or economic recession.

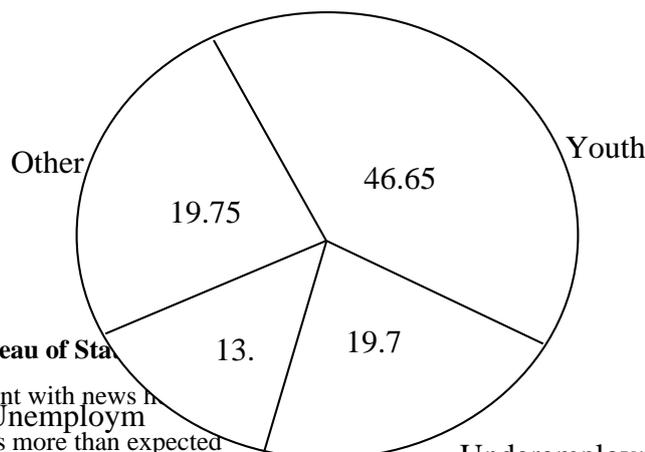
Economic Recession

This is a period of general economic decline and is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment and a decline in the housing market (Mckinney, 2017). It is a decline in gross domestic product (GDP) for two or more consecutive quarters. GDP is the market value of all goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time. Economic boom results from increase in market value but economic recession or downturn of economy is experienced when market value decreases. Economic recession is prevalence, when the economy declines significantly for a period of not less than six months and indicated in fall in real GDP, income, employment manufacturing and retail sales. Decline in these indicators in Nigeria are proof of economic recession. In Nigeria there has been a consistent decline in GDP. Economic output falls continually instead of expanding and increasing resulting in economic recession.

Fig. 1: Nigeria GDP Annual Growth Rate



Fig. 2: Unemployment, Underemployment and Youth Unemployment



Source: National Bureau of Statistics

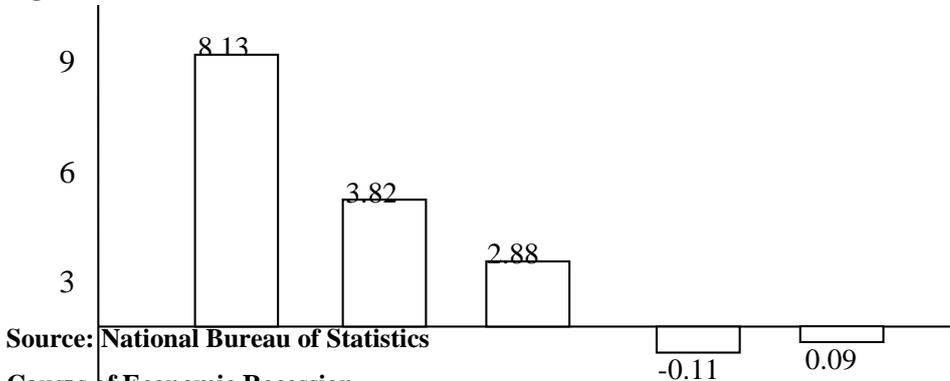
Nigerians are conversant with news of unemployment

- i. GDP declines more than expected
- ii. Inflation rises further (Now drops from 17.24% to 16.25%)
- iii. Capital importation declines
- iv. Unemployment rate rises (Now 14.2% more than 11.55 million)
- v. Foreign investment inflow declines (41% lowest in 10 years) unemployed people as against 9.48 million at the beginning of 2016.
- vi. Naira crumbles to ? per \$
- vii. Trends in poverty rises (From 30.3% in 2010 to 69% in 2014 Nigeria insight 2014)

- viii. Crime cases increases in different States in Nigeria
- ix. Government promises the citizens a brighter future and so on.

The different sectors of the Nigerian Economy are affected by the negative economic growth-recession. Education sector is not an exception. Education consequently contracted by - 0.09% in the fourth quarter of 2016 from 3.82% in the first quarter of the same year.

Fig 3: Growth Rate in Education Sector 2015/2016 Education



Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Causes of Economic Recession

- a. High Inflation Rate: Sudden ban of agricultural products, removal of subsidies, budget delay etc.
- b. High-Interest Rate: Few investors leading to high unemployment and damage to the country’s GDP.
- c. Debt Accumulation: Foreign debts
- d. High taxation: Crippled small businesses
- e. Policy conflict: Tight monetary policy measures through high interest and tax rates.
- f. Implementation of Treasure Single Account meant to consolidate all funds of the Federal Government.
- g. Appointment and employment of uneducated economic managers in leadership, administration and governance.

Ways of Mitigating Economic Recession

Economic Recession can be checked through the following measures:

- a. Reduction in tax rate
- b. Planned and Strategic spending e.g. Agriculture, manufacturing and most importantly education.
- c. Improved consumer access to credit
- d. Policies that will restore consumer confidence
- e. Responsiveness and sensitivity to data
- f. Adequate investment and improvement of the educational system.

The Place of Qualitative and Functional Teacher Education in Mitigating Economic Recession

Education is attributed the best instrument for socio economic emancipation and transformation; reduction of poverty, inequality and ignorance. It is a prerequisite for quality manpower development, health and wealth creation; a sure path to a successful life and service to humanity. Qualitative and functional education ensures the accomplishment of these feats by their recipients. This is possible because of the variant nature of functional education which include:

- a. Literacy programmes
- b. Vocational education
- c. Science education
- d. Teacher training and
- e. Special education (educating persons that are physically challenged)

These enable the students to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, values, insight and attitude that can be practically employed or applied purposefully. In the context of global economy, functional education succeeds as it seeks to equip learners with a broad array of knowledge, skills, competencies and values as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Skill Requirement Mirror

Skill	Explanations
	Digital Age Literacy
Functional Literacy	Ability to decipher meaning and express ideas in a range of media; this include the use of image, graphics, videos, charts and graphs of visual literacy
Scientific Literacy	Understanding both the theoretical and applied aspects of science and mathematics
Technological Literacy	Competence in the use of information and communication technologies

Information Literacy	Ability to find, evaluate and make appropriate use of information, including the use of ICTs
Cultural Literacy	Appreciation of the diversities of culture
Global Awareness	Understanding of how nations and communities all over the world are interrelated
	Inventive Thinking
Adaptability	Ability to adapt and manage in a complex interdependent world
Curiosity	Desire to know
Creativity	Ability to use imagination to create new things
Risk-taking	Ability to take risks
High Order Thinking	Creative problem-solving and logical thinking that result in sound judgment
	Effective Communication
Teaming	Ability to work in a team
Collaboration and inter-personal skills	Ability to interact smoothly and work effectively with others
Personal and Social Responsibility	Be accountable for the way ICTs are used and learn to use ICTs for the good of the public
Interactive Communication	Competence in conveying, transmitting, assessing and understanding information
High Productivity	Ability to prioritize, plan and manage problems and projects to achieve the desired result. Ability to apply what they learn in the classroom to real life contexts to create relevant high quality products.

Source: Agbaje, 2011

An individual exposed to qualitative and functional education who acquired the requisite skills as enumerated in the table will be well equipped and ready to face the challenges of the present and prepared for that of the future when they manifest. This supports the opinion of Nwaka 2010 that a well administered education would equip individuals with the capacity to understand and adapt to new problems and changing situations, awaken intellectual curiosity, encourage their spirit of inquiry and make them inventive, self reliant and resourceful.

There is therefore no doubt that a well planned, administered and supervised qualitative and functional education will go a long way in reducing and checking economic recession. It is the planned and guided application of qualitative and functional teacher education that engender national development which entails the ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people, thereby eliminating economic recession.

The Way Forward

No nation can achieve any meaningful social, economic, political, technological, human and over all national development outside education. It is pertinent that the government gives the educational system of this nation the deserved seriousness, attention, commitment and resources necessary to move this nation forward to the fore front in the international world. These recommendations are therefore made. The government should ensure:

1. Improved and adequate budgetary allocation to education and disbursement of such at all levels.
2. Better condition of service for teachers
3. Improved educational materials, equipment, facilities and infrastructure.
4. Recruitment and employment of qualified and competent teachers, educational administrators as well as other educational personnel
5. Training and retraining of serving teachers and other educational personnel
6. One year compulsory teaching practice with pay as a prerequisite for being certified a trained and qualified teacher
7. Properly equipped, furnished and resourceful TRCN outfit for registration, licencing and quality control for teachers.
8. Functional ICT and CET centers in all the higher education institutions.

Conclusion

Education is key to self, economic, social, political and over all national development. To achieve this, the learners must acquire knowledge and skills that will bring about desired changes in behaviour. This implies effective teaching and learning process attainable only with the help of a well trained, qualified and committed teacher. This teacher therefore impacts knowledge and skills in the learner and helps him to develop his potentials to become functional, pragmatic, productive and useful citizen. With this, a generation of critical thinking, hard working, committed and dedicated, virtue packed, accountable, responsible and responsive people emerge who will fearlessly and courageously face the economic crises of this nation. Economic recession is not new globally and in Nigeria but requires educated men and women to take the bull by the horn and stir this nation back on the right course toward economic emancipation from the pit of recession as the giant of African and a fast growing and developing nation of the world. Thus, qualitative and functional teacher education is a milestone toward helping Nigerian economy recover from recession and become buoyant.

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