



**Educational Benchmarks and Economic Recession in Nigeria:
A Critical Analysis**

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Abstract

This paper discusses the effect of economic recession on standard of educational system in Nigeria. It gives an insight into the concept of economic recession and attempts a comprehensive description of the effect of economic recession on educational system. The factors that cause recessions and details of the various periods of great recessions in the Nigerian educational system were also highlighted. Some studies on the effect of economic recession on educational system in Nigeria were reviewed. Secondary source of data collection method was employed through the use of published books, journals and periodicals. It was concluded that economic recession has direct effect on educational system benchmark since most of the parents live below the poverty line. It was therefore suggested among others that, schools should look inward to generate more funds to execute school programmes since the government grant; subvention and allocations seemed to be going on the low side on yearly basis due to economic recession.

Keywords: Economic Recession, Nigerian Educational System, Educational Benchmark Critical Analysis.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a vital tool for socio-economic, political, cultural and technological transformation of a nation. Any nations that are deemed to be developed and largely considered as civilized have in the main achieved this status through purposeful and strategic education for their citizens. The hopes of



every country of the world to develop human capital for effective functioning of the society are hinged on education, being an instrument of change. Among the levels of education in Nigeria, secondary education which is the pivot of the entire education system is fast losing its relevance which among other factors is due to unsatisfactory and poor performance of students in public examinations (Alaka & Obadara, 2013).

Stakeholders in the education sector have continued to express serious concern about the poor academic performance of students at all levels of education system especially in the recent times. Education in Nigeria is regarded by the government and the entire citizenry as capable of achieving rapid development and national integration and to bring about desirable change in all spheres of human endeavors. This may explain why the various levels of government strive to achieve the goal of providing qualitative education to the ever rising population of school aged children in realization of the roles of education in accelerating economic performances in internal and external examinations which is the yardstick for measuring the success or otherwise of the education sector. The National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) are the two examination bodies mandated to conduct external examinations to assess secondary school students nationwide and the results obtained by the students determines their progress or otherwise.

Secondary level of education is the worst hit by the down turn in our economy. The lofty objectives of secondary education might not be achieved due to myriads of problems affecting it. This development has led to serious comparison between the academic performance of students between the period of oil boom and the present state of economic meltdown, hence the need to research on the composite and independent contributions of economic crisis on educational system.

Overview of the Relationship between Economic Recession and Educational System

Economic recession 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. Generally, a recession is less severe than a depression. The blame for a recession generally falls on the federal leadership, often either the president himself, the head of the Federal Reserve, or the entire Administration. An economic recession is typically defined as 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. An example of one type of GDP would be the value of all the automobiles produced within the United States for one year. GDP only takes into account new products that have been manufactured (Muhammad and Akanle, 2008).

Education has been in crisis for many years largely due to the fact that the sector is poorly funded. This results in shortage of material and human resources experienced in the system. Inadequate qualified teachers, high turnover rate of teachers, shortage of classroom, and poor remuneration of teachers and a host of other problems abound in the education sector (Ali, 2004). These problems are more pronounced at the primary and secondary school levels. The education system has undergone rapid changes and growth within the context of unstable economy. The economic crisis experienced in Nigeria and impacted on the education system had



played a major role in the decline of the quality of Education offered (Olabanjo & Abayomi,(2010) in Adeyanju and Emmanuel (2013).

In the 1970s, Nigeria experienced oil boom which led to the expansion of the economy with a Spillover effect in the education sector. The education sector then witnessed rapid growth and development. However, by the 1980s, in contrast to what was experienced in the 1970s, it was a period of economic recession. By 1995, the value of the Naira had fallen to N85 to \$1 i.e.85 naira to one US dollar instead of N1:\$1 experienced before. Presently, the exchange rate is N490 to \$1. the rate of inflation remain high and this has a negative impact on the education sector leading to the transfer of funding responsibilities from one level of government to another as well as to families to help subsidize education through fee payments at secondary and higher levels of education. According to Teboho (2000), alternative sources of funding education have been explored. In 1995, the government established the Education Tax Fund (ETF) in which companies with more than 100 employees contribute 2% of their Re-tax to the Fund.

Teboho (2000)further hammered on the financial crisis in the education sector when he declared that existing facilities in most schools are inadequately maintained and has retarded progress in building new facilities. This shows that the rising students' population is not matched with adequate facilities.

Ollon (1998) as cited in Muhammad and Akanle (2008) made it clear that in the quest for funding survival in the education sector, the nation has evolved series of socio-economic and policy measures such as Structural Adjustment Programmed (SAP), Austerity Measure, Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Basic Education (UBE) and devaluation of naira. Johnson (2010) lamented that as a result of these hard measures, most parents became poor the more such that they could no longer provide adequately for the upkeep and education of their children. This situation led to drop out of many students to engage in menial jobs to support their academic pursuit. Most of the students, therefore, saw schooling as a secondary assignment and school attendance was on rotational basis. The resulting problem posed by this development is poor academic performance in school external examinations conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO).

Shittu(2004) revealed that the quality of parents and home background of a student goes a long way to predict the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional, survival and academic needs. In a similar way, poor parental care with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of a child as a result of poverty usually yield poor academic performance of the child. Martins and Emmanuel (2009) declared that the immediate effect of economic meltdown on organizations and the inability to maintain the current productive capacity leads to inadequate fund; it raises the possible implication of government's control measures such as cutting down expenditure which may likely affect educational expenditure. Nigerian public secondary school teachers experienced hardship during the period of economic meltdown as they experienced delay in the payment of salaries and allowances, payment of net salary only, roof blowing taxation, depletion of the personal co-operative savings and stagnation on a grade level and step (Maicibi, 2005). This affected the teachers' morale which prevented them from giving out the best to the students.

The relationship between educational system and the nations cannot be overemphasized. The school system is part of the general macro-economy hence



whatever happens in the system will definitely affect the schools. There is a symbiotic relationship between the school and the economy of a nation in that whatever happens in the economy directly affects the school, and also whatever happens in the school systems directly results in the situation of the economy of a country (Maicibi, 2005).

The school system cannot compromise standards and quality on the account of poor funding and the rising school population indicates the need for a proportionate annual increase in school enrolment and its consequent demands on the national economy and since no economy can survive without human capital stock, all aspects of the school system must be up and doing to continue the production of manpower at all levels.

Effects of Economic Recession on Education System

The infrastructure and facilities in most secondary schools remain inadequate to cope with the rapid student's population growth pace. School environment is therefore in general terms not conducive for learning due to the physical condition and inadequate teaching and learning resources. The annual growth rate estimated at 3.3 percent contributed to children who have to be accommodated in schools.

Most institutions in Nigeria are confronting economic constraints and this slows down the pace of achieving the institutions' activities. The expected funds from funding agencies i.e. government are delayed and in most cases some of the fund are not released at all and this has negative impact on the effort of the institutional administration in execution of institution projects. Since the funding of education is exclusively external at lower levels, it is likely to be mostly affected, with the economic hardship. Staffing situation may be affected as school heads would prefer to substitute high quality staff with low quality ones. General quality may decline due to lack of funding for the maintenance of infrastructures, lack of funds to purchase laboratory equipment and support training and development.

Factors that Cause Economic Recession

The factors that cause recession in the Nigerian educational system includes: High interest rate is a cause of recession because they limit liquidity, or the amount of money available to invest. Another factor is increased inflation. Inflation refers to a general rise in the prices of goods and services over a period of time. As inflation increases, the percentage of goods and services that can be purchased with the same amount of money decreases. Reduced consumer confidence is another factor that can causes recession. If consumers believe the economy is bad, they are less likely to spend money. Consumer confidence is psychological but can have a real impact on any economy. Reduced real wages, another factor, refers to wages that have been adjusted for inflation. Falling real wages means that a worker's pay check is not keeping up with inflation. The worker might be making the same amount of money, but his purchasing power has been reduced.

Many studies on the effect of economic recession on educational system in Nigeria have been carried out. Adeyanju and Emmanuel (2013) investigated the effect of economic crises and poverty stricken society on students' academic performance in Ogun state Public Secondary Schools. Descriptive research design was used for the study. Forty (40) secondary schools were randomly selected and 10 teachers were selected from each school. Chi-square analysis was used in analyzing the data. The instruments used are questionnaire and students' WAEC results. The result revealed



significant combined contributions of economic crisis and poverty to the predictors of students' academic performance. It was recommended, among other things, that schools should source for alternate funding through the assistance of Old Students Association, Parents-Teachers-Association and Corporate Bodies to complement the meager allocation from government. Government should also key into private and public partnership in education to reduce its educational responsibilities and unemployed Nigerians should be assisted through Skill Acquisition Centers and Soft Loans to help reduce the poverty level of the parents so that students will be provided with necessary support that will incorporate improved students' performance.

The economic recession has direct effect on parent's income since most of them live below the poverty line. This in turn affects the education of children because parents could not meet up with the financial responsibility that is attached. Loss of income during the crisis may cause parents to withdraw their children from expensive private schools to already saturated public schools. Yusuf (2003), found a positive correlation between academic achievement and parents' academic status. Bello (1987) also found that children from high economic background have a better chance of succeeding in school than low economic counterpart having homes that provide physical environment appropriate for child growth, enrolment for extra lesson, ability to buy necessary textbooks and stationery are the hallmark of children from high income earning parents. It was also found that parental interest and altitude as well as support given at home may be a major factor influencing child's academic achievement in school.

Conclusion

It is only fair and acceptable to say that education is a weapon for acquiring skills, relevant knowledge and habits for survival in an ever changing world especially in times. In this paper, of recessions an attempt has been made to highlight the gross under performance of Nigerian educational system resulting from economic recession. In conclusion, it was observed that economic recession has great influence on Nigerian educational system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was found pertinent to make the following recommendations:

1. Schools should look inward to generate more funds to execute school programme since the government grant; subvention and allocations seem to be going on the low side on yearly basis due to economic recession.
2. Government should key into Private Public Partnership (PPP) in the education sector to allow well-to-do individuals to participate actively in the provision of education service to reduce the burden on government.
3. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be encouraged in the business of educational opportunity provisions.
4. Governmental agencies like Education Trust Funds (ETF), Industrial Training Funds should be involved in the monitoring of funds allocated for the sustainable goals achievement of education programme in Nigeria.
5. Government to enlist the support and contribution of multi-national companies, UN organizations and other business tycoons in the country to guarantee that Nigerian children have access and equal educational opportunities to quality education.



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