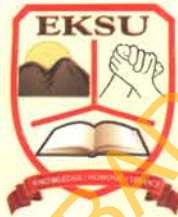


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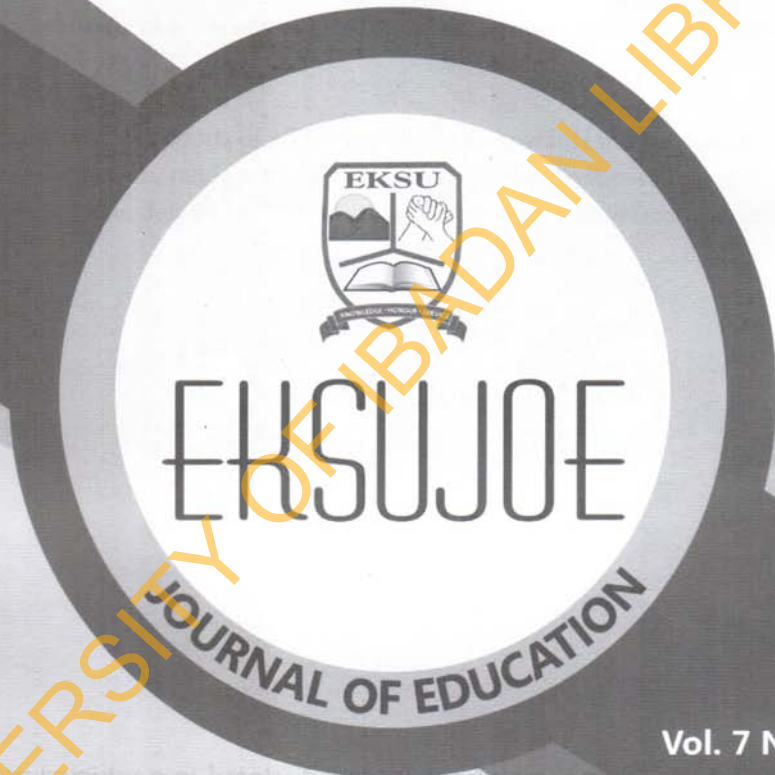
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REVAMPING NIGERIA'S ECONOMY THROUGH THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH

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Abstract

Causes and effects of global economic recession have been discussed by scholars from different perspectives in recent times. It was observed that Economy in Africa has not been growing well compared to developed continents in the world due to problems of underdevelopment occasioned by bad governance, and wide-spread corruption. Nigeria economy at present is undergoing a severe experience of an economic recession. Since some of the factors undermining development in Africa are also responsible for economy that slid into recession, the focus of this paper is to identify and discuss factors that are responsible for economic recession in Nigeria and explain how it can be tackled through the teaching of Literature-in-English in secondary schools. The writers are of the opinion that the inculcation of desirable societal virtues such as patriotism, honesty, dignity of labour, self-sacrifice through compulsory teaching of Literature in English will be in line with the federal government change mantra and help in revamping the nation's economy that slid into recession.

Keywords: Revamping, Nigeria Economy, Education, Literature-in-English, Change mantra

Introduction

Economic recession has been defined in so many ways by different scholars. It has also been given many names like economic crisis, economic meltdown, declining economic output, economic downturn etc. The reason for so many appellations for economic recession is that the term does not lend itself to one definition as a result of relative factors that affect various national economy and the peculiarity of the effects on various national economy of the world.

A global recession according to International Monetary Fund (2012) is recession that affect ts many countries of the world, which is a period of global economic slowdown or declining economic output. According to the source, since World War II, there are only four global recessions (in 1975, 1982, 1991 and 2009), and all of them lasting a year. The last recession was the deepest and widest, and since 2010, the world economy has been in a process of recovery. The period of global economy recession brings along financial hardship, depressed social life, and this is why economy experts don't forecast global recession.

Although, many countries in the world presently are experiencing one economic crisis or the other and are also putting different measures in place to come out of the crisis, the peculiarity of the problem of underdevelopment in Africa has subjected countries in the continent, and most specifically countries in sub-Sahara Africa to experience economic recession in different forms. Nigeria as a case study is presently passing through a period of economic crisis which has been occasioned in the past through wide spread of corruption and lack of proper planning. Anya (2017) observed that there was no basis for the present economic recession if only we effectively planned our economy. Otti (2017) in the same vein attributed the cause of present economic crisis to failure to plan for resilient self-reliant economy.

Fapounda (2012) noted that economic recession is a period of economic slowdown, featuring low output, illiquidity and unemployment. She added that the Nigerian economy has continued to witness renewed and sustained recession, char-

acterized by galloping inflation, unemployment and declining businesses. The effect has also find expression in downsizing, mass unemployment, crashes in the money market and non-payment of workers salary arrears.

Okobia (2017) stated that the present economic recession is a symptom of a “fundamentally flawed economic structure” which according to Otti (2017) is characterized by mono-economy refusal or short sight to shift from export of commodity (oil) to dependence on knowledge based and diversified economy, import dependent and import distributive economy, corruption and decadence in infrastructure e.g. transportation, energy, light and water etc.

Although there are other factors that can be identified to have been responsible for the recent economy crisis in Nigeria, but the most overriding factors from academic research evidences are bad governance, widespread corruption and poor human resources management. In his speech on May 29, 2017, the Acting President Professor YemiOsinbajo explained that the country economy has gone into recession due to many factors including security and social political challenges faced by the nation.

In the context of Nigerian situation as the case in many African countries, poor political leadership which has resulted into bad governance is the bane of economic development. The post-colonial era in Africa presented the continent with socio-political instability. Rather than engendering development and good governance, most African nations are experiencing general political instabilities. As a result of this factor, most countries in the continent remain underdeveloped. If the government can put in place machinery through the system of education, it will help to eliminate social political problem inhibiting the progress.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, cited in Olagunju (2012), the sub-Sahara Africa nations occupied spaces among the poorest nations in the world.

Nigeria, one of the two giants of Africa politics and economy, had dipped into 146 position out of 174 countries in development. Okobiah (2017), added that Nigeria is now rated as the 4th lowest country of the lowest 10th country in the world. The fundamental problem militating against development in Africa is bad governance, as a result of poor political orientation.

Ogundiya (2010) defined governance as the process of allocating resources, through the instrumentalities of the state for the attainment of public good. Consequently, according to World Bank Institute, cited in Ogundiya (2010), governance is also about social, economic and political progress and advancement. Ogundiya (2010) opined that bad governance is contrapuntal to a nation's socio-economic and political development. He also stated that badgovernance encourages priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for or non-transparencies decision making. This bad situation has been for long in our politics.

A literary icon, Professor Wole Soyinka, in his autobiography: *The Penkelemes Years: A memoir; 1946 – 1965* declared that there is a trouble ahead in the nation's socio-political and economic life. In the account read in the memoir, he was lurked in struggle against absolutism, injustice and corruption that have continued to be part and parcel of our political system. The dominant attitude or description of the politician of the Second Republic is embodied in 'Penkel-emes' a reminiscent to a significant detail of the First Republic political debacle.

The same scenario, is all over again, the peculiar mess of the whole political system; the totality of a state affairs that is askew. Atia and Pawa (2005) observed that some politicians hijacked the resources of the nation, display their ill-gotten wealth by building mansions in many cities across the nation. They left the great majority of Nigerians preoccupied with daily struggles to earn a living. Workers' salaries were delayed and in some cases left unpaid. Educational sectors

are not adequately funded. Many roads in Nigeria are in bad condition and the problem is affecting the country's economy.

The objective of this paper is to identify and discuss the roles of education in tackling economic recession in Nigeria. The objective is also to discuss, how the instrumentality of education, through intensive teaching of Literature-in-English at the secondary level can be used to revamp Nigeria economy that slid into recession.

Role of Education in Tackling Economic Recession in Nigeria

Education has been seen globally as an instrument per excellence for economy and socio-reconstruction of any society. Education is capable of endowing individuals with the capacity to equip them with the potentials for personal and collective development. According to Tagoe (2012), the key attributes of good governance are often linked to sustainable development and can be best understood and implemented by informed and educated citizenry. This background information shows that education is the tool to sustainable development, peace and stability within the country and a good government is the one that can provide the type of education needed to tackle economy crisis.

The concept of education is wide and complex. Many scholars like the psychologist, sociologists, philosophers etc. have defined the concept according to their horizons. Education to some people is the transfer of knowledge from an older person to a younger person. Etymologically, education was derived from Latin word 'Educare' meaning 'to bring up', 'to raise up'. In actual sense it means the process of helping an individual to grow and develop fully all the potentials in him and enjoy the way of life of the society. Whatever the case may be, it is important to note that education is synonymous to knowledge acquisition, the type of knowledge that is expected to affect the social behavior either the educated person or person being educated.

Education can be used to tackle economic recession in many other ways. The acquisition of sci-

entific and technological knowledge cannot be less emphasized. Economic development depends on development in the area of science and technology. Thus as an important aspect, education sector need to be adequately funded in order to enjoy the benefits of having a strong base development in science and technology sectors. Education helps in the production of manpower to satisfy the needs of the various sectors of the economy. It is through provision of sound education that Nigeria can be stronger in science and technology, agriculture etc.

The process of education can also be used to produce manpower to satisfy the needs of the various sectors of the economy for sustainable national development through the instrumentality of English Language, which is the official medium of communication in Nigeria schools. English Language in the Nigeria context plays a prominent role in the acquisition of scientific knowledge needed for national development.

In the same vein, as the use of English language in education can never be underrated in improving national economy so also is the teaching of Literature-in-English. It has been observed that effective teaching of Literature-in-English at the secondary school level can bring about social change (through acquisition of values) and development of human capacity for economy recovery.

The Importance of Literature-in-English in the School Curriculum

Literature-in-English is an important aspect of English Language curriculum at the junior secondary school level. Although at the senior secondary school level, the two are separated, but the fact still remains that English Language and Literature-in-English are symbiosis. One important means of education which is man's most basic communication tool is language. It is useful in developing all human communicative skills that an individual requires to meet his ever increasing social and economic needs.

Language is useful in promoting human behavior and actions. The same integrative function is

performed by Literature-in-English as a subject in the curriculum. In the teaching of Literature-in-English, students are exposed to a wide variety of experiences, the fortunes and feelings of others, and to the vicissitudes of life, which they should be invited to share vicariously in their impressionable and formative years. The objectives of teaching Literature-in-English at the secondary school level include (i) exposing young minds to various values in the society through reading of fiction and (ii) exposing the mind of students to much magnificent ideas of life and society (FME, 1985).

Literature-in-English is divided into three genres, namely; poetry, drama and prose. All the genres of literature are designed to educate students language-wise. The genres are also designed to integrate values and virtues of good living in the society. This is done through the use of different methods and strategies of teaching such as reading and discussion, role-play, dramatized reading, inquiry process, peer-dialogue etc. Importantly the salient aim of an English literature programme is to promote student's overall education growth through steady intellectual nourishment leading to intellectual maturity.

In the field of education, there is a moral worth. There is need for every Nigeria youth to be adequately and perfectly groomed morally. Critical to the study of literature and relevant to the country at present is value and moral development. Although the government is making efforts to fight corruption, and other social problems in the country the result will not manifest so much unless the government introduce the inculcation of social virtues such as patriotism, honesty, dignity of labour, self-sacrifice etc. through compulsory teaching of subject like Literature-in-English at the secondary school level. The economy of a nation that fails to properly train her youths to be productive and creative will slip into recession. The resultant effect of such negligence is downturn of the nation's economy.

The Roles of Literature-in-English in Revamping Nigeria Economy

Education is seen generally as a primary instrument to economic development and growth. Language plays important roles in the quest to economic development. Literature-in-English according to Ogunsanya (2010) is viewed as an instance of language in use. Thus, apart from performing the same roles with language in the quest to revamping Nigeria Economy, Literature-in-English performs other functions which include the following: (i) Literacy development (ii) Creative empowerment (iii) Poverty eradication (iv) Didactic function.

1. Literacy Development

Development is a multi-dimensional process that can be measured along a plethora of dimensions, which includes access to education, literacy development among others. Economic development can be measured with the level of literacy and communication potentials of the entire citizenry. Amadi and Emeka – Eze (2012) reiterated that economic development is the qualitative change and restructuring in a country's economy in connection with technological and social progress. No educational development can take place where literacy level of people is low.

The economy of many African countries especially in the sub-Sahara areas are faced with a lot of challenges because of low literacy level. Generally the major concern is literacy development. It has been noted that 43% of Nigerian population cannot read or write (Olagunju, 2012). The objective of language learning from National Policy on Education (2013), is seen as the acquisition of communicative skills for survival, integrative and instructional purposes. Ohia (2003) stated that one of the aims of English and literature study is the literacy development; to offer a rich learning experience across a variety of literacy and linguistic study. Ohia, later observed that literacy study is not just necessary but desirable at the secondary level of education for the achievement of its various goals, which include socio-economic development. Thus, if well handled in school, the teaching of Literature-in-

English can be used to tackle effectively many of the socio-economic problems confronting the nation.

2. Creative Empowerment

Literature-in-English helps individuals in so many ways to identify, discover and enjoy their creative potentials and maximize it. The major creative function of Literature-in-English is enhancement of creative writing. Literature as a work of art implies creative expression of artists or writers.

The end product of the language is the acquisition of ideas thoughts etc. This is one important area in creative empowerment. Ibitoye (2011), noted that at the level of creative reading the reader goes beyond the writer's material and generate new ideas or develop new insight. This in turn helps to develop in a reader creative potential useful for national development.

People also read to learn and write about new ideas. Using literature to teach English exposes students to learn about ideas, cultivate new ideas, and write in their own ways. Ability to create new ideas, develop imagination through essays, narrative and creative writings is a creative response to the Economic empowerment. In a related development, Ike-Nwafor (2010) noted that writing makes an exact man. She explained that skill in writing is also very essential for an entrepreneur in this technological age, and that progress in work place depends very much on ability to write efficiently. An important role performed by Literature-in-English, in the school curriculum is to develop in a learner, creative writing skills.

3. Poverty Eradication

The importance of Education in poverty alleviation and eradication cannot be less-emphasized. Okobiah (2017) reiterated that the purpose of education is always to respond and adapt positively to the challenges posed by the vicissitudes of social, political and economic manifestations to the quality of life for the citizens in time and place. In the Nigeria socio-economic situation, poverty, like corruption has become a cancer

worm eating deeply to the system and affecting its growth. Thus the role of education, through the teaching of Literature-in-English to alleviate poverty is discussed in this paper.

Nigeria as a country is regarded as a rich nation, but according to Oyinloye and Ofodu (2008) 70% of her citizens are poor. The poverty level continues to go up higher. The standard of living in the country according to the writers has been rated very low by the United Nations Organisation (UNO) Human Development Index (HDI).

Improvement in the quality of life is a factor of effective management of all natural and human resources. Education at this point in time should be used as instrument for knowledge based and diversified Economy. Literature-in-English if well handled in school can be used to drive the transformation propellants of human potentials and resources into meaningful economic development. This can be done through activities such as creative reading and creative writing (knowledge economy) and development of other functional skills.

4. Didactic Functions of Literature-in-English

Foyewa, Adebajo and Adelokun (2007) remarked that English plays a prominent role in the acquisition of scientific knowledge and social skills needed for national development. In addition to developing knowledge and skills in learners, Literature-in-English is a valuable part of the system of education to develop right attitudes, character and self-discipline (both moral and mental) of the pupils. Nigerian Economy is seriously affected by problems of social-imbalance, greed, endemic corruption, selfishness etc. Literature-in-English, through the intrinsic values inherent in the genres can be used to communicate living experience, teach a range of values, attitudes to reshape the characters of the learners and bring about the change that the nation desired. Research studies have shown that biographical writing tends to re-adjust the values of those that read them (Kolawole, 1996).

In Literature-in-English curriculum, the design and subject matter attract our attention and focus it to the themes. According to Icheke (2016), some of the themes discussed in prose fiction include (i) Honesty/Integrity (ii) Corruption (iii) Greed (iv) Violence (v) Poverty (vi) Nepotism (viii) Pessimism and despair etc. The theme of honesty and corruption was treated and juxtaposed in AyiKweiArmah 'The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born'. The post-independence novel exposes the corruption and incompetence which have become the lot of African countries after gaining independence from their colonial masters. The major theme is the widespread corruption that has affected all part of the body politic in Ghana. The writer viewed Africa continent (sub-Sahara countries) as passing through an inevitable phase of corruption and degeneration inherent in bad governance and poor political leadership.

Poverty is another major theme found in the novel. The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) cited by Graff (2006) had shown that illiteracy accompanies poverty, low life expectancy, political oppression and underdevelopment. The post-independence African nations are ravaged with poverty, political oppression as exemplified by Armah in the novel. One of the sub-themes is the difficulty encountered by an upright man, 'The Man' in resisting temptations of easy bribes and easy satisfactions. The sub-themes centered on the major theme of corruption and the evils, the ugliness and the rottenness that go with it.

Lastly, a lot of work can be done in the classroom to help students develop positive attitude to reading and study of Literature textbooks. Also a lot of work can be done to help students develop desirable societal values and enhance their functional skills for national economic development. There is a need to engage students creatively in teaching activities that fosters functional skills such as play writing, play making etc. Ideas can be extracted from literature books to incorporate stylistics and aesthetics production of scripts. Greater involvement in activities such as

peer reading, inquiry reading, dialogue practice, debate, role play, and dramatization will help a lot to achieve the objectives of teaching prose literature.

Conclusion

If other measures are put in place to tackle economy recession in Nigeria and the system of education is left uncared for, the nation will still remain prone to it until all stakeholders collaborate to address the fundamental causes. Some of the causes of the present economy recession in Nigeria include decadence in infrastructure, mono-economy, corruption, security and political challenges among others. Through effective teaching of Literature-in-English some of the problems of underdevelopment and economy downturn can be tackled to pave way for a revamped economy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Federal government of Nigeria should focus on developing the educational system, since the future of her economy depends on qualitative education.
2. The system of education should be infused with adequate inculcation of right attitudes, spirit of patriotism and faithfulness in order to harness the full potentials of individuals for economic growth.
3. Curriculum planners should review and design the nation's education curriculum in line with the federal government change mantra for national economic development.
4. Curriculum planners should make the teaching of Literature-in-English compulsory in secondary schools to enable students acquire socially desirable intellectual skills and attitude that will make them live happily in the society.

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