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**EDUCATIONAL THEORY
AND PRACTICE
ACROSS DISCIPLINES**

(PROJECTING BEYOND THE 21ST CENTURY)



Edited by

Olawale A. Moronkola
Clement O. O. Kolawole
Babatunde O. Asagba
Jonathan O. Osiki
Adebola Jaiyeoba



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Impact of Global Economic Recession on Health and Education of Nigerian School-Age Children: Proffering Mitigation Strategies for Sustainable Education

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Development

Odelola J.O.

Abstract

Economic recession has led to reduced financial income of Nigerians, consequent upon which many families are financially poor. The impact is overwhelming on the children of the families as their education and healthcare needs suffer neglect. There is the need to mitigate the effects of the recession in order to empower the children adequately to confront the challenges of sustainable development of the country. The paper examined global economic recession, elementary school children as well as the impact of the recession on health care and education of the children. Mitigation strategies are proffered. Prudent management of government resources as well as quality services delivery in government health and educational institutions were suggested as measures to ensure the effectiveness of the mitigation strategies proffered.

Introduction

The literary meaning of recession is contraction. Economic recession is a reduction in business activity which could have negative impact on a nation's economy. A recession that grows worse and last longer becomes a depression. In depression, business activity totally goes into slump, leading to considerable drop in production prices, income and employment. National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (2003) defined recession as a significant decline in economic

activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales. Economic recession, if not promptly tackled, can snowball into full-fledged economic depression with all its devastating consequences. Economic recession had already exposed countries of the world to poverty. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2000) identified various guises of the prevailing poverty to include:

“dilapidated house, no sanitary convenience, inability to care for children, hunger, no job or steady income; violence and crime severely affecting community spirit and social relations due to fear, distrust, interpersonal conflicts, destruction of community infrastructure and political tribalism; inadequate housing/ shelter, land tenure and social amenities impacted by low income of households and resulting in the absence of protection, access to services and amenities, privacy, access to jobs, income, recreation and socialization; inadequate food, nutrition and health resulting in low weight for age, anemia among young children and, pregnant and lactating women, nutrition related chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiac diseases and stroke; environmental threats mainly related to water and air quality, the impact of improper waste disposal and the impact of natural disasters and environmental accidents”

It is evident from the foregoing that health care of school-age children continue to be in jeopardy due to poverty brought about by economic recession.

School-age children are elementary school-going children, aged between six and twelve years. Individuals in this age bracket are still in the formative and developmental stage of their intelligence, personality as well as social behaviour. Synergies exist among education, health and nutrition. This is because education is an instrument which can be used to improve health and nutritional status of children. It is a

statement of fact that nutrition has a major influence on the physical and mental health of a child.

Education is a veritable instrument for achieving human development with primary education is its foundation. No country desirous of development can afford to toy with the education of her children because they hold the key to the nation's future political, economical and social institutions. The much desired development by developing nations of the world can only be achieved when children are well educated. When a level of development is attained and lingers into the next generation, sustainable development is achieved. Sustainable development is enhancement of people's capacity as individual and groups to improve their own lives and take control over their own destinies (Ogun, 1982). Health and education are vital instruments for achieving sustainable development.

Economic melt-down has taken its toll on economic activities of many countries. Many corporations have closed down as the number of the unemployed continues to increase. Increase in the number of failed banks has caused people to lose confidence in financial institutions. Depositors are at the receiving end as interest rates continue to dwindle. Investors in capital markets continue to lose the value of their investments. The overall effects of all these are on families which are faced with sudden change of fortune.

Inflation continues to rise in geometric progression as a result of economic recession. The high exchange rate and the interest rate put the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country in jeopardy. Many people are negatively affected especially workers who lost their jobs. It is now increasingly difficult for people to pay house rent, meet obligations to family and live a quality life. In families, children suffer most as they depend on their helpless parents. Thus, education and health care of children continue to suffer to the detriment of their physical and mental development.

Olagunju (2009) mentioned the major causes of the recession to include the mortgage default, write-off of losses, excessive and improper use of leverage, excessive use of

derivatives to back transactions with weak fundamentals and non-performance of underlying facilities and/or assets. The liquidity crises that resulted from the foregoing caused among other things a steady decline and volatility in global equity markets, absence of liquidity in debt capital markets with banks and large corporate bodies unable to access liquidity all resulting in loss of confidence in financial markets and the collapse of inter-bank markets (Olagunju, 2009). The human consequences of financial crises due to economic recession according to Department for International Development (DFID) (2009) include rising unemployment, poverty and hunger. Meanwhile, Sudan (2009) had predicted that the additional revenue such as tourism and remittance from African workers abroad will fall and that there will be decrease in foreign aid if the crisis persists.

Global economic recession has a number of consequences. Money becomes scarce and as a result, prices of goods and crude oil witness a sharp fall. Developing countries of the world have their fair share as there is a drastic drop in prices of property both on the part of individual and corporate bodies. There are also increased cases of bankruptcy. Poor performance of nation's economy led to frequent restructuring of financial institutions which continue to affect manufacturers. In most cases industries are worst hit as there is a fall in the prices of commodity leading to poor income and eventual total collapse.

Nigeria is a country whose economy depends on oil revenue. Economic meltdown has caused decline in the price and demand for oil in the international market. The decreasing government revenue resulted into cuts in public expenditure. This continues to make it difficult for government to meet rising demand in social sector including health care and education of children. This is why many children are not immunised and some are not in school. The already impoverished parents cannot provide adequate food for households as well as pay for the school fees of their children.

Elementary school children are individuals whose growth time length include period from nursery up to and including pre-adolescents of pubertal period. The growth at this stage is not as rapid, notwithstanding, certain changes do take place during this period, and one of such changes includes loss of primary teeth with the exception of the second and third molars while acquiring permanent teeth.

Health challenges of elementary school children include accidents due to their hyperactive nature. They tend to get themselves in risky physical activities. Common illnesses are infections causing respiratory illness and digestive disturbance.

Economic Recession and Health Care of Nigerian Children

Low crude oil production and fall in the price of the commodity led to low revenue for government. This has incapacitated the government in its responsibilities to the people. The impact is overwhelming as health care of children is negatively affected.

Economic opportunities are limited and access of children to basic health service is poor. Granage (2006) found in a study that most of the childhood deaths in Nigeria are from preventable causes such as malaria (24%), acute respiratory infections (20%), acute diarrhoea (16%), measles (6%), and HIV/AIDS (5%). In the same vein Kayode, Owoade and Omotade (2007) said that only 13% of 12-23 month old Nigerian children can be considered to be fully immunised. They went further to state that the impact of the failure to immunise children against six- killer diseases is shown by the recent data that 22% of child mortality is related to vaccine preventable disease. This is so largely because of poor health service provision as a result of dwindling economic fortune of the government.

Malnutrition and under nutrition contribute to infant and childhood morbidity and mortality. Food Consumption and Nutrition Survey in Nigeria (NFCNS 2001 - 2003) reveals that the nutritional status of Nigerian children is poor (FGN, 2005).

This is because data for children under five years of age (U-5) showed 42% stunted, 25% underweight, 9% wasted and 29.5% were suffering from vitamin A deficiency. Also, more than a quarter (27.5%) of children U-5 were at the different stages of iron deficiency, while 8.1% already had depleted iron stores (FGN, 2005). Iodine deficiency afflicts 27.5% Nigerian children and the deficiency was severe in 4.2% of the children. Undernourished children have lower resistance and therefore, more susceptible to infection. Also, relationship has been found between nutritional status and school indicators such as age at enrolment, grade attainment, absenteeism, achievement test score, general intelligence and performance (World Bank, 1994). Unfortunately, poverty in most families has affected food provision to the children.

Developing the health of the nation starts with improving the health of the children because they are the future of the country. Poor health status of a child can hinder his/her physical development, mental alertness and emotional stability, thereby undermining his/her contribution towards the development of the nation.

Economic Recession and Access of Nigerian Children to Education

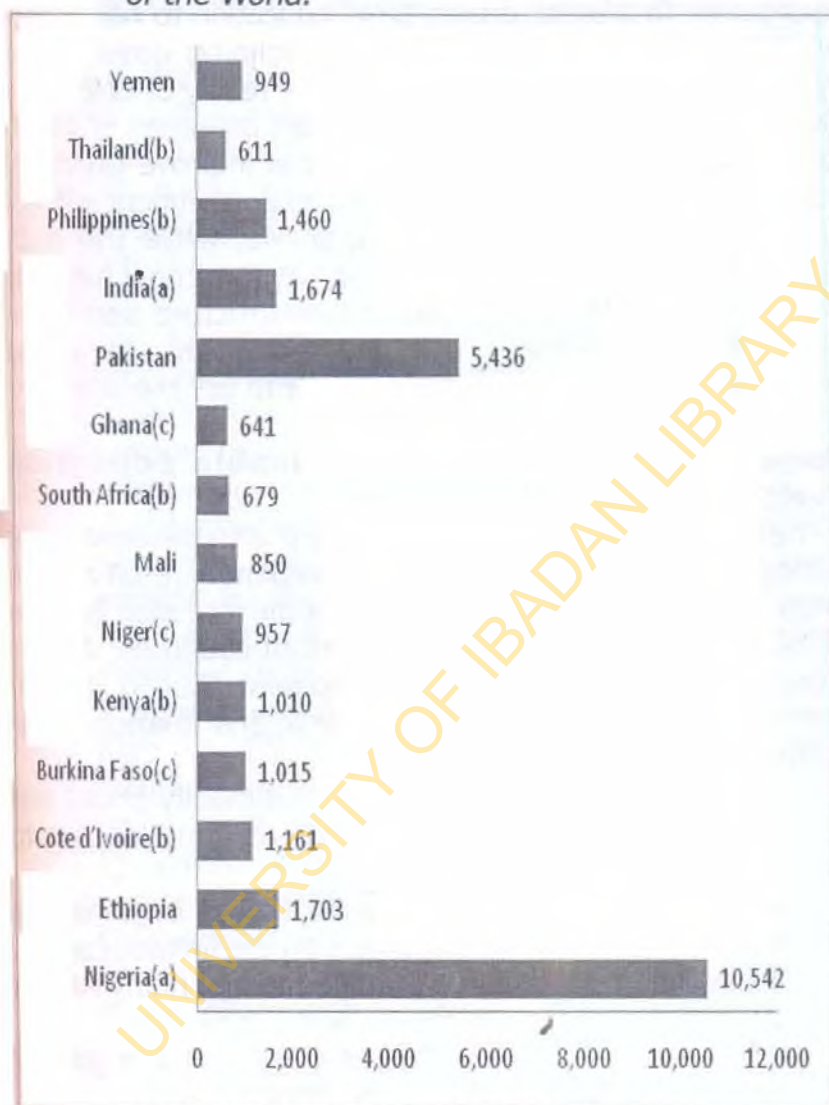
Education is central to the achievement of good quality of life. This is because it contributes to improvement of health by enhancing individual's capacity to care for his/her health. Education is the instrument through which a society transmits its culture to younger generations as well as produces professionals in diverse fields to manage government and private enterprises.

Education is a human right. This is why primary education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948 article 24) which states that at least the elementary and fundamental stages of education should be free. By the same token, United Nations convention on the rights of the child (1989 article 28) made it clear that it is national

governments or states parties which should be responsible, on the basis of equal opportunity for making primary education compulsory and accessible for all [DFID,2001]. However, according to UNESCO, an estimated 61 million children of primary school age are being denied their right to education globally. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of out-of-school children of primary school age climbed from 29 million in 2008 to 31 million in 2010. Nigeria alone is home to an estimated 10.5million out-of-school children, 42 percent of primary school-age population (9ja 2003). The alarming number of out-of-school children in Nigeria compared to other countries of the world as recorded by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics Database is shown in the figure below.

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Figure 1: Number of Out-of-School Children in Some Countries of the World.



Notes: i. Refers to data from 2010
 ii. Refers to data from 2009
 iii. Refers to data from 2012

Source: UNESCO 2013 Institute of Statistics Database.

Nigerian government has been renegeing on its responsibility to provide quality basic education to her school age children. This is largely due to declining government revenue and shrinking capital inflows. The reality of UNESCO's (2009) prediction that low income African countries of which Nigeria is one which have made efforts to improve Universal Primary Education will suffer setbacks, as government will not be able to finance education programme, while the poor households will not be in a position to pay for school fees has come to reality. There is decay in infrastructure and down play of teachers' welfare. Pupils are ill-motivated to attend schools by unhealthy school environment to say the least.

Mitigation Strategies for Sustainable Education Development

The economic melt-down which began with the collapse of exchange market in the United States deepened, resulting into recession in many countries. The effect of the recession became profound on the economy of most African countries. African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGS), (2009) identified impacts of the global economic and financial crisis on African economies to include:

- i. decreased exports due to fall in commodity prices and reduced demand for African exports thus leading to lower export revenues.
- ii. increased stock market volatility that is beginning to have significant negative effects on the financial sector.
- iii. depreciation in foreign exchange rates of many African countries.
- iv. reduced worker's remittances due to loss of jobs or reduced earnings of African migrants.
- v. decreased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows due to tightening of liquidity in global financial markets, constraining economic growth.
- vi. potential decrease in Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the financing of government programmes.

- vii. decrease in revenue from tourism negatively affecting economies that are dependent on tourism such as Cape Verde, Mauritius, Kenya, Uganda and Morocco.

The overall effects of the listed have led to impoverisation of families. The reduction in the income of families resulted into reduced utilisation of health services due to lack of resources to pay for access to health services and reduced consumption of other basic goods such as education, food, nutrition and security that are essential for positive health outcome (ACGS) (2009).

In order to mitigate the effects of the adverse impacts of global economic recessions on families, most especially school-age children, the governments of African countries including Nigeria should look inward for solutions. It is along this line that the following mitigation strategies are proffered.

- i. Good governance and prudent management of resources. Good government is the one that is able to provide for the welfare of the governed in terms of food, health, education and security. The provision of the listed depends largely on the availability of fund. Economic recession has led to reduced government revenue. This necessitates prudent management of available money. Therefore, wasteful spending by government must not be allowed to continue.

In Nigeria, a number of special advisers, house of assembly members and senators must be reduced as their salaries and allowances add to cost of running government. Also, government sponsoring people to go on pilgrimage is unnecessarily putting financial burden on government. The money saved from such activities could be channeled into the provision of quality health care services and basic education to the children.

- ii. Homegrown School Feeding Programme: Parents of most children in schools are poor due to the effects of economic melt-down. This has greatly undermined their capacity to provide for the needs of their children. This

is why most children in primary schools are severely undernourished with lack of protein and calories as well as micronutrients. This obviously can have permanent adverse effect on the growth and intellectual development of the children. It is however important that pupils are in good state of health to boost their capacity to learn in order to achieve high learning outcome. Therefore, government should come to the aid of parents in the provision of school meals for the children. Homegrown school feeding programme is an effort of government directed at the provision of free nutritious meal daily to take care of child hunger and malnutrition. The aim is to enhance school enrolment, retention, completion as well as gender equality in access to education. Implicitly, the programme will help to improve the health status of the pupils.

- iii. Multi-sectoral approach to funding health care of children: Duplication of functions by local, state and federal government ministries and parastatals result into wastage. One of the ways by which wastages can be prevented most especially in this austere time is to promote health care through intersectoral collaboration of Agriculture, Works and Housing, Sanitation and Water resources, Health and Education. These sectors could help to address the demand-side factors of health and make immense contributions to the preventive area of health.
- iv. Promotion and patronage of locally made goods: Unemployment and poor cash flow are some of the negative effects of economic recession. In the process of producing goods locally, many people are involved, thereby generating employment opportunities. Also, local raw materials are purchased from farmers, thereby leading to increase in cash flow. These ultimately increase income to families.
- v. Public and private participation in funding health care and education of children: Present decay in the

infrastructure in health and education institutions is a pointer to the fact that government due to its decline in revenue cannot all alone fund the two institutions adequately. Therefore, Non-Governmental Organisations as well as private business enterprises should be made to contribute to the funding of health care and education of children.

vi. **Health promoting school environment:** Dwindling economic fortunes of government resulting from current economic crisis has continued to restrict spending on health care and education of the nation's children. Poor environmental sanitation of school condition led to a build-up of worm infection overtime making parasite infestations endemic in the school-age children (FGN, 2005). Prevention is better than cure. One way to manage the little fund allocated to health care and education sectors is to prevent diseases from occurring in schools in the first instance. This is because the cost of curing diseases is higher than that of prevention. It therefore behooves schools management to ensure that school compounds are kept clean by cutting the grasses low, providing beautiful flowers and proper wastes disposal systems.

vii. **Entrepreneurship Education:** Poor employment opportunity is one of the impacts of economic recession. This is why many young school leavers are roaming about the streets of major cities in search of jobs that are non-existing. Many people who are already working in one establishment or the other are laid off as a result of re-organization in order to reduce workforce. Entrepreneur is coined from French word *Entreprendre* which literary means to undertake. Cole defined entrepreneurship as the purposeful activity of an individual or group of associated individuals undertaken to initiate, maintain or earn profit by production and distribution of economic goods and services (Mohanty, 2010). Entrepreneurship education is mainly concerned

- with making students acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, characteristics, interest and motivation to be good and efficient entrepreneurs. Skills needed to be inculcated in students in order to be good entrepreneurs are decision making, creativity, building organization and skillful management of resources. The individual who is empowered with the listed can make good fortune especially during this austere time.
- viii. Access to Information through Information and Communication Technology (ICT): There is limited business opportunity during economic recession. In order to take advantage of the few ones available, the individual has to have information at his/her disposal. Information is crucial to the development of any business. Information provided to traders about daily market condition could help them transact businesses of buying and selling their goods and services. Also, volatility of daily basic goods prices and swiftness of trade that characterize the present economic recession make timely information to be important to traders. Information and communication technologies are technologies that provide access to information through the newly developed telecommunication systems. These include internet, global system of mobile communication and other wireless networks. Business opportunities created by ICT could translate into more income for many families.
- ix. Use of Improvised and Locally made Teaching Resources: The use of teaching aids in the delivery of lesson in classroom setting, no doubt, makes for effectiveness. Teaching aids help to stimulate the interest of the learner and also focuses the attention of learners on the lesson. The numerous values of teaching aids have made it important to teaching and learning activities. The costs of importing and maintaining foreign-made material aids are very high and may not be accommodated in the budget especially in the austere

time. In order to make judicious use of the limited fund allocated to the education sector by the government, cost effective and locally made teaching materials could be used.

- X. Teaching Health Education for Healthy Living: Economic crunch affecting the nation's finances has made it imperative for individuals to be cost effective in the maintenance of one's health. It costs less to prevent disease than to cure it. Increased emphasis on health education can help to reduce ever increasing costs of health care while stressing health maintenance and diseases prevention (Achal, 1993). Healthy living is enjoyment of optimal physical, mental and emotional well being.

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCD], 1987). In this context, children are the future adult generation. Their future should not be compromised through poor access to health care and education due to economic recession. Increasing access to health and education is an important step towards developing a child for the task of sustainable development of the country. A healthy child translates into future prolonged life workforce. Also, education is needed to train future teachers, lawyers, engineers, doctors, accountants and managers to sustain the production of health services, food, water, electricity, houses and good governance.

Conclusion

The global financial and economic crisis is posing challenges to the economy of the country. Income from oil which is the major driver of the economy is negatively affected. Families continue to experience reduced income due to losses and unemployment. Children in families are not given adequate diet as their health and education continue to suffer. The need to mitigate the effect of the crisis led to this write-up and of

course, the suggestion of the mitigation strategies. In order to ensure effectiveness of the proffered mitigation strategies, the following should be considered;

- i. Government should ensure adequate and thorough supervision of service delivery in its educational institutions.
- ii. Headteachers and subject teachers should ensure prudent management of education materials in order to prevent wastage of meager resources* of the country.
- iii. Commitment to work by all categories of workers in health and educational institutions to ensure quality service delivery.
- iv. Wealthy individuals and private organisations must be encouraged to pay their taxes.
- v. Government must perfect its population reduction strategies through the availability of family planning services and population education.
- vi. In this austere time, there is tendency for poor parents to subject their children to child labour in order to increase family income. Therefore, adequate measures must be put in place to ensure enforcement of relevant laws that protect the rights of children to health and education.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

We are here not concerned with a mere textbook, neither are we concerned with a conventional collection of academic essays. We have at our disposal a richly diversified store of knowledge that can quench the learning thirst of variety of users. For the undergraduate/beginning student, a quick survey and constant follow-up-in-depth study is recommended. For the researcher/postgraduate teacher, this is where the search should begin. For the teacher, here is African-generated literature to enrich your interactive sessions with students. To the practicing teacher and education sector manager, the book should serve as a constant let's update our knowledge and ideas' companion.

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