



<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18637913>

**Managing Secondary Education in a Recession in Anambra State: The Role of Curriculum and Instruction**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In every economic recession administrators of schools try to find ways to manage schooling, while teachers and facilitators make efforts to teach effectively while minimizing costs of teaching and learning materials. Managing education in a recessed economy needs a concentration on resourcefulness and flexibility of curriculum and instruction. This study assessed management of secondary education and the role of curriculum and instruction during economic recession and the role of curriculum and instruction in Anambra State. Two (2) research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. One hundred and thirty (130) principals from 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State were randomly selected for the study as the sample. An instrument 'Education and Curriculum in Recessed Economy Questionnaire' (ECREQ) in two sections was used for data collection, and consisted of twenty-four (24) items in modified Likert four point scale strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) valued 4, 3, 2, 1. Its reliability coefficient was computed at 0.80. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while Z-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses. Findings reveal that inadequate funding and rigid curriculum are the major challenges of managing secondary schools in Anambra State in a period of recession. It was recommended that curriculum should be flexible and adaptable, while private participation should be involved in funding the schools during economic recession.*

**Keywords:** Economic, Recession, Reliability, Curriculum, Education

**INTRODUCTION**

In every period of economic recession, citizens find it difficult to live, due to the erosion of their purchasing power and high cost of goods and services. In such periods managing education particularly secondary education involves prioritizing funding for highly essential tools and services, reviewing the curricula to make it more flexible and adaptive to economic realities in order to ensure provision of essential resources for students and teachers. Managers of schools and teachers seem to focus on imparting skills that are needed for survival in the society, which necessitates the incorporation of instructional strategies that are cost-effective through improvisation of teaching and learning materials. The effective management of secondary education in a recessed economy is critical to goal attainment and enhanced students' academic performance. Worlu and Okorie (2024) posit that it is only quality education which is enhanced through effective management that can sharpen the minds of the individual and help transform the society economically, socially and politically, but management of secondary education in a depressed economy, especially in the developing economies as Nigeria seems to be more challenging than envisaged. This could be as a result of inadequate funding from reduced revenue generation.

It is obvious that the management of educational resources requires funding but Nigeria is still experiencing financial crisis for a prolonged period. Output has been low, jobs have been lost and unemployment has heightened causing untold misery and pushing millions of people below the poverty line (Ayorinde, 2016). As a way out of this school funding quagmire alternative funding sources might be explored to seek grants, sponsorships and public-private partnerships to supplement government efforts, and cost-saving measures adopted to streamline administrative processes and non-essential spending.

Recession in economics is a business cycle contraction that occurs when there is a period of broad decline in economic activity, this occurs when there is a widespread drop in spending. A recession is officially seen as a period of negative growth which can last for months or years causing astronomical rise on unemployment and sharp slide of retail sales. This negative phenomenon equally impacts general education in a negative ways particularly secondary education.

Curriculum and Instructional developments should need to on focus marketable skills for survival of man in the society which calls for massive improvisation of materials and equipment and adaptation to a flexible curriculum planning and implementation in the classrooms. The curriculum may need to be reviewed to reflect the changing economic landscape and emerging demands of the job market. This review might require integration of practical and vocational training skills development to prepare students for immediate public or self-employment opportunities. Consequently, instructional skills might be reviewed to incorporate and leverage technology through online platforms and virtual classrooms to expand access to education and reduce costs of real classroom teaching and learning.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Economic recession or meltdown is negatively affecting every level of education in Nigeria. Secondary system seems to be the worst-hit because of large number of schools and students in that important segment of learning and development. Managing secondary education in a recession is posing numerous challenges ranging from poor funding, depleted purchasing power of parents to existing curriculum inadequacies. It is based on this ugly development that the researcher wants to chronicle the challenges faced by this sector of education in Anambra State in a recessed economy and to proffer solutions to mitigate the problem.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State?
2. What are the strategies for managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the problems of managing secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the strategies for managing secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The design of the study was a descriptive survey, which is a research method that uses questionnaires or interviews to gather data about a specific topic or population to describe the inherent characteristics of that population or phenomenon. Responses were sought to research questions. The population of the study comprised 263 principals from 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 130 principals drawn to serve as the respondents for the study. The data were gathered with a modified 4-point Likert scale model tagged 'Education and Curriculum in Recessed Economy Questionnaire (ECREQ).' The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established at 0.80. Means and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while, Z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of confidence. Z-test is suitable for this because it is a statistical test used to determine whether two population means are different when the variances are known and the sample size is large (above 30). It can also be used to compare one mean to a hypothesized value (Chen, 2024).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Question 1**

What are the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Mean scores of male and female principals on the problems of managing secondary schools in a recession.**

S/N	Items	Male Principals		Female Principals		Weighted Mean	Rank	Remarks
		N	X	N	X			
1.	High dropout rate	53	3.50	77	3.53	3.51	12 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
2.	Poor funding	53	3.88	77	3.64	3.76	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
3.	Poor teaching aids	53	3.33	77	3.54	3.43	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
4.	No digital media	53	3.72	77	3.94	3.83	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
5.	Poor motivation of teachers	53	4.01	77	3.87	3.93	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
6.	Low staff development	53	3.54	77	3.50	3.52	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
7.	Low funding for supervision	53	3.49	77	3.53	3.51	13 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
8.	Poor remuneration of teachers	53	3.94	77	3.90	3.92	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
9.	Depleted resources of parents and guardians	53	3.26	77	3.46	3.36	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
10.	High inflation rate	53	3.67	77	3.64	3.65	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
11.	Low cultivation of farmlands	53	3.22	77	3.64	3.43	9 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
12.	General insecurity	53	3.50	77	3.20	3.35	14 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
13.	Curriculum Inadequacies	53	3.09	77	3.07	3.08	11 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
14.	Poor improvisation by teachers	53	3.01	77	2.81	2.90	10 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
		<b>Σ49.16</b>		<b>Σ49.27</b>				

The above result in Table 1 revealed that poor funding of public secondary schools is the major and recurring problem of managing the sector in a recession, with a weighted mean score of 3.76 and principals agreed to a high dropout rate, poor teaching aids, no digital media, poor motivation of teachers, low staff development, low funding for supervision, poor remuneration of teachers, depleted resources of parents and guardians, high inflation rate, low cultivation of farmlands, general insecurity, curriculum inadequacies and poor improvisation by teachers, with weighted mean scores of 3.51, 3.43, 3.83, 3.93, 3.51, 3.92, 3.36, 3.65, 3.35, 3.08 and 2.90 respectively.

### Research Question 2

What are the strategies for managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Mean scores of urban and rural principals on the possible solutions to the problems of managing public secondary schools in the era of recession in Anambra State.**

S/N	Items	Urban Principals		Rural Principals		Weighted Mean	Rank	Remarks
		N	X	N	X			
15.	Free education at all levels	63	3.95	68	3.60	3.78	1st	Agreed
16.	Proportionate increase in							

government funding to schools.	63	4.01	68	3.82	3.92	2nd	Agreed
17. Adequate supply of projected and non-projected aids	63	3.63	68	3.20	3.42	9th	Agreed
18. Use of ICT should be intensified	63	3.76	68	3.82	3.79	4th	Agreed
19. Teachers should be adequately paid.	63	3.95	68	3.63	3.79	4th	Agreed
20. Teachers should be motivated to acquire new skills.	63	3.66	68	3.50	3.58	8th	Agreed
21. Federal and State authorities should cushion the effect of recession on parents and guardians.	63	3.22	68	2.91	3.06	6th	Agreed
22. Governments should boost agriculture and stop insecurity.	63	3.63	68	3.27	3.45	5th	Agreed
23. Curriculum to incorporate real-life 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills.	63	3.63	68	3.82	3.73	3rd	Agreed
24. School managers to explore community participation and NGOs.	63	3.38	68	3.29	3.34	7th	Agreed
	<b>Σ36.82</b>		<b>Σ34.86</b>				

The result in Table 2 showed that free education at all levels which includes public secondary schools in urban and rural settings is good strategy to solve the problems of managing secondary education in a recession in Anambra State, with a weighted mean score of 3.78. The respondents (Principals) in urban and rural public secondary schools in Anambra State also agreed to proportionate increase in funding to schools, adequate supply of projected and non-projected aids to schools, intensified use of information and communication technologies (ICT), adequate payment to teachers, teachers' motivation to acquire new skills of teaching, government authorities to cushion the effect of recession on parents and guardians, boosting of agriculture and stopping insecurity by the governments, incorporating real-life and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in curriculum and exploring community and private partnerships, with weighted mean scores of 3.29, 3.42, 3.79, 3.79, 3.58, 3.06, 3.45, 3.73 and 3.34 respectively.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the problems of managing secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State.

**Table 3: Z-test on the difference between the mean scores of male and female respondents (Principals) on the problems of managing public secondary schools in a recession in Anambra State**

S/N.	TYPE	N	MEAN	SD	DF	Z-cal.	Z-tab.	REMARK
1.	MALE	53	3.51	1.87	128	-0.36	1.96	Agreed
2.	FEMALE	77	3.52	1.88				

Table 3 shows the result of the z-test of no difference on the responses of male and female respondents on the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State. Since the z-cal value of -0.36 is less than the z-tab value of 1.96, the hypothesis of no significant difference between the opinions of male and female principals on the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession is upheld.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural principals on the strategies for managing secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State.

**Table 4: Z-test on the difference between the mean scores of urban and rural respondents (Principals) on the strategies to manage public secondary schools in a recession in Anambra State.**

S/N.	TYPE	N	MEAN	SD	DF	Z-cal.	Z-tab.	REMARK
1.	URBAN	63	3.68	1.96	129	3.22	1.96	Disagreed
2.	RURAL	68	3.49	1.87				

Table 4 shows the result of z-test of no difference on the responses of urban and rural respondents on the strategies for managing public secondary schools in a period of recession in Anambra State. Since the z-cal value of 3.22 is greater than the z-tab value of 1.96, the hypothesis of no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural principals on the strategies for managing public secondary schools in a period of recession is rejected. Hence, Table 3 shows the result of the z-test of no difference on the responses of male and female respondents on the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession. Since the z-cal value of -0.36 is less than the z-tab value of 1.96, the hypothesis of no significant difference between the opinions of male and female principals on the problems of managing public secondary schools in a period of recession is upheld. Hence, there is a statistical significant difference in their responses.

#### Discussion

Table 1 of the study revealed that the principals agreed to poor funding of public secondary schools as the major problem of managing that sector of education in a period of economic recession. Obiakor (2021) posit that economic recession negatively impacts secondary school funding in many ways, including reduced government budget, low school revenue due to fewer parents able to pay fees, and

reduced opportunities for external funding. These challenges according to the author can lead to inadequate infrastructure, fewer instructional materials, and potential teacher layoffs.

They also agreed among others that poor motivation of teachers as a result of poor remuneration constitute problems to managing secondary education in a period of recession in Anambra State. No wonder, Nakpodia in Akande (2014) stated that in any educational arrangement, the success lies in the commitment and productivity of the teachers. It is obvious that teachers in public secondary schools no longer manifest expected desirable competencies and productivity to the teaching profession (Nwankwo et al, 2009). This trend however, may be attributed to the ill-treatment being meted on the teachers in regard to inconsistent and inadequate remuneration packages given to them. Remuneration according to the author can function as both an incentive to ginger one into action and as a reward for a job already done. Akande (2014) further asserted that teachers' development is guaranteed when they exchange ideas and are encouraged to test the hypotheses they established. He assures that by this, the teachers will become competent, encouraged and happy in carrying out their functions and do them productively.

Table 2 of the study revealed that respondents agreed that introduction of free education at all levels, proportionate increase in funding of schools, incorporation of real-life 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the curriculum among others can be good strategies for solving the problems of managing secondary education in a period of recession in Anambra State. The principals also notably agreed that government should boost agriculture and strive to stop insecurity which hinders farmers from accessing their farmlands. Chow (2025) supported infusing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity into the curriculum of schools to boost lifelong and survival learning strategies. This approach enhances student learning in a recession by fostering essential life skills and aligning education with the needs of workplaces.

## CONCLUSION

Apart from a full war situation, there is no other situation that is as problematic as the period of economic recession in managing public secondary education. This recession comes with poor funding of the sector, high dropout rate, high inflationary trend, low purchasing power by parents and guardians, paucity of adequate educational resources and materials, poor remuneration and poor motivation of teachers etc. Possible management strategies have also been sought in the second part of the instrument for data collection.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were put forward based on the findings of the study:

1. Despite the recession, various governments should consider an upward review of educational budget to meet the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the whole budget.
2. Schools should leverage technology by embracing online learning and digital tools to reach more students and offer diverse educational resources.
3. School managers should engage with the private community partnerships for support through financial and material assistance.
4. Government should invest in continuous learning and skill development by infusing life skills or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the curriculum.

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