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## **Pedagogic Environment in the Teaching of Economics in Secondary Schools and the Attainment of the Goals of Vision 2035 in the North-West Region of Cameroon**

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### **Abstract:**

*The development of critical thinking skills and logical reasoning in Economics students during teaching is an important asset for the development of Cameroons' Economy. The main purpose of this paper was thus to evaluate the influence of Pedagogic Environment in the teaching of Economics in Secondary schools on the attainment of the goals of vision 2035 in the North-West Region of Cameroon. The study was a survey and data were collected using a questionnaire and content analysis of examination questions. A sample of 170 Economics teachers was drawn from the target population. Schools selected for observation were done purposively. The analyses of data were done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Specifically, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was the statistical tool used. The study found out that Pedagogic Environment in secondary schools has an influence on the attainment of the goals of vision 2035 in the North-West Region of Cameroon. Based on the research findings, some recommendations were made.*

### **1. Introduction**

The Cameroon government's principal objective for emergence outlined in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) 2009 included reducing poverty to less than 10 percent, becoming a middle-income country, being an industrialized nation, consolidating democracy and national unity. According to the Prime Minister's report in the GESP in 2009, infrastructural and unfavorable business environments are the main structural weaknesses hampering faster economic growth and employment in Cameroon. Against this backdrop, the teaching of Economics in our school's system must be taken seriously. Economics concepts and principles are important tools for the government to achieve her objectives of economic growth and development. Economics deals with the laws and principles which govern the functioning of an economy. Therefore, the teaching of Economics in secondary schools is an important tool for Cameroon to achieve vision 2035.

The Vision of Cameroon becoming an emerging nation by the year 2035 was coined from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) formulated in April 2003 by the Cameroon Government. This framework was for the government's overall development policies. In 2008, the PRSP evaluation was published and it concluded that the Cameroon's economy had not witnessed any major structural changes (GESP, 2009). At the conclusion of the process, a new growth and employment strategy paper was adopted by the cabinet in August 2009 and presented to the public in November 2009 by the then Minister of Economy and the Minister of Finance. The new strategy aims to adjust the overall objectives and addresses the weaknesses of the various sector policies in PRSP including some sectors that had not been prioritized initially. It was built on a long-term vision extending to 2035 with technical support from the European Union and the World Bank (GESP, 2009).

#### *1.1. Contextual Background*

Secondary school in Cameroon is a stage to be attended by students after six years of primary education. This is a stage before tertiary education. That is, a stage for youth direction on subject specialization leading to issues of professionalism. The significance attached to this requires a productive school system with efficient resources for teaching and learning.

According to the Sector's Wide Approach reports presented in February 2005 by the four ministries in charge of education in Cameroon, it was revealed that the education and training received by students had limited external efficiency, that is, it does not prepare the youths to confront the employment market which is more demanding and evaluative. Learning and working conditions are poor, pedagogic organization is largely insufficient the school system has insufficient teachers who are poorly distributed between

urban and rural zones. In the rural zones, they are sometimes less qualified and less performant. The system lacks school manuals and other didactic materials. Furthermore, this report laments that within the system there exists a problem of coherence and conditions which hamper its smooth functioning. The planning system is less efficient due to a poor system of statistical reports as a result of ineffective personnel.

It was concluded that, the dis-functioning and inefficiency of management are costly and do not facilitate the allocation of resources which ought to be used for the development and amelioration of the school programmes, the teaching conditions and the quality of education and training. With such a situation, it was decided that a harmonious development strategy of the educational sector was imperative. Some of the guiding principles and priority domains outlined to improve on the present problems were to significantly increase resource allocated to the different pedagogic sectors, ensure training in higher and secondary technical education in terms of quantity and quality which will meet the challenge of the Cameroonian economy, professionalize education and facilitate the availability of manuals and didactic materials to students and teachers. To meet up with these strategies, it was agreed that at the end of secondary general education the students should be able to reason logically, understand and appreciate cultural diversity of Cameroon, be creative, make concrete criticism in French and in English by actively participating in the resolution of the daily problems of the community and its environment for sustainable development and be able to Create/ or manage small production units/enterprises (Sector wide approach, 2005).

Learning is dependent on the pedagogical approaches teachers use in the classroom. A variety of pedagogical approaches are common in schools, but some strategies are more effective and appropriate than others. The effectiveness of pedagogy often depends on the particular subject matter to be taught, on understanding the diverse needs of different learners, and on adapting to the on-the-ground conditions in the classroom and the surrounding context. For Cameroon to surmount the problems identified in the Sector Wide Approach Document and educate a labour force that can propel the country to emergence, attention needs to be paid to the pedagogic environment. Over ten years after the report of the Sector Wide Approach the study thus aims at finding out the extent to which the pedagogic environment where Economics is taught can enhance the attainment of some of the goals of Vision 2035.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Instructional Material in the Teaching of Economics

Ifoema (2013), reveals that the use of instructional materials such as workbooks improve the quality of learning in the students. Agwu (2001), describes instructional materials as those apparatuses of teaching which may include textbooks, workbooks, charts, audio visuals aids, chemicals, specimens and other relevant things that will attract student's attention. Omabe (2006), asserts that instructional materials are central in the teaching and learning of social studies because no matter the efficiency of a teacher's effectiveness in lesson delivery, this cannot be guaranteed without the use of instructional materials. Esu et al. (2004), affirm that instructional materials facilitate the learning of abstract concepts by helping to concretize ideas and estimate learner's imagination while Mathew (2012), states that the use of instructional materials makes teachers effective as it enables learners to participate actively in classroom instruction. Orji (2012) and Ekpe (2010), in their independent studies advocate that instructional materials are not necessarily important if the learners are intelligent and the teacher has good mastery of the subject's matter. Awolay (2015), conceives instructional materials as "a wide range of materials and devices, designed to provide realistic imagery and substitute experiences in order to enrich curricular experiences of many kinds". Awokayu (2015), stresses that one way to attain education objective is to expose learners to real objects in real life situations for instructions. Tomlinson in Karla (2007), states that teaching materials are anything which teachers and students use to facilitated teaching and learning like cassette, videos, CD-ROMS, Dictionaries, books, workshops, photocopied exercises etc. According to Abdullalin (1982), instructional materials are tools locally made or imported that could make tremendous enhancement of lesson impact if intelligently used. The teaching of Economics requires the use of visual materials like graphs, projectors, print resources like books and journals as well as audio-visual resources to portray people's behaviours in real life situations.

### 2.2. Teaching Methods Used in the Teaching of Economics

Bharadwaj and Pal (2011), purport that teaching methods work effectively if they suit learners needs since every learner interprets and respond to questions in a unique way. Boud & Feletti (1999) explain that, the teacher-centered methods of teaching allow students to obtain information from the teacher without building their engagement level with the subject being taught. Zakaria, Chin and Daud (2010), specify that teaching should not merely focus on dispensing rules, definitions and procedures for students to memorize, but should also actively engage student as primary participants during teaching. Most teachers today apply the students centered approach to promote interest, analytical research, critical thinking and enjoyment among students (Hesson & Shad, 2007). Joseph (1998) says that the lecture method is basically narration that will signify what we usually call explanation or description. However, lecture or explicit teaching is relevant in the teaching of facts, concepts, principles and theories in Economics. However, lecture must not dominate teaching.

Tambo (2012) describes illustrated lecture as the use of picture, diagrams and charts in teaching. The advantage of this method according to him is that it makes abstract concepts concrete. There are many topics in Economics that require this method. Demand and Supply for example cannot be taught without diagrams.

According to Look wood (1994), the project method is a learning activity in which students develop an understanding of a topic, body of knowledge by working on actual problem. The project method in teaching fosters effective learning and helps the learners to develop manipulative and psychomotor skills. In enhancing critical thinking in the teaching of Economics students must be involved

in problem-solving. The must be involved in identifying problems, stating hypotheses, collecting and analyzing data to propose solutions.

According to Bossche et al. (2000), problem based learning fosters a deeper approach to learning, promotes students to use the library and library resources to study, develops greater knowledge retention and recall skills, exhibit stronger knowledge and applications of skills. Finkelstein (2010) sees problem based learning as an instructional method characterized by the use of “real world” problems as a context for students to learn critical thinking and problem- solving skills. Massa (2008), advocates that problems based learning students are active participants in their own learning. According to Jahr (2011), for the teacher to effectively use problem based methods in teaching he must set a standard, establishes procedure, judge the amount of time needed for preparation, and provide a standard for critical analysis. Njideka and Ejimonye (2014), explain that for a teacher to teach effectively, the teacher must have sufficient knowledge about the students in addition to the appropriate method of teaching. Mahmood (2011) adds that if proper and suitable methods and techniques are used, even the students of less intelligence can easily learn. Problem-based learning should be a core method in the teaching of Economics

According to Dishon (1994), cooperative learning is the instructional use of small group so that students’ work together to maximize their learning. Cooperative learning as an instructional methodology provides opportunity for students to develop skills needed in today’s world (Carol, 1999, Imel 1999, and Kerka, 1990). Keachie (2010) adds that students are more likely to acquire critical thinking skills and meta-cognition learning strategies in small groups because it permits them discuss or argue. Kagan and Kagan (2009), point out that teachers must identify and overcome disciplinary problems, noise level, the problems of selecting groups etc. Economics deals with the behavior of people and cooperative learning permits learners to share real life experiences, making the teaching of Economics meaningful.

### *2.3. Assessment Procedures in the Teaching of Economics*

According to Peter (2003), assessment is the process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information gathered in the classroom to aid in decision making. Robert, Gerace, Mestra and Leonard (2000), adds that assessments inform the teachers about what students think and about how they think. Ampiah, Hart, Nkhata and Nyirenda (2003), contend that a teacher needs to know what children are able to do, if he/she is to plan effectively. Dagney (2007), classifies assessment into two broad categories that is formative and summative assessment. Wininger and Norman (2005), assert that formative assessments help to inform teachers about students learning during instruction for the purpose of guiding and modifying instruction. According to the Organization for Economic cooperation and development (2005), (OECD), tests and examinations are classic ways of measuring student’s progress and are integral to accountability of schools and the education system. Freeman (2013), postulates that paper- and pencil tests are the most efficient, reliable and valid instruments available for assessing knowledge, comprehension and some types of applications but only a well-constructed performance tests can assess a complex thinking skills, attitude and social skills. Herman (1992), believes that traditional approach to testing in education like the traditional multiple choice exams have created an over emphasis on basic skills and a neglect of thinking skills in the classroom. Therefore, Economics should make use of paper and pencil tests which test critical thinking.

### *2.4. Statement of the Problem*

For the past six years’ performance in Economics in secondary schools leaves much to be desired and secondary school graduates are unable to help themselves in the face of unemployment. Economics is a key subject in achieving development. Cameroon’s strategic vision is to become a middle-income country by 2035, specifically to alleviate poverty and become a middle-income nation. The effective teaching of Economics should provide students with competencies capable of providing solutions to the problems of unemployment, poverty reduction and economic growth and development in Cameroon. However, this situation seems challenging as the pedagogic environment may affect the effective teaching of Economics in secondary schools needed for the development of skills in the students to fight poverty and make Cameroon a middle-income nation. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the Pedagogic Environment in the teaching of Economics in secondary schools and the development of skills in the students which is necessary for the attainment of the goals of vision 2035 in the North-West Region of Cameroon.

### *2.5. Purpose of the Study*

The general objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of Pedagogic Environment in the teaching of Economics in Secondary Schools on the attainment of the goals of vision 2035

### *2.6. Hypotheses*

Three hypotheses were formulated to direct the study as follows:

There is no significant influence of the use of instructional materials on the development of critical thinking skills in the students of Economics.

1. How does the use of instructional materials help in developing critical thinking skills in the students of Economics?
2. How do teaching methods use in the teaching of Economics promote logical reasoning and innovative and in the students?
3. To what extent does assessment in Economics promote logical reasoning and value judgments in the students?

### 3. Materials and Methods

The research design selected for this study was the survey design. The sample was selected based on the Krecie and Morgan (1970) table. From a population of 318 Economics teachers a sample of 170 respondents was selected from the three divisions under study in the North-West Region of Cameroon (Mezam, Momo and Ngoketunjia Divisions). The 15 items on the questionnaires were closed ended questions with four Likert-type response options of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The content of examination question was analyzed based on the Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of educational objectives. This was to find out the extent to which assessment reflects thinking skills that can lead to poverty alleviation and economic growth and development in Cameroon. The reliability was established by calculating the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the test – retest scores of 10 respondents who responded to the questionnaire twice in two weeks. The results of this analysis using the raw score method was calculated with a reliability coefficient of 0.599 or 0.60 which shows that the instrument was reliable. The data collected were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze quantitative data for research question 1. Research question 2 was analyzed descriptively; using frequency tables, mean and percentages while research question 3 was qualitatively using content analyses technique of the examination questions.

### 4. Results

**Hypothesis:** There is no significant influence of the use of instructional materials on the development of critical thinking skills in the students of Economics.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is the use of instructional materials and the dependent variable is the development of critical thinking skills in the students of Economics. The scores of the independent variable were gotten from the responses recorded from the eight questionnaire items that measured the use of instructional materials. The scores of the dependent variable were gotten from the scores recorded from the responses got from the nine questionnaire items that measured the effective teaching of Economics on the development of skills in economics students. The statistical analysis technique used to test this hypothesis was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. The formula using deviation from the mean method is;

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where x is the independent variable, y is the dependent variable and  $\Gamma_{xy}$  is the correlation coefficient for x and y. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1

Variable	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$		
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	$\Gamma_{xy}$
Rate of use of instructional materials (X)	3505	77515	105448	0.071
Attainment of Cameroons Vision 2035 (Y)	4839	147169		

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the influence of the use of instructional materials on the development of critical thinking skills (N=161)

$p^* < 0.05$ ;  $df = 159$ ; critical  $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.159$

The result of the analysis reveals that the calculated  $\Gamma_{xy}$  -value of 0.071 for the use of instructional materials is less than the critical  $\Gamma_{xy}$  -value of 0.159 at .05 level of significance with 159 degrees of freedom. With the result of the analysis, the null hypothesis was retained and the alternative hypothesis rejected. This result therefore means that there is no significant influence of the use of instructional materials in the teaching of Economics and the development of critical thinking skills in the students. This result implies that the way the teachers are using instructional materials in the teaching of Economics cannot enhance the attainment of the goals of vision 2035 in the North-West Region of Cameroon. The mean value (mean = 21.77 on 32) for the use of instructional materials in the teaching of Economics is also average with a percentage (68%).

N0	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	%	Decision
31	I group students to write projects	17	56	49	39	2.32	58%	Disagree
32	I make students come up with solutions to real life problems	55	89	10	07	3.19	79.8%	Agree
33	I use graphs to explain mathematical concepts in Economics	71	71	09	10	3.26	81.5%	Agree
34	I organize students to debate about Economics concepts in class	36	59	39	27	2.66	66.5%	Agree weakly
35	I always provide students with steps and procedures to solve Economics problems	74	72	08	07	3.32	83%	Agree
36	I make use of lecture most of the time due to time constraints	48	60	38	15	2.88	72%	Agree averagely
37	I make students do research and present findings in class	29	101	23	8	2.94	73.5%	Agree
<b>General Mean</b>		330	508	176	113	2.94	73.55	Agree

Table 2: Research Question 2: How do teaching methods used in the teaching of Economics promote logical reasoning and innovative in the students?

$$\text{Critical mean, } (\bar{x}) \text{ value} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 2.5$$

In reaction to the issues raised on the role of teaching methods used in teaching Economics in promoting logical reasoning and innovative skills in the learners addressed by seven items with mean opinions calculated on a maximum of 4 by the responding teachers, the following findings were obtained:

Teachers of Economics in secondary schools in the North-West Region say they do not use project writing as a teaching method (mean= 2.32)

The use of debate in the teaching of Economics is not quite popular (mean=2.66), while the use of the lecture method is averagely popular (mean=2.88). Economics teachers agreed that they use graphs to explain the mathematical concepts in Economics (mean= 3.26), provides steps and procedure to solve problems (mean =3.32), encourage students to solve real life problems (mean=3.19), and encourage students to carry out research (mean=2.94)

In summary, the teachers agree that they use teaching methods that enhance logical reasoning and promote innovative in the students. The general mean is (2.94). This means that teaching methods use in the teaching of Economics enhance the attainment of the goals of vision 2035. However, the use of project method and debate are to a lesser extent.

➤ Research question 3: To what extent does assessment in Economics promote value judgments in the students?

According to the Cameroon GCE Board, Economics is divided into paper one and paper two at the O/L examination. Paper one consists of 50 compulsory MCQS which are set to cover the whole syllabus and to be answered in one hour thirty minutes. Paper two consists of eight essay questions and candidates are expected to answer four essay questions in two hours. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) is used to set assessment questions for the award of GCE Ordinary level certificate to students. Based on the statistics gathered, it is evident that students are assessed with content that exhibits lower order thinking skills according to Bloom (1956). From the analyses of the content of the questions, data collected reveals that there are 23 questions on knowledge (46%), 16 questions on comprehension (32%) and application 11 questions (22%). On the other hand, in paper two 62.5% is on knowledge, 25% on comprehension and 12.5% on application. Based on Bloom's taxonomy, it implies that students are tested on the lower levels of cognitive ability and the aspect of analysis; synthesis and evaluation are left out. From the above analysis of assessment, students who write Economics at the Ordinary level examination are not given the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills value judgments and problems solving skills that will enable them relate contents to solve problems in real life situations.

## 5. Discussion

Results reveal that the use of instructional materials in the teaching of Economics is not significant. This implies that students may find concepts abstract and this may affect their performance. It may also make the teacher's job stressful. The use of instructional materials such as text books and workbooks improves the quality of learning in the students (Ifoema, 2013), Omabe (2006), affirms that instructional materials are central in the teaching and learning of social studies because no matter the efficiency and effectiveness of a teacher in lesson delivery, it cannot be guaranteed without the use of instructional materials. Esu et al (2004), complement this by adding that instructional materials facilitate the learning of abstract concepts by helping to concretize ideas and estimate learners' imagination.

The second finding is that teachers make use of methods that enhance critical thinking. Therefore, young Cameroonians would be able to take part in societal development that will lead to Cameroon being a middle-income Country. With critical thinking, they will be able to apply, hypothesize and innovate. Tchombe (2009), asserts that project methods provide a means to the learners to obtain knowledge in natural circumstances. Woldad, (2013), supports this view by saying that, if the students are given the chance to explain their view and opinions of Economic realities, they will be able to have other reflection and construct their own personal knowledge. This result goes to complement the finding of Van den Bossche (2000), which says problem based learning fosters a deeper approach to learning, promotes students to use the library and library resources to study which enable the students to develop greater knowledge retention and recall skills, exhibit stronger knowledge and applications of skills. Finkelstein (2010), concluded that problem based learning as an instructional method characterized by the used of "real world" enable students to learn critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for the job market.

The third finding reveals that lower order thinking skills dominate assessment. This may lead to a situation contrary to the one described in the second finding, where students may not have much to offer in societal development. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2005), holds that examinations are classic ways of measuring students' progress and accountability of the educational system. That is effective assessment should be formative as it builds students' learning skills by emphasizing the process of teaching and learning hence involve students as participants of the process. Freeman (2013), concludes that performance tests helps teachers to assess complex cognitive learning as well as attitude and social skills in social studies and mathematics. In order to achieve this, the teacher must establish situations that allow the learners to observe directly, analyze, solve problems, experiment, make decisions and cooperate with other learners. This is far from the context of Cameroon classroom because examination in secondary schools focused on Multiple Choice Questions (knowledge and comprehension). Although some essay questions are asked in paper two, students are expected to list, states, and explain facts without expressing their opinions. This level of assessment is not enough to develop skills in the learners that will enhance poverty reduction and take Cameroon to the level of industrial development by the year 2035.

## 6. Conclusion

Materials and assessment are not adequate in enhancing critical thinking but methods are. Teaching usually assumes a systemic perspective where if one component is not functioning well the entire system is affected. In other words, the pedagogical environment the teaching of Economics in Cameroon is inadequate to achieve the goals of Vision 2035. From the foregoing discussion, it is recommended that stakeholders within the Educational system should uphold the following;

- Assist teachers during national seminars to develop and use local instructional materials related to the context of Cameroon to teach Economics.
- Organize seminars and workshops in schools to train teachers on how to teach students using the indirect teaching methods. For example, how students can write a project, use cooperating teaching method, debates and problem based method to teach Economics
- School administrators should ensure that specialized rooms like libraries are equipped with instructional materials and encourage teachers to use them. For example, the availability of internet facilities in the staffroom enables teachers to do research before their lessons.
- Assessment procedures should be varied. Students should be assessed on all the levels of the Blooms' Taxonomy which demonstrate mastery of concepts'

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