



DEVELOPMENT IN DISARRAY: DEFINITIONAL PLURALITY AND IMPLICATIONS ON THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The concept 'development' is one of those concepts which are not exclusively ascribed to a particular area of knowledge. This is because its various connotations are adopted to explain phenomena in the natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, physical sciences, mathematical sciences, etc. even photographers have use for the term. When the term development is used therefore, it conveys a message of growth, advancement, progress, modernization, change, improvement, etc. Perhaps, as a result of the plethora of connotations, it has been plagued with the problem of a definition generally acceptable to scholars. The focus of this paper however, being a social science based paper, is to present a concept of development against the background of failed attempts in many Third World Countries. The paper has eight (8) parts made up of abstract, introduction, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research methodology, literature review, conclusion, recommendations, and reference. In part six (literature review), the paper looked at the definition of development by some scholars; explored the historical origin of economic development, highlighted the specificity of economic development using some variables, then concluded the paper by asserting that the West propagated notion and process of development had led to many of the development oriented efforts of less developed nations ending up as mirage, and that development oriented activities and efforts are best spurred internally than initiated from outside. Development is more of indigenous and autonomous than foreign and

dependent. Recommendations were made i. Enhancing the nation's extraction capacities and capabilities. ii. Building the capacity of citizens psychologically, intellectually and in skills. iii. Creating enabling environment for corporate, group and individual initiatives and efforts to thrive, with emphasis on security and fiscal matters. iv. Sustaining the programs, efforts and progress recorded, and the will and loyalty of the citizens.

Keywords: *Economic, development, disarray, plurality, third world.*

INTRODUCTION

Development is a term which lends itself to use and adoption by various disciplines to explain many processes. Because of that, it would amount to intellectual recklessness for me to assertively give an answer to the question 'what is development'.

Different academic fields have defined the concept to suit the phenomena that are peculiar to them. For example, biology sees development as 'the series of changes which animals and vegetable organisms undergo in their passage from the embryonic state to maturity; mathematics sees it as the act or process of changing or expanding an expression into another of equivalent expression into which another has been developed; music sees it as the elaboration of a theme or subject, the unfolding of a musical idea, the evolution of a whole piece or movement from a leading theme or motives; etc.

Leaving the definitions given by other disciplines, this paper seeks to sieve through the definitions and meanings given to economic development by scholars of social sciences inclination, to come up with an understanding of development which could be all-embracing vis-à-vis the variations in the perception and the indices of development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept 'economic development' which has implications in practical terms has to be appropriately defined and given a meaning that would guide any activities precipitated by its prescriptions in the right direction. Some definitions given to economic development have misguided policy makers in their perceptions. Hence, Third World Countries have over the years embarked on development agenda and programs, structured to conform to the prescriptions

Western concept, which ended in futility after valuable time and huge amount of resources had been put into them, as they never actualized the quests for national development. Jwa (2017:24), discussing the need for a new theory of economic development asked the following questions: How many under-developed economies have actually caught up with developed economies in the modern era? How many have achieved visible and sustainable economic development in the past century? Moreover, how many developed economies have been able to maintain stable economic growth and dynamism as well? His answer to the questions was an emphatic “Only very few”. Some of the development formulas peddled by scholars of development as panacea for transformation from a status of under-development to that of development include the theory of “comparative advantage” propounded by Adam Smith, “technology transfer”, “import substitution industrialization” popularized by Raul Prebisch, who was the Secretary General of the U.N. Commission for Latin America (Olashore:1991). The failures of the TWCs to attain economic development goals was due to the fact that they merely translated from one colonialist private property under monopoly capitalism to corporate colonialism under financial capitalism. Holcomb & Ibssa (1990:25) expressing their aversion to the exercise tagged “decolonization” and “independence”, pointed out that “The move to neo-colonialism constituted a withdrawal of European-born representatives and their replacement by locally-born persons who were put in the charge of the intact institutional structures. Through this process of so called decolonization, countries that had been forced into the capitalist economic system in the position of subjects remained in the same subject position”. The expression portends that though the subject countries were granted independence, they were not loosed from the colonial strings that serviced the economic interest of their former colonial masters. Rather, it ushered in a situation where the former colonial powers corporately have unfettered access to the wealth of the former colonies in the pursuit of their common interest anchored by finance capital. Therefore it is likely that the development formulas churned out by the Bretton Wood Institutions are not borne out of good will for the development of the TWCs, but the conscientious move to perpetuate the economies of the TWCs in the service of the interest of finance capital. The question we ask here is “Is the Western development prototype the only option to attain economic development”?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to evaluate some definitions of economic development, point out their flaws in the face of contemporary definitions of the concept so as to come up with my own definition and explanation of what development actually implies.

In addition, it is intended to get policy-makers to know that since development answers to specificities, there is no straight jacket approach to attaining it. Therefore, nations can adopt any of the identified approaches or evolve a unique approach that best blend with their peculiarities in the quest for development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this work is content analysis. Existing works on the topic both in the library and internet were consulted and analyzed, and deductions made.

LITERATURE REVIEW

We had pointed out earlier in the paper that economic development is plagued by numerousity of definitions by scholars and schools of thought.

DEFINITION: Many scholars, in an effort to explain what economic development means, gave it several definitions, some of which are cited here. According to Harris (1979:301), “the word development represents the idea of methods being found to fulfill the aspirations of a nation, group or state”. Aworuwa in Vaughan et al (2005:333) posited that “in its broad sense, development is any improvement that occurs as a result of social and economic transformation”. It refers to improvement in the ways of managing areas natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people’s lives. To Walter Rodney (1970), development is “a situation where men increase jointly in their capacity for dealing with the environment through the understanding of science and technology and the manner in which they work or work is organized”. Marxists view development as a socio-economic transformation. They went further to explain that: it is essentially a human issue concerned with the capacity of individuals to realize their potentials and to effectively cope with changing circumstances of their lives; it involves the total and full mobilization of a society, the task of changing the institution in which the thinking of individuals finds expression, to a comprehensive extent, so as to invoke total

political commitment. This means the movement of the whole society upwards; involving a shift from an outward oriented, dependent status to a self-centered and self-reliant position with regards to the process of decision making, and more importantly the pattern and style of production and consumption. Kemball and Wright saw development in terms of integrating economic development with alleviation of pressing social, cultural, institutional and attitudinal problems of which poverty is pivotal or prime. According to Williamson, “economic development is a process whereby the people of a country utilize the available resources in such a way that the per capita income of the country increases”. According to Loveridge and Moore (WC & RE), economic development is “a sustained community effort to improve both the local economy and the quality of life by building the areas’ capacity to adapt to economic changes”.

Encarta defined it as “the promotion of more intensive and advanced economic activities through such areas as education, improved tools and techniques, more available financing, better transportation facilities and creation of new businesses”. Wikipedia states that economic development refers to “sustained, concerted actions of policy-makers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic wealth of a specific area”. It also refers to a qualitative and quantitative change in the economy.

One thing common to the definitions above is that economic development is neither transient nor static. That change which involves a shift from the status quo has to have the potential for sustainability for it to pass as development. It must be permanent and its effects must be progressive. Another point of note is that the definitions were situated against the background of citizen’s wellbeing. Also some of them bear the apparent fact that development is the responsibility of both the policy-makers and the people, and therefore internally initiated. Drawing from the above definitions, we are inclined to define economic development as the evolving of methods by a community for harnessing both the natural, material and human potentials of the environment to actualize the desired and appropriate wellbeing of the citizens with necessary external relations.

SPECIFICITY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is no single approach to the attainment of economic development. The Wyoming Community and Regional Economics (WC&RE) pointed out that there is no one prescription for economic development that will fulfill the needs

of all communities. Successful economic development is a process that fills different communities at different times. Its success is often case specific, depending on the development goals, implementation and funding resources available. Max Weber, in Harris (ibid:302), registered his skepticism against Western prototype process as to the possibility of emergence of western form from non-western practices by stating “No part led from the magical religiosity of the non-intellectual classes of Asia to a rational control of life” in the search for modernization in the non-West. Chinweizu (1978:290), expressing aversion to the adoption of the development recipe projected by the West had this to say:then how much prosperity and economic autonomy could she possibly attain if she remains within the imperialist economic structure and if she persisted in basing her economic activities on the liberal capitalist ideology she is now told she must allow to govern her development, --- she can neither do much for her people’s prosperity nor go far in attaining that economic autonomy---“.

Lending credence to this, Knox, Agnew and McCarthy (2008:23), argued that development is a normative concept- that is, it involves values, goals, and standards that make it possible to compare a particular situation against a preferred one. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) asserted that: “As there is no single definition for economic development, there is no single strategy, policy or program for achieving successful economic development. Communities differ in their geographic and political strengths and weaknesses. Each community therefore will have a unique set of challenges for economic development.....”

The conclusion I draw from the above opinions is that the perception and process of economic development have to be silhouetted against the community’s socio-cultural and religious values and orientations, nurtured by their natural endowment.

APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There are many models on economic development. They include:

1. The structuralism model which believed that state-led development is the key to economic development through: the internal expansion of the local economy; improving the technological levels of lagging sectors of the economy; and government intervention to transform the structure of the economy.

2. The Linear-Stages of Growth Model which represents Western European view of economic development. Most prominent of this was W.W. Rostow who viewed economic development as a linear process. Hence he proposed five stages a nation has to pass through to achieve economic development thus:
 - i. The traditional Society: at this stage, the society is characterized by low level of technology, a rigid social structure, fatalistic attitudes and low per capita income.
 - ii. The pre-condition for take-off: at this stage, the traditional society is exposed to modern scientific knowledge, and traditional values begin to disappear or breakdown.
 - iii. The take-off: at this point, economic growth is sustained and paves way for the discard of traditional values of the society.
 - iv. The drive to maturity: here the society undergoes rapid economic growth and becomes integrated into the larger international economic system.
 - v. High mass consumption: this is the final stage of development characterized by a high standard of living for majority of the society.
3. The Dependency Theory Approach: this theory was advocated and popularized by Latin American scholars. The arrowhead of this theory was Andre Gunder Frank (1960), an ardent critic of structuralism and the linear stages approaches to development. According to him, colonialism and Western capitalism were the two identifiable factors accountable for the under-developed nature of the Third World Countries. This was based on the premise that the international economic order structured by Bretton Woods gave the capitalist nations of the West the moral justification to plunder the resources of the Third World Countries. Therefore, the Dependency theorists believe that the developed countries are responsible for the underdevelopment that has persisted in Less Developed Countries through their exploitative economic policies and activities. The theorist then proposed a delinking from the West if the Third World must develop.
4. The neo-classical counter revolution: This model championed by Solow (1956) (in Mario Coccia:2019:4) *Theories of Development*, opined that

the under-developed state of LDCs is a result of internal improprieties caused by government intervention and bad economic policies. He was averse to state intervention, so he stated the believe that “market price and resource allocation usually produce better results than state intervention”. A position which Jwa (op.cit:27), while discussing institutions as key factors in economic development asserted that “the developmental nature and quality of the political leadership as an exogenous determinant of institutions becomes a fundamental precondition for economic growth and development”. This portends that economic growth and development can be achieved if the political leadership carries out institutional reforms that would do away with traditions, culture, religious and ethical practices that are antithetical to development programs and practices.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Development as a concept evolved from other concepts which existed and were adopted to explain strides man took in the progressive effort to extract a living from his environment. Such earlier terms include progress, growth, movement, etc, which Harris (op. cit) attributed to Aristotle.

Since the terms were applied to activities that resulted in improved economic conditions, one could argue that the term ‘development’ emerged on the economic advancement platform to explain phenomena that is as old as man’s time on earth. Marx in Boguslavski et al (1978:330-33 1), stated that: “people produced food and clothing, built houses, and so on in every age, ---- stages of social history are differentiated not by what man produced but by how, that is, by what means, they produce the material goods necessary for subsistence “. He went further to state that historical periods are differentiated, above all, by the modes of material production on which they are founded.

In the light of the above, arrogating the origin of development to the era of capitalism (Conteras) or post World War II era is an aberration on scholarship integrity. Rodney (1989:10-11, reprint) tended to agree with Marx as he traced the origin of development to the origin of man. According to him, “A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment”. He went further to say that “this capacity is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized”. He then argued inter-alia “---- it can be said there has been constant economic development within society since the origin of man because man has multiplied enormously, his capacity to win a living from nature”. He strengthened his argument by

presenting remarkable progress recorded at the insipient stage of mans existence: from crude stone tools to the use of metals; the change over from hunting and gathering wild fruits to domestication of animals and the growing of food crops; and the improvement on the organization of work from being an individualistic activity towards being an activity which assumes a social character through the participation of many.

The clear arguments of Marx and Rodney give a premise on which I stand to say that though the term “economic development” may pass as a new concept, the phenomena it connotes is a practice which neither started with the industrial revolution nor the post World War II speech of President Harry Truman of America in 1949 (Wikipedia), but which relics excavated in Omo Valley, Lake Turkana, Olduvai Gorge, etc, attribute to the era when men started to interact with their immediate environment to better their lives and living conditions.

CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude this paper by stating that the term “economic development” is a word that explains activities that go on at different times, in different ways, at different places, in different countries and communities in the world. There is no nation on earth that is not engaged in one development oriented activity or the order.

However, the West propagated notion and process of development had led to many of the development oriented efforts of less developed nations ending up as mirage. As I stated earlier in this paper that understanding of the specificity of the concept and approach of development would cause policy-makers to adopt suitable methods, the definition I gave which I deduced from the arguments of Marx, Rodney and others cited in this paper, I feel, portrays development oriented activities and efforts as best spurred internally than initiated from outside. Development is more of indigenous and autonomous than foreign and dependent. I end this section by quoting Marcus Garvey “No race in the world is so just as to give others, for the asking, a fair deal in things economic, political and social” Garvey (1977:9, comp.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

I therefore recommend that, based on the premise that the development potentials of nations are inherent in their environment:

1. Policy-makers should come out with inward looking policies that would aim at:
 - i. Enhancing the nation’s extraction capacities and capabilities.
 - ii. Building the capacity of citizens psychologically, intellectually and in skills.

- iii. Creating enabling environment for corporate, group and individual initiatives and efforts to thrive, with emphasis on security and fiscal matters.
 - iv. Sustaining the programs, efforts and progress recorded, and the will and loyalty of the citizens.
2. Policy-makers should initiate policies that would guide the nation's external/foreign relations on necessary and progressive terms and courses respectively so as not to allow her development agenda and programs to be enmeshed in the dictates and specifications of external conditions and interests.

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