



THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
And
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
In The
21ST CENTURY AFRICA

A Festschrift for
Prof. Patrick A. Edewor @ 60

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PREFACE

The book *The social sciences and sustainable development in the 21st century Africa* is a festschrift rustled up in honour of our own very cerebral, easy-going, pleasantly natured, pious and experienced academic, Professor Patrick A. Edewor. The thematic bent of the book, which underscores a very important subject which has fascinated the attention of the globalised world for a long time now, inclusive of the international community, sovereign nations, the civil society community, the intelligentsia, business, the faith sector, the media and others, generates a blitzkrieg as the peoples of the world have met (and still meet) on how to orchestrate development in a sustainable way for the benefit of the present and future occupiers of the earth. In other words, sustainable development compels the present generation to reasonably, conscientiously and sustainably exploit the resources in the environment such as energy, water, climate, mineral deposits, and others so as not to jeopardise the survival of the future generation. This was why in 2015, United Nations member states met to endorse the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which comprises 17 goals which, in all, aim to induct a sustainable world in which environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic development enjoy sacrosanctity.

While the rest of the modern world is taking the sustainable development “movement” seriously and is committing resources, putting plans and structures in place to achieve the 17 ambitious but transformative and people-centred Sustainable Development Goals, twenty-first century Africa appears to struggle and straggle. With a population of 1.3 billion people as at 3rd January, 2019, and projected to double by 2050, if there is any continent that should be hastily and univocally focused on changing the painful narratives that have dogged and togaed it, it is the African continent. African countries have straggled off the path of sustainable development over the years, and this has resulted in the climate of unsavouriness which pervades the region. Majority of African youths are jobless, with huge numbers in the not in employment, education or training (NEET) population; the healthcare system is moribund at best and comatose at worst; insecurity percolates the countries; infrastructural amenities are generally in deficit; leadership is poor, distanced from the people and insensately kleptomaniac, and the painfully vicious cycle of

brain-drain continues unabatedly. Young Africans, and those who can afford it, now leave the continent in droves through official and desert channels to find greener pastures abroad.

Consequently, this festschrift is a timely tome that has received various contributions from scholars far and wide, particularly those of the social science provenance or academy, to lend their research efforts and voices to the need for sustainable development to happen in and for twenty-first century Africa. Africa cannot afford to be baby-sat all the time. It needs to grow up and take responsibility for its destiny and the realisation of its vast human and natural resources. The social science academy, comprising researchers, scholars, thinkers and scientists, has its work cut out for it. On the various pages of this festschrift, there is a call to use our intellectual and other resources and endowments to rescue Africa so that in this twenty-first century, it can transition from being the continent of promise to becoming the continent of success.

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The Concept of Development and the Philosophy and Method of Planned Development

ALLO Tolulope Abiola

Abstract

Many have perceived the notion of development as rather controversial and difficult to conceptualise. This is because of the usual confusion of the term with "economic growth". For the economist, development is seen from a quantitative perspective using terms such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per-capita income as yardsticks of measurement, while for the sociologist, development is viewed from a social point of view putting into consideration the overall living conditions of the generality of the people. This chapter seeks to discuss the concept of development, and also to explicitly show the idea behind planned and deliberate efforts at development. It is believed that for any nation to experience any meaningful progress and achieve sustainable development, a pre-meditated and conscious course of action has to be put in place in order to ensure a stable and upward movement in the developmental ladder.

Keywords: Development, Sustainable Development, Philosophy, Planned Development, Africa

Introduction

Many have perceived the notion of development as rather controversial and difficult to conceptualise. This is because of the usual confusion of the term with (economic) "growth". For the economist, development is seen from a quantitative perspective using terms such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income as yardsticks of measurement, while for the sociologist, development is viewed from a social point of view putting into consideration the overall living conditions of the generality of the people, namely, access to education and healthcare, employment opportunities, availability of clean air and safe drinking water, safety from the threat of crime, and so on. For the sociologist, therefore, development is viewed from the qualitative standpoint, putting into perspective the general process of

social change, including the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation that has occurred throughout the world. Processes such as population growth, educational expansion, political change and so on are usually considered in conceptualising development from the sociological point of view.

This chapter seeks to discuss the concept of development, and also to explicitly show the idea behind planned and deliberate efforts at development. It is believed that for any nation to experience any meaningful development and achieve sustainable development, a premeditated and conscious course of action has to be put in place in order to ensure a stable and upward movement in the developmental ladder.

The Concept of Development

The word "development" is a common vocabulary that is popularly used in everyday conversation by both the man on the street and scholars alike. Development has many meanings. The meaning a particular person attaches to the term depends on her or his subjective view of the world. Indeed, the meaning of development is not only a product of the individual's perspective but also of the particular period in time when the word is being uttered.

Audu (2009) believes that there is no generally acceptable operational definition of what development is, nor is there a unanimous consensus regarding how development can and should be conceptualised. Development can be broadly defined in a manner applicable to all societies at all historical periods as an upward ascending movement featuring greater levels of energy, efficiency, quality, productivity, complexity, comprehension, creativity, mastery, enjoyment and accomplishment (Jacob & Asokan, 1980). Development is a process of social change, not merely a set of policies and programmes instituted for some specific results. This process has been going on since the dawn of history. But during the last five centuries, it has picked up in speed and intensity, and during the last five decades has witnessed a marked surge in acceleration (Asokan, 2006).

From the literal sense, development could be taken to mean growth, expansion, progress, advancement, increase, maturity, enlargement, or improvement. It can, therefore, be said that development connotes a transition from one stage or phase to another, particularly one that is more advanced or better than the preexisting one.

A business dictionary provided the following definitions for development:

1. The use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements.
2. An extension of the theoretical or practical aspects of a concept, design, discovery, or invention.
3. The process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions.
4. The process of adding improvements to a parcel of land, such as grading, subdivisions, drainage, access, roads, utilities.

However, developmental scientists have variously tried to define what development means to them. For instance, Dudley Seers, a trained development scientist in a work he published sometime in 1972, argued that, development should not be seen from the economic perspective alone, but firstly from the social perspective. Seers stressed the significance of social development in developing countries before moving to economic development and his argument is that before economic development can be achieved, social development needs to occur. Seers was highly critical of using expressions such as inflation, unemployment, and per capita income and asserted that development should be measured by the human development index (HDI). In other words, to Seers, true development lies in the elimination of poverty, increase in literacy, improvement in health services as opposed to increase in per capita output.

For Walter Rodney, development is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, responsibility and national well-being (Rodney, 1972). The United Nations Development Programme uses a more detailed definition. According to them, development is 'to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community.'

Some in the Economic Development community define development as the process of improving the quality of all human lives. There are three equally important aspects of development in this definition:

- (1) Raising people's living levels – their income and consumption levels of food, medical services and education through economic growth processes;

- (2) Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political, and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect; and
- (3) Increasing people's freedom by enlarging the range of their choice of variables, such as increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.

A current United Nations documents focused on the issue of "human development," measured by life expectancy, adult literacy, access to all three levels of education, as well as people's average income, which is a necessary condition of their freedom of choice. Thus, the idea of development according to this report should incorporate all aspects of an individuals' well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom.

Central to the understanding of the concept of development is the concept of underdevelopment. As noted by Audu (2009), the concept of underdevelopment, like development, is shrouded in controversy. This according to him is because it has no precise definition. Some scholars however see underdevelopment as the direct opposite or the other side of development. Others define it by comparing the levels of development of two or more societies, while others see it as the absence of development. In any case, underdevelopment is neither opposite nor absence of development. Looking at a literal definition, the business dictionary suggested the following definitions for underdevelopment:

1. Not adequately or normally developed; immature.
2. Having a low level of economic productivity and technological sophistication within the contemporary range of possibility; developing: e.g. *underdeveloped countries*.

A more scholarly and professional perception of the term "underdevelopment" is often presented in terms of economic underdevelopment, symptoms of which include lack of access to job opportunities, healthcare, drinkable water, food, education and housing (FAO report, 1948). Underdevelopment takes place when resources are not used to their full socioeconomic potential, with the result that local or regional development is slower in most cases than it should be. Furthermore, it results from the complex interplay of internal and external factors that allow less developed countries only a lop-sided development progression.

Underdeveloped nations are characterised by a wide disparity between their rich and poor populations, and an unhealthy balance of trade (Gunder-Frank, 2005).

Daniel (1980) viewed underdevelopment as the state of an economy of a satellite economy characterised by underemployment of human and natural resources. Such an economy is characterised by low real income per capita in comparison with those of North America and West Europe. For Daniel, therefore, such economies are display symptoms such as illiteracy, poverty, over population and diseases.

The argument put forward by underdevelopment scholars revolves around historical circumstances such as slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. To them, therefore, underdevelopment is synonymous with exploitation. However, within the context of this chapter, underdevelopment may be used to describe a country that has not sufficiently attained a state of 'development'.

The Philosophy and Method of Planned Development

Having clarified the concepts of development and underdevelopment, it suffices to say that in order for any nation to attain a level of appreciable development, certain strategies have to be put in place.

A planning process that will bring about sustainable development both at the national and local level needs to be institutionalised. The basic concern of development planning in so-called underdeveloped nations of the world should therefore focus basically on the following:

- i. Provision of education
- ii. Provision of improved health facilities
- iii. Better nutritional facilities for the mass population
- iv. Reduction in unemployment and underemployment
- v. A rise in the standard of living
- vi. Provision of food in sufficient quantity and quality for the teeming population
- vii. Good housing and environmental sanitation
- viii. Equitable income distribution, and,
- ix. Provision of skilled manpower.

The basic mechanism for planning a lasting and sustainable development is increasing awareness leading to better organisation. Life evolves by consciousness and consciousness in turn progresses by organisation. When society senses new and better opportunities for progress, it accordingly develops new forms of organisation to exploit these new openings successfully. The new forms of organisation are better able to harness the available social energies and skills and resources to use the opportunities to get the intended results.

Planned development is governed by many factors that influence the results of developmental efforts. These may include the following:

- There must be a motive that drives the social change and essential preconditions for that change to occur.
- The motive must be powerful enough to overcome obstructions that impede that change from occurring.
- Development planning also needs resources such as capital and technology and the availability of supporting infrastructures.

Planned development is a conscious effort of a society's capacity to organise human energies and productive resources in order to meet the challenges and opportunities that life presents society with all the times. Society passes through well-defined stages in the course of its development. They are nomadic hunting and gathering, rural agrarian, urban, commercial, industrial and post-industrial societies. Pioneers introduce new ideas, practices and habits and so forth which are resisted in the beginning by the conservative elements in the society. At a later stage, the innovations are accepted, imitated, organised and made use of by other members of the community. The organisational improvements introduced to support the innovations can take place simultaneously at four different levels—physical, social, mental and psychological. Moreover, four different types of resources are involved in planning development. Of these four, physical resources are the most visible but the least capable of expansion. The productivity of resources increases enormously as the quality of organisation and level of knowledge inputs rise.

The pace and scope for development varies according to the stage that society is in during the developmental process. The three main stages are physical, vital (the term vital refers to the dynamic and nervous social energies of humanity that propel individuals to accomplish) and mental and all these three have their own unique characteristics.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, development planning requires a systematic method of conscious efforts put in place by planners and implementers to achieve an unbiased coverage that is devoid of the usual haphazard picture of development that is mostly common with underdeveloped (or better still, developing) countries, particularly, countries in the sub-Saharan region of Africa. When development is strategically planned, bearing in mind not only quantitative improvements but also qualitative advancement in terms of the general improvement in the standard of living of the mass of the people, the possibility of a sustainable development will not be far-fetched.

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