

## **Culture and Development: An Exposition of the Interconnectivity (A Review Article)**

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**Abstract:** For more than a century now, there have been debates on the link between culture and the level of development of a society. The major objective of this study is to establish a link between culture and development. Specifically, the study is aimed at identifying how the different components of culture can be harnessed to stimulate development in human societies. By way of research methodology, the writer made use of secondary sources of data which involves a review of works done by other researchers in this field. Thus text books, journals, institutional publications, and a host of related materials were consulted in the course of this research. The study discovered that culture and development are intertwined. The study also discovered that there is no aspect of the human ways of life that does not have its positive and negative sides. The onus however lies on the people to harness and maximize the positive aspects of these ways of life to bring about development. The writer concludes by recommending that culture in every human society, should be regenerative and should offer opportunities to be harnessed for the improvement in the standard of living of the people. A society where people are not proud of their culture finds it difficult to step into the wheels of sustainable growth and development.

**Key words:** Culture, development, normative culture capitalism, protestantism, technology

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The debate on the relationship between culture and development has been on for quite sometimes now as people have attributed the development or underdevelopment of societies to their culture. The debate is popularly believed to have been sparked off by the pronouncements of W.W. Rostow the then economic adviser to former US President John F. Kennedy. Rostow's idea was considered a version of the market-oriented approach termed 'modernization theory' which argues that low-income societies can develop economically only if they give up their traditional ways and adopt modern economic institutions, technologies and cultural values that emphasize savings and productive investments.

According to Rostow (1961), the traditional cultural values and social institutions of low-income countries impede their economic effectiveness. For example, many people in low-income countries, in Rostow's views, lack a strong work ethic; they would sooner consume today than invest for the future. Large families are also seen as partly responsible for 'economic backwardness', since a breadwinner with many mouths to feed can hardly be expected to save money for investment purposes. The culture of low-income countries tends to support 'fatalism'- a value system that views hardship and suffering as the unavoidable plight of life. In this view, a country's poverty is due largely to the cultural failings of

the people themselves. The modernization theory thus believes that third world countries are poor because their culture inhibits development. According to Giddens (2006), a number of theorists in the 1960s questioned this market-oriented explanations of inequality offered especially by the modernization theory. Many of these critics, mainly from Latin America and Africa relying heavily on Karl Marx's ideas, opposed completely the idea that their country's economic underdevelopment was due to their own cultural practices.

According Francis and Hezel (2009), "the success of national economies is driven by cultural factors more than any thing else. The thrift, hard work, tenacity, honesty and tolerance are cultural factors that make all the difference". They concluded by saying that, modern technology alone will never be able to turn around an economy and boost the standard of living among a population. The development of the mindset, with accompanying values and habits, is a big part of the equation. These arguments and counter arguments as well as current happenings with regard to development, have led to the heightening of the debate on the role of culture in development. This study therefore attempts to bring to limelight, the relationship that exists between culture and development and equally show how development can be brought about by harnessing the various aspects of a society's culture.

**Conceptual clarifications:** Both culture and development have become protean concepts, with elusive and

sometimes bewildering varieties of meanings. Kluckhohn and Kelly (1945), see culture as historically created designs for living which may be explicit or implicit, rational, irrational and non-rational and which exists at any given time as potential guide to human behaviour. Linton (1945) defines culture of a society as 'the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation'. A more comprehensive definition of culture is that given by an eminent English Anthropologist and Sociologist, Sir Edward b. Taylor. In his book, 'Primitive Culture', Taylor (1958), defines culture as: "That complex whole which includes knowledge belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

In contemporary sociology, 'culture is used in two senses. In the first, it is used as universal and uniquely human phenomenon which consists of patterns of thinking, believing, doing, behaving, making and using which all human beings learn in order to fit in as members of a human society. In the second sense, it is used to describe the life style that characterizes a particular society and which serves as a basis for the social organizational patterns that distinguish that society from the others.

A common practice in sociology is to view culture as made up of two large and interrelated configuration or components. These parts are the material culture and non-material culture. Material culture has to do with the physical or material objects and things made or used in their natural state by men. The inventory of these material or physical traits of culture are numerous and they include those things that have physical existence which we can touch, feel and see. Examples include buildings (structures), cars, motors, machines, shoes, ear-rings, dresses, etc. Non-material culture refers those aspects of culture which have no physical existence. The non-material culture relates to the rules regulating appropriate behaviour and guiding the appropriate use of the material culture especially in certain kinds of interpersonal relationship. Examples are the rules, appropriate behaviour, attitude, values, beliefs, law, customs, habits, ideals, ways of doing thing etc.

The concept development has many definitions; according to one view, development is a process of economic growth, a rapid and sustained expansion of production, productivity and income per head (sometimes qualified by insistence on a wide spread of the benefits of this growth). Another view sees development as a process that enhances the effective freedom of the people involved to pursue whatever they have reason to value (Giddens, 2006). For McGee (1989), development is 'a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increase, skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-

being. According Cotgrove (1978), development is a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. This involves, in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structure as well as in popular attitude, customs and beliefs. Dudley Seers in his contribution to the meaning of development argued that "the question to ask about a country's development are therefore; what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned" (Ujo, 2004).

## METHODOLOGY

**Data collection and analysis:** This research was carried out in Nigeria in the year 2010. The researchers dwelt mainly on the secondary sources of data for this work. Thus in drawing up conclusion for this work, the researchers consulted extensively and made use of literature from research reports, text books, government documents, institutional publications and a host of journals. Consequently, the researchers adopted the content method of data analysis to analyze the information gathered through the earlier mentioned secondary sources of data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Culture and development:** Culture is an ingredient in the development of any society. It can enhance or deter development. The ability of any society to keep abreast with innovation and change depends on how open and adaptive the culture is. Most nations have been able to develop because their culture is dynamic and receptive rather than antagonistic and resistant to change.

There are some domestic and traditional technologies which are unique and which should not be allowed to dislocate because of acculturation. For example, there are simple technologies in the realm of manufacture, craft and arts which when harnessed could develop into sophisticated military might and power. The Japanese technology is an example. Crafts, artifacts and iron smelting rely heavily on simple technologies. They should be appreciated, developed and applied in manufacturing outfits. Americans have been able to integrate the ingenuity in their traditional culture and education into modern manufacturing industry and military know how. The outcome is the diversification of their export of finished goods, services and coercive power resources which they use in international politics.

The technological component of culture is a veritable instrument as far as development is concerned. This

aspect of culture has been harnessed and integrated in machine designs, agriculture, commerce and industry, manufacturing and health care. Scientific discoveries and applications have improved life expectancy and standard of living thereby improving the poverty level of most countries. Products from the crafts and arts exhibitions have been sources of foreign exchange earning to some countries as well as opening avenues for bilateral trade and relations. For example, most of the Ife and Benin works of arts are found all over the world and especially in British museum and have been a great source of tourist attraction and revenue.

The ideological component of culture involves belief, values and ideas which are aspects of the culture ethos. The cognitive culture especially can be properly abstracted and applied in the areas of development. Granted that the ideological component makes particular cultures unique and remains a perspective for viewing other cultures, there are some cultural practices and attitudinal dispositions which can be explored and integrated in the process of development. These dispositions include hard work, ingenuity, initiative, creativity, frugality, concerned efforts, tolerance and patriotism. Nigeria aborted 'Opinion A - 4' is a cultural ideological component abstracted from our traditional political institution. This should have been properly developed and exported to the whole world as part of our contribution to the development of world politics.

The organizational ingredient of culture involves integrative approach, organizational acumen and abilities of a people in the areas of coordination and cooperation. These help to make life what it is- unique. A society without peace and harmony cannot grow and develop. A country where patriotism and identification (fellowship) are exchanged for brigandage, sabotage, subterfuge, fraud, embezzlement, terrorism and the like will always wallow in abject poverty, disarray and political darkness. These are vices that do not allow creativity, hard-work and development to nurture. Political stability rather than political instability should be an integral part of a nation's political culture as this attracts foreign investment and industrial development.

Language is an effective symbol in culture and men's ability in symbolizing should be accorded a significant place in development. Language diversity, though a dislocating factor can be positively explored. The educational system and programmes operating in society should reflect the felt needs and development-oriented culture of the people. The idea of admixture of cultures for the sake of emulation and civilization should be jettisoned.

The normative culture serves as a control mechanism. It stipulates what ought to be the pattern of life and behaviour in the society. It is more effective than the formal control system especially if the cultural elements are properly internalized through effective socialization. It therefore checks crime and deviance.

Art industry helps to improve the individual skills, talents and creativity. The various images of art work, weaving, carving and decorations and designs are examples. Nature offers opportunity for increased exploitation and use of natural environment to the advantage of man. The skills involved in the mining or natural resources like petroleum, iron ore, coal etc., and weather reading are examples (Onwuejeogwu, 1975). Through the use of wide range of ideas, culture is therefore, regarded as an agent of civilization. This is epitomized in the areas of sophisticated art works, architecture, aesthetic, mathematics and metallurgy.

The interconnectivity between culture and development can also be established when we take a look at the emergence of modern day capitalism. In fact, ample evidence exist that points to the fact that western capitalism evolved or developed as a result of the cultural ethos which Protestantism encouraged. This is evident in the works of Max Webber. For Webber (1904/1958), Protestantism and modern capitalism appeared on the historical scene at about the same time. He went further to argue that, firstly, capitalism attained its highest development in protestant countries compared with catholic regions. Secondly, in countries with both Protestants and Catholics like Germany, it seemed to be the protestant regions that pioneered in capitalist development. Lastly, he came up with evidence that it was Protestants and not Catholics who were early entrepreneurs. Based on these, he concluded that the protestant ethics, particularly as it is embodied in Calvinist doctrine instilled an attitude which seeks profit rationally and systematically. It can therefore be argued that the culture of hard work, sobriety, thrift, restraints, avoidance of fleshy pleasures, and deferred gratification which the Calvinists preached to a large extent though debunked by other scholars, accounts for the rise and development of capitalism (Hughes *et al.*, 1999).

In discussing culture and development, a distinction is made between positive or progressive culture and negative or regressive culture. Positive or progressive culture is one that is exploited for human and national development. Examples of such cultures include those in Japan and South Korea which have contributed to national development in the areas of manufacturing, industry and politics. Also we have the African form of architecture and designs. Progressive culture is dynamic and stands the test and challenges of different epochs. It is sustainable over time. There should be no inhibition in the interplay that occurs between culture, science and technology, otherwise it would be regarded as retrogressive. It should have the capacity of utility and acceptability to a larger world community. Negative or regressive culture is the one that offers no contribution to nation building. The culture of indiscipline, fraudulence, wasteful spending and the likes; killing of twins; and certain social stratification systems in particular societies are examples.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

We can sum up by saying that culture plays a major role in the political, economic, social religious and educational development of nation. In other words, there can be growth and development in any given human society if the culture in existence is not supportive of such. Whereas any induced development program should not undermine the culture of the people, the way of life of the people should not hinder or stagnate development. The people are the actors and beneficiaries of development efforts. A dynamic culture therefore, should be able to accommodate change rather than stagnate predictive processes

Culture should be able to regenerate itself and should offer opportunities to be harnessed for the improvement of standard of living of the people. Culture forms the indices for measuring national development. A country where the citizens are xenophobic; are unable to decolonize themselves; and are not proud of what they are and have, finds it difficult to step into the wheels of sustainable growth and development.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We wish to sincerely thank all the authors and writers whose works are cited in this paper. Without your rich pool of knowledge and findings which we borrowed from, this work would not have been possible. For all those not mentioned, we are grateful. October 13, 2010

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