# Issues in Development and Underdevelopment: A Theoretical Discourse and Paradigm

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Abstract: This study attempted to asses various issues and challenges in conceptualizing development and underdevelopment. The two concepts for long were subjected to a lot of profound emotionalism and accumulated bias. Our attempt is to fill the gap by presenting and providing an explicit and dialectic clarification between the concepts. To be able to provide holistic clarification between the concepts, we define and describe development and underdevelopment within the socio-economic context of the society. A conclusion was drawn that development and underdevelopment are probably not the concepts to be defined and measured using only the indices of western countries. They are not binary phenomenon but a fusion of variables that need deep epistemological explication. It was recommended that, there is the need for further research on the concepts in line with the dynamic of socio-cultural complexities of an evolving society.

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the basic issues in development and underdevelopment. The field of development and underdevelopment is so vast that it cannot possibly be discussed in detail in a single chapter. Classical writing on development and underdevelopment have not been able to grapple with the whole essence of the concepts either; the writing of *André Gunder, Amin, Weber*, and *Marx* on development and underdevelopment have been argued to be extraneous to contemporary experience in most societies. Underlying our theoretical conception is the understanding of why some society are where the way they are and the role of class relation as evidently explained by sociological school. Although studies have carried out around issues of development and underdevelopment, most of the conclusions from these studies are too general, while specific salient issues are noticeably buried or tucked away in omnibus documentations and researches. In addition, the studies are either national or regional and where specific case studies are carried out, they are restricted to subjective colonial and class struggle, thereby losing their expected scientific objectivity

However, some of the basic issues in development and underdevelopment are briefly examined in this section. The discourse starts with the conceptualization or conceptual definition of development and underdevelopment. Different views of scholars across the globe were critically reviewed and analyzed; areas of their divergence and convergence were reviewed and integrated inside the work. The work proceeded to look at the theories of development and theories of underdevelopment within the context they were used. It discusses the principle that they were used. The work also looks at the feature of societies that are developed and those that are still developing.

#### 2. Concept of Development

All available evidence as shown in the literature on development portends the concept as nebulous, hence it has different meanings in different contexts and sometimes even in the same context. Consequently, several schools of thought, models, paradigms and theories have emerged to explain the concept (Nnadozie, 1986).

The western liberal scholars see development as a total transformation of a traditional or a primordial society into the type of technologies and associated social organization that characterize advanced economically prosperous and political stable nations of the Western world (Todaro and Smith, 2003). The above definition implies that there is one average or normal path to development which countries have followed in the past and which they are obliged to in the future [Stevenson, 2010]

The scholars of Marxist philosophical persuasion, found the above conception of development grossly deficient, because it has not led to real development, instead, it enhanced the progressive underdevelopment of most third world states (Bello, 2013). Thus, they see development as socio- economic transformation which man engenders as he, jointly with his fellows, interacts with the natural environment through labour power. In a similar vein, Okoli and Onah (2002) define the concept as a human issue which should involve the total full mobilization of a society. Espousing a similar view, Nnoli (2003) conceived development as a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter human environment, transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. It can be construed

from the above mentioned definitions, that development implies the capacity to secure and sustain a better life to humankind in the society. The effort to elevate human life and comfort from a given level considered unsatisfactory to a better and perhaps more comfortable level.

Apparently piqued by this lack of an all-embracing definition of development, Seers (1972:47) poses three (3) basic questions, about the meaning of development when he asserts:

The question to ask about a country's development is 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. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income has soared.

But the phenomenon of development or the existence of a chronic state of underdevelopment according to Todaro and Smith (2003) is not only a question of economics or even quantitative measurement of incomes, employment, and inequality. It is a real fact of life for over three (3) billion people in the world. To them development must therefore be conceptualized as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. Most importantly, development must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system turned to the diverse basic needs and desires or individuals and social groups within that system, move away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and towards a condition or situation of life regarded as materially and spiritually better.

Guolet (1990) defined development as the enjoyment of good things of life. He mentioned three basic values that should necessarily serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for understanding the inner meaning of development. These according to him are life sustenance (food, shelter, health, and protection), self-esteem (sense of worth and self-respect of not being used as a tool by others for their own understanding, dignity, respect and recognition) and freedom from alienation of material condition of life and from social solitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs.

Rodney (1972) sees development as a many sided process. He stressed further that at the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being, and at the level of the social group, it implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Development therefore to Rodney is when members of a society jointly increase their capacity for dealing with their environment.

What is discernable from the above definitions is that development is man-centered and can be seen as a multi-dimensional process involving the fundamental transformation of society in its totality (economy, polity, culture, etc.). In other words, development implies growing self-reliance, both individually and collectively. The basis for a nation's development must be its own resources, both human and material fully used to meet its own needs.

# 3. The Concept of Underdevelopment

It is not easy to define in few words what underdevelopment entails. The term has suffered from a lot of misconceptions and has been viewed in different places in different perspectives. This assertion flows with the perception of Ibrahim (2003) who advocated:

The term development cannot be restricted to only one or two variables. Their characteristics are apparent and dynamic. Most countries of the third world prefer to use the word developing rather than underdeveloped. The use of the word developing by these countries show some degree of optimism and rest that they will one day become economically developed in the near future.

The list of the underdeveloped countries according to Galbraith (2010) runs the alphabetical gamut from Afghanistan, Brazil, China, to Zanziber. Goldhosp (2010) indicates that non-industrial countries were first called underdeveloped in a famous report to the United Nations in 1951, and then when the word came to be thought of as pejorative, they were called developing, an instance Myrdal (1980) called diplomacy by terminology. Mount-joy (2010) also points out that a succession of descriptive name

has been applied to these countries, the third world (the west and the former east being the first and second respective less developed countries, the south (because they occur in the southern hemisphere)

Shehu (2010) defined underdevelopment as those societies that are considered to be economically poor, low in industrial production, low in level of technological development, low purchasing power, political instability, economic crisis, poverty, disease, squalors, low per- capita income, short life span and predominantly agrarian economy. The definition tandem with the view of Goulet (1971:37) who also subscribed that:

As a real fact of life for over two billion people of the world. It is a state of mind as much as a state of national poverty. It is shocking, the squalor, diseases, unnecessary death, and hopelessness of it all. No man understands if underdevelopment remains for him a statistic reflecting or underdevelopment- a culture of poverty

He went further to say that the prevalent emotion of underdevelopment is a sense of disease and death, confusion and ignorance, as one group understand change of servility toward men whose decision in government causes hopelessness before hunger and natural epidemic of chronic poverty, a cruel kind of hell. The two (2) definitions of the concept of underdevelopment above seem to equate the term to state of abjection, despondence and inadequacy of material thing of life. The definitions ignore the social element and other desirability of mankind such as mindset, peace, good inter-human relations, group hegemony and harmony, group cohesion and a lot of others. The definitions gave adequate premium to poverty at the expenses of other factors.

#### Griffin as cited in Stephenson (2010) writes that:

Underdeveloped countries as we observed them today are a product of historical forces and power, especially those released by European expansion, imperial world and the world dependency, manipulation, exploitation, misdirection and domination. Europe did not discover the underdeveloped countries and societies; on the contrary, she created them and pupated them to her taste.

This definition associates underdevelopment and undeveloped nation to countries that have for some time been dominated economically as well as politically by external centres of power and hence function as their satellites. Their perception argued that the varying degree of development among various third world countries can be well explained in terms of their circumstance incorporated into the world wide-political and economic global system. The global system is characterised by unequal but simulates development of its component national units.

Amin (1990) in a different angle viewed underdevelopment to the transition of pre-capitalist formation integrated into the world system - a trade relation intended to meet the interest of the capitalist economies in the west: thus draining the peripheral countries of their resources and a situation he termed as unequal exchange. The definition above ignored instances of successful capitalist development in the third world as fixated on external relationship to the total exclusion of internal relations of product .It is simplistic and has a lower epistemological view in its perception. The definition failed to emphasize the interplay of internal and external variables in the perpetuation of underdevelopment.

#### 4. Theories of Development

#### a. Rostow's Stage of Growth

This is one of the influential and outspoken theories of development. It was developed by as American economic historian-*Walt W. Rostow.* In his word, the transition from underdevelopment to stage of development can be described in stages which all countries must underwent before they developed. In his work stage of economic growth, he enthused:

This book presents and economic historian's way of generalizing the sweep of modern history. It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within the one of the five categories: The traditional society, the precondition for take-off into self-sustaining growth, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. These stages are not merely a way of generalizing certain factual observation about it sequence of development of modern society. They have an inner logic and continuity.

He further argued that all advanced countries have all passed the stage of take-off into self-sustaining growth and the underdeveloped that were still in either the traditional society or the precondition stage must follow a set of rules of development to take-off in their turn into self-sustaining economic growth and the principal strategies are through mobilization of domestic and foreign savings to boost investment.

## b. Harold – Domar Growth Model

According to this model, every economy must save certain proportion of its natural income to replace worn out or impaired capital goods such as building, equipment, and materials. He further stated that new investment which is representing net additions to the capital stock is necessary. The model sees relative low level of new capital formation in most poor countries as one of the major setbacks of development.

#### c. Structural Change Model

This is also one of the models used to describe the development of a society. It focuses on the mechanism by which underdeveloped economies use to transform their domestic economic structure from a heavy emphasis on traditional subsistence agriculture to a more modern, more urbanized, and more industrially diverse manufacturing and service economy. The model employs the tools of neoclassical price and resources allocation theory and that of modern econometrics to describe societal transformation take place. Prominent work in the structural change model are the two sector surplus labour theoretical model of W. Arthur Lewis and the patterns of development analysis of *Hollis B. Chenery* and his co-authors.

#### d. The Lewis Theory of Development

This is one of the well known theoretical models of development that centered on structural transformation of a primarily subsistence economy. It was propounded by Noble Laureate *W. Arthur Lewis* in the mid – 1950(s) and later modified by John Fei and Gustav Ranis. In the Lewis model, the underdeveloped economy consists of two sectors: a traditional, overpopulated rural subsistence sector characterized by zero marginal labour productivity which Lewis classify as surplus labour in the sense that it can be withdrawn from traditional agricultural sector without any loss of output and a high productivity modern urban industrial sector into which labour from the subsistence sector are transferred. The nitty-gritty of the theory is labour transfer, growth of output and employment in the modern sector.

#### (e) The International – Dependence Revolution

This theory gained support in the 1970s as a result of the dissatisfaction associated with the structural models. It equally went out of favour in the 1980s and 1990s. Some versions of it have enjoyed resurgence in the early years of the twenty-first century. This is because some of its views adopted in modified form by theories and leaders of anti-globalization movement.

The model view developing countries as weigh down by institutional, political and economic rigidities and are caught up in dependence and dominance relationship with rich countries. Three stream of though flows in this theory. These are:

- a. **Neocolonial Dependence model** which is an indirect offshoot of Marxism. It attributes the existence and continuation of development of historical evolution of a highly unequal relationship between rich and poor countries. He sees rich nations as exploitative and neglectful.
- b. **The false-paradigm model** is the second less radical international dependence approach to development. This model attributes underdevelopment to faulty and inappropriate advice that is provided by well-meaning but often uninformed biased and ethnocentric international expert advises from developed countries, assistance agencies and multinational donor organizations.
- c. **The dualistic development thesis** is a used to describe the existence and persistence of substantial and even increasing divergence between rich and poor nations and as well between rich and poor people on various levels. The thesis embraces four themes which are: the coexistence between superior and those seen as inferior, non-traditional and temporal relations widen gab between they have and they have not and the false relationship between the superior and inferior nations.

(f) **Public-choice theory**: This is also known as the new political economy approach. The theory argued that government in any society can do nothing right. It assumes that politicians, bureaucrats, citizen and states act solely from self-interest perspective, using their powers and authority of government for their own selfish ends. The citizens use political influence to obtain special favour called rent from government policies. Politicians use government resources to consolidate and maintain positions of power and authority. The Bureaucrats and public officials use their positions to extract bribes from rent seeking citizens. The state uses their power to confiscate private resources. Minimal government is seen as the best government.

### 5. Theories of Underdevelopment

1 **Climatic development theory**: This theory was first developed by *Ibn Kaldun* in 1967 and was later expanded by other prominent theories such as: *Smith, Young* and Adamu Usman. The theory stressed that there are certain climate that do not encourage the growth of development. The factors which most scholars often used as medium to substantiate their points are existence of cold, desert, earthquake and a lot of others. Examples are mostly cited with countries in Western Europe (Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, etc.), Asia (Bangladesh, Armenia, Bahrain, etc.) and Sub-Saharan Africa (Niger, Mauritania, Chad, etc) and Island countries. Others argue that the very hot climate experienced in the tropics did not also encourage development. Critics argue that such a theory must not be taken seriously. It lacks adequate scientific explanation.

#### 2. Sociological Theories

One variant of the sociological school of thought argues that economic growth and development largely depend on certain characteristics of the people. It argues that negative qualities of a people such as lack of inventiveness, lack of dynamism, irrationality, low achievement motivation, high rate of absenteeism, laziness, negative attitude to work, failure of high earnings to elicit more work, lead to underdevelopment.

Others link development with certain cultural traits of a people such as fatalism, a high regard for custom, rituals, lack of rationality and limited wants. Such negative traits inhibit development

Another variant of this school which looks at development in terms of the quality of the people ascribes development wholly to inventiveness or technological dynamism of the people.

#### **3.** Puritanical Ethic Schools of Thought

Weber is the protagonist of this theory. He argued that puritanical ethic was the man driving force behind the industrial revolution in Europe since it strengthened the incentive to work and save. The puritanical doctrine placed emphasis on thriftiness, frugality, self-discipline, and abstinence, motivated saving. In addition, the twin doctrines of predestination and the calling acted as incentives to hard work. Predestination teaches that some were destined to be the elect of God while others were doomed to eternal damnation. 'The calling' meant that success in one's vocation was a sign of belonging to the chosen ones of God. To achieve success therefore and thereby belong to the elect, people were motivated to work hard. Weber argues that the teachings of puritanical Calvinism, helped to influence the conduct of the people which is the bedrock of western capitalism. The greater contribution of puritans to the industrial revolution and the greater economic progress made by predominantly Protestant countries in Europe tend to lend weight so his argument.

#### 4. Colonial Background Theory

Those who belong to the 'dependency school of thought' (or 'the conflict theorists') base their explanation of economic development on historical development in relation to colonialism. An important feature which is common to underdeveloped countries is that they were colonized at one time or the other. There are a number of factors inherent in colonization which tends to inhibit economic growth and development. By its very nature, colonialism is conservative, and seeks to perpetuate the status quo (in terms of seeking to continue to dominate). To perpetuate the status quo, colonial powers usually employ the system of divide and rule. This weakens the emergence of a common identity which is essential for the economic transformation of society. The colonial rulers simply siphon the natural resources of their colonies without attempting to develop these countries. Any evidence of development such as building railways, installing telecommunications, initiating mining activities were confined to a Few localities, largely controlled by the colonial rulers and modem production was based on the desires of foreign nationals. Educations provided by the Christian Missionaries were based on the humanities and were sometimes anti-scientific.

The conservative nature of colonialism is in conflict with the tenets of the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution is revolutionary and involves far-reaching changes in technology, social relations, and the political framework of society. It also leads to economic transformation of society. There 'was therefore little development in these countries because of the reactionary nature of colonialism.

#### 5. Hen and Grain Theory

The Hen and Grain theory was propounded in 2010 by Stevenson. The theory asserted that in every relationship, there must be one interest or the other and the interest has a magnetic effect which can lure and draw the attention of the other party mostly the weaker one. It cited instances of a person who give grain to a hen and how he uses the grain to induce the hen.

There is a relationship between the owner of the grain and the hen. The owner of the grain uses the grain to puppet the hen and the hen only comes because it its enticed by the grain.

The relationship is not synergetic and mutually beneficial, rather it uses the symbiotic channel to entice and induce attention. The theory also pointed that the major and focal point of the relationship is the manipulative element which its intent is to dictate, direct and remotely controlled the weaker party.

The Tenets of the theory are:

- (a) All relationship contain one interest or the other
- (b) Symbiotic colour is a cover up to gain public applauds
- (c) The relationship has exploitative and manipulative orientation
- (d) When the interest of the major actor is satisfied, the relationship end.
- (e) Interest is not mutually beneficial but self –centre and personal.
- (f) Master- servant bond is the medium of Communication.

The theory is applicable to the study in the sense that the owner of the grain symbolizes the western power (Donor Nations) who often comes to the aid of the weaker and developing nations. The developing nations signify the hen which is often used as a puppet. The grain is seen as the foreign aid which is usually given to gain public acclaims and recognition but in the real sense, it is an inducer and enticer which encourage the exploitation and manipulation.

There are other numerous theories which are also used to explain the causes of under development in most societies. Common examples are: Dog and meat theory, the Hen and the basket theory, Meat and broth, Instrumentalism Rigidity theory and a lot of others

## 6. Features of an Underdeveloped Economy

An underdeveloped economy has the following features:

- i. **There is a low income per capita**: The low level income per head of the population is due to the generally low level of productivity which results in low national income or low Gross Domestic Product. Then the total Gross Domestic Product is spread among the population, the share of each person is small. A low level of income per capita leads to low standard of living
- ii. **There is a lows level of technology**: Much production is done by using primitive methods: the use of modern methods of production is not widespread. The extent of industrialization is still limited. In agriculture, the use of modern implements such as tractors and harvesters is limited. Traditional tools such as hand hoes, cutlasses and digging sticks are widely used.
- iii. There is a high level of illiteracy: In many developing countries a large percentage of the population cannot read and write. The illiteracy rate has been put at over 80% in some countries. The high level of illiteracy is partly due to widespread poverty. Many parents cannot afford the cost of education for their children or themselves. The low level of literacy results in an abundance of unskilled labour and relative scarcity of skilled manpower.
- iv. **There is a low level of productivity of labour in agriculture and industry:** The low level of productivity results from the low level of technology, the low level of investment, the shortage of skilled manpower etc. Much production is for subsistence. Low productivity (especially in agriculture) leads to widespread hunger and low living standards.
- v. **Primary forms of production contribute a greater percentage of the Gross Domestic Product**: Primary forms of production such as agriculture crop farming, fishing; forestry, hunting, livestock farming and mining are the dominant economic activities. Secondary forms of production, especially manufacturing, contribute a little share to the Gross Domestic Product.
- vi. **There is a high degree of under-empowerment**. In underdeveloped countries, many factors of production are either idle or not fully engaged in production. The available job opportunities are highly insufficient for all those who wish to work. So many people are left unemployed. Also, capital such as machinery and equipment is not used to full capacity.
- vii. **There is an inequitable distribution of income**: In other words, there is great disparity in income levels among the population. There are a few people who are very rich while the masses are poor. In addition, there is greater poverty in the rural areas than in the urban centres.
- viii. **The rate of capital formation is slow**: Capital formation is negligible because of the existence of the vicious circle of poverty. Low income leads to low saving, and consequently to a small amount of funds being available for investment purposes. In addition, many of those who are rich are not enterprising. Others who have the business acumen may have no capital to invest.
- ix. There is a poorly developed infrastructure: Basic facilities such as electricity, transportation, communication, water supply and education, which are essential for an industrial take-off, are poorly developed. Industrial development is therefore handicapped.
- x. **There is low saving**: The majority of the population spends a large proportion of their income on food and other essentials of life instead of investing it. This is partly due to the fact that the income of many people is low; little is left for saving after their basic requirements have been met. In addition, There is a great propensity to consume, resulting in low savings for investment.
- xi. **There are high birth and high death rates**. In many developing countries the annual birth rate is high. In some cases it is well over 30%. The death rate is also high due to disease and malnutrition.

# 7. CONCLUSION

The study vividly explores the concept of development and underdevelopment. Different views of various scholars were reviewed and integrated inside the work. The theories of both development and underdevelopment were also assed. The work revealed that one theory cannot fully explain the reasons for the development and underdevelopment of a particular country. The extent to which a country is developed can be explained by a number of factors. However, the strength of each factor in explaining the lack of

development differs from country to country. A number of factors account for slow pace of development and some includes inadequate capital base, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of skill and technology and many more. There are number of things the government can do such as: sound economic planning, provisioning of socio-economic infrastructure, diversification of the economy and many more to accelerate development in the underdeveloped societies

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