

## **A CRITIQUE OF THE MODERNIZATION THEORY TO DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Development tends to be a space of discourse and activity that embraces several distinct and interrelated conceptualization and understanding of change. Millions of people around the world are witnessing a revolutionary transformation of their day to day life. Contemporary sociologists use the term modernization to describe the process by which peripheral nations move from traditional or less developed institutions to those characteristics of more developed societies. The writers seeks to discuss the modernization theory to development.

### **Introduction**

Potter (2002:61) refer development theories to the sets of ostensibly logical propositions, which aim to explain how development has occurred in the past and or how it should occur in the future. Development is simply defined as good change. Rodney (1983:1), connotes that development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Schaefer (1994) defines modernization as the far-reaching process by which peripheral nations move from traditional or less developed institutions to those characteristics of more developed characteristics. Mouton (2001:27) avers that modernization theory refers to the transformation which takes place when a traditional or pre-modern society changes to such an extent that new forms of technological organizational or social characteristics of advanced society appears. Modernization does not take a holistic approach to development as it leaves the cultural developments especially the traditional values.

### **Modernization Theory**

The modernization theory is an economic theory that is rooted in capitalism. "The concept of modernization incorporates the full spectrum of the transition and drastic transformation that a traditional society has to undergo in order to become modern." (Hussain et al: 1981) The modernization theory became dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, pointing out differences between the developed or the rich nations and the less developed or the poor nations of the

world. It encompassing many different disciplines as it seeks to explain how societies can react to that progress. Mouton (2001) points out that the theory was an attempt to provide a theoretical framework to describe the road that newly decolonized countries of the 1960s lead to take in order to reach their development destination. There are several factors which pose a threat to capitalism and this led to the development of modernization theory. These factors include the Post World War II's deepening poverty in some countries, ideological competition from communism and the increasing unrest in some countries. Modernisation theorists aimed to explain why poorer countries failed to evolve into modern societies and to reduce the spread of communism by presenting capitalist values as the solution to poverty. According to the modernization theory, internal factors in the countries, such as illiteracy, traditional agrarian structure, lack of communication and infrastructure are responsible for underdevelopment. The underdeveloped countries were characterized as being 'traditional' or having 'primitive' values, comprising of an orientation to the past, strong kin relationships and superstition.

### **World of globalization**

Modernisation theory encompasses the world of globalization where cultural ideas are easily spread throughout the world leading to a sort of universal culture that serves as a baseline for all activities. In this case, modernization of a person needs to provide motivation, to along with the changing social and economic situation. It is about abandonment of an individual's cultural values in favour of that of former colonizers. The development of Africa should come after deculturisation of the African people. Modernisation of culture entails a change in the broader values, norms and attitudes of the larger contexts within which people in Africa find themselves. It was said that cultural factors block development or traditional values block a country from developing. According to modernity, policies intended to raise the standard of living of the poor often consist of disseminating knowledge and information about more efficient techniques of production. "For instance the agriculture modernization process involves encouraging farmers to try new crops, new production methods and new marketing skills." (Ellis and Biggs, 2001) Targeted people were trained on how development would go so that they would also train others.

Modernisation theorists believed that modernization is an evolutionary change and it requires a company to pass through some stages for it to develop. The stages were developed by one of the people who influenced the modernization theory, Rostow and the stages were called, 'Rostow's evolutionary ladder of development. America imposed these stages to Africa but they themselves never followed these stages. The modernizations also believed in the Trickle Down where Western Investment in factories, expertise and equipment. It involves the use of loans from World Bank. If the problem facing the Third world countries resides in their lack of productive investments, then the solution lies in the provision of aid to these countries in

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the form of capital, technology and expertise. For example the Marshall Aid Plan of the Post World War II.

### **Shortcomings of modernization**

Modernisation theory is criticized for failing to consider the poor as the centerpiece in poverty reduction initiatives. By ignoring the involvement and participation of the target community, modernity achieves the marginalization of their commitment, creativity and support of the intervention strategies. The intervention strategy becomes an imposed strategy and such a strategy fails to construct adequate notions or both the causal power structures and the role of human agency in shaping social relations in general. The premise encourages the foreign powers to prescribe the route to Africa's development. For instance in the 1980s Africa was a victim of the failed International Monetary Fund – imposed economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP). Matunhu (2011) opines that ESAP Project failed because it was developed with a total disregard of the cultural social, political and traditional values of the recipient countries. Broadly expressed, the ESAP was a Eurocentric experiment which failed to pull the continent out of poverty and underdevelopment.

#### **4.1 Westernisation**

Modernisation theory is ethnocentric because it devalues traditional values and social institutions and it is not a neutral theory as it suggests or promotes Western capitalist values. It is actually a way of making the African countries and the developing countries follow the western way of life. Modernisation in this case is actually westernisation. It also ignores the increasing inequality within and between countries. "Many sociologists are quick to note that terms such as modernization and even development contain an ethnocentric bias. The unstated assumptions behind these terms are that 'they' (people living in developed countries) are struggling to become like 'us' (in the industrialized nations). Viewed from a conflict perspective, these terms perpetuate the dominant ideology of capitalist societies." (Schaefer, 1994).

#### **4.2 Colonialism**

Modernisation also impoverished Africa through colonialism and imperialism by the West and this trend is with us today as the East takes its turn to deplete the continent's resources such as oil and mineral. It was due to the concept of modernization that Africa was actually regarded as the Dark Continent and has to be colonised. This according to Rodney (1983) is how Europe underdeveloped Africa as the colonisation was to benefit Europe. For example, the railway lines that were put were not for the African people's easy mobility but to transport the African resources to Europe. The language that was being taught which is English was to benefit and

is still to benefit the Western countries for their spread of ideologies and for easy trade of which they get the African raw materials and resale these to Africa as finished products at very high prices. Coetzee et al (2007) alludes that out that the African needs to outgrow poverty and underdevelopment but this may not be possible as long as we still believe in the power and strength of modernity at the expense of promoting new theories for Africa's development. Fighting Africa's poverty involves much more than a simple displacement of traditional society by the modern society. The traditional society can be actually be developed in its own right as according to Rodney (1998) development also entails freedom. There is great indigenous knowledge in Africa of which if properly applied and utilised would yield great economy to Africa. Another criticism for the modernization theory is that the theory proposed that modernization and development will gradually improve the lives of people in developing nations through the innovations transferred from the industrialized world. Schaefer (1994) concur that any such technology transfer only increases the dominance of core nations over developing companies and facilitates further exploitation.

### **4.3 Mordenisation and Aid**

Furthermore modernization theory is associated with development aid from the developed countries. It places value on externally sources aid without attending to the inhibiting conditionalities attached to such aid. The failure of the theory to attend to such conditionality may demonstrate a hidden hand behind the metropolitan state's application of the theory to Africa. The strings attached to the aid have tended to benefit the metropolitan states more than the recipient countries which show that the modernization theory is an enemy to Africa.

Education in developing world mainly benefited small or local elites because those who were trained did not train others and this lead to skewed development. The education system introduced do not made people in the developing countries self-reliant but further see k employment from an organisation and even to the Western countries thereby benefiting from the developing countries' knowledge. Other areas remain undeveloped and also some areas were left underdeveloped because natural resources were looted from those areas. Education of the men also led to housewifisation that is women were now considered as housewives and were restricted to be home. Modernisation was guided by the bread winner concept and trained men so that they will train their wives but it did not happen.

Lastly, modernization theory is economic centered since it emphasised massive development of infrastructure and it also ignores the aspect of sustainable development. It emphasise development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It only benefits those at present.

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#### 4.4 The positive side of modernization

However, the modernisation theory also brought about good change to Africa. For example modernization led to the introduction of hybrids, the greenhouse technology, insecticides, tractors and the application of other scientific knowledge to replace traditional agricultural practices. There is now easy transportation of goods and people from different distances from the massive infrastructure brought about by modernization. The introduction of the internet brought about a virtual which benefited the world in doing away with physical boundaries and has enabled e-business. Kotler (2005) reiterates that the internet creates new winners and barriers the laggards. The new Information and Communication technologies have made life much easier as people can do business all over their world without necessarily have to travel there. However, it has come with its challenges for example further spread the western way of living.

#### Conclusion

The modernisation theory of development to a great extent brought much more harm to developing countries than good. It has spread the western way of living which include western culture and language. It has disputed the traditional way of living of which some of it were to benefit of development countries. However, it also brought a bit of advantageous aspects which include easy of communication and transportation.

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