



CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE: KEY TO AFRICA'S

DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a prologue to the issue of development in Africa and the critical need to build capacity through investment in people. The paper reviews relevant literature on the seminal issues of defining human development, promoting human development in Africa, new development deal for Africa and investment in human capital as key to Africa's development. In addition, the paper provides a brief overview of the articles focusing on capacity building in Africa. Literature pertinent to the topic of development in Africa is provided. Understanding the meaning of development and human development in particular is not only a necessary but a sufficient condition to designing strategies and policies aimed at promoting human development in Africa. As

established in this paper, knowledge, entrepreneurship and the mastery of information and communication

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technologies in this century should become Africa's best competitive advantage. This paper introduces this special issue on capacity building for Africa's development. It reviews the literature on the meaning of development and human development, promoting development in Africa,

new development deal for Africa and investment in human capital as key to African development. Instead of people in Africa being consumers of knowledge they should strive to produce knowledge based on their indigenous, cultural, political and socio-economic perspectives. To do this, African governments must be willing and able to invest in quality education.

Introduction

In Africa today, there is an urgent need for the educators to re-affirm the enduring value of education as a powerful foundation for life, career, citizenship and human development. It is not an exaggeration to argue that individual, families, communities, all African countries and indeed the world needs education Nafukho (2015). While there are several benefits of investing in education, it is a truism that education (science, arts, humanities, business) enables us to approach problems through multiple ways of learning and knowing; to think deeply, critically, and creatively; to listen openly and reflectively, and engage in dialogue; to learn from others and to appreciate differences among people who think and look different from us utilizing emotional intelligent skills (Muyia and Kacirek, 2009). Thus, building capacity through investment in education holds the key for Africa’s development. But, we must first address the issue of meaning of development. Nafukho (2003) observed that in the contemporary African society, the meanings and views of the concept of development have been difficult to define. “The bone of contention in the views and meanings of the concept is seen in the agency, objective, objects, and means of development” (Wambugu, 2002).

Capacity building and human resource development (HRD) have emerged as relatively distinct areas of theory and practice associated with the development of people, organizations, and economies. While the term HRD has been used in a wide variety of international, national and local contexts, the term capacity building has often been associated

with international development literature relating to developing and transitional contexts (Franks 1999; Venner, 2015). For example, Agenda 21 of United Nations' plan for sustainable development states that: "The ability of a country to follow sustainable development paths is determined to a large extent by the capacity of its people and its institutions as well as by its ecological and geographical conditions, specifically, capacity-building encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional, and resource capabilities" (UNDP, 1992).

There is increasing interest in the intersection of education and training through societal development in the developing world, a concept linked to National Human Resource Development (NHRD). In addition, education and training is known to correlate strongly with employment outcomes that are connected to economic success, health and family stability and social connections (Hout, 2012). The aims of this paper is to provide a prologue to the issue of development in Africa and the critical need to build capacity through investment in people and to explore the extent to which HRD and capacity building are associated terms with a view to revealing the potential for academics and practitioners to synthesize research in these areas and to inform one another's professional knowledge and practice. Thus, the paper is structured into five sections including this introduction; in section two the term capacity building is explored with reference to the term capacity. The issue of promoting human development in Africa is discussed in section three. Section four discusses new development deal for Africa with focus on investment in human capital. The final sections of the paper synthesize the findings of the study and summarize the conclusions drawn from the research.

Defining Capacity Building

Prior to considering the nature of capacity building, it is necessary to focus upon the term capacity. Capacity has been defined in various ways.

For example, the UNDP (1992) defines capacity as: “the ability of individuals and organizations or organizational units to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably”. In a similar vein, Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) define capacity as: “... the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently, and sustainably”. These exemplar definitions emphasize that, in international development literature at least, capacity is inextricably associated with individuals and organizations, performance, systems, skills and attributes, sustainability, and effectiveness. Further, it is noted that capacity is not the same as capacity building; rather, the absence of capacity necessitates capacity building (Larbi, 1998).

As indicated above, the term capacity is wide-ranging. Arguably, this has led to problems in defining the term “capacity building”; as Howe (1998) highlights; the term capacity building is used in a plethora of different ways in literature. Ballantyne (2000) identified a variety of quotations and definitions from various sources, concluding that there is a huge variation in interpretations of capacity building. One of the corollaries of this variation is that definitions and descriptions of capacity building tend to reflect particular orientations, with some writers considering it as an approach or process, and some as development per se (Angeles and Gurstein 2000; Bolger 2000).

Similarly, Bossuyt (1994) has argued that the lack of clarity on the meaning of capacity building remains an obstacle to its effective implementation. This uncertainty surrounding the term capacity building also indicates that, at very least, it may possibly represent a form of HRD, given its association with concepts such as performance, systems, skills and attributes, and the ability to perform tasks effectively. Capacity building is a concept that encompasses a broad range of activities that are aimed at increasing the ability of citizens and their governments to produce more responsive and efficient public goods and services. At its core, capacity building is concerned with the selection and development

of institutional arrangements; both political and administrative” (Hawkins, 1980, cited by Honadle, 1986).

“Capacity-building encompasses the country’s human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity-building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environment potentials and limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned. As a result, the need to strengthen national capacities is shared by all countries (UNDP, 1992).

“Capacity-building is a long-term, continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and water user groups, professional associations, academics and others)” (UNDP, 1992).

Capacity building consists of meeting a hierarchy of needs which all need to be considered in a logical order if investments in development are to pay off” (Potter & Brough, 2004). One of the main priorities within capacity building is the enhancement of human and social capabilities through better health and education (UNDP, 2003). Capacity-building efforts have also shifted toward the development of broader-based social capital (Shaffer, 2006).

Defining human development

The challenges associated with the definition of development have both theoretical and practical implications for development policies in Africa. Development can be looked at as a process that aims at improving people’s standards of living. Todaro (1977) defined development as a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. Development has also been defined as “increasing the capacity of people to influence their future” (Bryant and White, 1982). Thus, development has socio-economic, cultural, political and psychological dimensions. Cowen and Shenton

(1996) observed that development is both immanent and intentional in nature. Immanent development refers to the natural change that takes place in society. It can be compared to the current knowledge revolution that is being witnessed in the twenty-first century. Immanent development is spontaneous and unstoppable (Wambugu, 2002). Intentional development on the other hand involves deliberate and planned interventions by individuals, institutions and development agencies aimed at addressing problems facing society such as diseases, poverty, and illiteracy. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines development in terms of human development. As noted, “human development is a process of enlarging the range of people’s choice by increasing their opportunities for education, healthcare, income and employment and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political systems” (UNDP, 1992). Looked at from the human development perspective, development should ensure that individuals in society have access to health services, education facilities, opportunities to earn income and access to other social welfare services (UNDP, 2003). A key issue in the development process is choice. This means that African people must have a choice in their development agenda.

Human Resource Development (HRD) encompasses planned activities, processes and/or interventions designed to have impact upon and enhance organizational and individual learning, to develop human potential, to improve or maximize effectiveness and performance at either the individual, group/team and/or organizational level, and/or to bring about effective, beneficial personal or organizational behaviour change and improvement within, across and/or beyond the boundaries (or borders) of private sector (for profit), public sector/governmental, or third/voluntary sector (not-for-profit) organizations, entities or any other type of personal-based, work-based, community-based, society-based, culture-based, political-based or nation based host system” (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011).

“Human Resource Development (HRD) is defined by various researchers as follows: a mechanism in shaping individual and group values and beliefs and skills through learning-related activities to support the desired performance of the host system” (Wang et al., 2017). It is a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organization development, personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance (Swanson, 1995). Organized learning experiences provided by employers within a specific period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and or personal growth” (Nadler & Nadler, 1989). HRD is the integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (McLagan 1989). “Processes of organized capability and competence-based learning experiences undertaken within a specified period of time to bring about individual and organizational growth and performance improvement, and to enhance national, economic, cultural, and social development” (Lynham & Cunningham 2004). The development and unleashing of human expertise for multiple learning and performance purposes, individual, family, community, organization, nation, region and globe (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006).

“Human resource development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults’ work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation or, ultimately, the whole of humanity” (McLean & McLean, 2001). Thus, development and performance are central concepts to both HRD and Capacity Building.

Promoting human development in Africa

The issue of promoting human development in Africa and the need for African economic recovery has been addressed both from within and without Africa. Several development theories and approaches have been

formulated by scholars and leaders geared toward a diagnosis and treatment of the problems of underdevelopment in Africa (Nafukho, 2015). Examples of the theories developed and prescribed for Africa include: modernization, dependency, post modernization, post structuralism and neo-liberal theories. The proponents of modernization theory include scholars such as, Walter Rostow, W.A. Lewis, Talcott Parsons, and Daniel Lerner. According to the modernization theory, a transformation process could solve problems of development facing the newly independent states in Africa among many other countries from the developing world. “Modernization theory makes the claim that Western capitalist values and practices are the basis for modernizing third world countries and helping them become self-sustaining” (Sorensen, 2001). The theory advocated for the transition of the African countries from traditional to modern societies. Its advocates argued that developing countries’ low levels of development could be explained in terms of traditional characteristics such as low level of labor, low level of production, and reliability on subsistence agriculture. According to modernization theory, the main reasons for the underdevelopment of African countries were explained in terms of internal factors, such as African traditions or in the lack of sufficient capital investment resources (Wambugu, 2002; Chambua, 1994). In addition, the proponents of modernization theories assumed that a linear process existed whereby developing countries in Africa were assumed to progressively become industrialized. This led to direct transformation of Western values and traditions in Africa. In addition, foreign aid was recommended as a means to provide the financial capital required for investment. But as noted earlier in this paper, development requires individual choice. When individual choice is lacking especially from the African people themselves, then all planned development is most likely to fail like it happened with foreign aid and Africa’s underdevelopment (Moyo, 2010). The dependency theory on the other hand argued that developing countries are underdeveloped due to structural linkages with the West.

The main proponents of the dependency theory include scholars such as Samir Amin, Rau'í Prebisch, Theotonio dos Santos, Gunder Frank, Paul Baran, Walter Rodney, Rweyemamu and Fernando Cardoso. According to the theory, the relationship between the developing countries and developed countries has been that of exploitation. The developed countries exploited the raw materials of the developing countries making supernormal profits on the manufactured goods produced from raw materials, while the developing countries made very low profits on materials exported. This trend still continues today. According to the proponents of the dependency theory, for countries from the developing countries to develop, they have to delink themselves from the international capitalist system. Samir (1972), for instance identifies dependency in neo-colonialism in West Africa in terms of colonial trade as a step backwards, export-oriented economic development, the creation of colonial enclave, and the presence of a bourgeois class.

Given the shortcomings of both theories, the current thinking has moved away from global explanations, with the exception of neo-liberalist trade paradigms. Theories such as postmodernism and post structuralism, which focus on the relationship between actors and structures, free agency and systemic coercions, have been advanced. Postmodernism has been explained in terms of keeping with the idea of (post) which means after modernity. It refers to the incipient or actual dissolution of those social forms associated with modernity (Sarup, 1993). As a result of unimpressive performance of these development strategies, a new neo-liberal theory seeking to bring about economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa has emerged. The World Bank for instance noted that Africa had lost over 30 years or three decades of development (World Bank, 1989). In the 1980s and the 1990s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prescribed Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs) as one of the major ways of ensuring economic recovery in Africa (World Bank, 1994). SAPs led to devaluation of currency, reduced government spending in social service ministries such

as education and health sectors (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999). SAPs also led to liberalization and privatization of government enterprises. Some of the effects of SAPs were increased taxation and interest rates, introduction of cost-sharing schemes, user fees, and cost-recovery measures, and wage restraints (Olukoshi, 1998). The implementation of SAPs in Africa did not result in economic recovery. There have been a number of suggested paths, including Nyerere's ujamaa and self-reliance model to Africa's recovery. More recent we have New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While these approaches have been formulated and implemented, the African continent still remains underdeveloped.

New development deal for Africa

In the twenty-first century, a new development deal for Africa is being advanced. In most African countries, development policies and programs have been largely informed by the modernization theory. This is supported by the import substitution policies and reliance on foreign aid by various African countries. But, as a result of unimpressive performance of these development strategies, neo-liberal trade theory seeking to bring about economic development in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries through trade, deregulation of capital markets, and less state involvement in socio-economic affairs, rather than through aid has emerged (Chambua, 1994; Moyo, 2010). Trade liberalization is a process of systematically reducing and eventually eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers between countries as trading partners.

The liberalization policies aim at creating a level playing field on which economies at different levels of development can fairly compete. Its main foundation is the economic theory of the invisible hand of the free market enterprise and the notion that unrestrained markets will lead to efficiency in the production and distribution of goods and services between African countries and the rest of the world and within Africa.

Trade liberalization is based on the neo-liberal idea that successful development can only be achieved by adopting the policy of openness to global capital and competitive forces and closer integration with the global economy (Moyo, 2010; World Bank, 1994). While this sounds quite plausible in theory, in practice it has also proved elusive. For example, McGrew (2000) noted that structural adjustment policies (SAPs) prescribed for developing countries by the IMF and the World Bank form part of the neo-liberal development agenda. Trade liberalization advocates for the opening up of national economies to global market forces and limited government intervention in the management of the local economies. This can only work if there is fairness in international trade between developing and developed countries. In the absence of fair trade, Africa still remains disadvantaged.

As noted: In 1960, the richest 20 per cent of the world's population had incomes 30 times greater than the poorest 20 per cent. By 1990, the richest 20 per cent were getting 60 times greater more. And this comparison is based on the distribution between rich and poor countries. Adding the misdistribution within countries, the richest 20 per cent of the world's people get at least 150 times more than the poorest 20 per cent" (UNDP, 2003). Two main reasons are advanced for this phenomenon as noted, "[...] where world trade is completely free and open as in financial markets, it generally works to the benefit of the strongest. Developing countries enter the market as unequal partners and leave with unequal rewards" (UNDP, 2003). The second reason provided for world income disparities is that in areas where developing countries like those from Africa have a competitive advantage, such as in labor intensive manufacturing or trade in precious minerals such diamond, gold, platinum and crude oil, the market rules are often changed to prevent free and open competition.

Regarding development, the neo-liberal trade theory rests on the idea that immanent development of capitalism can positively change the destiny of people in developing countries. Capitalism is defined as an

economic system of production of goods and services for market exchange in order to make a profit. It advocates for the distribution of welfare through the market, distribution of wages and enterprise management for profit accumulation (Allen and Thomas, 2000). Capitalism was the dominant view of development in the 1980s that led to the process of capitalism as a desired form of modernization. The reality however, requires some form of intentional development that calls for proactive state initiatives well planned and aimed at providing public facilities and welfare programs especially in education and health. Intentional development is guided development that aims at addressing the imperfections and inadequacy of free market economy by ensuring equitable distribution of resources and availability of essential public utilities. At international level there is need for deliberate and planned development to help redress world poverty. When discussing the strategies to promote development in Africa, there exist a dichotomy between outside driven initiatives and internal driven solutions. The main focus of this editorial therefore is idea that investing in education is what will bring real human development to Africa.

Investment in human capital is Key

It is a truism that the quality of inputs that the country has, which is determined by the quality of labor, have enormous impact on economic growth through the production process. But quality of labor is determined by investment in human capital through the quality of education and training programs offered (Wawire and Nafukho, 2006). Knowledge, entrepreneurship and the mastery of information and communication technologies in this century should become Africa's best competitive advantage. As noted earlier in this paper, instead of people in Africa being consumers of knowledge they should strive to produce knowledge based on their indigenous, cultural, political and socioeconomic perspectives. While trade liberalization may sound an

important development agenda for Africa, without investing in education and health, Africa will remain disadvantaged.

The key to Africa's survival is through investment in intellectual capital. Only those with knowledge and information will survive. Experience has shown that while Africa has vast physical and natural resources, however, intangible assets such as knowledge and information determine wealth creation in this century. African economies need people who possess critical skills and knowledge required for development. Without these skills and knowledge, physical capital and natural resources, remain underutilized or are exploited by those from outside Africa. Global wealth today is concentrated less and less in factories, land, tools and machinery (World Bank, 2000). Knowledge, skills and resourcefulness of the people are therefore increasingly critical to the world and national economies. Knowledge is and has been at the center stage of economic development (Wawire and Nafukho, 2006; Lewis, 1962; Harbison and Myers, 1974). As the World Bank (1999) noted, knowledge enlightens the lives of people and is crucial to any development effort. Economic equality of the population remains low when there is little knowledge of available natural resources, possible alternative production techniques, necessary skills, existing market conditions and opportunities and institutions that might be created to favor economizing effort (Jhingan, 1989).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there will likely be a central and continuing role for the state in most Sub Saharan African countries in the delivery and financing of education and training initiatives. However, the role of national governments continues to be influenced by, “an almost monopoly on ideas in technological, cultural, social, economic and political realms”. It is a fairly robust finding that a country's human capital is almost always identified as an essential ingredient for achieving growth. By examining the findings of this paper, with contributions focused on capacity

building for Africa’s development, through investment in human resource development the following key implications for HRD theory research and practice emerged:

(1) Provision of teachers’ professional development is not only necessary but a sufficient condition to enable teachers and trainers to access specialized skills in instructional design (ID) and blended learning.

(2) Peer Teacher Evaluation is an important practice necessary to develop quality teachers required to offer quality education as a way to build capacity necessary for development.

(3) Providing quality virtual learning programs and curriculum innovations are not a one-time activity but a continuous process characterized with strategic reviews, evaluation, feedback and refinement of course content design and delivery and curriculum development.

(4) Professional development, design and delivery of courses, curriculum development and peer teacher evaluation are important HRD activities required for capacity building but consume enormous amount of financial resources.

Hence, capacity building is a broad concept, which overlaps with and includes human resource development and various management issues and trends such as strategic management, change management, quality management, organizational re-engineering, knowledge management, information management, etc. The relationships between the “parts-to-be-improved and the “whole” within a country and international frameworks are often lost. Capacity development is an attempt to see that “whole”. These types of approaches call for capacity building to be seen as an overreaching perspective which is designed to provide sustainable development. Thus, while a holistic approach is reflected in both HRD and capacity building definitions, capacity building tends to differ from HRD in terms of the focus which is placed on the creation of a sustainable ecosystem involving intangibles such as environment, community, culture and values. This is not intended to suggest that

capacity building should be prioritized as a higher order activity in relation to HRD, nor that HRD theory and practice is solely focused on short-term tangible outcomes; nevertheless, literature suggests that effective capacity building is contingent upon tangible HRD activities that, in some cases, can have both immediate and long terms effects.

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