

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH IN AFRICA**Mgbonyebi Voke Charles (PhD)****Department of Public Administration, University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.***voke.mgbonyebi@unidel.edu.ng.***Introduction**

Historically, the African continent seems to be in a state of flux because of the increasingly social and political disorder which manifests in various conflicts spread across Africa (Akinola, 2021; Uka, 2020). It is becoming quite glaring that the problems of Africa stem from underdevelopment of the continent (Mkandawire, 2018). Most of Africa is in abject poverty, widespread unemployment, corruption and bribery are fast becoming a survival strategy; value systems are misplaced; unrest and war are widespread phenomenon in many areas (Collier, 2019; Ayeni, 2022). The causes of African problems are multi-dimensional and the solutions may be sought and found in the many dedicated development researches in the social and political spheres (Adepoju, 2020). Development research in Africa, among other things, should help Africans to understand and control their position in global affairs, and find the basis for strengthened value systems, as well as the means to reach those ends that will provide for progress of the economies; so as to guarantee future development for Africa (Okafor, 2021). History has shown that democracy and development are intertwined, because while democracy carries a legacy of ideas and techniques as a basic form of government where political power is ultimately in the hands of the whole adult population; development, on the other hand, is much more than economic growth because it is the creation, sustenance and the maximization of opportunities for the attainment of full and satisfying life for every citizen (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017). History is concerned with the analysis and explanation of events as they occurred in society. History is used as a weapon of social criticism and reconstruction, in the light of fresh development and new ideas (Adediran, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The work of the historian, though influenced by the general educational and social standards of the society, has relevance for the development of the society. Democratic ideas lead to the formation of the right opinion and forge the freedom of association and movement. Development is the progressive unfolding of the inner potentialities of a given reality. Hence, Africa will progress if attempts are made in the socio-cultural, historical, moral, religious, intellectual, spiritual, political, economic, scientific and technological spheres to enhance development initiatives (Akinola, 2021; Mkandawire, 2018). This paper provides a historical perspective of Africa's underdevelopment and analyses the effect of this on the stagnant nature of development in the continent. The paper establishes a relationship between history and the development process of the continent, and proposes a multi-dimensional approach to development research. The paper views this process as particularly important for Africa in view of the transition from dictatorship to democratic governance in the continent (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017).

Clarification of Concepts**History**

History is the study of the record of past events of human activities, arranged in order from the earliest to the present time, especially events concerning the rulers and government of a country, social and trade evolutions. History is an account of an event, a systematic account of the origin and progress of the world. History is also defined as a narrative based on scientific reconstruction of the past activities of man (Adediran, 2003:1). From the earliest Greek writers to the time of Herodotus in the fifth century B.C., history has been a systematic attempt to inquire into the activities of man in the past (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Historical developments have taught us global lessons, and history has been relevant to mankind, with particular reference to Africa's search for nationhood and good leadership (Uka, 2020). The usefulness of history to development issues is contemporary. Dating back to the nineteenth century, several publications exist to show the reasons

why history is a body of knowledge, with as much value as possible; whether conceived as a social science or in the humanities (Manvick, 2000). History is indeed significant to mankind, as those who forget the lessons of history are bound to repeat their mistakes (Mkandawire, 2018). The metamorphosis of the League of Nations in 1945 is a global example of the provision of a forum for the settlement of disputes, and enabled a member state to discuss and air her grievances publicly (Oduniami, 2002; Gyimah-Boadi, 2017). In the same vein, history is valuable at regional and national levels (Oduniami, 2002). In order to understand a people, it is essential to decipher their past through a reconstruction based on their beliefs and traditions referred to as the people's culture (Adediran, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

Development

Development means improvement that reflects a particular vision in political, social or economic spheres. It is an evolutionary and multi-dimensional process which is democratic and reflects the transformation of society (Mkandawire, 2018; Okafor, 2021). Development is progressive creation, proliferation and enhancement of the conditions of the good life for citizens within the boundaries of a nation. Development aims, among other things, to achieve:

1. Sustained increase in such aggregate economic indices as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), Per Capita Income (PCI);
2. Enhanced capacity of citizens to meet their vital daily commitments which allow them a comfortable margin to save for the future;
3. Reduction of and elimination of inequality, unemployment, disease, poverty and ignorance;
4. Diffusion of influence and the guarantee of basic freedoms including the freedom to participate meaningfully in the political process; and
5. Assurance of a stable and peaceful political order essential for sustained productive activities (Iziren, 2005; Nwankwo, 2006).

This development is the creation, sustenance, and maximization of opportunities requisite for the attainment of full and satisfying life for every citizen. It is a continuous and cumulative endeavor which should result in some attainment of any combination of the above-listed objectives (Agbefe, 2006; Adepoju, 2020). Development, according to Iziren (2005), depicts urbanization, sound cultural transformation, mass literacy, vertical and horizontal mobility, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles. Development is a process of cumulative change that results from positive forces that raise productivity (Nwankwo, 2006; Mkandawire, 2018). Iziren (2005) notes that development is the socio-economic and political changes which affect the relationship of man and the environment, as well as to his fellow individuals. We therefore conceive of development as a value concept which reflects vision and worldview to mean a continuing process of formulating and implementing a set of related goals, plans, programmes, activities and tasks for realizing state goals within a prescribed time sequence (Agbefe, 2006; Okafor, 2021).

Development Research

Research is categorized as a detailed and careful investigation into some subject areas of study with the aim of discovering and applying new facts or information. It is often an investigation into something new to discover new facts and new directions (Adepoju, 2020). Development research concentrates on finding new or improved processes, products, and also optimum ways of introducing such developments. In this paper, we categorize development research as that research that seeks to find new opportunities and innovations for growth and transformation in the African continent (Uka, 2020; Okafor, 2021).

Underdevelopment

This will be categorized as a many-sided process involving a low level of individual attainment of

skill and capacity, less freedom for creativity, lack of discipline and lack of responsibility (Rich, 2000; Mkandawire, 2018). There is decreasing material well-being of the people and a low level of welfare for the society, denoted by decreased capacity, skill and opportunity due to the paucity of egalitarian principles in all spheres of material and spiritual relations between the citizens (Collier, 2019). Economists see underdevelopment as a result of lack of economic growth, sustained rise in real output per head, and decreasing shifts in technological, economic and demographic characteristics of a developing polity (Ayeni, 2022; Mkandawire, 2018).

The African Past Post-Colonial Situation

In the past, developments in Africa have been in the areas of social, economic, educational and political, being probably the most urgent since independence (Atubare, 2000; Mkandawire, 2018). These are not merely the problems inherited from the colonial period, but also many new problems resulting from independent nationhood, and the demands of the people for the better life the new leaders promised would follow independence (Uka, 2020). The post-colonial problems have ranged from problems of unity underlining the need to develop the idea of 'one nation' for the removal of the colonial governments and the differences between groups living within national boundaries fixed to suit European convenience. Whether these differences in Africa are religious, ethnic or merely the result of some areas being favoured with better resources and communication than others, they have led to political instability and crisis of civil war (Atubare, 2000; Adebayo, 2019). There is need to find solutions to these problems which are hindering co-operation between countries as well as within them (Adepoju, 2020). Within the wider problem of national unity is the question of the proper form of government for African countries. It is clear that the system of parliamentary democracy has been introduced for modern African society where political parties have become mere extensions of ethnic rather than political interest; modern trend in Africa is democratic governance where free and fair elections could take place without 'rigging and thuggery' (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017; Nwankwo, 2020). In the past, this had led to widespread dissatisfaction and in some instances, to army and police interventions throughout Africa of the seventies and eighties (Mkandawire, 2018; Ayeni, 2022). Underlying these political issues lay the long-term economic problems of African development. From reliance on primary products, there is a shift towards manufacturing industries and oil explorations, all of which are turning the economic fortunes of the continent rapidly (Collier, 2019; Osei, 2021). In the bid to industrialize, African states have followed different economic patterns, but the correct solutions to these problems have not yet been found (Okafor, 2021). In order to raise capital at home and abroad, a sacrifice of some of the good things in life has to be tried. Currently, this system of raising capital from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank has been slow and painful, carrying with it political consequences which have been unacceptable to African nations looking for immediate improvements (Mkandawire, 2018; Akinola, 2021). The details of these problems remain the province of current development research in the continent's conference centers and educational institutions. However, the post-colonial period in Africa has been marked by the growth of a body of informal public opinion among Africans. Public opinion helps to build support for African nations seeking outside help to control and concentrate on building an economy capable of giving service to the people comparable to that of the developed world (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017; Uka, 2020).

The Trend of Development Research in Africa

Since 2005, the report of development research has been momentous in that it showed attempts to focus on troubled areas in the continent in a series of international conferences and initiatives (Africa Report, 2005; Okafor, 2021). The G8 held its Summit at Gleneagles, Scotland in July 2005 where the then Prime Minister Tony Blair pushed his Commission for Africa Report as a core manifesto for Western policy, even though it had received only lukewarm receptions from fellow European leaders and the US government (Smith, 2005; Mkandawire, 2018). Gleneagles provided the opportunities

for Africa's own growth and trade reform agenda. The next was the September 2005 Summit by the United Nations Global Summit to assess all developing countries' progress in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of halving poverty, infant mortality and illiteracy by 2015. It concluded that by current trends, East Asia and the Pacific would have almost cut it substantially, but Africa would see only sporadic improvements (Akinola, 2021; Ayeni, 2022). Later that month, the new World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz hosted his annual meeting, having already pledged that his priority would be to 'cut poverty' in Africa (Smith, 2005; Osei, 2021). The meeting with the greatest capacity to change African economies was the World Trade Organization Summit in Hong Kong in December 2005. This was to reach agreement on ending rich-country subsidies on farm products and widening market access for African exports. Africa's baseline demand was for an immediate end to rich country subsidies on cotton and sugar production, as well as a commitment to phase out all their other subsidies by 2010 (Collier, 2019; Adepaju, 2020). All these high-level gatherings recorded that Africa was poorer than it was 25 years ago, despite the plethora of development strategies pressed on its governments over the past four decades. Previous approaches may have been eclipsed by pockets of poverty-reduction, institutional reform and good governance, but even this had much the same origins, and probable weaknesses, as all those that went before. The core aims of growth and economic efficiency were applied in a way that made no difference to Africa's small and struggling economies. As Africa's governments and civil services danced to the tune of bilateral and multilateral donors, the round of summits and high-level conferences again saw thousands of senior civil servants diverted from their domestic policy priorities to prepare reports and feed the beast that was the international aid bureaucracy (Africa Report, 2005; Gyimah-Boadi, 2017).

Analysis of Development Research in Africa

Over the years since 2005, individuals, corporate organizations and international institutions have concentrated on forging research into vital areas of human endeavour in Africa (Okafor, 2021; Akinola, 2021). It has been an endless search for solutions aimed at revamping African economies, reconstructing social facilities, implementing welfare programmes to emancipate the African, as well as addressing gender issues and child welfare programmes (Adepaju, 2020; Ayeni, 2022). However, a critical analysis of these efforts leaves much to be desired (Mkandawire, 2018).

Economy and Business

In this area, development research focused on fighting African poverty, which brought about NEPAD. African statesmen wanted their populations to see the dynamic benefits of partnership. But despite their efforts, the suspicion remained that the latest concept was a front for South African dominance (Costa, 2005; Osei, 2021). Costa (2005) believes that the New Partnership was for Africa to define its relationship with the countries of the G7/8. This was a far cry from the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s. NEPAD internalized privatization and private sector-led growth, liberalization, and the inevitability and desirability of globalization. Suffice to say, NEPAD did not close the financing gap for Africa's development (Collier, 2019). With trade, it was the struggle for reform and diversification where manufacturers vied for markets within Africa. The Oil and Gas sector raised moral questions on the new bonanza for African economies; the Mining sector created tougher times ahead after the boom. In the banking sector, big players headed for the South African market and the capital market yielded impressive gains for equities. On the agricultural sector, the old problems of ancient farming techniques and cultivation methods resurfaced and made the problems of going global a herculean task. Commodities had higher demand, but the old constraints bedeviled Africa (Mkandawire, 2018). The media world in Africa battled for independent press, as the power sector continued to throw countries into darkness continually due to decreased generation of power for the people (Ayeni, 2022). In telecommunications, the cellular revolution was taking off rapidly and was making a strong impact as the Global System of Mobile Communications became accessible to many African countries (Akinola, 2021).

Society and Culture

In the area of education, Africa development researches were mainly striving for higher educational standards in the school system (Adebayo, 2019; Nwankwo, 2020). Health facilities were on the road to recovery after years of neglect (Adepoju, 2020; Ayeni, 2022). In literature, a new wave of African authors continued to assert themselves to make their impact felt globally to highlight the African predicament through visionary commitment (Uka, 2020; Okafor, 2021). Their advocacy was that the public services must improve, clearing the stage for information technology and self-help (Akinola, 2021; Osei, 2021).

Politics and Diplomacy

By 2007, the development research had assumed political dimensions, as the craze for democratic governance became widespread (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017; Mkandawire, 2018). The polling fever was sweeping the continent like wildfire (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Diplomatic realignments were asserting Africa's position in the world arena (Adepoju, 2020; Ayeni, 2022). African institutions were examining the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), and APRM (African Peer Review Mechanism) was being held up by its own complexity (Costa, 2005; Okafor, 2021).

Continental Business

In the mining sector, profits were being reaped from digging deeper holes in the mines (Collier, 2019; Osei, 2021). Electric power was facing outages as dams fell into distress (Ayeni, 2022). With the power shortages in South Africa set to last until 2013, economists were busy revising their growth estimates. Most expected a drop from the previous predictions of around 5% to something closer to 3% (Akinola, 2021). While Eskom (the power producer) deserved blame, the 1998 South African electricity capacity and demand energy white paper was ignored by policy planners (Mkandawire, 2018). This has been the trend of development planning in most African countries (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017). In the Oil and Gas sector, major producers held close their oil blocks rather than develop them (Collier, 2019). Information and computer technology reached and became popular among the youth in Africa (Okafor, 2021; Osei, 2021). The banking sector competed among themselves seeking to further foreign interests, and agribusiness suffered due to US subsidies on crops (Adebayo, 2019). From the outsourcing revolution, the democratization of the mobile telephone, and information and communication technologies, were changing the face of business, society, and government in Africa (Uka, 2020; Akinola, 2021).

Overcoming Established Interests in Africa – The Way Forward

The fact that South Africa's GDP, at an estimated \$239bn, is nearly 40 times that of the average African country makes it no surprise that South Africa has become one of the biggest investors on the continent in a decade (Collier, 2019; Osei, 2021). Companies needed new markets, and the hinterland was the obvious place to go (Adepoju, 2020). South African firms have moved steadily and swiftly to tackle the old-style competition posed by both local monopolies and established market companies from the continent's traditional partners in Europe and the US (Gyimah-Boadi, 2017). The mobile phone companies have definitely been the highest profile success stories in Africa. MTN, which fast saw explosive growth, is the biggest mobile operator in Africa, with 48.2m subscribers by mid-2007. The group saw a 69% increase in revenue in the year to June 2007, with Nigeria alone showing a 51% rise in revenue generated (Akinola, 2021; Okafor, 2021). Some firms are definitely evolving an African strategy that can pay off whatever happens back home (Uka, 2020).

Apart from the political risk concerns, exacerbated by the serious problems in Kenya and South Africa, challenges include excessive bureaucracy, regulation, logistics, skills shortages, the lack of harmonization of requirements across borders, poor infrastructure, insufficient supply of domestic

capital, and exorbitant operating costs (Ayeni, 2022; Osei, 2021). Despite the fact that China is not seen as a threat overall, business in construction and engineering faces the problem of Chinese companies giving quotes for contracts below the cost. In 2006, Chinese contractors won a third of all public works contracts funded by the African Development Bank (Collier, 2019). South African firms are also under pressure in African markets to match shifting internal priorities. These include finding local partners and using local skills, right up to management level, which requires large outlays for training. Linked with this, governments are likely to introduce stricter local content regulations for foreign investors and push foreign companies to establish manufacturing plants in countries in which they already trade (Akinola, 2021).

South African dominance of the financial services sector in Africa is also going to be challenged by large Nigerian banks and regional groups such as Ecobank (Okafor, 2021). But this trend is likely to be countered by a strategy of mergers and acquisitions involving big local banks in various countries, a trend that is already underway in Africa (Collier, 2019; Osei, 2021). The agriculture sector is likely to see greater commercialization. Contract farming, a commercial arrangement between the large agricultural companies and smallholder farmers, is expected to expand and feed into this (Ayeni, 2022). The commodity boom does not seem likely to abate soon, and new opportunities are looming in diamonds, uranium, coal, and oil, with new finds being made across West, Central, and East Africa by large international companies, many of which are already involved in exploration activities (Mkandawire, 2018; Collier, 2019). There may be testing times ahead for all Africans, but they seem undaunted by the challenge. Having a strong African strategy is likely to pay off whatever happens back home, and problems in the African economy could be a spur for development research across the continent. There could be greater investments attracted north of the African border, and a boom at home would spur the search for new markets in which to invest (Akinola, 2021; Okafor, 2021).

Conclusion

This study has reviewed the development research trend in Africa, and has noted the current efforts to put Africa on a steady gait for development and growth towards the twenty-first. The study has also noted the post-colonial challenges, which have been very trying for Africans. Nevertheless, advances have been made in the development bid. It is inevitable, given the level of underdevelopment still persisting in most parts of the continent. In future, development researchers will concentrate on wiping out the traces of underdevelopment in most parts of Africa, improving the infrastructure for service provision; rural development, good governance, seed improvement, affordable food and food security measures, climatic change and reducing the high population growth rate. This is to allow for a modicum of development and growth in the economy of the continent.

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