

## Human Capacity Building in the Third World Nations of Africa: Retours Aux Sources

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Human society experienced myriads of changes as a result of man's "probe into the secrets of nature" symbolized in the search for and the growth of knowledge in the universe. The birth, rise and fall of empires show the tyranny and dynamics of human desire; however it is ironically the vision for the transformation of humanity that propels the uneven societal developments in agriculture, humanities, science and technology and their subdisciplines in the world. The dissymmetry of developments in Asia, Africa and Europe can be explained through the thesis of uneven investment in human and institutional capacity building of nations of all continents, despite the vital roles played by international and regional organizations such as United Nations and its organs towards the delivery of Millennium Development Goals.

Different literatures of development discourse (Itheriohanna 2011; Ikharehon 2007; Joshua *et al* 2014; Wadda 2000; UNESCO 2011) have identified human and institutional capacity building as a panacea for problems of poverty in Africa and the economic development of African nations as part of the third world. In addition, individuals and organizations (UNESCO 2011; Gevaert 2012; UNEP 2002) have given vital recommendations that could unlock the potentials of Africa States, but surprisingly and continuously Africa does not make tangible improvement as to change its seemingly constant position in world's development index ladder because African countries' human resources remain grossly underutilized or unutilized (Saasa 2007). It is possible that such recommendations from exotic organizations are not domesticated and given required local colors that will Africanize them. This work intends to argue that human capacity building as a concept has been inherent in traditional African societies; it advocates for an introspection into African folkloric values and worldview that could be energizing factors for robust human capacity development in Africa and hopes to emphasize the need for bridging the expanding gaps between "the gown and the town" so that impacts of African universities and their researches could be tools for repositioning the African private and public sectors as witnessed in countries such as Singapore, India, Malaysia and the rest of them. In the end, this paper makes a call for human capacity building that promotes indigenous technologies and draws its systems, structures and strength from the African past, hence Leopold Sedar Senghor,

in his negritudist lamentation, made an apologia for "retours aux sources" [Return to African past].

This paper proposes to review human capacity developments in the developed nations and fast-developing countries who, though not typically endowed with much natural resources, have galvanized development strides, thereby emerging now as epicenter of developing economies. It is evident that human resource development (HRD) could have been a national policy of these nations (NHRD) as shown in *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, where Eunsang Cho and Gary McInan do emphasize 5 emerging models of NHRD, replicated in the economies of developing and developed countries with gains and pains as well shall discover later in this work.

### **Term and Concept of Capacity Building**

The term "Capacity building" is frequently used in development discourses. As an ideological concept, it has been part of African communalism that characterized African traditional societies as reflected in its traditional system of conflict resolution, age grade system of labor, artisanal apprenticeship, tales by moonlight system of acculturation and socialization or the *griot* system, thereby promoting developments seen through African folklore and its civilization. The above examples point to the interdependence and interrelatedness of institutional and human types of capacity building provides structures for public sector reforms. UNEP (2002) defines capacity building as a holistic enterprise, encompassing a multitude of activities. It means building abilities, relationships and values that will enable organizations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their development objectives. In his attempt to define human capacity building; Saasa relates it to provision of a trained workforce; to the promotion of knowledge and skills that are required by a society to acquire prosperity through the building of productive capacities. In African traditional societies, patrilineal or matrilineal, communities adopted multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial approaches which Tortajada (2001) advocates for in the management of Mexican water sector because it appears to integrate communalism, complementarities and community towards the development of individuals and societies. The search/dispersal of indigenous knowledge, which has long been associated with the terms 'local knowledge' or "ethnoscience", indicating knowledge systems that are specific to cultures or groups in particular historical or social contexts (Richards et al. 1989 cited in Bebbington, p.7292), was both individual and collective responsibility, enhanced through the African worldview.

In essence, an indigenous viewpoint

Deals with what is salient and fosters understanding of a particular setting. Although most people cannot articulate an understanding of the world, their knowledge is organized generally into a worldview or outlook on the universe, and the place of human beings in it. It is social representation with which a given culture makes sense of human life. A set of social, cultural, and existential realities marks out an indigenous West African worldview, which differs remarkably from that informing scientific psychology (Ibid. :7279)

The essence of defining a human capacity building with socio-cultural realities of a people cannot be emphasized as such indigenized perspectives have helped interstitial nation states who are standing between the developed and developing paradigms of economies. It is not impossible to clone exotic policies though Bell & Stevenson (2006:8) recognize the fact that policies impact differently on different social groups because they cannot be disconnected from the socio-political environment within which they are framed (p.29). This realization makes Africanized progress Network at USA and Abuja (ALPN), The Southern Africa Capacity Initiative (SACI) by UNDP.

Saasa (2007) summarized the challenges of human capacity building as thus: lack of data on training needs, uncoordinated training program, lack of policies and guidelines, wastages and misplacement of personnel, lack of monitoring mechanism to determine the capacity and productivity of the trained personnel to contribute meaningfully to national development, among others, explaining how African countries have lacked ownership of, and commitment to, capacity building. The question is to know how human capacity building worked/works in the developed countries or the fastest growing economies of the world.

### **Domesticating International Paradigms: Lessons from Singapore**

Understudying how human capacity building has been planned and implemented in different developed countries or fastest growing economics of Singapore, China India and others becomes paramount. It shows that capacity building is central to the quest for sustainable development (UNEP, 2002:10); hence many Western countries have invested heavily in capacity building through quality education. Bell & Stevenson (2006) report that in many parts of the Asia-Pacific region the close connection between education and economic development is widely recognized and a significant number of improvement initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the contribution of education to economic growth. Unlike economies such as Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia,

Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, which are all naturally endowed with rich and abundant resources, Singapore is devoid of natural resources (Goh, p.13). For example, its government deliberately adopted a policy of developing a highly educated work force was pursued (Bell & Stevenson, 2006:48). Each individual nation state identifies its area of priority while having the future in focus. Countries now understand the need to build ICT skills; the place to start is the schoolroom, according to Labelle (2005:64) who reports that China has an ambitious programme to roll out telecommunications networks and infrastructure, and to develop computer literacy at the primary and secondary school levels. Singapore, as a city-state and other countries have also done so.

Human resources have been identified as the single most important strategic capital for Singapore. It has become one of the most developed countries in Asia primarily due to its strong emphasis on developing human resources and for continuously making significant investments in its human capital (Ousman-Gani, 2004:276). The Singaporean human resources development (HRD) has undergone innovation and improvements overtime because it is based on the dynamics of its environment and innovative thinking towards development. The city-state occupies the 3<sup>rd</sup> position of Global Innovation Index ranking, according to Cseh & Manikoth, while no African country is seen on the classification table, despite the metaphor of the "Lions and the Cheetahs" which Martins explains (citing Mackingsey 2010; & Radelet 2010) as the fast concepts or human capacity development imperative, though Africa has its numerous challenges that mitigate best policies from being fruitful.

### **The Challenges of the Third World Nations and the Imperative of Human Capacity Building**

According to UNESCO (2011), there are currently 48 LDCS (Least Developed Countries) of the world as classified by the United Nations, 33 of them are from Sub-Saharan Africa. These African nations are battling with population growth, brain drain syndrome, low school enrolment rate, low Domestic Product (GDP) and Per Capital Income, healthcare challenges, high infant and maternal mortality rate and poor leadership which, in the words of Joshua *et al* (2014:284) "can lead to the prevalence of poor education facilities, mass unemployment, poverty, poor salaries and conditions of service, poor healthcare, etc.", despite the Technical Assistance (TA) provided by the UN systems which is given through capacity building campaigns (UNEP, 2002:10).

Education is a catalyst for poverty eradication and sustainable development because promoting education for all is a key to reaching all other Millennium

Development Goals (UNESCO, 2011:11) and university remains an institution that plays a better role as development actor in society (Gevaert, 2012:124), however Ikharehon (2007) bemoans the decay of Nigerian educational sector and other parts of Africa by extension because poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense natural and human wealth (Kalejaiye & Solaja, 2014:229). It is not surprising that a country like Nigeria that was ranked among the richest 50 countries is now among 29<sup>th</sup> poorest countries of the world (Ibid.). Gevaert (2012) reports that most of the young people in Ethiopia will have a Bachelor degree or master's degree, unfortunately, they are not comparable to their counterparts in Europe or America; for example, it is normal to finish a programming course without writing a code on a computer, making awareness of ICT very low. Iheriohanma (2011) is right to affirm that corruption challenges the development of the third world.

Political sit-tight syndrome, tribalism, and materialism have fuelled the phenomenon of corruption in the third world especially Africa where political leaders have no ethical guidance; constitutions and legislations are privatized and personalized to the whims and caprices of the ruler or the ruling political class. This phenomenon of "L'Etat, c'est moi" [I am the State or the State is mine], used by Louis 14, king of France, does not give institutional structures required for human capital development. Consequently, structures such as African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), etc. are now conduit pipes for looting of funds (Ibid. p.137), thereby constituting developmental rhetoric of the African Union and its member states, not fulfilling their *raison d'etre*. Though these visionary development plans are well outlined, structured and supported by International organizations and donor agencies, the individual environment states become their albatross, destroying their seeds before they germinate fruits. Furthermore, World Bank Initiative Program called African Capacity Building Foundation has not been impactful, so are other initiatives such as African Leadership and Growing economies of Africa and the entrepreneurs that have transformed the economic landscape of Africa.

### **Human Capacity Building in Africa and Traditional Knowledge (TK)**

This paper emphasizes the need to domesticate inherited human capacity building policies to African socio-cultural contexts as a means of improving and fast-tracking its developmental visions. However, indigenous policies on human resource development must be guided by Leopold Senghor's "retours aux sources", thereby prioritizing the revival of traditional knowledge and African

folkloric heritage or rather the fusion of TK and Modern Knowledge System (MKS) to create hybridized African policies of human resource development. Risiro et al (2013) have advocated similar ideas, emphasizing the infusion of IKS (Indigenous Knowledge System) and modern methods of resource conservation in Zimbabwe, though mystical and metaphysical aspects should be expunged for wider acceptance. In answering a question raised in his work, "Does Indigenous Knowledge have anything to do with Sustainable Development?", Das Gupta (2011:60) explains that Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) is nowadays considered very crucial, because it can provide so much information about traditional environment management techniques necessary for sustainable development in a modern society.

### **Recommendations for the Third World Nations**

In the pursuit of impactful human capacity building for socio-economic of African states, different scholars and development experts have advocated the role of digital libraries for greater knowledge acquisitions (Ogunsola, 2011), the appropriation of information technology at grassroots, the adoption to be gained from education and from having an educate and skilled workforce (Bell & Stevenson, 2006:43), instead of the welfarist approach of investment in education. The last recommendation has greater potential since it will be all-encompassing. These scholars affirms that the language of economics is now used as a rational for educational provision (Ibid., p.47); this factor explains why Singapore developed HRD strategies such as Skills Development Fund (SDF), Skills Re-development Programme (SRP), Lifelong Learning Fund (LLF), etc. (Ounsman-Gain, 2004:278). In this light, researchers will engage in functional researches that will drive the society towards the path of development in the near future, meaning that the gown will be responsible for the town. For this to inform effectively, a synergy must be created in the third world, especially African between the academia and the private sector who should be end-users of research product. A country like Nigeria may need to rethink its educational policy. Accepted, it needs to improve on the roles of ETF, TETFUND. And other to accommodate workers in private and public sectors

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