
Limitations of the Use of Modernization Theory in Formulating and Implementing Development Policies in Africa – The case of Tanzania and Malawi

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Abstract: *Despite the progress that Africa has been making in terms of economic development, many countries still face issues such as poverty, inequality, and conflict. Africa houses have plentiful economic resources. Paradoxically, the continent languishes in poverty as evidenced by high prevalence of famine, diseases and ignorance (Matunhu, 2011). For example, out of 189 countries that are ranked by the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), Seychelles – the first African country with 0.801 index is ranked 62 globally (World population Review, 2020). Again, there are only 9 countries including Seychelles that are categorized within High HDI adding Mauritius, Algeria, Tunisia, Botswana, Libya, South Africa, Gabon and Egypt. These are the only African countries out of 54 with HDI above 0.700. The point of reference in this article, Tanzania and Malawi sit 159 and 172 respectively on HDI global rank. This shows that Malawi sits 18th from the bottom. Apart from HDI, another related measure of living standard is real GDP per head. 2019 real GDP per capita shows that most African countries sit at the bottom with Tanzania and Malawi on 153 and 182 respectively. Malawi is found at 8th position shy from the bottom (worldbank.org, 2019).*

This manuscript attributes the poverty and economic stagnation to theories of development because the way African society deals with underdevelopment is influenced by development theories more specifically the highly used modernization theory of development by Talcott Parson. In the explicitness of this manuscript, there is no place of blame on African countries for employing the theory rather it aims to excavate the loop holes of modernization theory in order to expose its shaky premises that makes it unworthy to be used for policy formulation and programming

Key Words: *Modernization, Tanzania, Nyasaland/Malawi, Underdevelopment, Real GDP/head*

Introduction

According to Wilbert Moore (1968), Modernization refers to total transition of traditional society to types of technology and associated social organization that is characterized by economically advanced and politically stable states of the West. Modernization theory is a theory that explains how the society changes from a traditional society to a modern form, by striving towards a modern society such as Europe and USA. Modernization theory is used to explain the process of modernization within societies. Modernization refers to a model of a progressive transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' to a 'modern' society. The theory originated from the ideas of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), which provided the basis for the modernization paradigm developed by Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979).

Modernization theory looks at the internal factors of a country while assuming that with assistance, "traditional" countries can be brought to a more developed state in the same manner as more developed countries have used in developing, the theory attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. Levy (1967) maintains that: "as time goes on, they and we will increasingly resemble one another because the patterns of modernization are such that the more highly modernized societies become, the more they resemble one another". The theory stresses not only the process of change but also the responses to that change. It also looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies, the theory claims that traditional society will develop as they adopt more modern practices. This manuscript will therefore focus on two key aspects; modernization of agriculture and facilitation of industrialization in Africa, the case of Tanzania and Malawi.

Africa

J. Matunhu (2011) reasoned that "Modernization in Africa means following the development footsteps of Europe (largely the former colonizer of Africa) by creating efficient techniques of production such as agricultural modernization. In agriculture modernization process farmers are encouraged to try new crops, new production methods, new marketing skills, introduction of hybrids, the green house technology, and genetically modified food, the use of artificial fertilizers, insecticides, tractors, and application of other scientific knowledge to replace the traditional one." Modernization theory of development has been examined over Africa and to some extent it has proved to be relevant to the development of some African countries since Africa can be facilitated

through moving from a feudal to a capitalist society (Jack, G., 1969). The reliance on the noble families, as the case is feudal system, acts like a hindering factor to private investors. However, a society based on capitalism, where the private sectors control investments, encourages more investments hence development

Malawi and Modernization Theory

Basing on the context of Malawi's social, political and economic setting, the use of modernization theory has had a mixture of both relevance and challenges in ensuring sustainable development. Though the west claim that modernization of agriculture as a back bone for Africa development, it is difficult to see any relevance of modernization in Malawi. Immediately after the flock of European settlements in Malawi during the colonial era, they advocated modern methods of agriculture and banned all traditional farming practices. However, of the 5 well documented periods of famine in Malawi; 1903, 1922, 1949, 1992 and 2002, 3 periods representing 60% time periods fell during the colonial era. Green Erik (2007) argues that this was due to the mechanism whereby the state actively transferred resources from the smallholder sector to the state or to the estate sector.

In this context, two assumptions of the modernization theory proved sharky from the start. The assumption that, modernization of agriculture in Malawi will lead to development of other sectors and stages of development as argued by Rostow model of five stages of development proved inapplicable in Malawi. The other assumption of modernization theory is call for external capital for investment, usually from the west or colonial masters to facilitate development in Africa. In many countries in Africa, fertile land was reclaimed by the colonial state and white estate owners. For example, in Zambia, the original inhabitants were driven to the unfertile highlands of Gweru while in Malawi, they were caged in the shire highlands. Nevertheless, Nyasaland's transfer of fertile land in the plains of Shire highlands from peasants (smallholder) farmers to European estate owner, rarely saved the country from the famine of 1902, 1922 and 1949.

After independence, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the first Malawian President made the same mistake of undermining smallholder farmers. Banda's approach is dubbed 'patronage following policy' as there was little explicit attention to social protection in his domestic policy phase as the government and the Malawi Congress Party played down the existence of chronic poverty (Booth et al., 2006). The initial domestic policies under Banda delivered quite rapid economic growth but this was achieved through a set of ultimately economically and politically unsustainable policies.

The emphasis was on cash crops and not food security of the country. This shows that they focused on the development of highly import dependent estate agriculture producing tobacco while the smallholder sector grew much more slowly and was restricted to cultivation of food crops and low value cash crops, while providing a low cost labour reserve for estate agriculture. Banda used promotion of Tobacco (Malawi's 'green gold') in the estate sector as an important means of dispensing political patronage to elites and emerging middle class based primarily in the central and, with time, in the northern regions. Middle class support was also garnered by investments in secondary and higher education and by growth in civil service employment, while mass support rested upon large scale visible investments in a variety of infrastructural and development projects, including fertilizer and credit subsidies, and a commitment to deliver national food security. This did not yield intended results particularly because of global supply shocks of early 1980s.

With the intervention of IMF and World Bank, Banda changed the policy from 'patronage' to 'liberalization', another aspect of modernization theory. This policy then looked to increase smallholder export crop production by increasing farmgate prices while holding down maize (food) prices and this encouraged the substitution of smallholder maize production by cash crops. However, this resulted in miserable failure with a food crisis in 1987, with rapid increases in maize prices. Maize shortage continued in the 1992 -94 period. This was worsened with the change of political party when the new party introduced "Starter Pack Programme" in 1998. This involved a universal provision of small packs of maize seed and fertilizer.

However, the 10 years from 1994 were characterized by severe macro-economic mismanagement, rampant inflation, dramatic falls in the value of the Malawi Kwacha, and a weakening of government capacity. Opportunistic privatization, funding diversions and the issue of bonds to finance budget deficits became an important source of patronage for a primarily southern region elite with commercial rather than agricultural interests, so that short term financial interests of politicians drove policy with 'policies following patronage' (Booth et al., 2006). This shows that western intervention to foster development in Malawi led to miserable and more harm than good.

Hardwick Tchale (2009) argued that agriculture determines the pace and direction of overall economic growth for Malawi. The analysis of GDP figures makes it clear that there is a close correlation between agricultural sector performance and overall economic performance. However, the main challenge is that modernization approach ignored smallholder farmers due to their primitive methods of agriculture, yet this did not spare the country from a series of famine.

Malawi's agricultural sector is dominated by smallholder farmers who comprise over 90% of the sector and operate under low-input rain-fed system. How the country's economy performs thus depends largely on how its smallholder farmers perform. Investments in the intensification of African agriculture have focused on field-scale innovations and inputs: the application of inorganic fertilizers and herbicides, hybrid and genetically modified crops, irrigation, mechanization and alternatives to cereal crops. However, these efforts have largely failed to deliver the wide-scale transformation of agricultural systems and increases in productivity that are associated with the linear approach of modernization theory (Eleanor K.K.J., 2020).

By 1998, the manufacturing sector made a small contribution to national income (12% of GDP) and employment and there is limited industrial diversification (Vision 2020). In addition, there are weak inter-and intra-industry linkages. Manufacturing sector is synonymous to industrial sector because it takes over 85% of industrial output. Despite, the 1998 well-articulated vision 2020, Industrial Production in Malawi averaged -1.09 percent from 2001 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 58.28 percent in April of 2017 which was just offsetting a record low of -69.10 percent in February of 2013 (www.tradingeconomics.com). Malawian manufacturing is carried out by about 100 companies involved in agricultural processing, textiles, clothing, and footwear production. There are many propositions that can be made to explain the failure of industrial growth in Malawi, firstly, monopoly dominance of the Press Corporation since 1997 in the past two decades limited the competitiveness of the sector. Secondly, overemphasis in the agricultural sector and an historical overreliance on cash crops for export revenue and also poor road networks. However, the overarching reason behind all these miserable is large of financial and human capital investment in the use of improved technology.

Evaluation of Malawi

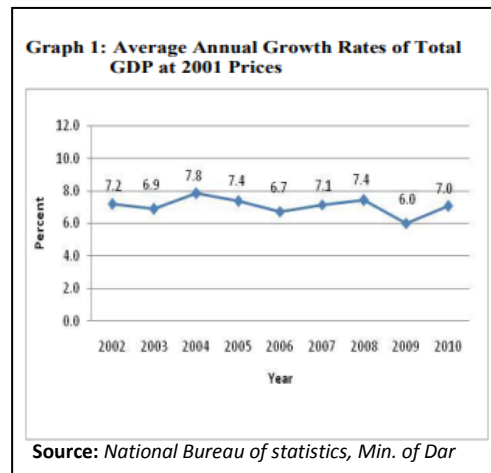
Had it been that the linear approach of Modernization theory had real life logic, underdevelopment, poverty and donor aid would have been an ancient story in Malawi. It is very surprising that up-to-date, Malawi is still using this theory as seen through a persistence and continuous struggle to improve the agricultural sector. For example, in 2011 the Government of Malawi agreed with its development partners to formulate the Agricultural Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp) aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, contributing to 6 percent annual growth of the agricultural sector, improving food security, diversifying food production to improve nutrition at household level, and increasing agricultural incomes of the rural people. For a long period of time this project

run (2011 – 2015), calls for a need to change the approach if development is to come anytime soon. Even the rate of speed of the Shire Valley Transformation Project just shows how much difficult it is to acquire and employ expensive technology in the agricultural sector in Malawi.

Tanzania

Tanzania has seen a fair use of modernization theory with opportunities to achieve rapid development through modernization over time. Tanzania gave agriculture precedence as the backbone of its economy. Taking policy instruments and programmes to improve country's agriculture; MKUKUTA strategy in 2000-2005 and NKURABITA which aimed at increasing rate of agricultural activities was promising but it became efficient after the adaptation of modern agricultural strategies through the KILIMO KWANZA agricultural strategy in 2005-2012 aimed at increasing the use of modern technology to the agricultural sector (Kweka, D., 2015). Employment of tractors, artificial fertilizers, introduction of new crops and irrigation schemes, and modern methods of cultivation has brought about the shift from subsistence farming to surplus production. By Surplus production one can produce products enough to sustain them and have a surplus that can be taken to the market for sell.

As shown in figure 1.1, Tanzania economically boosted its economy through cultivation of cash crops which are sold within and outside the country through exportation. Tanzania the implementation of Kilimo Kwanza technological strategy. By the year 2014 CIA word book report for Tanzania's economic development listed agriculture as 24.1% of the GDP of Tanzania. Socially, the MKUKUTA and KILIMO KWANZA strategies brought about employment opportunities to individuals hence improvement of living standard of the people.



Another relevancy of modernization in Tanzania has been the facilitation of industrial production leading to reduction of over reliance in agricultural production. Looking up to the developed countries, their economy is mostly based and focused to industrial production. So far this may be the current strategy under the fifth government famously articulated by the current president “Tanzania ya viwanda”. Since the revenue earned from agriculture is quite minimal to stimulate

rapid development, industrialization in other hand will influence rapid development since industrial products are of high value, and hence fetches more returns, as compared to agricultural products.

The modernization theory also advocates for the use of advanced technology rather than primitive technology (Reyes, G.E., 2001). Apart from agriculture and industries, there is a need to improve technology in other sectors that are of big impact to the development of Tanzania. By improving means of transport and communication such as roads, railways, waterways and including their vessels that is vehicles, trains, ships and modern boats. This reduces time taken to move from one place to another, hence increasing the productivity of people and delivery of goods to the market. Tanzania so far is improving the transportation and communication means, for example the introduction of “Mwendo Kasi” buses which means “Rapid Buses” (<https://www.tripadvisor.com>) have reduced at a big rate the problem of time consuming in moving from one place to another in Dar es salaam city hence boosting the efficiency of productivity among people.

Furthermore, as per modernization advocates, Tanzania needs to adopt market-oriented labour and shun the family/clan labour. The traditional African societies carried out task in a family/clan manner, where family members do the work for each other perhaps suitable for Africa since this method is not costly. This has one major drawback of applying unskilled labour in sectors that may need people with experience and skills. Unskilled labour is less productive hence the job done is not to standard but the use of skilled labour ensures efficient productivity and improvement of standard of the task itself. People as a core factor to any country's development require skills and profession to combat the changing environment. The use of skilled labour assures efficiency and productivity to the society and nation at large. For the same cause, Tanzania has made a step so far on this taking for example the introduction of the Labour market under the Ministry of Labour.

Evaluation

The premises of modernization theory of development include moving from culture-based society to an institution-based society. This also involves a shift from a rural society setting to an urban setting. The urban setting is characterized with easy access to social amenities such as good schools, good hospitals, recreational centers, and electricity. Malawi and Tanzania have done a lot of effort in changing the bases of the societies since Independence. Improvement of culture and norms, empowerment of women as opposed by the traditional cultures of Africa, improvement of rural areas by construction of infrastructure and improvement of social services in rural

settlements. This transition from culturally based society to institution-based society has brought the introduction of better social services such as good schools, hospitals and supply of electricity is an indication for the improvement of the living standard of the people.

Limitations of the theory in Africa

There are many challenges arising from employment of the modernization theory, for example, Capital requirement or insufficient of capital Modernization theory is based on investments in different sectors and improvement of methods of production which requires funding. Malawi, Tanzania and many other African countries are still a developing and not capable of raising sufficient funds to invest in modernization at once, this has been observed through different projects that are financed by foreign countries at the expense of Africa's mineral resources, we see roads being built by the help of developed countries, sometimes the aid is in form of loans or by their own target on the minerals of these countries.

People's perception and resistance to changes is another challenge faced in Africa in the shift from traditional to modern societies. Basing on beliefs and culture of the people there is some sort of resistance to changes reasoning that it influences destruction of our culture and traditions and adaptation of the western culture which some of which is likely to be considered as bad cultural practices.

Another key challenge is that modernization allows neocolonialism as an allowance of the colonial era. This is seen through weak political or legal system of African countries. Many African countries have not yet formulated their own legal systems rather have just made few amendments of the colonial era legal system. These adopted constitutions give leaders unlimited powers which makes the laws susceptible to corruption. This explains why many African countries have suffered from chronic corruption cases up-to-date. The fight against corruption has lasted long enough due to weak adopted political settings like no legal authority is there to challenge the actions of the president. The president is also entitled as the head of state empowered over all bodies of the state, this is to say that; if the president is corrupt then the fight against corruption will always be theoretical.

Conclusion

There is a lot to be desired in Africa in quest to realize its productive potential. African countries need to increase research and development to as to discover the right development formula in their own context rather than buying inapplicable linear models with unreliably shaky premises.

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