

# Culture: A Basis for Economic and Human Development: The Case of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The paper examined culture as a basis for economic and human development with reference to Nigeria as a case study. It discusses the role of culture in economic and human development, established linkage between and among culture, economic and human development variables and relevance of culture in economic and human development. Data used were based on countries whose economic and human development were evident in culture such as Chile, Sweden, India, Ireland etc. it was found that the advent of colonial master in Nigeria has trample on the culture of people of Nigeria and depleted her values. The colonial master brought a culture of "divide and Rule" which permeates across the nation thus, serving as hinderances to both economic and human development since independence. It was concluded that any economic and human development that alienate culture will not withstand test of time and cannot be seen to represent development. Recommendation was that developmental efforts should not ignore culture.

**Keywords:** culture, economic development, human development, national planning,

## 1. Introduction

Culture is gradually gaining presence in development discourse, as policy makers acknowledge that the cultural norms that people observe influence their attitudes and choices, and that people need not and in many societies often does not act autonomously. Although, there is no consensus on what culture entails, how it matters or on the implications for policy. However, what is clear is that is it hard to ignore the fact people's behavioral pattern varies with their background (Lawal and Abe. 2011). It is then pertinent and natural to ask to what extent these variations are important for development analysis in general and economic development in particular.

The economic development main focus is on the improvement of the economic well-being and quality of life for a community and so also, human development borders on creation of an enabling environment in which people can develop their full potential and live a productive life. In addition, live in accordance with their needs and interests without prejudice to life and property. The implication of these two concepts seems to make people the real wealth of nations and it is therefore expedient to understand the ways of life of these people vis-à-vis their values, beliefs, norms, interest etc. as these will form the basis for measuring any economic or human development.

### 1.1 Objectives

The main objective of this research was to examine how culture serves as basis for economic and human development which was achieved through the specific objectives stated below i.e. to;

1. identify the key issues in culture, economic and human development
2. develop the linkage that exists between and among culture, economic, and human development.
3. identify the effect of globalization on culture and its implication on economic and human development
4. identify the relevance of culture in economic and human development of a nation

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

Many dominant development paradigms have come and gone, among them are Rostow's stages of Economic growth, National planning, focus on the poorest of the poor, appropriate technology, dependency, focus on private sector, the Washington consensus, institutional development etc. At no time in this paradigm odyssey have culture, values and attitudes been confronted. There exist all manners of explanations with regard to underlying causal factors on the economic and human development such as Geography, climate, previous colonization and vagaries of history loom large in contemporary explanation of economic divergence. However, culture consequences for development have been given short shrift. The possible reasons for these are manifold, however, Olson & Swamy (2000) narrowed it down by saying that the main cause for this short coming is deep seated dogma that has prevailed in social sciences and policy circles by simply rejecting every explanation that invokes a group cultural attribute. Its distinctive attributes, values and predispositions and the resulting behaviour of its members. The puzzling question is therefore raised, if there can be a measurable phenomenon

without proper understanding the ‘mental programme’ which are developed in the family from the early childhood and reinforced by the other socialization agents. Can economic and human development goals of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, employment opportunities, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life be achieved without recourse to the ways of life of the people? Hence, the need for this research work.

## 2. Literature Review

The reviews of relevant literature were done in relation to the keywords in the paper theme i.e. Culture, Economic and Human development

### 2.1 Culture

Culture connotes different meanings to different users and that explains why we have many definitions on the concept. Below are some of the common definitions

1. According to Taylor in Fagayinbo (2015) it is defined as the complex whole of man’s acquisitions of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs, technology which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation
2. Ajetunmobi (2000) in Fagayinbo (2015) culture is the society’s entire heritage, including all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skill acquired by individual members of a community as well as their learned behaviour, habits and techniques which are passed on from one generation to another via the process of socialization.

From the above definitions, it is clear that every society has a culture which is continually passed from one age to another. We can therefore deduce that culture is a way of life of a group of people the behaviours, values and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them i.e. is the sum total of all learned behaviour of a group. Since culture is the cumulative of deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, norms, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notion of time roles, spatial relations, concept of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Aluko, 2016). It is then crystal clear that this will definitely have bearing on what will be the trends of human activities towards economic and human development.

### 2.2 Economic development

Economic development is a term that economists, politicians and others have used frequently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century although culture has been in the west for centuries guise such as modernization, westernization, and especially industrialization when discussing economic development but no one is sure when the concept actually originated (Ogai, 2007). However, many were of the same opinion it could be closely bound up with the evolution of capitalism and the demise of feudalism (Akindele, Oginni & Agada, 2013). Economic development is the overall development of economic wealth of countries or regions for the well - being of the inhabitants. However, with a policy perspective, economic development can be defined as effort that seek to improve the economic well - being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing and tax base. It is worth nothing that there are significant differences between economic growth and economic development. The term economic growth refers to the increase (or growth) of a specific measure such as real national income, gross domestic product (GDP) or per capita income. (when the GDP of a nation rises, economist refer to it as economic growth). Whereas the term economic development on the other hand, implies much more. It typically refers to improvement, in a variety of indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, and poverty rates etc. The economic growth as a measure of economic welfare does not take into account important aspect such as leisure time, environmental quality, freedom, or social justice. This made economic growth not be a sufficient definition for economic development.

### 2.3 Areas of Economic Development

In its broadest sense, economic development encompasses three major areas

1. Policies that governments undertake to meet broad economic objectives such as price stability, high employment, expanded tax base sustainable growth. Such efforts include monetary and fiscal policies
2. Policies and programmes to provide infrastructure and services such as highways, parks, affordable housing, crime prevention and qualitative education
3. Policies and programmes to explicitly directed at job creation and retention, expansion and technology as well as real estate development.

### 2.4 Objectives of Economic Development

Todaro (2008) in Aluko (2016) identified the following as the practical objectives of any economic development to;

1. produce more 'life sustaining' necessities such as food, shelter and health care as well as broadening their distribution
2. raise standard of living and individual self esteem
3. expand economic and social choice and reduce fear as well as anxiety

## 2.5 The Human Development

Human development relates to economic and standard of living. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives with their needs and interest. The human development is a holistic development model. It embraces every developmental issue, including growth, social investment, people's empowerment, provision of basic needs and social safety, nets political and cultural freedom and all other aspects of people's lives. To this end, human development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value and it is more than economic growth, which is only a means of enlarging peoples' choice

## 2.6 Focus of Human Development

The primary focus of human development borders on

1. The development must put people at the centre of its concerns
2. The purpose of development is to enlarge all human choices, not just income
3. Concern with both building up human capabilities (through investment in people)
4. Equity, sustainability, production and empowerment

## 2.7 Measurement of Human Development

This is done by the use of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX(HDI). It is a composite index of social economic progress which has three components namely

- Longevity as measure by life expectancy at birth
- Knowledge measure by adult literacy
- Income measured by current real GDP per capita in 'purchasing power parity'.

It is a standard means of measuring well - being as it relates to economics and standard of living

## 2.8 Relationship Between Culture and Development

Both culture and development have become protean concepts, with an elusive and sometimes bewildering variety of meanings. However, discussion is confined to viewing development as a process of economic growth, a rapid and sustained expansion of production, productivity and income per head (sometimes qualified by insistence on a wide spread for the benefiting of this growth). UNDP's annual development report (2000) summarized the views early expressed by Rostow (1961); Rowen (1996); Muller (1997); Rodrick (1999) that development is seen as a process that enhances the effective freedom of people to pursue whatever they have reason to value. This underlining focus of human development and economic development is culturally conditioned and bound because what constitute human development and economic development to people is embedded in knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs, values thus, a basis for their ways of life which invariably determine what is viewed as economic and social progress

The role of culture is different in two interpretations of development. The first view emphasized economic growth, culture does not play a fundamental role but purely instrumental (Lewis, 1955; Helliwell, 1993; Sen, 2004): it can help to promote or hinder rapid economic growth. It is thus, an instrumental agent for the process of economic growth and development. It is therefore important to acknowledge the far reaching instrumental function of culture in development, and at the same time to recognise that this cannot be all there is to culture in judgment of development. There is, in addition, the role of culture as a desirable end in itself, as giving meaning to our existence (Schein, 1990; Sims, 2000). This dual role of culture applies not only in the context of the promotion of economic growth, but also in relation to other objectives, such as sustaining the physical environment, preserving civil institutions in a society.

In the views of Sen (2004), well-being does not basically depend on the per capita GNP, it requires the 'enrichment of human lives through cultural expression and practice', thus providing a basic framework for development. Culture is an essential dimension of development because when development is not tailored towards the local relevant traditions and institutions, it becomes meaningless in the face of the people. This however explains why the government of any country would strive to ensure people, their culture, society as well as their organisation are taken into account in any economic developmental policy. Culture influences whether and how people participate in political activities and the types of social and support associations that exist, which can be critical to economic and development success.

Cultures thus contribute to the core development objectives by helping.

1. To provide new opportunities for poor communities to generate income from their own cultural

knowledge

2. To catalyze local level development through communities using their diverse social, cultural and economic resources.
3. To strengthen social capital by providing marginalized groups a basis to pursue activities that enhances their self - respect and efficacy; to strengthen respect for diversity and social inclusion.
4. To diversify strategies of human development and capacity building for knowledge based and dynamic societies.

To this extent, development and culture are linked in a number of different ways, the connections are inescapable complex and the role of cultural factors as mean of development cannot be neglected because cultural conditions can exert a strong influence on behaviour, and through that can affect economic choices and business decisions as well as social and political as well as political behaviour.

### 3. Methodology

Data used here were cases involving culture, human, and economic development in some nations of the world. Our samples are Sweden, Quebec, Ireland, Chile, Spain and India. Causes of various culture, human and economic developments from different theses nations were considered.

#### 3.1 Chile

Chile was the only Latin American country to implement the Washington consensus policies. Chile also enjoys a typical entrepreneurial tradition. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Chileans were noted for their entrepreneurial skills and they provided a considerable impetus to the growth of the Argentine economy as well as their own. Chileans geography and climate are similar to California and thus contributed to Chile's entrepreneurial endowment. Foreign investment has played a key role in Chile's economic development, especially in copper mining. But the entrepreneurial response to the open economic politics installed during the Pinochet dictatorship and sustained since 1990 by elected left - of - center government has come principally from Chileans. Entrepreneurial successes recorded have been in line with prevailing culture of the people. Chile has been one of Latin America's fastest-growing economies in recent decades, enabling the country to significantly reduce poverty. Between 2000 and 2015, the population living in poverty (on US\$ 4 per day) decreased from 26 percent to 7.9 percent.

#### 3.2 Sweden

Nordic countries are considered the champions of progress based on the measure of ten indicators of political, economic and social development, ranging from united nations human development index to world value survey data in trust. All the five Nordic countries; Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland have a Lutheran background. Lutheranism is the source of the Nordic value system that has produced high educational levels, extensive welfare programs, and high-quality entrepreneurship symbolized by Finland's Nokia and Sweden's Volvo, Saab, Ikea. The compatibility of economic efficiency and social spending in the Nordic context is apparent from the 2006 World Economic Forum ratings. Sweden's present economic and social prosperity was built on the lessons learned from the financial crisis in the early 1990s. Governments pursued reforms and fiscal sustainability became institutionalized because it is line with culture of the people. Stable economic policies combine with competitiveness, innovation and an open approach to trade to make Sweden a model for economic success. The economic success of the Nordic societies and protestant society in general, strongly in general, strongly suggest that weber's focus on Calvinist 'tension' was too narrow and that is the protestant virtues of education, achievement, work ethic, merit, frugality, honesty universal culture that is the real force behind the spirit of capitalism

#### 3.3 Ireland and Spain

The Irish and Spanish economic 'miracles' have much in common. They were both triggered largely by the opening up of inward looking economic policies. Foreign investment particularly in the case of Spain, tourism played major roles, compensating at outset for domestic shortfalls in both capital and entrepreneurship. Both benefited handsomely from the assistance programs of the ELL. Both emphasized one of the least educated European countries to one of the most educated. And both, the influence of the catholic church declined sharply, to the point where one hears the term 'post catholic' applied to both of them. Both cultures were transformed.

#### 3.4 Quebec:

Prior to the 'Quiet Revolution' (1960-1975), Quebec was underdeveloped when compared to other Canadian provinces: poorer, less industrialized, less educated, less healthy, and less democratic. Today, the indicators of progress in Quebec compared favourably with the rest of Canada  
What brought this transformation?

- The use of inclusive nationalism to promote unity, effort and sacrifice.
- A process of 'declericalization' in which the church's experience was drastically reduced, above is education, over a period of five years (1961-1966)

Like Ireland and Spain, Quebec is sometimes referred to as 'post catholic'.

- Massive resource allocation to education.
- Promotion of gender equality, particular in workplace.
- The creation of a modern state spearheading development ranging from Cirque De Soleil to advance biotech industries. A 'Corporatist' approach, bringing business, labour, the professions etc. together with for policy discussions has been generally successful
- State led efforts to reduce inequality

Ironically, Quebec's value profile has converged with that of anglophone Canada simultaneously with the growth of pro-sovereignty sentiment in the province

### 3.5 India

India under the Mughals, accounted for more than twenty percent of the world's GDP in the 18<sup>th</sup> century principally because of textile and agricultural production. This fact coupled with the economic success of many diaspora Indians, including those who have migrated to the United States, which suggests the presence of universal progress values in Indian culture. Moreover, the parallel between the unfolding Indian economic miracles and the East Asians miracles and striking: the opening up of Indian economy in the 1990s produced a response similar to that produced by 'To get rich is glorious in China'. India's economic surge has been fueled in part by its large pool of English language speakers, a valuable asset also enjoyed by the Ireland, and by foreign investment focused on this linguistic asset. But Indian entrepreneurs have played a prominent role in the surge. India is a country of numerous ethnic and religious groups. India is for example the second most populous Muslim country (after Indonesia). The ways of life of the people of India were preserved despite the advent of the English Language speakers.

Culture does matter in economic development. Thus government, development assistance institutions, think – tanks, and universities must confront culture and cultural changes. The incorporation of cultural analysis and cultural change into the UNIX of policy and project design factors significantly accelerate the pace of standard of living as a by-product of human and economic development.

Cultural relativism fits with and reinforces, the predilection of many economists to think that people are the same the world over. William () opined that 'maybe there is a lot to be said for the old-fashioned economist view that people are the same everywhere and will respond to the right economic opportunities and incentives'. Consensus worked well in India and poorly in Latin America (with the exception of Chile). Where socialism or even authoritarian socialism appear to be alive and well as in the cases of Cuba and Venezuela, cultural factors may not supply the whole explanation, but surely, they are relevant. Although in the world today, socialism or capitalism is gradually becoming a thing of the past.

### 3.6 Nigerian Experiences

Before the advent of the colonial masters i.e. pre-colonial era, Nigeria was governed by set of rules as provided for by the culture of the inhabitants, which gave the people a sense of moral values and acceptable behavioral patterns. These set of rules were unwritten but were well imbibed and were also being passed from one generation to another. However, with the advent of the colonial masters, these set of rules were trampled upon so as to establish themselves and thus, replace this with culture that were contrast to the inhabitants' ways of life i.e. 'DIVIDE and RULE'. The rules have greatly influenced our ethnical orientation as a people. Per adventure, our great grandfathers could have totally resisted them but they were not educated enough to discern the implications of what attitude or act could have on future events (Aluko, 2016).

When the colonial masters were leaving i.e. at our independence, Nigerian were at a cross road of ethical dilemmas, because the moral values have been depleted to its foundation, the moral values were replaced with alien culture in the name of civilization and democracy. The researchers are not of the opinion that civilization and democracy are bad but they did not take cognizance of people's culture as well as values placed on different issues. Today, Nigerian are not just witnessing the efforts of the evil perpetuated by eroding our moral values which prevented Nigerian from having sound ethical behaviour thus impeding our economic and human development

### 4. Findings

From the review of relevant literatures, it was found that the focus of culture, economic and human development is the individual human being, who is both the ultimate objective of development and a means to attain it. For an alert, skilled, educated, well-nourished, healthy, well-motivated labour force is the most productive asset of a society. People, however, are not self-contained atoms; they work together, cooperate, compete and interact in

many ways. it is a culture that connects them with one another and makes development of individual possible. Similarly, it is culture that defines how people relate to nature and their physical environment, to the earth and to the cosmos, and through which we express our attitudes to and beliefs in other forms of life, both animal and plant. It is in this sense that all forms of development, including human development, ultimately are determined by cultural factors therefore, culture is not a means to material progress; it is the end and aim of 'development' seen as the flourishing of human existence in all its form and as a whole

If on the one hand, culture is a way of living and development on the other hand is the widening of human opportunities and choices, then, an analysis of culture and development shows different ways on how people living together affect the enlargement of human choices. A country's culture is not changeless or static. On the contrary, it is in a constant state of flux, influencing and being influenced by other cultures, either through voluntary exchange and extension or through conflict, force and oppression. Thus, the change in Nigerian culture to divide and rule is solely responsible for poor economic and human development experienced since independence.

## 5. Conclusion

A country's culture therefore reflects its history, mores, institution and attitudes, its social movements, conflicts and struggle, and the configuration of political power, internally and in the world at large. At the same time, it is dynamic and continually evolving. It is for this reason that attempts to make culture a qualifier of development, as in the notion of 'culturally sustainable' development, must be undertaken with great care. It should be interpreted in such a way to confine culture to the role of an instrument that 'sustains' some other objective; nor should it be defined so as to exclude the possibility that the culture can grow and developed. It should not be given an excessively conservationist meaning. Unlike the physical environment, where we dare not improve on the best that nature provides, culture is the fountain of our progress and creativity. Once we shift our view from the purely instrumental view of culture to awarding it a constructive, constitutive and creative role, we have to see development in terms that include cultural growth.

Therefore, unless economic development has a cultural basis, it can never lead to truly lasting development. Culture is not something to be considered for consideration but is fundamental to development because culture does matter in economic development.

## 6. Recommendations

One of the basis of our findings and conclusion, that cultural matters are integral parts of lives we lead, the following are the recommendations;

- a) Since development can be seems as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared towards development should not ignore the world of culture of people within that locality.
- b) Culture should be figured among the end-based consideration on developmental analysis.
- c) Economic development should be in tune with the culture for meaningful improvement on the lives of the people.
- d) Economic and social changes in pursuit of development can certainly influence positively and negatively the opportunities for cultural pursuits and it would be appropriate to see that the effect of these opportunities receive attention.
- e) Governments, development assistance institutions and think tanks and other policy makers to confront culture and cultural changes into the mix of policy and project design to significantly accelerate the pace of economic development

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