

DEVELOPMENT, THE HUMAN PERSON AND RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT

Definitions

Development may be conceptualized as a process. Development involves a series of stages with the notion that each new stage is different and more progressive or better.

a) Economic development approach

Walter Rostow (1971) presented the modernization theory as a model to be used by developing countries to achieve development. Inglehart (1997:5) defines modernization broadly as “a process that increases the economic and political capabilities of a society; it increases economic capabilities through industrialization and political capabilities through bureaucratization. Modernization theorists noted that modernization is attractive because enables a society to move from being poor to being rich.”

Rostow (1971) provided an important contribution to the economic component of modernization theory. In his book; *The stages of economic growth*, he argued that although modernization first occurred in the west, it can occur in all societies provided these societies meet certain preconditions. Notably, a wholesale change must take place in underdeveloped societies in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty, ignorance and low productivity. Not only has the economy have to be transformed but also the education system and the ways of thinking and acting (Schech and Haggis 2000). This excerpt from a speech by the first Indian prime minister, Nehru illustrates how modernization requires leaving behind tradition;

We have got to get out of many of these traditional ways of thinking, traditional ways of acting, traditional ways of production, traditional ways of distribution, and traditional ways of consumption. We have got to get out of all that into what might be called more modern ways of doing so... the test of a country's advance is how far it is utilizing modern techniques. Modern technique is not a matter of just getting a tool and using it. Modern technique follows modern thinking. You can't get hold of a modern tool and have an ancient mind. It won't work. Nehru quoted in (Myrdal 1968:58-7)

According to Rostow, evolution from traditional preindustrial societies to modern industrial societies takes place through five stages which he referred to as the stages of economic growth;

1. Traditional stage
2. Preconditions for take off
3. Take off stage
4. Drive to maturity
5. Stage of high mass consumption

For many years development was seen in terms of economic growth and as a shift of the economic structure away from production of primary goods (agriculture and raw materials) to manufacturing and service activities. These theories dominated development thinking in the 1950s and 1960s.

For most economists and policy analysts, development was understood as economic development which meant rising incomes as measured by Gross National Product GNP rather than individual well being. For modernization theorists, development is approached from a materialistic perspective.

This crude linear model came under increasing criticism in the 1960s and 70s. The notion of growth without development became dominant with reference to countries like Brazil where impressive GNP per capita growth and a degree of structural transformation as proposed by Rostow (1971) seemed to coexist with growing inequality and poverty for many.

Presently, over a billion people are consigned to subsistence lifestyles and live on less than a dollar a day. Therefore we have secure grounds on which to question the Western led model of development that has characterized the past 50 years (Mc Cann and Mc Closkey (2003).

According to United Nations (2000) *Human Development report*, by the late 1990s a fifth of the world's population living in the highest income countries controlled 86% of the global Gross domestic product. The bottom fifth controlled just 1%. Thus the benefits of globalization have not been distributed according to social needs.

Weaknesses of the economic development approach

1. GNP is an economic measurement and by definition does not take into account non economic criteria such as social, cultural and political considerations.
2. GDP when expressed in per capita terms takes no account of how resources are distributed. GNP per capita is a statistical average that has no relationship to the actual resources available to any person in a country. A country with a high GNP per capita could have a highly unequal distribution of resources with the majority of its population living in extreme poverty or even destitution (Sen 1999). For example, Namibia ranks as a middle income country because of the wealth of small elite. The richest 5% of the population receive 70% of the GDP while the poorest 55% receive 5% of the GDP (UNDP 2000).
3. GNP is based on market prices and does not take into consideration non market transactions. In poorer economies, a variety of economic activities such as the cultivation of food, processing and cooking of food, repair and maintenance of clothing and domestic equipment, provision of household food and water, caring for children, the elderly and sick and participation in communal activities may not be included in GNP calculations. These activities are usually performed by women hence GDP emerge as gender biased indicators of development. However not only women's work is undervalued or excluded from GNP as activities in the informal sector such as barter trade are usually underestimated or ignored completely by GNP measurement.
4. Market prices may not reflect the real social value or cost of producing an economic resource. For example, a chemical factory might produce a drug which may cause considerable pollution and the cost of that is unlikely to be reflected in the market price of the drug.

Economists define underdevelopment in terms of lack of what the rich could have in terms of money and material possessions. Later theorists, especially anthropologists have been at the forefront of criticizing this theory of stages of economic growth. Dissatisfaction with the economic development approach led to a new approach to development called the “Human Development Approach”

b) Human development approach

Human development involves the process of expanding capabilities and access to opportunities in the social and political arenas and therefore improvement in the overall quality of life. The most basic of these capabilities are: to lead healthy lives, to be knowledgeable and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living (UNDP 2000).

The new concept of development views development as a comprehensive economic, social and political process whose main objective is to improve the well being of the entire population. It takes people as the main actors in the process of improving their welfare.

According to this approach, a society’s standard of living should not be judged by the average level of income but by people’s capabilities to live the life they choose. Since human development is the overriding purpose of economic development, underdevelopment is viewed as lack of capabilities rather than lack of income per se. The human person is the central object of development and should be the beneficiary of development.

Thus, development may also be conceptualized in terms of improvement in human well being or living standards. Living standards can be measured through: longer lives, fewer health problems, higher educational standards, increase in income or earning capacity, political and economic stability at the national level, greater working opportunities, greater control of one’s life and involvement in decision making processes.

Weakness of the Human Development approach

Despite the all encompassing nature of the human development approach, some concern has been raised that it can also conceal other aspects of social and political inequality which are not captured in the human development index. For example, racial or political discrimination or religious marginalization.

c) Development as freedom

According to Amartya Sen (1999) development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Expansion of freedom is viewed both as

- a primary end and
- the primary means of development.

Freedom as a primary end of development

Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development for instance, identifying development with the growth of GNP or with the rise in personal incomes or with industrialization, technological advance or social modernization.

Growth of GNP and of individual incomes are important means for expanding the real freedoms enjoyed by members of society but freedom depends on other determinants i.e. social arrangements (education and health facilities) as well as civil and political rights (i.e. the right to participate in public discussion and scrutiny) (Sen 1999).

If development enhances freedom, there is a major argument for concentrating on that overarching objective rather than on some particular means or some specially chosen list of instruments. Viewing development in terms of substantive freedoms directs our attention to the ends that make development important rather than to some of the means that play a prominent part in the process.

Sen (1999) argues that development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom such as

1. Poverty and tyranny
2. Poor economic opportunities and systematic social deprivation
3. Neglect of public facilities and intolerance or over activity of repressive states.

Freedom as a means to development

Expansion of freedom is also viewed as a primary means to development. The instrumental role of freedom concerns the way different kinds of freedoms (rights, opportunities and entitlements) contribute to the expansion of human freedom in general thus promoting development (Sen 1999).

References

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4. Schech S. and Haggis J. (2000) *Culture and development: a critical introduction*. USA: Blackwell publishers.
5. Sen Amartya (1999) *Development as freedom*. New York: Anchor books.
6. United Nations (2000) Human Development report.

Read:

- b) The stages of economic growth