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**The Legacy of Mwalimu Nyerere in
Leadership and Socio-Economic
Development in a New Era of
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Towards People-centered Development in Africa: The Need to Africanise Social Sciences

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Abstract

People-centred development philosophy is one of the important visionary ambitions of Africanists like Mwalimu Nyerere, geared towards founding economic and technological development with a human eye. This was possible because, in most African countries, development goals were and are still inspired by Western methodological and theoretical models that largely ignore or underplay social norms, culture, and people's mindsets. This study was undertaken to explore ways in which Africa can harness its inherent socio-cultural values in struggling for development. Data were collected using a document review to establish development paths pursued by emerging economies and through interviews to enquire about what should be done. The study has found that fast development (i.e. China and Korea) can partly be explained by the fact that these countries retained cultural values (Confucianism) to foster rapid development of their economies. Given this trend, the findings suggest the following measures. Firstly, Africa must establish social science theoretical-based research centres. Secondly, African scientific research should use the inductive approach in research and invest in the recording of oral narratives. Thirdly, Afrocentric researchers must consolidate efforts to avoid being pulled by Western-centric approaches. Fourthly, social science knowledge should be approached using a multidisciplinary approach. Fifthly, the government should invest in curricula reform even at lower levels of social studies. Sixthly, Africans must promote local languages in explaining African realities. In conclusion, it is cautioned that adopting people-centred development with an Africanization spirit does not mean abandoning global trends in material and technological development. Rather, African states should primarily invest in people's base to create positive attitudes, patriotism, and integrity, a practice exercised in countries like China and Korea.

Keywords: People-centred Development, Africanise Social Sciences, Indigenous Knowledge, African Perspectives

1. Introduction

Debates and practices related to the conceptualization and implementation of the development agenda have taken at least two paths: monetary-based and people-centred. To the majority of the so-called developed countries, development has been associated with economic growth, GDP, and advancement in science and technology (Aspalter, 2006). *Consequently*, African countries, due to colonial legacy and dependence, and drawing insights from Karl Marx' and Rostow's stages of development, adopted this linear Western epistemic approach to development. Karl Marx's development is characterized by five stages: communalism, primitive stage, feudalism, capitalism end up with socialism. Similarly, Rostow (1960) had the same five stages, namely: traditional society, in which the economy is dominated by subsistence activity; transitional stage, where there is an increased specialization to generate surpluses for trading; take-off stage, in which industrialization starts, followed by drive to maturity and lastly high mass consumption, which is full development. Thus, upon obtaining independence African states emulated these western paths. Tanzania for example, followed the Ujamaa vision which is Marxian socialism.

The Western development path indeed envisages improvement in people's lives but puts primacy into material things. It focuses on building infrastructure, science, and technology, and accumulating monetary investments. According to Mkandawire (1994), as the trends are rooted in a long history of the occidental world, it remains sustainable to the Western communities. In contrast, in a continent like Africa where the population had been decimated by slavery, colonial labour, poverty and diseases, there is a need to invest first in the people (*ibid*). The colonial modes of development, from an African perspective not only are constructed on exploitative modes, but they also promote the spirit of dismantling the previous stage of development for the sake of constructing the following one (negation of the negation) which is like to dismantle the base to construct upper floors (Cohen, 1978).

As a matter of illustration, postcolonial economies obliged Africans to abandon local traditional ways of life to be modernized (Park, 2019). Africans were compelled to neglect social norms, culture, and indigenous knowledge to modernize. Since cultural norms form the basis for societal harmony and entail reservoirs of human values, Africa fails to free itself from corruption, bad governance, nepotism, laziness, ethnic violence, civil wars and, worst of all, colonial dependence (Park, 2019; Mkandawire, 1994). It is at this juncture that

the need for founding development on human virtues and values like skills, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes seems inevitable.

Alternatively, over the last few decades, the world has progressively been reorienting its development vision from economic advancement to people-centred development. According to UNDP (2011), people-centred development puts human beings at the centre of the development process as beneficiaries and as drivers of the development process. This is exactly what Nyerere (1968) characterizes: not obtained from exploitation or through illegal acts and development for the benefit of the people. It is a development constructed within the human tenets of integrity, freedom, human rights, democracy, and respect for people's cultures. According to Nyerere,

To be meaningful, development must be people-centred. If not, people-centred, development cannot be true. If we affirm that it is people-centred... We should mention several things such as people's education, health, clothing and transport. But we must also include their culture ... we must also include their freedom and democracy¹ (my translation from Swahili)

People-centred development is a development approach that focuses on improving local communities' self-reliance, social justice, and participatory decision-making (Nyerere, 1968) which are tenets of social science.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica², social science is "any branch of academic study or science that deals with human behaviour in its social and cultural aspects. Similarly, Eller (2017: 17) defines it as the "systematic use of scientific methods to study and explain human beings and human behaviour". Discipline-wise, social sciences encompass but are not limited to geography, sociology, anthropology, economics, and social psychology. Although nowadays, the tendency is to place fields such as language, arts, and philosophy into the humanities cluster, for the sake of this study, social science includes both 'social science and humanities.

Unlike natural (material) sciences whose methods are universal, the understanding of science sciences is construed by people's interpretation of

¹ The speech is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHDwnVc4zJo> (accessed 8 October 2023).

²<https://www.britannica.com/> produce in early 1990' accessed on November 12, 2023.

reality, hence the reality is drawn from the people themselves. According to global economists who met in Stockholm in 2016 (UN, 2016), the role of social norms, culture, and mindsets in scientific and economic advancement can never be undermined. They state that “Our values and culture are not just important in themselves; they also affect how an economy performs. A society in which people have trust in one another does better than one in which people do not”. (UN, 2016: 5). In education and public spheres according to Macer (2012, 14.):

The first relevant role for social science in the public sphere is to educate students to develop the knowledge and skills required to become public researchers, experts, officers, managers, professionals, and above all, responsible citizens of open democratic societies, aware of their rights and obligations.

The present study was conceived with two objectives in mind: firstly, to trace the development path that emerging economies (like China and South Korea) and secondly, to propose what can be done by African countries to involve the masses in the development process. The study is divided into five parts: the methodological part, the section on literature review and the philosophical, the findings and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

Theoretically, this study was inspired by the decolonization stance. According to scholars, decolonization draws insights from the colonialism theory which assumes that despite the end of colonialism as an equal relationship, colonial mentality (i.e. coloniality) is still persistent in the minds of people and continues to shape and ground today's political, and economic, social, and knowledge systems (Fuentes, 2022; Macer 2012; Mignolo, 2006). Decoloniality entails epistemic reconstitution and reparations of thinking patterns to reimagine the categories of thought and knowledge that underpin social, economic, and political structures (Fuentes, 2022). According to Mignolo (2005: 114). “Decolonizing the social sciences means producing, transforming, and disseminating knowledge that is not dependent on the epistemology of North Atlantic modernity – the norms of the disciplines and the problems of the North Atlantic – but that, on the contrary, responds to the needs of the African population”.

But how and why decolonize social science? History indicates that, since their origins, social science studies have been embedded with modernity and a coloniality spirit (Nisbet & Greenfeld, 2021). Nisbet and Greenfeld (ibid) trace

social science discourses from the ancient Greece and Rome empires. According to the authors (Nisbet & Greenfeld), social sciences were evident during the Enlightenment in modern European history, marked by the French Revolution. During that period, economics was the driving force of colonialism (Sartwell, 2017); hence, economic studies are strongly rooted in colonial undertakings in Africa. As evidence, according to Fuentes (2022), the impact of colonialism (which is exploitative) on human behaviour is never discussed in economics. Similarly, philosophy, according to Fuentes (*ibid*), draws more insights from the Enlightenment period tends to make "traditional societies" inferior and consolidate dualism between whites (the supreme class) and non-whites (*ibid*). In philosophy, colonial education lowers people's imagination as the centre of focus has been on ideas, constructed by ancient philosophers and emerging Western thinkers (London, 2002). Hence, the epistemic from African narratives, artistic representations and history have been ignored and termed as barbaric or as signs of primitivity.

On the other hand, sociology, as a discipline according to Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2017), developed within a wider project of creating a gap between 'developed' and 'undeveloped' societies. While sociology was for the 'developed' people, anthropology, ethnology, and ethnography were studies of the "uncivilized" people. Thus, based on the prevailing social science underpinning philosophies, Africa would be taped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment because the means to attain autonomous thinking is tamed in an alien mindset. Within the Eurocentric epistemology, African development seems to be a nightmare. According to Ascione (2016: 63),

The inability to overcome Eurocentrism within the frame of modernity is due to a fundamental underestimation of the morphogenetic relationship between modernity and historical-social sciences. This morphogenetic relation allows either Eurocentrism to thrive through successive theoretical and semantic slippages or modernity to act as an autopoietic, self-perpetuating conceptual frame. The combined effect of these intertwined logics is to neutralise critical attempts to overcome Eurocentric explanate for the explanans of modernity.

Concerning the Ascione quote, Africa continues to be the most underprivileged continent. Historically, the slave trade that operated between the 18th and 20th centuries took human power, but subsequent colonial and neo-colonial systems devastated the entire human capital: habits, knowledge, social structures, culture, and personal attributes such as creativity. These historical injustices,

such as the slave trade and colonialism legacies continue to shape contemporary challenges, such as poverty, disease, and corruption (Ascione, 2016; Mkandawire, 1994). The colonial legacy continues to be shaped in finding solutions to continued social, and historical injustice. For example, the political unrest coups d'états and development in several former French colonies are attributed to continued unjust colonial French policy in these countries (Anani, 2023). Similarly, Western lifestyles, foodstuffs and culture as well as over-dependence on Western biomedical medical to diseases (Chukwunke *et al.*, 2021). While western democracies which are characterized by periodic elections seem to perpetuate corruption (Adejumobi, 2000).

For more than half a century, sub-Saharan Africa imported not only tools, technologies, and finances but also ideas, policies, and laws (Mazrui, 2005). Therefore, it seems difficult for an African country to emancipate itself from poverty, diseases, civil wars, corruption, and poor leadership without external support. Simply, colonial history dismantled African societal units and institutions; hence, African social scientists operate in a disunited research context. This fact calls for the deliberate intervention of stakeholders in social sciences to consolidate knowledge and the history of the continent and its people to enhance social and economic development.

In the African context, decolonization means Africanization. Africanization, in that sense, entails the reclaiming of Africanness in the social science system (Brizuela-García, 2006; Crossman, 2004). It means the modification of colonial-embedded entities to reflect African values and African philosophy. Africanization is a struggle against colonial mentality. Colonization made Africa inherit cultural values, education systems, and languages from the colonisers. Henceforth, Africans use them as tools to interpret their reality. This approach makes them unable to advance in understanding themselves and their environment. In the following section, we present the findings for the two objectives of the study and simultaneously discuss them.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in Tanzania higher learning institutions, specifically at the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy. Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy was selected because of its long time experience in forging national policies and training students on leadership, Pan-Africanism and its dedication to the perpetuation of Mwalimu Nyerere's spirit of self-reliance. The study used two methods of data collection: library research or document review and interview. The document review involved reviewing books, journal articles, and online

sources on development in Tanzania and the world at large. According to Erich and Gorghiu, (2017), the document review provides research information and reliable information about a phenomenon, for the present work development paths. Two countries, China and Korea, were purposely selected to provide a road map for African development because these have globally shown evident and unquestionable signs of economic progress. The two states are said to be in the same stage of development as some sub-Saharan African countries in the early 1960s, but their current economic growth is almost currently competing with American and European economies (Maldonado-Torres et al, 2018) while African economies are either stagnant or retarding. The interview was conducted with 8 experts at MNMA specialized in Political science (2), sociology (2), history (2), language (1) and public administration and leadership (1). These deliberately volunteered to provide insights on what should be done to Africanize social sciences to make them contribute to the development process.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings are divided into two sections. The first section presents document review information on development in emerging economies while the second discusses participants' contributions to how social sciences can be Africanized to attain people-centred development.

4.1 Evidence from Emerging Economies

On the first objective, the findings from the document review indicate that the emerging economies, specifically China and Korea, adopted a different mode of development from Western Europe inspired by Confucius's philosophy. Research indicates that rapid development in China and Korea emanates from the fact that the countries retained cultural values and harnessed them in building their economies (Park, 2019; Dunford, 2023). The development in China, for example, seems to be highly fostered by longstanding Chinese traditions that date back 500 years, carefully recorded histories in the forms of drawings, poetic manifestations, and tortoise shells. This part of the archaeological reserve is marked by Chinese integrity, generosity, transparency, trustfulness, and cooperation (Tay-Cheng & Lishu, 2020; Dunford, 2023). Accordingly, these have enabled the Chinese people to protect the environment, construct a development philosophy, and build unity among themselves (Tay-Cheng & Lishu, 2020).

The Confucian thought at the base of this vision underscores the importance of a society more than that of an individual. It emphasizes that when personal interests conflict with group interests, the former shall obey the group (Dunford, 2023). Confucian culture underlines coordination and stability. According to Confucianism, if conflicts occur among the members or groups, they coordinate

and solve the problems by themselves. Hence Confucian culture tries to suppress confrontation and conflicts within a certain range and strives to solve problems peacefully, which forms harmonious social relations in contemporary Chinese society (*ibid*).

Studies illustrate the direct contribution of Confucianism to socio-economic development in Asian countries including China and South Korea. According to Hon (2017: 7):

Due to Chinese people's [real]-worldly and human orientation, focus on this world and life in this world, as well as lack of concern for transcendence and the afterlife since the ancient period, Chinese people already stressed pursuing worldly benefits in the pre-modern period, which was a favourable factor for the development of commerce.

Thus, development in China is rooted in people's culture, like what Nyerere (1968) emphasized in the basement of culture, democracy, and human rights. In other words, Confucianism is another face of the people-centre strategy. According to Park (2019), the Korean development path is recorded to be rooted in rural development (*Saemaul Undong*), which was promoted in the 1960s and 1970s. The strong *Saemaul Undong* spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation is said to be rooted in proverbs, Korean traditional cooperative agriculture (*durae*), and a traditional village code of conduct (*hyangyak*). The *Saemaul Undong* was accompanied by a massive mobilization of labour, investment in technology and reallocation of resources to productive sectors. Park (*ibid*: 190) states that since the 1970s, "Exports and industrialization are not the only things that were pursued actively by the government; vigorous campaigns were waged for rural development and the promotion and application of agricultural technology". Africa can therefore use the Asian developing economies model as a benchmark for economic development. Literature indicates that there is a need for a change in mindset.

The 'mindset' of people should be brought to the forefront of our attention and considered a key term in the discourse on Africa's development. If people were to ask what the single most important root cause of the underdevelopment of Sub-Saharan Africa is, the best answer I can think of is the 'mindset'. Among the myriad of things that can be considered, the ultimate solution to break the impasse lies in a change of mindset. It is one thing to find reasons for past failures, which is what everybody has been doing, but quite another to make things right in practice which seldom takes place in the region (Park, 2019: 114)

As already discussed, Africanization refers to the contextualization or indigenization of structures to cope with African perspectives (Crossman, 2004). Therefore, to Africanize social science is the process of making social sciences revive, reproduce, or reflect African attitudes, identity, philosophy, mindset, experience, and history. It is an endeavour to consolidate efforts in support of available human capital and natural resources for development. Africanization constitutes academic discourse within African studies whose key focus is to study African epistemological methods and apply theories and practices from an African vantage point.

It is true that Africanization is criticized for being utopic, and that it may lead to further marginalization of Africa (Schulte-Nordholt, 2021; Minga, 2020; Mkandawire, 1994). Some scholars contend that partisans of Africanization do not consider today's global economic and technological complexities (Minga, 2020). Yet, in our view, Africanization seems to be the sole way to ensure people's ownership of the development process. In the following paragraphs drawing from informants' statements, we discuss different ways in which Africanization can be implemented and the importance of Africanization.

4.2 Ways to Africanise Social Sciences

The interview with social scientists has unpacked at least six ways in which Africanization can be implemented. Firstly, the informants recommended that Africa has to establish theoretically based research centres in universities that cherish ethnographic approaches. Equipped with writing, recording, and artistic oral tradition manifestations, the centres have to go beyond published materials as most of them reflect Eurocentric perspectives (Crossman, 2004). It highlighted that some countries like South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria already have Academic units specializing in African studies (The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS)-University of Western Cape, *Institute of African Studies* at the University of Ghana, and the *Institute of African Studies* of the University of Nigeria respectively). According to participants, most current African studies institutes, degrees, and courses are found in the United States and Europe rather than inside Africa; consequently, graduates of African studies come from non-African academies (Crossman, *ibid*). One informant expressed his concerns.

"Neocolonialism is perpetuated by the methodologies and theories about Africa that we use in our research. We, Africans, don't we have our philosophies or methodologies?"

In our view, while acknowledging commendable works by several European Africanists, it is wise to note that overdependence on non-Africans may reinforce and instil a non-African mentality through the application of theories and methodologies that are alien to the people. Secondly, scholars insisted that researchers have to use an inductive approach rather than a deductive approach in research because the latter tends to lead academicians to be influenced by existing theories. The participants interrogated the tendency that in most Anglophone African universities, research proposals are conditioned by predetermined (mostly Western) theoretical frameworks. One participant highlighted that:

a large number of ideas and well-established theoretical frameworks are a result of struggle in those countries that can hardly be replicated in our countries. The majority of them were developed with Western points of departure and using Western cultural context.

In contrast, theories, as illustrated by African feminism, emanate from the interpretation of data from African fields. For example, during curriculum reform in Botswana *Kagisano*, a local philosophical stance popularized by Sir Seretse Khama with four principles of democracy, development, self-reliance, and unity was used (Merryfield & Tlou, 1995). The interviewees insisted that African intellectuals must stimulate new thoughts and generate discussions on the value of indigenous knowledge; as an alternative method of studying our reality and progressively refrain from Western methodologies, epistemologies, and ontologies. According to Mkandawire (1994), researchers from outside Africa come to African universities with their research priorities, problems, and approaches: they may engage locals in their research, but in most cases, the latter is only a research assistant to fulfil the conditions of funding institutions or host governments, not genuine collaborators.

Thirdly, it was recommended that African social scientists have to consolidate their efforts. According to participants, the absence of cooperation among African researchers implies fostering intellectual dependence. One participant asked,

"In reality, if Anglophone universities are unified if not dictated from London while francophone with Paris, I do not know the arabophone, Lusophone at the like. Where will be the African people's content and voice?"

The above participant's worries lie in the continual division of Africa and overdependence on formal colonial donations and ideas. Instead, according to her:

"Afrocentric exchange programmes and scholarship will enable verification or reliability of findings concerning research on African social sciences."

Fourthly, another suggestion that transpired during the fieldwork is that social sciences should invest in the promotion of indigenous knowledge from a multidisciplinary approach. According to the majority of participants, segmentation into discipline leads to a missed interpretation and hence an appreciation of African life. Respondents insisted that indigenous knowledge reflects communal contexts that include social, economic, spiritual, education, and any other domains in the progress of African society.

Related to the above, the fifth tactic of Africanization is conscientization through reform of the school curriculum, ensuring that global issues and approaches are understood from the African worldview. Curricula reviews to customize and localize content have been in Africa since the 1960's. For example, Merryfield and Tlou (1995) illustrate the process of improving curriculum and study materials in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe in which transformations are backed up by local conceptualization of realities. In the Tanzanian context, participants cited the ongoing reforms in education which underscore the introduction of *Historia ya Tanzania*, as a special subject and insist on the use of the Kiswahili language.

Lastly, related to the above, the use of local language in understanding social realities is important. The interviewed experts insisted that language is not only the reservoir of local and indigenous knowledge but also a means through which the local community can access and critically commend the outcomes of the research from their community. Hence, it is important to use and promote community languages. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000: 23), "Indigenous languages keep people connected to their culture, which strengthens feelings of pride and self-worth. Language is necessary for the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next".

5. Conclusion

Since Western world social sciences and eventual development were backed by exploitative means in the form of feudalism, slave trade, and capitalism, given early African leaders, Africa could not follow that path. The evidence found in Korea and China gives Africa a stepping stone towards constructing a people-centred development. Efforts to Africanize social science studies might indeed face challenges such as financial constraints, lack of political will, and decision-

makers prioritization of natural sciences as well as globalization. It is safe here to quote one of the participants who argued that:

"It has to be borne in mind that there is a mutual interplay between people and material development. In 1982, we were taking 12 hours from Dar es Salaam to Tanga, but now we spend less than 4 hours. Because of the improvement of roadways, business is fast, social services reach people in remote areas. What is wrong is when we invest in for example airplanes while bridges between villages are swept by rains...."

Indeed, the promotion of science to cope with technological advancement and industrialization are inevitable factors for development; however, a careful examination of the roles of science and social sciences would conclude that industrialization as well as scientific and technological development depend on positive attitudes and integrity.

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