The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa

Edited by

Ali G. Chivaura and Claude G. Mararike

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Chapter Seven

African Philosophy and Human Factor Development

Claude G. Mararike

Introduction

African countries, though independent, cannot develop as they see fit as long as they continue to function as clients of development organizations and social institutions which have their own economic and political agendas. The call is for Africa to analyse critically the human factor content of development proposals offered by foreign development organizations. Only then can Africa adopt and adapt those models which agree with her own developmental goals. In no way should Africa accept development proposals which compromise her vision and mission statements of development.

Development in Africa should only take place in the context of Africa's own organizations and institutions. And the main component of all organizations and institutions are people. Africa must, therefore, first develop the Human Factor (HF) content in all organizations and institutions before she can put in operation her developmental machinery.

Foreign organizations which have operated and continue to operate in Africa have introduced and continue to introduce development interventions whose primary agendas are, first, to destroy the African HF content and, secondly, to damage organizational and institutional capacities, in order to finally put in place their own organizations and institutions.

The task which Africa faces is how to clean the spoiled HF content and ensure that no further damage is done to her younger generations.

Main stream development theories

Since World War II, two major theories arose which sought to explain economic development. These were the modernization and dependency theories. Although the two theories purport to be dealing with economic development, both have overt and covert political agendas of their own. Their aims are to create clients for their own economic prosperity and political domination of the world by the West.

For instance, the modernization theory was developed by Western economists who sought to provide an economic model for the so-called developing countries. One of the modern writers, explains the origins of the theory in the following way:

> The modernization school was a historical product of three crucial events. First, there was the rise of the United States as a super power... Second there was the spread of a United Communist movement ... Third, there was the disintegration of European colonial empires ... [So, 1990:17].

The events referred to above prompted the United States government to encourage its political and social think-tank to develop an economic model for developing African nations in order to curb the influence of the then Soviet Union. The United States' primary concern was to create clients out of Africa and the so-called developing nations. Large sums of money were poured into research whose main agenda was to come up with a model for development which developing countries would be persuaded and forced to follow.

An analysis of the key components of the modernization theories reveals their intention to reproduce the western political agenda in Africa and developing nations. The assumption of the modernization theories is that all other societies which were referred to as traditional, should develop in more or less the same way as societies in western Europe. The proponents of modernization theories have argued that, it is necessary to first remove traditional institutions and organizations in developing countries and then create a new favourable social environment before development can occur.

The process of demolishing Africa's own organizations is, therefore, a well orchestrated activity. This is the process which Africa should carefully examine and reverse. The process of decolonization itself is part of this reversal, but it has continued to run into a number of pitfalls for reasons to be explained later.

Some voices from the so-called developing countries have challenged the American modernization theories and hegemony of the American school of thought. We note, in particular, scholars from Latin America such as Frank (1967) and Dos Santos (1971). Their main contention was that so-called Third World countries could never follow the western path because they have experienced something which western countries have never experienced, namely colonialism. In their view, the colonial experience has totally disorganized Third World countries and drastically altered their paths of development. The focus of Franks' argument was largely economic. It makes little attempt to explain development from a HF perspective.

The crucial point to make here is that the slavery of the mind is far more destructive than the slavery of the body or the exploitation and destruction of peoples' material resources. When Frank formulated the metropolis-satellite model to explain how the mechanisms of underdevelopment worked, he referred to how cities and towns were implanted in the conquered countries. These cities became satellites of the western metropolis. The cities were used as centres to transfer resources from Third World countries to western nations; thus developing Western nations' agendas while underdeveloping Africa and Third World countries.

Frank's argument sounds plausible and valid; but, it is necessary to point out here that it is not mainly the control and exploitation of material resources which is at the centre of Africa's underdevelopment. It is, rather, the destruction of Africa's social, economic and political organizations. It is also important to point out that destruction of Africa's institutions and HF is still continuing. Therefore, as long as this damage is not halted, Africa will continue to plunge into waters infested with predatory crocodiles.

Adjibolosoo rightly refers to colonization as 'a process of socialization used by the colonizers to make subservient and serviceable European aliens out of Africans.'

[1995:55]. The first target of European colonization is, therefore, the African HF itself, properly understood as:

> a spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, economic and political institutions to function, and remain functional over time [Adjibolosoo, 1995:4].

European colonialists must have known and, even today, continue to know that, no social, economic or political organization can function effectively if it is not manned by committed persons who have values and ideals of their own to believe in but those dictated to them by their former masters. One of the agendas of Africa's colonizers and detractors, is therefore, to ensure that Africans do not and should not believe in the values and ideals of their own traditions and social institutions. How do they do it? Or how have they succeeded in doing this? Reference to African philosophy should help us to answer these questions.

The '*kudyiswa*' hypothesis

The term 'kudyiswa' in Shona language; 'ukudhliswa' in Ndebele; 'guthaiga' in Gikuyu, or 'miti' in Kikamba, refers to a practice by some women in Africa who use a concoction of bad medicinal herbs to exert control over their husbands and take-over the affairs of the home. The medicine is not supposed to cause death or serious illness. Its intention is rather to exert a strong effect on the body's reticular activating system (RAS). The symptoms are that the husband becomes slow in thinking and sluggish in movement. He falls asleep even when he should be listening to a conversation. He thinks of nothing else but his wife. He takes advice from no one else except his wife.

The overall effect of 'kudyiswa' or 'guthaiga' is that the husband rejects his relatives. He loses control of his home to the wife and her relatives and friends. Put differently, he is at the mercy of his wife. Those personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance which constitute the HF and which would have enabled the husband to run his family affairs effectively at all times, are damaged and destroyed completely.

The 'kudyisa' practice is not haphazardly done. It is supposed to follow a particular, systematic sequence. First, the wife takes careful advice, from her mother or aunt or an expert in the practice. The advice includes studying carefully the husband's likes and dislikes. His favourite foods must be known. The wife must also find out whether or not the husband consults traditional institutions and medicine experts.

The second stage is to apply 'kudyisa' dosage gradually, not once and for all. The dosage is carefully measured and added to the food which the husband likes. The wife ensures that the husband eats the food all by himself and that he is in his happiest mood when he eats the food. She normally sits by his side to create the environment conducive to a healthy appetite and to watch progress.

The third stage involves monitoring carefully the day to day reaction of the husband to the 'kudyisa' dosage. The reactions are reported to the wife's advisors who may recommend variation or readjustment to the application of the dosage until the desired

effect is achieved; namely that the husband has totally lost control of the management of the family affairs to his wife and her friends and relatives.

A further important point to note in the 'kudyisa' practice is that, by so doing, the wife is creating a client out of her husband. She reverses the roles. When the '*kudyisa*' process is complete and successful, the wife may decide to loot the husband's property first, before she disappears with another man. She may repeat the 'kudyisa' practice with the second husband and so on and so forth, until she has accumulated massive property for herself and her relatives.

What then is the analogy between the 'kudyisa hypothesis' and the process of the underdevelopment of the HF in Africa?

Creation of clients in western development discourse

We have earlier characterized the 'kudyisa' practice as a method used by some greedy women to exert control over their husbands and, therefore, the affairs of the home. Put differently, the women create, out of their husbands, clients who are subservient and serviceable to their interests and agendas.

In the development discourse, powerful organizations (represented in the 'kudyisa' hypothesis by the wife) construct the world in which we live. For example, the client 'Third World,' is 'socially constructed' prior to the powerful organization's interaction with it. 'Socially constructed' here means that the relation between the Third World as client and the West as agent, is structured by bureaucratic and textual mechanisms ahead of interaction. The Third World client must be made to believe that the 'facts' as presented to him by the West as agent are true discoveries of the real situation characterizing life in the Third World. The powerful Western organizations, like the 'kudyisa' woman, possess schemata and structuring procedures. These are embedded in the organizations' routine work and practice. They are used for organizing the actuality of given situations and presenting them as facts, or truth of things. For the operation to be successful, the structuring procedures must be made invisible, as in the '*kudyiswa* hypothesis' where the woman who administers the dosage does not let her husband know what is going on. The real agenda remains hidden, in the appetising food she has 'packaged' for the consumer, her husband — the Third World in our analogy.

Powerful organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provide the categories with which 'facts' can be named and analyzed. Such 'facts' are presented in standardized ways so that they can be retold if necessary. This 'kudyisa' process — if we may return to our hypothesis — must be seen as 'conditioning' a practice of 'knowing' that constructs an object as 'external' to the 'knower' and 'independent' of him or her. The role of powerful organizations, in this regard, is to create and preserve conceptions and means of description which represent the world 'as it is' for those who have power rather than 'as it is' for the ruled and powerless. The 'kudyisa' process practised by Western organizations on Africa, is a process of 'mental conditioning' or 'ideological indoctrination' and 'brain washing'.

A basic feature of this operation used by organizations such as the World Bank and IMF, to produce what they call social reality and create clients, is their reliance

on textual and documentary forms as means of representing and preserving given types of reality. These texts are inevitably detached from the local historical context of the reality that they supposedly represent. But because of an earlier process of colonization which has successfully created the potential for subservient and serviceable clients out of Africans, the latter only recycle the 'facts' as provided by these powerful organizations.

Ethnomethodologists have pointed out that organizational texts cannot be taken as 'objective' records of external reality, but are to be understood in relation to organizational uses and goals and in the context of their goals and those of their production and interpretation. Instead of a system of rational action, the documentary basis of an organization is but a means to 'objectify' knowledge. Organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF produce forms of social consciousness that are more of their own properties than the properties of those individuals or organizations trying to understand their own problems. This objectification and transcendence of local historicity can be achieved in the process of inscription, namely, the translation of an event or object into their own textual form. In this process, their perception and ordering of events is 'pre-ordained' by their discursive schemes. The 'locally historical' is, thus, greatly determined by 'non-local practices' of organizations, embedded, in turn, in 'textual' practices. Smith puts the matter as follows:

> Discourse creates forms of social consciousness that are extra-local and externalized vis-a-vis the local subject... Discourse develops the ideological currency of society, providing schemata and methods that transpose local actualities into standardized conceptual and categorical forms... This movement between the locally historical and textually mediated discourse is characteristic of many contemporary social forms (1984:63).

Documentary practices are, therefore, embedded in external social relations and deeply implicated in mechanisms of ruling. Through documents, the internal process of organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF are linked to external social relations involving our governments, universities, corporations and other communities. The World Bank and other powerful organizations are active in directing and ordering the relations among these various groups. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate how these powerful organizations provide categories and concepts that dictate their practices. 'Labelling' is a fundamental feature of organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Labelling

Labels, as part of client creation, are not neutral. They embody concrete relationships of power and influence the categories by which we think and act.

The validity of labels should not be regarded as a matter of substantive objectivity; but as the ability to use labels effectively in action as designations which define parameters for thought and behaviour. Such behaviour may render environments stable and establish spheres of competence and areas of responsibility. In this way, labelling is part of the process of creating social structures and institutions of mental control. It

is people making history by making rules for themselves and others. So, the issue is not whether or not we label people. The issue is, which labels are created, and whose labels prevail to define whose situation or policy area, under what conditions and with what effect? Labels reveal more about the process of authoritative designations, agenda setting and so on, than the characteristics of the people they label. In that sense, labels reveal the relationship of power between the giver and the recipient of the label.

Labels determine access to resources so that people must adjust to such categorization to be successful in their dealings with the organization. The whole person's life is reduced to a single feature. The person is turned into a 'case'. The whole of Africa, for instance, is turned into 'case studies'. These 'case studies' are more a reflection of how the World Bank or IMF constructs the problem. The total dynamics of African problems are reduced to solving a number of 'cases' with apparently no connection to structural determinants, much less the shared experiences of African peoples. This kind of labelling implies not only abstraction from social practice, but the action of professional monopolies that share the interests of powerful organizations. The entire politics of needs interpretation, as mediated by expert discourses, is at stake. 'Experts' become brokers of sorts, mediating the relations between our communities, the state and, in some cases, social movements [Escobar, 1995].

Labels are invented and maintained by powerful organizations on an ongoing basis as part of an apparently rational process that is essentially political. Although the whole process has, at times, devastating effects on the labelled groups through stereotyping, normalizing and fragmentation of people's experiences, it also implies the possibility of counter labelling as part of the process of democratization and knowledge. Although this process of abstraction and structuring takes place at the top — in Washington, London or Paris — it eventually works its way down to the local level in Africa where most of the 'kudyisa' work has to be done. The people in Africa must then 'reproduce' the world as Washington, London and Paris see it.

In Africa, the World Bank and the IMF act more like arsonists than fire fighters. Their behaviour contributes to creating or worsening, than alleviating, the African debt problem [Payer, 1991:82]. Trin T. Minh-hà describes the situation in the following way:

> We can only deplore the mechanism which favours the transfer to Africa of problems and their solutions, of certain institutions which result from a purely western historical process. Organizations for the promotion of women's rights tend naturally to extend identical activities into Africa, and in so doing, to assimilate us into a strictly European mentality and historical experience. Hardly anything which has been written about African women has not presented them as minor elements (1989:165-167).

The picture of Africa so far, is of a people who have gone through the 'kudyiswa' process and therefore need 'gutahikio' or 'kurutsiswa', or to be 'expunged.' How should this be done?

The 'kurutsiswa' process

Earlier, we stated that the overall effect of 'kudyiswa' or 'guthaiga' was that the husband rejects his relatives. He also loses control of his home to the wife and her relatives and friends. He is at the mercy of the wife. Those personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that would have enabled him to run his family affairs effectively at all times are damaged or destroyed completely.

The 'kudyiswa analogy' graphically epitomizes the HF situation in Africa today. The process of colonization, like 'kudyiswa', gradually and effectively eroded the integrity and personality of the African people. It produced creatures which are at the mercy of the colonizers; creatures which have rejected themselves. The 'kudyiswa' drug continues to be administered to the African population and is producing more damaging results than before.

The content of our education, for example, is a dangerous mixture. It produces 'vanhu vakadyiswa' or 'brain washed' people. Our institutions and organizations have been equally desecrated. In fact, they have long been labelled as 'pagan' and we seem to have accepted the label. Our agricultural systems have gone the same way. In fact, everything which would have been central to the African personality has been labelled as 'backward' and we have accepted this label too. More labels are being created and it seems we are going to accept them because of 'kudyiswa'. How can we reverse this situation? Let us take our lesson once again from African philosophy and practice on how to get rid of 'guthaiga' or 'kudyiswa'.

The first step is that relatives should notice the deteriorating change of behaviour in their fellowman and be able to identify the cause of such change in behaviour. In any case, no African man would fall victim to this if he knew the value of sharing food with other men. But for those who have fallen victim, the second step would be to remove him from the cause of the problem and take him to someone who has the medicine to remove the 'kudyiswa' effect. That someone is usually an uncle or a reputable medicine person. A process called 'kurutsiswa,' or 'gutahikio,' or 'expunging' would then start.

What is administered first are drugs that weaken or neutralize the effect of 'kudyiswa'. These are followed by drugs that stabilize the body's immune system and reactivate the reticular activating system (RAS). After the administration of such drugs, it is expected that the person should be able to start realizing that his wife was dangerous to his health. He then undergoes the willing 'kurutsiswa' process. The last drug to be administered is the one which has a preventative capacity. Future attempts of 'kudyisa' the man would not succeed. In fact, some strong 'kurutsisa' drugs would frighten the woman every time she attempts 'kudyisa' the man.

The 'kurutsiswa' hypothesis brings out a number of lessons which Africa must follow to free herself from being used to fulfill Western agendas engineered by powerful Western development organizations. Some of the lessons are:

1. Identify the causes of the problems clearly and accurately.
2. Remove Africa from the framework of the causes of the problems.
3. Rid Africa of the problem by administering the right kind of medicine at the right time in correct quantities.

4. Administer permanent preventative medicines and then teach African peoples about the dangers of marrying from families known to be notorious in 'kudyisa'.
5. Pool Africa's resources together and eat from the same plate, making sure that the food is safe from dangerous 'kudyiswa' herbs.

Implications of the 'kudyiswa' and 'kurutsiswa hypotheses

Concepts such as decolonization, transfer of technology, empowerment and many others, seek to explain how Africa can rid herself of the 'kudyiswa' problem. Such terms seek to explain the 'kurutsiswa' process. The main problem with these explanations is that they emanate from the very persons who have administered the 'kudyiswa' drug. Besides, Africa seems to believe that the same organizations which manufactured the 'guthaiga' drug should be the same organizations or persons who must manufacture the 'kurutsiswa' drug. Or, it is hoped such organizations will have sympathy with Africa which has now suffered from 'kudyiswa' for too long. It is also assumed that there are people from these powerful organizations and institutions who can free Africa from her 'kudyiswa' state. These kinds of assumptions can only be entertained by people who are still suffering from 'kudyiswa' dizziness.

Africa should draw her lessons from those nations which have managed to free themselves from the 'kudyiswa' problem. Japan and Malaysia, to mention a few, are countries which Africa should learn from. The emphasis for development in these countries was to rely on their HF; but particularly the preservation of those traditions, institutions and practices that helped to inspire national pride and development. The point to note here is that national development can only take place within the framework of organizations and institutions. But organizations are as good as the people who create and manage them. People can only manage organizations effectively if they have the necessary HF characteristics of commitment, honesty, dedication and moral uprightness. These characteristics are cultural. They are inculcated into the minds of people through the process of upbringing and socialization — a process through which persons learn the values and social roles of their people and carry out their responsibilities as expected of them by their society [Mararike, 1995(a), 1995(b)].

Conclusion

For Africa to develop her HF content, there is need to recognize that powerful organizations which purport to support her quest for development are after creating subservient clients out of African people. What has happened and may still be happening is that, powerful organizations are systematically damaging or destroying completely, the HF characteristics which should enable African people to develop and manage their own affairs.

What Africa needs urgently is to rid herself of the 'kudyiswa' syndrome by developing her own organizations and institutions and running them herself. Implied in this call is that, the starting point should be the cultural development of a people who will eventually be committed to the promotion of ideals, norms, values and aspirations of their African societies. The slavery of the mind precedes the looting of material resources. It creates

willing partners who cooperate in self-enslavement and participate in their own exploitation and destruction of their own societies' HF.

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