

4-1-2003

# The Pursuit of Development in Ghana

Jessamyn Mayher

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african\\_diaspora\\_isp](http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african_diaspora_isp)

---

## Recommended Citation

Mayher, Jessamyn, "The Pursuit of Development in Ghana" (2003). *African Diaspora ISPs*. Paper 51.  
[http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african\\_diaspora\\_isp/51](http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african_diaspora_isp/51)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the African Diaspora Collection at DigitalCollections@SIT. It has been accepted for inclusion in African Diaspora ISPs by an authorized administrator of DigitalCollections@SIT. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

# The Pursuit of Development in Ghana

Jessamyn Mayher  
May 2003  
Marlboro College

School for International Training African Diaspora Studies

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Introduction

Methodology

History of the Study of Development : Theory and Economics

    Theory

    Economics

Problems for Ghanaian Development

    On Development

    On Underdevelopment

Fieldwork: The Meaning of Development in a Ghanaian Context

    Responses from Student

    Responses from Government Officials

    Summary

Development Language and its Implications on Development

Conclusions

Suggestions For Further Study

Appendix One

Bibliography

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude for the guidance and assistance of my advisor, Professor Atta Britwum of the French Department at the University of Cape Coast for your patience and your insight, for all your time.

Thank you also to Kofi Manu for your help in the early stages when I was trying to figure it all out. You were extremely helpful to me, even though I decided to take it in a different direction in the end.

Kofi Sam, thank you for your inspiration and your help. Your thoughts, insight and strong work have been instrumental in my understanding of where this project could go and how I could get there.

Auntie Naana, Uncle Kwadwo, Uncle Eric and Uncle Ebo you have been altogether too good to me and your constant support and help will not be forgotten. Me da se papaapa.

Alice Wrisberg, thank you also for your loving care and hospitality during my stay and your understanding and respect for my needs during this time of intense study.

I would like to send out much love and respect to Ama and Pandwe for their motivation, support, insight and patience. I could never have made it without you!

The gratitude I have for my parents who have helped in so many ways to get me here and make this work possible could not possibly be expressed here in words. Thank you and I love you very much.

## **ABSTRACT**

Drawing on research from primary and secondary sources, in four major sections, this paper examines the evolution of development as a concept, the meaning of development according to commonplace western institutional perception, the meaning of development according to local perceptions of Ghanaian university students, and a critique of the contrast through the overlaps and gaps in definition and language. In conclusion, this study has shown that imperialism is playing a noticeable role in the perception of the meaning of development including the indications of and the path to such a state for Ghanaian society.

# The Pursuit of Development

Jessamyn Mayher

## INTRODUCTION

What is the meaning of development and how can it be applied to any one area from another area without adequate consideration for the very real variations in circumstances such as history, geography, environment and language? To what extent is the understanding of development changing as it is realized that development must come from within any given society and grow from there, not to be imported from another area along with crates of Coca-Cola and ships full of second hand clothing. My question of exploration, then, would be to what extent is “development” as a concept here in Ghana, merely another import being brought about and directed by external catalysts more interested in putting fuel in the engine of the development industry of the west than encouraging real and positive change in the areas being targeted? To what extent is it understood both here and abroad that to direct one’s destiny, one must also be allowed to direct one’s growth and development? According to this research, imperialism has penetrated significantly into the meaning of development in Ghana including the indications of and the paths to growth and progress for this nation.

Issues to be discussed in this paper will include the history of development as a concept, as a discipline and as an industry. In establishing this background information I hope to uncover the extent to which “development” is problematic as a mere concept and as a reality that exists on the ground in Ghana today. Extending from this discussion, the problematic nature of the language development employs and the manifestations it welcomes could be explored – why development as it is understood and applied succeeds or fails and to what extent. To inform my writing and research I have conducted interviews and surveys with Ghanaian academics and students. I have contrasted the information I have pulled from this slice of people here with current development discourses and understandings coming from western institutions and development specialists. Through this contrast it can be illustrated what the general understanding of development looks like here in Ghana and to what extent it is merely on loan from the west and or to what extent it has been adopted and adapted to take root and grow as it only can here.

My belief is that development is a constantly evolving process and not one that can be frozen and articulated at any one moment to continue serving its purpose for the rest of time. Due to its constantly evolving nature, as a concept, it escapes any real concrete definition. Furthermore, I believe that development is of the mind, like a gas, incapable of holding a concrete form. As might follow, Ghanaian development should come from the minds of Ghanaians using what they know from their lives in Ghana to allow for their continued growth in the future. My project strives to highlight why development as it exists and as it is understood could easily become more of a problem than a drive for positive change so long as the driver comes from outside of Ghana.

The type of development that exists to a large extent here, based on a political situation economically controlled largely by external forces, is hard to manipulate into a truly Ghanaian

prescription, derived by the people for the people. If development visions and plans are envisioned and planned outside of Ghana by non-Ghanaians, the fruits of such visions will be likewise external and alien to the individual circumstances in Ghana every time. Since development seems absolutely contingent in the people, living, learning, working and striving on the ground here in Ghana, it seems most appropriate that they should need to use what they know about themselves, their lives, their work to solve their own problems with their own resources. The more that gets brought in from the outside world, the more meaningful and sustainable Ghanaian development becomes lost in the exchange.

In remedy of external development initiatives in Ghana, I propose the conversion of local knowledge, or science, into local technology appropriate and relevant for the lives, learnings, and workings of all Ghanaians striving on a path to positive and sustainable change. Such a strategy, inspired by Mr. Kofi Sam of Approtech in Cape Coast, teaches us that the state of “underdevelopment”, by which Ghana is too frequently classified, is merely the condition of a society which has not yet been able, for whatever internal or external reasons, to turn their local ways into technology<sup>1</sup>. The reason for this perhaps has to do with the fact that many such areas are convinced by any number of instigators that the “made here” science is inferior to that which was “made there”. By importing the science and the technology through the medium of a colonial education system, (on top of everything else currently being brought to Ghana from the outside), development for Ghana and Ghanaians is smothered. The minds of the people become infected with the backwards mentality of Acquired Import Dependency Syndrome, also known as AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kofi Sam. “Appropriate Technology in Ghana” 31 March 2003. University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. (Notes in possession of author.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



## METHODOLOGY

### *Secondary Sources:*

My advisor presented me with a text, *Economic Development* by Michael Todaro, which went through development as a concept and then into all the economics involved in this field of study. Since I am not a student of economics, but theory, I chose to steer the project in a more theoretical direction with the understanding that economics plays a major role that can never be completely ignored when investigating such a topic as development. To supplement this next, I also reviewed other texts on development by authors such as Kwamina Panford, Robert Bates, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Jeffrey Herbst, Alvin So and Richard Joseph.

### *Primary Sources:*

After I had spent considerable amount of time reviewing the literature and doing the necessary preliminary reading, I decided to create a general survey to solicit information from a population of students I encountered on the campus of the University of Cape Coast. I chose to focus my survey almost exclusively on the student population due to the fact that, should they decide to remain in Ghana post graduation, they are most likely to become leaders in any number of ways. I designed the survey such that the questions were not accompanied with a set of possible responses but required the thought and insight of the individual to respond in complete sentences to illustrate their personal understanding. The students who were so willing were extremely thoughtful and generous with their time and their sincere thoughts, sometimes spending as much as an hour or more filling out their responses to my nine questions, which I will provide below.<sup>3</sup> In order to gain an understanding of what thoughts on development within the current government administrators might sound like, I surveyed three people involved in local government here in Cape Coast. This was primarily to gain an understanding of the extent to which various understandings contrast amongst the current government, students and western development institutions. My main objective is to see to what extent development discourse, which was born in the west, is translated or merely transplanted upon arrival in a Ghanaian context.

The major problem I encountered during my surveys, in particular, was one that I had anticipated going into it. Asking people questions about development, as an obvious outsider myself, caused a few to question my motives. My hesitancy to ask people for their help at the beginning was reflected in a more frequent hesitancy on their part to comply. As I went along, however, I became more comfortable asking for help and I learned that I could easily encourage their participation by verbally introducing myself and explaining that my project is a theoretical one, that I am not working in development initiatives here in Ghana but am merely interested in uncovering the meaning of

---

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1.

development as it is understood here among the people. Explaining a little bit about my beliefs on development and where I was coming from provided further reassurance that my questions were not intended to inform anything more than my independent research project consisting in the end of a single paper. I also included a coversheet attached to the front of each survey I passed out which explained the basics that were described above in the case that I was unable to communicate with each informant personally. Several also asked where the final paper could be located upon completion and were very pleased when I explained where and when they could have access to the finished result.

## History of the Study of Development: Theory and Economics

The United Nations were established after World War II with the aim of maintaining peaceful relations and security amongst the nations of the world while also promoting economic and social progress equally for all peoples. Not long after its creation a special side agency, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), was also born with a mission to “construct the defenses of peace in men’s mind, since it is in men’s minds that wars begin”.<sup>4</sup>

However, it became more and more apparent with the passage of time that peace would never reign in a world where some were poor and others rich and each ignorant and insensitive to the other. It was soon thereafter realized that “ignorance bred fear and that knowledge dispelled fear and misunderstanding.”<sup>5</sup> And thus a conflict of interest was uncovered. Desire to gain a better understanding of real cultures amongst other nations and peoples must necessarily precede the promotion of economic and social advancement for such entities should it be initiated or imposed from the outside. Hence, development theory and development economics entered into the discourses of western academia and a new science was born into the world. As a discipline development studies (which incorporates both theory and economics) was born and raised in the sterile and affluent environments of western institutions, gaining speed and popularity through the progression and advancement of theories and different schools of thought. It is important to realize the progression of

---

<sup>4</sup> K. Twum-Barima. *The Cultural Basis of our National Development*, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1985)20. Written from the J. B. Danquah Memorial lectures of Feb. 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Twum-Barima, 20.

theory, what each major school was founded upon and how each consecutive school informed the following revisions creating a system of reflexivity in development theory as a discourse. By understanding the theoretical framework existing to inform development initiatives on the ground it becomes easier to problematize the benefits and drawbacks of such a concept as it is understood in the minds and lives of the various parties involved.

#### On Development Theory:

Perhaps, as a way of looking at the world, development theory aids the mind in realizing and thinking about all the complexities inherent in human society on a global and local scale. Development theory, then offers a way to mentally organize those complexities, ideally avoiding generalization and dilution wherever possible. Whether or not this actually happens is one of the main focuses of this section.

As a result of three major world events, the modernization school of development theory was born: the rise of the United States as a superpower, the spread of a united world communist movement and the disintegration of European colonial empires and thus the birth of many new fledgling nation states. As a result of these events, in particular, the American political elites encouraged social scientists from all areas to begin research on this new emerging group of nations, dubbed “third world” for popular reference. The aim of such study was to promote economic development and political stability in order to avoid ‘losing’ them to communism.

The modernization school was born on a foundation of evolutionary and functionalist theory. Evolutionary theory explained the transition from traditional to modern society in Western Europe so it was thought that it would likewise suffice as a model for the newly independent countries of that time. Because many prominent students of the modernization school were also students of functionalist theory, the presence of the functionalist perspective was inevitably infused into modernization theory. Essentially, modernization theory took the theories of old and, with some refinement and revision, reflected them again in the form of a ‘new’ theory.

The defining principles of this school understood development as a unidirectional process of modernization according to a western, primarily, American example. It focused on the development of the “third world”, conducting studies at the national level.

Modernization thinking accredited internal cultural values and social institutions as the major obstacle to development and originally saw modern and traditional as incompatible concepts. The theories of this school also assumed that modernization, as a process, was generally beneficial to all those involved. Upon revision, the students of modernization decided that tradition could offer a positive contribution to modernity. They were also able to see that the modernization approach to methodology must be revised. Rather than construction of typologies with high levels of abstraction, they moved on to studying concrete case studies, utilizing historical analysis. They also confessed that

the potential for multiple directions to development was originally neglected. In this, they were actually conceding that not all states should hold America as their model for development. In response to the seeming neglect of external factors and conflict, the neo-modernization theorists began to expend greater attention in this area. By allowing these amendments to be made, the new school of modernization theory opened up a whole new realm of potential research tools. This is the essence of reflexive development.

As a response to the failure of the U.N.'s Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the crisis of orthodox Marxism and the decline of the modernization school in the U.S., a new perspective was reached. In response to the critiques to modernization, the dependency theory offers "an external explanation," for the relative failure of Third World development. Frank, a dependency thinker, claims that the "historical experience of colonialism and domination have reversed the development of many 'advanced' Third World countries and forced them into backwardness."<sup>6</sup> Like the modernization school, dependency theory shares the research focus of the "third world", the methodology with high levels of abstraction and the polar theoretical structure replacing tradition versus modern with core versus periphery. The differences that can be seen are the results of an expanding and growing understanding of the nature of development and the nature of the world as a whole.

The roots of the dependency movement have little relation to the roots of the modernization school as they arose out of different historical backgrounds, this is not to say, however, that development theory doesn't follow from modernization. Dependency felt the reasons for hardship in development were due to almost purely external causes whereas the modernization school understood this stagnation to be mostly caused by internal factors. According their belief that external factors were controlling their nations stagnation, dependency also felt that there was on hope for the development of the "third world" as the power to drive positive change was not in their hands. The modernization thinkers thought progress would be made through the venue of increased western contact and capital penetration. Contrarily, extreme dependency thinking even called for delinking from all western international relations.

After examining the effects of the modernization school in the ground, in the real world, some patterns were emerging. People were beginning to see that in reality things weren't necessarily the same as they were prescribed to be in the theories of modernization researchers. This called for revision. The revision, this time, was attempted from a 'third world' perspective and led, ultimately to this theory of dependency. They are very different perspectives. However, they are simply the opposing perspectives on the same situation. In essence, however, they combine to form a whole. In response to the complexities that have always been and were becoming more and more dominant with

---

<sup>6</sup> Alvin So, *Social Change in Development: Modernization, Dependency and World Systems. Theory* (Newbury Park; Sage Publications, 1990), 96

the passage of time, the 'first world' wanted to see the problem as coming from the "first world". On the positive side, this tension provided fertile soil for increased awareness and understanding of the problems at hand. Hearing what the various constituents of the world are feeling and thinking is crucial to growth as a whole and the ability to understand and continue to revise previously uninformed ways of thinking.

The strengths of modernization include its emphasis on history. Also its view of tradition as an asset to modernity is a clear strength. The modernization school is able to employ analysis on social, political, cultural and economic levels. So far as the internal versus external explanations for problems in development, it is very important to have both sides represented. Nothing is either all good or all bad. These complexities are not more a result of actions taken in the "first world" than they are due to actions taken in the "third world". Responsibility must be accepted on both sides in order to achieve balance. There is no use in playing the blame game unless it yields the conclusion that all must be responsible for their own course of actions in history. At that point, forgiveness may be attempted and understanding will be increased.

The groundwork provided by the theories of dependency and modernization gave way into what we now call world systems theory. Not too different from dependency, the evolution of world-systems is just another example of how development is reflexive in nature. It responds to the weaknesses of dependency which came as a result of the realized weakness of modernization. Ever marching onward to become a more aware and mindful people, through development theory, the west is constantly attempting to realize what constitutes the better life and trying to understand the best way of accomplishing just that for all people.

World-systems theory takes the world economics system as its unit of analysis. It researches the cyclical rhythms and secular trends of the world economy, assumed to be capitalist. It offers the trimodal system consisting of core, periphery, and semi-periphery. This school of thought sees the potential for both upward and downward mobility within the three hierarchical positions. World-systems research focuses on all areas of the world as well as on the world economy. These attributes are, in fair truth, revisions on the flaws of dependency. Dependency took the nation-state as the unit of analysis and world-systems saw this as limiting. There are many things in the opinions of world-systems theorists that escape the somewhat narrow confines of the nation-state. This is why it might be more helpful to view the whole world as one, although revisionist world-systems theory concedes the need for continued research at the national level. Dependency theory studies the structural-historical tendencies of the nation-state and sees a sharp dichotomy so sharply that they believe there is no potential for upward or downward mobility within the proposed hierarchy. Dependency thinking views the circumstance of dependency as hopeless to a great extent and thus conducts all their research on the periphery to the exclusion of the core entirely.

World-systems theory has realized the need for holism within development theory. Like any other concept applied to a theory it carries its strengths and weaknesses needing to be weighted, learned from and applied in appropriate ways into the theories there derived. Jan Nederveen Pieterse defines holism in this sense as “the theory that whole entities, as fundamental and determining components of reality, have an existence other than as the mere sum of their parts.”<sup>7</sup> The move from the nation-state to the whole world as the unit of analysis is indicative of a move to holism. The nation-state is just too limiting as time marches forward bringing us to a moment where much economic, social and political activities are in no way restrained to the confines of any one nation-state. Now that modernization and dependency, respectively, have taken apart the situation, broken it up into “first world” and “third world” perspectives, world-systems has come to piece it all back together again with the needle and thread of a greater understanding. There is a popular critique, however, that Wallerstein, the founder of this theory, has simply taken the theory of dependency that belongs to largely “third world” intellectuals revised it barely and made it something new. Some attribute its popularity with the mere fact that it was born in the “first world” and not the “third world’.

According to Pieterse, development theory is a “continuum of views that meet and diverge on multiple levels”.<sup>8</sup> Just as nothing is entirely good or entirely bad, in life like all other things, there is a balance. Rather than viewing these various perspectives as dichotomous, dualistic or polar, it must be understood that they are mere fractions of a whole. World-systems can be seen as an evolution of that which came before yielding a more holistic approach. This has been the theme throughout the evolution of development theory and is the reason why I continue to assert that development is essentially reflexive.

Realizing the complexities of development, allowing the revisions of previous theories to inform the creation of new perspectives is crucial to the progression of healthy theory and development. What is of utmost importance is that development thinking as they are realized and thus theory, much like development itself, is constantly evolving. It must be able to adapt to the way people are living and thinking – it cannot remain static or unchanging. It has been said that the horizon of development is ever receding. It is an unreachable destination reserved strictly for the purpose of utopia. No nation will ever truthfully be an example of “developed” for there is no ending point; progress is eternal with time.

#### *On Economic Development:*

Shadowing the evolution of development theory as a discipline, development economics plays the part of policy prescription and development analysis. Just as there can be no one single

---

<sup>7</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions / Reconstructions*. (London, Sage, 2001). 132

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 135

understanding of development, and just as there is danger in understanding development strictly through the optics of one brand of theory or school of thought, there is also no one singular development economics – no universal form of economics that could be applicable to all struggling countries. Development economics needs to pick and choose, refine and revise all relevant concepts and theories from traditional economic analysis and combine them with new understandings derived from broader multidisciplinary approaches incorporating the study of historical and contemporary development thinking on the ground in respective points on the globe. Michael Todaro, author of the text *Development Economics*, explains:

*Today development economics is a field on the crest of a breaking wave with new theories and new data continuously emerging. These theories and statistics sometimes confirm and sometimes challenge traditional ways of viewing the world. The ultimate purpose of development economics remains constant: to help us better understand Third World economics in order to help improve the material lives of three quarters of the global population.<sup>9</sup>*

Two things can be seen from the above statement. Firstly it is clearly that economic development, as a discipline, is likewise reflexive in the equal sense of development theory. It builds on the knowledge gained piece by piece throughout history and time. Secondly, it is clear that both development economics, just as development theory, is written by ‘the west’ for “the rest”, or rather written by the “first world” for the ‘third world’. There is an assumption of leadership on the part of the west in the fields of economics and theory. Due largely to this assumption of leadership and power in the arena of decision-making, western institutions have made it the fashion in development for comparative studies planned on their soil to be executed in foreign lands.

Economics was born as a social science. Its concern, as was mentioned above, is with humans and the social systems they establish to satisfy wants, be they material or otherwise. Unlike in physical science, there can be neither universal truths nor scientific certainties. There can only be tendencies, patterns, noticed behaviours and assumptions. Todaro explains further:

*Many so-called general economic models are in fact based on a set of implicit assumptions about human behaviour and economic relationships that may have little or no connection with the realities of developing economics. To this extent, their generality and objectivity may be more assumed than real. Economic investigations and analysis cannot be simply lifted out of their institutional, social and political context, especially when one must*

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael Todaro. *Economic Development*. (Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA., 2000), 9.

*deal with the human dilemmas of hunger, poverty and ill health that plague so much of the world's population.<sup>10</sup>*

So economics, like theory, has a tendency toward value judgment. Because its parameters are so broad and its language so loosely defined and often times ambiguous entirely, its pursuit becomes easily convoluted, confused and misunderstood. The next section will discuss this notion further.

## PROBLEMS FOR GHANAIAN DEVELOPMENT

*On Development;*

Development as a term may mean many different things to many different people and so it is crucial to understand and acknowledge that it may necessarily change from person to person, community to community, nation to nation: its meaning will never be fixed. Negotiating these variations and complexities becomes paramount in the pursuit of sustainable and meaningful development in every instance.

Todaro tells us that “in strict economic terms, development has traditionally meant the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product at rates of 5% to 7% or more.”<sup>11</sup> It is common practice of western development institutions to quantify the sufferings of the people and the relative “development” of a nation in terms of such economic indicators as GNP or per capita income, however, it remains to be seen in many cases to what extent these numbers and statistics are actually indicative of the lives of the everyday people living, working and striving to survive on the ground in any given society. Todaro explains:

*Every nation strives after development. Economics progress is an essential component, but it is not the only component. Development is not purely an economic phenomenon. In an ultimate sense, it must encompass more than the material and financial side of people's lives. Development should therefore be perceived as a multidimensional process involving the reorganisation and reorientation of entire economic and social systems.<sup>12</sup>*

Economic problems in every society are fundamentally the same although there are few legitimate generalizations for the societies themselves. Central to all societies in pursuit of economic

---

<sup>10</sup> Todaro, 11

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 77



development are questions such as what, where, how, how much and for whom goods and services should be produced. However, included with such questions should be more that focus on who is really making economic decisions and who are the ones to benefit from such decisions. Nonetheless, such is not always the case. Whoever manages the resources of any given community is then necessarily also in control of the direction in which that society or nation is being driven. If much of the needed material base of any given society is being imported from outside that society, the control comes to rest in the hands of those outside the society.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, economics, or that which the “state” rest upon, becomes directed in the interest of those who control it from afar – external institutions, nations or groups of powerful people.

*On Underdevelopment:*

The phenomenon of what is called “underdevelopment” is a relative term. It must be viewed from both a national and an international context. Commonly quoted indications according to western development logic include problems of poverty, low productivity, population growth, unemployment, primary-product export dependence, and international vulnerability.<sup>14</sup> The reason for both a national and international understanding of this problem stands upon a belief that the reasons for such problems have sprung from both domestic and global origins.

One author has been led to believe that the main cause of underdevelopment in Africa, in general, is slavery. He refers to slavery of four kinds: the physical slave trade, the apprenticeship system, colonialism and the enslavement of the intellect.<sup>15</sup> The historical and colonial background of any nation plays an undeniable role in the way in which a future will unfold. He claims that development concepts and initiatives:

*Have retained the essence of the master-slave relationship and have fought shy of upsetting it. All development efforts have thus maintained the dichotomy whether it be the master-slave relationships, the colonial power and the colonized relationship or post-Independence urban and rural relationship the main characteristic is the drain of wealth, resources and services from one area to another.”<sup>16</sup>*

Through the medium of slavery – physical, political, economic and intellectual – the external catalysts and former perpetrators of physical slavery have maintained their position at the core through the appropriation and control of “development” and the path it will pursue wherever it may be employed.

---

<sup>13</sup> Atta Britwum. “Contemporary Politics in Ghana. 4 March 2003. University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. (Notes in possession of author).

<sup>14</sup> Todora, 62

<sup>15</sup> Twum-Barima, 22

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23

Neo-colonialism, which has to do with economic and ideological as well as intellectual control, is by far the most dangerous as it is harder to actually see. Its effects are no less present and destructive, however. The “formal” education system, founded and nurtured in the west, was transplanted to Ghana during the time of British colonialism. However, during its move from Europe to Ghana, it was never questioned or reconsidered but rather put into place as an exact replica of its model back in Europe. It could be claimed that the enslavement of the intellect was not an intentional or deliberate affront to Ghana and other such former colonies and the development thereof; however, the results are clear and obvious to anyone caring to see. The “formal” education system on loan from Britain has succeeded in many regards in the complete severance of Ghanaian students from their culture, their knowledge and their lives here in Ghana. “So subtle and complete has been the process that the African, today, does not even realize his condition.”<sup>17</sup> Without awareness of such a condition, the knowledge being administered is taken as correct and legitimate and has resulted in a false sense of self, a false sense of development, a false sense of what it means to be a Ghanaian.

Indoctrinated in the education, which is British, is a false sense of faith in all things coming from “there” as can be opposed to all those things coming from ‘here’, Ghana. What has ensued as a result of the perpetuation of this alien education is what one author, Pieterse, has coined as ‘psychological modernism’ which he defines as ‘an uncritical acceptance of the values of the modern world including blind faith in technology, inordinate attachment to the material gadgets and conveniences, uncritical acceptance of the march of scientific progress, devotion to electronic media and a lifestyle dictated by advertisement.’<sup>18</sup> The condition of psychological modernism is a result of the foreign educational system that is an effect of neo-colonialism. Mr. Kofi Sam, former minister of state and founder of Approtech in Cape Coast, has dubbed this condition Acquired Import Dependency Syndrome (AIDS).<sup>19</sup>

The effects of this disease as was outlined in the title above, Mr. Sam will argue, are equally if not more disastrous than the disease we all think of in reference to the above-mentioned acronym. Acquired Import Dependency Syndrome has kept a primary perpetuator of mental slavery in Ghana. Because Ghana was in many ways Britain before it was officially Ghana, there was not clear way for Ghanaians to acquire an appreciation for the ‘made here’ goods as opposed to the “made here” goods. Because of the indoctrination and intellectual enslavement of Ghana through foreign education the choice to patronize all that coming from elsewhere dominated the choice to pursue internal development. Because Ghana has been at the receiving end of this education, this indoctrination, this particular “path to development”, she herself is in the very best position to decide whether or not to continue further in such a manner or develop strategies to have her lot made more tolerable in terms of individual happiness, pride and satisfaction however they may be measured and quantified.

---

<sup>17</sup> Twum-Barima. 23

<sup>18</sup> Pieterse, 34

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Kofi Sam. ‘Appropriate Technology in Ghana’ 31 March 2003. University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. (Notes in possession of author).

Today, Kofi Sam will argue, education which remains to a large extent foreign and superficial in consideration of the environment, culture and history of Ghana, is serving as a direct input for the perpetuation and growing popularity of western notions of development which has shown itself to be inclusive of western styles of dress, religion, consumption and life. What is needed, then, is the creation of more appropriate education which would in turn fuel the creation of more appropriate technology which would allow for the healthy advancement of this nation with much respect to its individual circumstances, personality and history.

The spread of education, which is a commonly thought to be essential in pursuit of development according to local and western logic, may not be exactly the case due to the indoctrination that serves as education within the foreign schooling system. For example, according to western development institutions, per capita is often used as an indicator of the level of living and development within any given society. Why then was the per capita in Ghana greater when there was only one university as opposed to now when there are five?<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Mr. Kofi Sam of Cape Coast, interview by author, 28 April 2003, Cape Coast, residence of Kofi Sam. (Notes in possession of author).

## **Fieldwork: The Meanings of Development in a Ghanaian Context**

*Although difficult to define, 'development' is generally agreed to include a series of components such as increased economic growth, equity and distribution of the fruits of that growth, control of the population of its own destiny and the achievement of qualitative transcendental values. Development cannot be defined in purely quantitative terms and differs over both time and space. It is best defined in terms of the aspirations and values of the people in their own social context in this sense, is probably only really meaningful at the subnational level.<sup>21</sup>*

As development is ever changing and evolving, of the people, for the people, by the people, it is those very people striving for development, therefore, who must be at the center and the periphery of all development thinking. It can be no other way as no one is better able to define problems as the one experiencing the problems initially and most directly. Without the ability to clearly define problems in the first place, how then is one to find a solution? Simply, it can't be done.

So if development in Ghana is to happen in any meaningful and sustainable way, it must be the Ghanaians who define it, understanding it and control it. The main focus of this research is to uncover the meaning of development within a Ghanaian context. My region of study has been the Cape Coast area in the Central Region, in particular, the University of Cape Coast. It is now appropriate to go through those findings in hopes of lending greater understanding to this topic.

### *Responses from Students:*

In response to the meaning of development, responses from participants ranged from provision of basic necessities, self-sufficiency and responsible resource management, increase in standard of living, improvement in education, improvement of social amenities and provision of greater infrastructure.<sup>22</sup> One participant felt development could be defined by the relative happiness of any individual within a given society and / or the total well being of that person which can be measured according to the level of access to the control over the basic necessities in life.

In response to the meaning of underdevelopment, answers ran along the lines of inability of a people to provide *basic necessities of life, lack of self-sufficiency, low per capita GDP and low standard of living*, mismanagement of resources, reliance on primitive *technology, illiteracy*,

---

<sup>21</sup> Fraser Taylor and Fiona Mackenzie, ed. *Development from Within: Survival in Rural Africa*. (London and NY: Routledge, 1992), 214.

<sup>22</sup> Please note italicized words are to be discussed and defined below in following section.

*economic dependence, foreign domination*, lack of social amenities and improvement, and also meaninglessness in the lives of the people.

When asked to distinguish development from underdevelopment some chose to respond in complete thoughts while others chose not to respond indicating that their previous two responses were adequate explanations of both situations. Those who responded noted that development allows for dignity and independence while underdevelopment renders those under its rule less dignified; development is positive while underdevelopment is negative. Responses included commentary on development in terms of attaining the “good life” and underdevelopment in terms of hunger, poverty and disease. Still others referred to the differences in the standard of living and differences in the lives of the people in terms of happiness and comfort. The dependency / domination situation was mentioned by several participants as well as differences in the ability to attain self-sufficiency.

The next question on my inquiry was in regards to a model for the path of development to pursue, ideally. This question was the one other that was frequently skipped, however, the responses I received envisioned a Ghana with a better education system, healthcare, housing and higher levels of literacy. One participant claimed there to be no clear-cut model but that if one were to be established it could be one of self-sufficiency. Many used specific countries to define their models. Countries mentioned were typically western capitalist states including European countries and America, others such as Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were mentioned but far less commonly. Those who answered in such a manner for a model of development frequently responded to a model for underdevelopment with countries such as Ghana or sub Saharan African nations. Other people still said that the models of development and underdevelopment are dictated solely based upon the level of happiness of the individual as well as the aspiration of people to attain greater heights.

Indications of a developed versus an underdeveloped nation were largely claimed to be read in terms of the ability on the part of the citizens to meet the basic needs of life, GDP and per capital income, high versus low standards of living, mortality, medical care, unemployment, inflation and malnutrition. Other respondents referred to the achievement of self-reliance, ability of a nation to be responsible for themselves and their mistakes, economic stability, improved technology, affordable education, high versus low levels of infrastructure as well as modern equipment and skilled labour. Overall, the society which is able to enjoy a greater comfort of life, meeting the basic needs at least and typically with access to surplus are the societies indicative of “developed” while the ones lacking the ability for whatever reason to meet the basic needs for life in any sustainable way are indicative of “underdeveloped”.

The next question on the survey was a study I borrowed from Todaro’s text, Economic Development. He claims:

*During the 1970s, economic development came to be redefined in terms of the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment*

*within the context of a growing economy... (Therefore) if all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result 'development' even if per capita income doubled.*<sup>23</sup>

Based on this premise, I asked my participating student three consecutive questions regarding what has been happening to levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality. They were given three choices for each area of focus. According to the responses I received I have compiled statistics. In regards to poverty, 28% of students polled thought it had reduced, 13% thought it had remained the same and 59% thought it had increased. In terms of unemployment, 13% thought it had reduced, 9% thought it had stayed the same while 78% felt it had increase. Lastly in the area of inequality, 47% of my participants felt it had reduced, 6% felt it had remained the same and 41% thought it had increased. In sum, the majority of students felt overall that poverty and unemployment has been on the rise while inequality has been reducing over time. In conclusion, then in accordance with Todaro's hypothesis, 56% of the people polled felt that two or more of these factors were increasing which would be to say that development has not been occurring despite boasts from the current government that mild progress has been made in the last twenty four months in terms of an increasing GDP growth rate.<sup>24</sup>

Ensuing from this discussion, I inquired about how students were to envision a developed Ghana and the responses were most illuminating. A developed Ghana will be free from AIDS, unemployment, economic dependence, poverty, inappropriate technology and illiteracy. Other response included equal opportunity and access to resources including education. A developed Ghana will be completely self-reliant as well as capable and willing to extend money to other countries in need of assistance. Industrialised and free from international donations and aid, Ghana will be a center for West African and African trade, according to others.

Next I asked about what role the government plays in the process of development in addition to the role the people must play. This question received many, many similar responses. Overall, it was agreed upon by the overarching majority of the students that the governments responsibility was to provide infrastructure including education as well as development friendly policies and initiatives. The peoples responsibility, according to my survey, is to stand behind the government, be self-sacrificing and hardworking.

The last question I posed to the students was in regards to the benefit the government as well as the people will see from advances in the area of development. One student said that through

---

<sup>23</sup> Todaro, 14-5.

<sup>24</sup> "NPP claims that the modest GDP growth rate of at least 4.7% for 2003 compared with 4.5% in 2002 shows that the government is committed to a systematic approach to its development." Bernard Otabil.

development, the people and the government would be lifted from the vicious cycle of poverty through a minimized reliance on the economies of other countries. Another student claimed that development will empower the people and the people will continue through that empowerment to advance the society further. According to another, development will be felt in the everyday lives of the people. A popular response in regard to the benefit derived for the government is popularity amongst the people and the greater potential for reelection as well as international recognition and esteem. Both parties are to derive peace and mutual understanding from development initiatives as well as a greater sense of national pride.

#### *Responses from Participants in Government:*

As for the Ghanaians I surveyed working in local government. Their responses were not too far removed from those of the students. I may postulate this to be the result of the education system, teaching the same curriculum now as it was for the previous generation. In response to my first question on the meaning of development, one participant referred to the socio-economic and cultural advancement of a society. The second participant echoed the last and added that provision of the basic necessities of life was necessary to an increased standard of living resulting in “development”. The last participant spoke loosely of the improvement of society over time.

In regard to “underdevelopment”, answers were the opposites of “development”. The first referred to socio-economic backwardness, while the next referred to the lack of means to provide for basic needs creating a low standard of living. The last spoke of development below the expected level although he did not articulate what might be understood as the “expected level” in his opinion.

According to one participant, with the necessary factors in place, underdevelopment smoothes out into development. Another thought that stages of growth lead one society (underdeveloped) into another (developed), which is a classic modernization theory implying a linear model for development. Lastly, one respondent noted the difference between the above-mentioned types of societies through their comparison to a set standard; what standard this might be was once again left undefined.

For models of development and underdevelopment, governmental participants referred to the “Great 7” as developed and sub-Saharan Africa as underdeveloped. Other responses referred to the use of indicators such as per capita income as appropriate, or at least acceptable, models. Indications of both ‘types’ of societies were articulated to be high versus low literacy rates, as well as mortality, access to health care and shelter, respect for human rights, high versus low standards of living, per capita income, GNP, population growth and education.

For my questions about increasing, stagnant or decreasing levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality in Ghana felt over time, all three agreed that poverty and unemployment have been increasing while only two out of three believed that inequality has been increasing. The other

believed that inequality has been declining. According to Todaro's hypothesis outlined above, it would be unfair to claim Ghana as currently 'developing' according to these small findings.

How do these government officials envision a developed Ghana? As Ghana develops there will be a higher per capita income and GNP, improved infrastructure, mechanized agriculture, widespread access to and control over basic needs, overall reduction in poverty, affordable health and education as well as the eradication of outmoded cultural practices.

The people surveyed here felt similarly to the students in that they see the role of government in development initiatives to revolve primarily around provision of infrastructure, initiative and environment for development to be pursued through and the people are to rally around the government, support them and uphold their individual responsibilities of work, obedience and sacrifice. As to what benefit the government and the people see from development initiatives, all three agreed that the government should receive economic growth and national stability as well as popularity and international recognition from any successful pursuit of development. The people then gain more widespread access to the basic needs of life and enjoy higher standards of living and overall happiness.

*Summary:*

What is most prevalent in many of the responses I received in this survey of students and government officials is the use of key development "buzzwords" for lack of a better term. This informs my research question in many ways. What is actually meant by these words in the first place, according to their creators – the western development institutions – and to what extent have these words, concepts and terms been blindly accepted as legitimate development discourse in Ghana for Ghanaian development and to what extent have the people accorded a definition to them that makes them meaningful in the pursuit of their own approaches to internal development? This will be discussed at length in the following section of the report.



## Development Language and Its Implications on Development<sup>25</sup>

The domination that language can impose is very real and very serious. From the time when the Europeans arrived on the shores of Africa, European language began its inward penetration throughout the lands and people of Africa. Foreign language was introduced to Ghana beginning in the times of trade. During the years of informal and formal colonialism that followed, English was made the official language. By this time Ghanaians were left with little other choice than to learn the language of their rulers. Imposition of language is just one more form of domination and the official languages of now independent former colonies remain in the European idioms of their former slave and colonial masters. The point here is not to argue over the legitimacy or validity of these spoken languages in Africa, but instead to highlight and explore the problematic nature and the perpetuation of domination through control over the understanding, knowledge, direction and language of development in Africa, most specifically, in Ghana.

Words are used to portray thoughts, ideas and concepts. What is thought of and spoken of in one society is different from what is thought of and spoken of in another and the environment, the people, their ways of life and understanding. As was detailed above, development, as in the disciplines of theory and economics, was born and bred through the labours of western academic, political and economic institutional thinking. Much of the language employed by the students I was able to survey during my fieldwork, however, was the same as the language being used by mainstream development intellectuals in the west. A discussion of such popular concepts and the meaning attached in the west will ensue to be followed by a critique of the contrast between the two relative notions of these concepts.

Firstly, it is important to define the most obvious terms, development and underdevelopment, as they are defined in the west. Development is understood as:

*the process of improving the quality of all human lives. Three equally important aspects of development are (1) raising people's living levels – their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical service, education, etc. through relevant economic growth processes; (2) creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions that promote human dignity and respect, and (3) increasing people's freedom by enlarging the*

---

<sup>25</sup> All definitions used for development terminology discussed in this section have been taken from the glossary of Michael Todaro's development economics textbook and can be taken as a valid suggestion of western meaning attached to such words.

*range of their choice variables, as by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.*<sup>26</sup>

Underdevelopment on the other hand, is defined as

*an economic situation in which there are persistent low levels of living in conjunction with absolute poverty, low income per capita, low rates of economic growth, low consumption levels, poor health services, high death rates, high birth rates, dependence on foreign economics and limited freedom to choose among activities that satisfy human wants.*

This brings us to very commonly employed term, ‘standard of living’ which means ‘the extent to which a person, family or group of people can satisfy their material and spiritual wants. If they are able to afford only a minimum quantity of food, shelter, clothing, their levels of living are said to be very low. If they enjoy a great variety of food, shelter and clothing amongst other things, such as good health, education, and leisure, they are enjoying relatively high levels of living...’<sup>27</sup> Basic needs, on a similar note, are the basis for any analysis on the standard of living. Development becomes absolutely contingent on the ability of any society to provide its citizens with the means to meet basic needs. Initially created by the International Labour Organisation, Todaro claims basic needs to refer to the “basic goods and services (food, shelter, clothing, sanitation, education etc) necessary for a minimum standard of living.”<sup>28</sup>

Gross national product, or GNP, is the most commonly cited economic indicator in the determination of levels of development according to western development institutions. According to Todaro, GNP refers to, “the total domestic and foreign output claimed by residents of a country. It comprises gross domestic product (GDP) plus factor incomes accruing to persons abroad.” And then there is the critique. Per capita GNP figures are based on averages. Averages are not always indicative of the truth – it has been shown that GNP statistics have great potential for construing a situation far removed from that actually on place in the lives of the people of a society. Stan Burkey explains, “A fair number of very wealthy families in an otherwise very poor country will pull the average higher than observation might expect.”<sup>29</sup> The term GNP goes hand and hand with per capita income and are almost used interchangeable. The technical meaning accorded to this term is “the total gross national product of a country divided by total population.”<sup>30</sup> Like GNP, however, per

---

<sup>26</sup> Todaro, 739.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 752. Placed under levels of living.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 734.

<sup>29</sup> Stan Burkey. People First: A guide to self reliant, Participatory Rural Development, (London and NY: Zed Books: 1993), 4

<sup>30</sup> Todaro, 747.

capita statistics have been shown to be capable of bias as it fails to take into account income distribution and the ownership of assets employed to acquire pieces of the total income.

Dependence and domination are spoken of typically in the same breath, being the opposite ends of a continuum of power dynamics. Dependence is referred to as the situation of what is commonly termed the “third world” whereas domination is used in reference to the “first world”. These are all terms as dire need of definition. Todaro tells us the situation of dependence is one in which “a less developed country (LDC) has to rely on developed country domestic and international economic policy to stimulate their own economic growth”. He goes on to say that “dependence can also mean that the LDC’s adopt developed-country education systems, technology, economic and political system, attitudes, consumption patterns, dress, etc.”<sup>31</sup> At the other end is dominance which is said to mean ‘a situation in which the developed countries have much greater power than the less developed countries in decisions affecting important international economic issues, such as the prices of agricultural commodities and raw materials in world markets.’<sup>32</sup>

All those nations taking part in the act of domination have been termed the “first world” which refers to “the now economically advanced capitalist countries of western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan” while almost all other nations on whom dependency has been imposed through domination are left with the title “third world”. This insensitive and equally problematic title refers to “the present 157 developing countries of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, mainly characterized by low levels of living, high rates of population growth, low income per capita, and general economic and technological dependence on First World economies.”<sup>33</sup>

Institutions and infrastructure are another pair that get thrown around a lot together. The word institution is used in reference to

*norms, rules of conduct and generally accepted ways of doing things. Social institutions are well defined, formal organizations of society that govern the way that society operates – for example, the class system, private versus communal ownership, or the educational system. Political institutions are the systems that govern the operations of the government of a society – formal power structures, political parties, and mechanisms for obtaining power.*

Whereas the term infrastructure refers to “the underlying amount of physical and financial capital embodied in roads, railway, waterways, airways and other forms of transportation and communication

---

<sup>31</sup> Todaro, 738.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 739.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 767.

plus water supplies, financial institutions, electricity and public services such as health and education.”<sup>34</sup> The quality and quantity of both institutions and infrastructure in any given society is frequently relied on to determine the level of development in any society according to western development logic.

The term vicious cycle of poverty is also frequently employed in reference to “underdeveloped” societies whereas “self reliance” is quoted as the path by which one nation pursues “development”. The vicious cycle of poverty is explained in terms of “a self-reinforcing situation in which factors tend to perpetuate a certain undersirable phenomenon for example, low incomes in poor countries lead to low consumption, which then leads to poor health and low labour productivity and eventually to the persistence of poverty.”<sup>35</sup> Self-reliance, on the other hand, indicated “reliance on one’s own capabilities, judgment, resources and skills, in a bid to enhance political, social, economic, cultural, attitudinal, and moral independence.”<sup>36</sup>

What can be drawn from the language alone created and continuously employed in the thinking, writing and doings of western development institutions is, first, a blind faith in the notion of economic indicators and, second, an unwavering acceptance of dichotomies. As the education system here in Ghana is a replica of the one in England, the means of development are also being viewed as a replica of the development pursued by other areas. Robert Bates puts forth a theory in his book entitled *Prosperity and Violence* and he claims:

*Older states were born of war. Those with private capital were coerced into sponsoring costs of government. Payment for government included home security. Liberal political institutions were a by-product of the impact of military insecurity. Countries developing later were born of a different context. There was less military threat and easy access to capital and therefore faced less incentive to forge liberal political institutions.*<sup>37</sup>

From this Bates concede that because nations have different origins and histories and circumstances, their paths from that point onward will not be the same nor should they be manipulated into the form of something else.

The language employed in the pursuit of development enforces domination necessarily. If the west creates the words and attaches whatsoever meaning they please and if the west then takes that language, that vocabulary to the targeted area (those areas opposite from where they stand) the

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 741.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 770

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 763.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Bates, *Prosperity and Violence, The Political Economy of Development*. (London and NY: W.W Norton and Co., 2001), 14

consequences will not be as beneficial to the targeted area as originally planned regardless of the quality of initial intentions.

## Conclusions

I am an outsider to Ghanaian culture. I am a student of development theory in the west here critiqued. I have spent merely one semester here living and studying, gathering insight and understanding. Of that time I have spent one month specifically researching this topic. The time is inadequate as well as my understanding to a significant extent. These are things I cannot deny. I am limited by these things. I have not come here to stir things up or point fingers. That I am interested in is meaningful development for Ghana, capable of teaching the individual lives of Ghanaians, uplifting them and taking them where they wish to go. According to this research, cultural imperialism has penetrated significantly into the meaning of development in Ghana including the indications of and the paths to growth and progress for this nation. In conclusion, I will provide the best alternative avenue I can see for Ghana to pursue a path to meaningful change and national “development”.

What is here in Ghana is the answer. May we be so bold as to presume that possibly there is no problem in Ghana. The answers are all found within Ghana. It’s just a matter of investing oneself into the discovery of their existence once again. Nothing that is coming from another place will take root anywhere else unless there is an intimate relation to it already alive and healthy on the ground here. To serve as an example, Christianity and the cross were both brought to Ghana by Europeans so many centuries again. Both now absolutely flourish there in whatever form they may take on. The point here is not to argue for or against the validity of these concepts but solely for the fact that they have survived all these years and remain well, alive and evolving amongst Ghanaians. So how come? Christianity and the cross came to Ghana and were accepted because the tenets of this teaching and this symbol were previously alive and well amongst the people. Gye Nyame, an adinkra symbol standing for the omnipotence of God was here before any European ever arrived. God was known and a symbol existed. Though they were different, they were similar enough. Christianity came on the coattails of a knowledge that was already present and healthy on the ground. And here comes the parallel example from which to draw peace of mind in the battle for meaningful development. What comes to Ghana, in the area of development and technology, must resonate with what is already there.<sup>38</sup> Theory then must also be relevant to the ground, the people, and their lives.

---

<sup>38</sup> Kofi Sam, founder and director of Approtech in Cape Coast Ghana, uses the symbol of the cross hooked on the gye nyame for the label of his products. Example and discussion here is borrowed from his explanation of the meaning of that label. Mr. Kofi Sam, 22 April 2003.

People wearing neckties and hot western style suits have taken something from somewhat else that does not readily apply itself to life on the ground in Ghana. It's hot in Ghana. This would explain why western style suits were not originally derived in Ghana, or any hot climate for that matter. Western suits, developed in the environment of the west were developed to fill a purpose, whatever that may be. That is the attire of another people and appropriate to their environment and lifestyles. With the suits, next comes the air-conditioning to adjust the climate to the suits. Again the logic of air-conditioning is not harmonious with what's here, the environment, the heat. The pump the wattage into the air conditioners, a surplus of electricity is required. To get the electricity, dams are built because dams are built in other areas to get electricity. But the water doesn't always flow here, so the dam may not always be worth the large amount of money required to create it. What is here is the sun. The sun is always here. So why not take the money set aside for dams to instead invest in solar paneling to tap all the unlimited and free power trapped in the ever-present, ever-burning hot African sun? The initial cost is high, but since the sun is constant, eventually it will have paid for itself.<sup>39</sup> This is what is meant by "appropriate technology". Thinking on development in Ghana needs to think about Ghana rather than what's outside of Ghana. Development is constantly evolving, as was stated above in the introduction. It is constantly evolving everywhere, and its image is not universal though its presence is. As Kofi Sam has proclaimed, "Science is universal, technology is environmental."

What is here in Ghana is good. What is there, outside of Ghana, is also good but it is good for there. With the beginnings of a "global marketplace" and a "global economy" it is critical that we all maximize on what we are, what we can offer. We are all different and that is there to be appreciated and exploited; which is to say exploited by our own for our own. There are rich countries and there are poor countries. There is a gap between the two that is just too wide. Closing the gap, however, does not require a global assimilation of the peoples of the world. We are all different whether we like it or not and there is no sense in trying to disguise ourselves in the image of one. However, the sum of all peoples, all nations, is One. No matter what we do to live and strive, work, learn and play, there will always be something that makes us all the same. It is merely the gap that is keeping us apart. Closing the gap entails nothing other than knowing ourselves well and striving to understand others as best we are able.

The key to development may involve a critical reexamination of all that lies within ones borders. Dependence, as was described above, is not limited to the poor nations of the world. All nations are currently depending on each other because no one nation can do it all as is becoming more and more apparent with the passage of time. For development to pursue a meaningful course in both a global and a national context all nations must examine what lies within their borders. A nation must never depend on another nation's mode of education, dress, consumption or technology. All of these

---

<sup>39</sup> Kofi Sam. "Appropriate Technology in Ghana". 31 March 2003. University of Cape Coast, Ghana (Notes in possession of author)

things must be indigenous to the land, the people and the history. They are universal in their basic necessity by not in their application. People must be educated, dressed, fed and skilled according to where they are. It just won't work any other way.

Basic needs must be addressed in every society first and foremost; this is undeniably true. If any society has survived until present day, it has found ways and means whereby to do so throughout history. And so I propose the answers to a society's problems are within, they have been within, and they will remain within. The appropriate solutions are not the same from place to place. If there is a problem in Ghana, how then do Ghanaians solve it? How did the Ghanaian ancestors that came before solve it when they were here? How can we take those ways of old and improve on them? For instance, how can Ghanaians develop better and more efficient ways to smoke fish or produce palm oil? Where is that technology? That would be an instance of meaningful and uplifting development. Development in Ghana should not take the form of skyscrapers and electronic gadgets because it fails to reach and enrich the lives of any majority of the people living in Ghana. For instance, with the power used to run one air-conditioner, ten village homes could be provided with electricity.<sup>40</sup> The people, and I am speaking of the majority, need to be able to feel "development" for it is they who are working to promote it. Eighty percent of Ghanaians were farmers or fishers.<sup>41</sup> They are the stakeholders and what to they receive in return?

As any institution will do if allowed, the foreign education system introduced into Ghana during the times of colonialism bred only more of the same as those nations still indirectly acting in domination perpetuated a new understanding of everything crucial to the healthy progress and advancement of humankind within her/his own society. A person's education makes that person all that she/he is. Therefore, that education must aim at making her/him in tune with her/his culture and conscious of the best traditions and values of the people he/she was born of and raised amongst. Education in any other will cause that person to become alien to his/her own situation and a hindrance to the natural development of the people. Because this alien education was perpetuated on an increasing scale, what once was normal, common-sensical and wise is now looking abnormal through the new lens of external logic. Education according to this alien logic robs the people and the society of their entitled normalcy. Meaningful and effective development can never be pursued under such conditions.

Appropriate technology refers to technology that is appropriate for existing historical, environmental, cultural and economic endowments and characteristics. Technical institutions must work to educate the people in such a way as is relevant and most helpful to the people. The work of the students in the schools and universities must reflect on the plight of the people. Education cannot serve as a mirror of another nation's knowledge but must strive to recover the normalcy of Ghanaian society, as it has existed in times past and how it ought to exist in times to come. Education must

---

<sup>40</sup> Kofi Sam. Interview 28 April 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

provide the populace with the means for meeting and improving upon the basic needs of society. If education isn't taking your nation and your people, your youth, where they need to go, how will this nation, this people, this youth ever truly get anywhere?

Development from within: what is here is the answer. What is needed is policies that stress economic self-reliance with a nation struggling to develop. This can be accomplished through conversion of local science into its appropriate technology. Thus "third world" and "first world" become One World, the dichotomy of dependence and dominance melts into One of self-reliance. We trade in per capita and GNP indicators for a measure of meaningfulness and happiness in the lives of the people. One author explains the situation clearly:

*The human potential, basic wisdom and understanding of Africa's local peoples have been seriously underestimated. To some, they are seen as a major barrier to the development aims both of the African state and of the international agencies which are involved in promoting and guiding what they see as being required for development to take place. They are objects of development who have to be 'modernized', 'mobilized', or 'captured'. A basic objective of development from within is to allow local people to become the subject, not the object, of development strategies. Given the opportunity to do so, they have shown themselves to be perfectly capable of making rational choices regarding their own destinies. Too much attention has been given to the negative developmental aspects of issues such as 'kinship' and not nearly enough to the positive aspects of local community realities on which a more meaningful development can be built.*"<sup>42</sup>

From this research, I have found that there is a clear and present cry for self-reliance and an end to domination and dependence. The people want equality. What remains problematic, however, is the cry for self-reliance in *conjunction with* the dominant discourse of "first" and "third" worlds, of GNP and per capita incomes. Development, as of now, looks like Accra. Accra looks like any big city complete with western food, western dress and western music. Everything there, in so many ways, has simply been brought in from there. That is not meaningful; it is not even sustainable. It is not even touching the lives of people, merely the western educated elites. Therefore I maintain that cultural imperialism has been allowed to cloud over the possibilities for meaningful development from within, for Ghana and for Ghanaians.

---

<sup>42</sup> Taylor and Mackenzie, ed. , 257



## **Suggestions for Further Study**

Drawing from this work, the next most obvious and pressing question for exploration might be the extent to which democracy, as a concept and as an ideology, is something actually existing here on the ground in Ghana and how it may or may not be just another imported notion from the West. What is its meaning to the West? What is its meaning to Ghana? Is it establishing roots here, to what extent and why or why not?

An investigation into the dominating powers of language imposition, in general, would be an intriguing topic for inquiry. Is the removal of colonial language feasible? What would be the possible repercussions of such an endeavor? What are the observable repercussions of the use of colonial language today in the education system? In politics?

One might also wish to pursue an exploration into the ways in which development initiatives help and/or hinder the recovery of Ghanaian normalcy in the sense of a greater appreciation for Ghanaian ways of dress, language, consumption and entertainment. In other words, an exploration into the ways in which Ghanaian development might offer resistance to cultural imperialism.

## Appendix One

*Survey for students and other professionals:*

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH**

Dear Sir/Madame,

My name is Jessamyn Mayher and I am an exchange student studying at the University of Cape Coast. I am currently conducting a research project on local perceptions of development in Ghana. The questions on this short survey are to assist with my study. A sentence or two in response to each would be sufficient although, extra information is welcomed and appreciated. Any assistance at all that you are able to provide would be most helpful.

I thank you for your time and insight.

1. In your understanding, development means what?
2. What does underdevelopment mean?
3. How do you envision one from the other?
4. Is there a model in mind for a developed society? Underdeveloped society?
5. What could you take as indications of a developed society? Underdeveloped society?
6. In recent years:
  - A What has been happening to poverty?  
It has reduced.  
It has remained at the same level.  
It has increased.
  - B What has been happening to unemployment?  
It has reduced.  
It has remained at the same level.  
It has increased.
  - C What has been happening to inequality?  
It has reduced.

It has remained at the same level.

It has increased.

7. How do you envision a developed Ghana?

8. What role does the government take in development? The people?

9. What benefit does the government see from development initiatives? The people?

Please circle one:            student                    professor                    other

Thank you so much for your time and assistance.

## Bibliography

Agyemang, Kwasi. "America's Lesson to Africa." West Africa, 24 – 30 March 2003.

Bates, Robert. Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2001.

Britwum, Atta. Professor in French department at University of Cape Coast.

"Contemporary Politics in Ghana." 4 March 2003. ADS Notes University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Notes in possession of author.

Burkey, Stan. People First: A Guide to Self-Reliant, Participatory Rural Development. London and NY: Zed Books, 1993.

Herbst, Jeffrey. States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2000.

Joseph, Richard, ed. State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 1999.

Otabil, Bernard. "Quiet' or 'Killer' Budget?" West Africa 24-30 March 2003.

Otabil, Bernard. "Is Professor Mills Misunderstood?" 3-9 March 2003.

Panford, Kwamina IMR – World Bank and Labour's Burdens in Africa: Ghana's Experience. Westport: Praeger, 2001.

Sam, Kofi. Former cabinet minister, founder of Approtech, Cape Coast. interview by author, 28 April 2003. Cape Coast. Notes in possession of author. Kofi Sam's residence. Cape Coast, Ghana.

So, Alvin Y. Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World Systems Theories. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990

Taylor, D.R. and Mackenzie, Fiona, ed. Development From Within: Survival in Rural Africa. London and NY: Routledge, 1992

Todaro, Michael, ed. Economic Development. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 2001.

Twum-Barima, K. The Cultural Basis of our National Development. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1985. Taken from J. B. Danquah Memorial Lectures, February 1982.