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Achieving Economic Development amidst Post-Modern Cross Roads

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Abstract

This paper endeavoured to point a way for achieving socio-economic development amidst postmodern crossroads. The paper observed that postmodernism aims with its “subjugation of differences,” especially the social and cultural differences of various regions, at unifying all cultures and social interaction into a monolithic pattern. This trend, however, is worrisome to many rich cultures which are swallowed to make way for other cultures, with the cultures of less developed countries the worst victims of this subjugation. Amidst the conception of cultural inhibitions, postmodernism could rightly be lauded for turning the world into a “global village,” and ridding the world of conventional beliefs and dogmatism which hitherto, imbeds development and breaking into progressive frontiers. The rise of Information Communications Technology (ICT) playing a large part with the information it creates. The breaking into successful frontiers then can rightly be attributed to possession of knowledge, “knowledge then becomes power” in this new world. To achieve socio-economic development then, entails being ahead of peers in the acquisition of knowledge, and our leaders, integrate elements of other regions that would enhance development. Not excluding being part of associations or world bodies that would hasten development.

Key Words: Postmodernism, Globalization, Economy, Development

Introduction

With the shift in the way of thinking and perception which is largely a result of postmodernism, there arises “crossroads” in the major spheres of life. Globalization which is a postmodern effect having successfully integrated persons of different cultures and arguably religion to some extent, have nonetheless led to some cultures stifled to make it possible for proper integration. The above trend has led to crossroads, “at moments of conflict, what should be sacrificed for the other?”

The question of what should be sacrificed for the other in cases of societal and cultural conflicts becomes pertinent as the economy of the world is carried out across the globe. Multinational companies now could have their headquarters in America, and the production plant in China while

monitoring sales all over the country with the aid of modem technology in milliseconds. Communicating with friends irrespective of distance becomes easier and effective with the social media. Information is now easily shared as the internet has overtaken the more traditional means of advertising and news that include: billboards, newspapers, radio, magazines, and so on.

Amidst the crossroads, the unifying process of postmodernism makes it far easier for an effective socio-economic development. When properly harnessed, and the issue of culture identity well taken into consideration to avoid the possibility of marginalization, the advantages and success postmodernism can offer are boundless. And it is these advantages to our socio-economic development that we would look concern ourselves with.

Post-Modernism: Meaning

Hungwe (2017) noted that postmodernism is considered by some as a new era to come, others argue that it is our contemporary culture, the period in which we live in. And for some others, there is nothing new but an extension of modernism, so it is therefore high modernity. Because of its difference in meaning to different people, the term “postmodernism” is generally considered as a difficult term to define. This difficulty in definition stems from its usage, vagueness, and the difference in opinion amongst the disciplines that use the term.

Andreas Saugstad warned against engaging in any attempt to offer a final definition of the term:

The term is used in philosophy, literature, social sciences and architecture. Different postmodern thinkers may have different opinions, and people from different fields may have somewhat different definitions of “postmodernism.” And if there is one thing postmodernism don’t tend to like, it is fixed criteria or dogmatism, so we should be careful trying to give a final definition of the term.

The difficulty in definition notwithstanding, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy described it as “a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyper-reality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.” The term “postmodernism” is gleaned from two words — “post” which is Latin for “after,” and “modernism” which refers to the modern period. According to Hameel Khan:

Postmodernism is “POST” because it denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody — a characteristic of the so-called “MODERN” mind.

Characteristics of Post-Modernism

To properly understand the notion of postmodernism, it would be worthwhile we look at the characteristics of postmodernism. The webpage ‘All about philosophy’ lists the following characteristics of postmodernism:

- There is no absolute truth -Postmodernists believe that the notion of truth is a contrived illusion, misused by people and special interest groups to gain power over others.
- Truth and error are synonymous- Facts, postmodernists claim, are too limiting to determine anything. Changing erratically, what is fact today can be false tomorrow
- Self-conceptualization and rationalization -Traditional logic and objectivity are spurned by postmodernists. Preferring to rely on opinions rather than embrace facts, postmodernist spurn the scientific method.

- Traditional authority is false and corrupt-postmodernists speak out against the constraints of religious morals and secular authority. They wage intellectual revolution to voice their concerns about traditional establishment.
- Ownership-They claim that collective ownership would most fairly administer goods and services.
- Disillusionment with modernism - Postmodernists rue the unfulfilled promises of science, technology, government, and religion
- Morality is personal-believing ethics to be relative, postmodernists reduced morality to personal opinion. They define morality as each person's private code of ethics without the need to follow traditional values and rules.
- Globalization- Many postmodernists claim that national boundaries are a hindrance to human communication. Nationalism, they believe, causes wars. Therefore, postmodernists often propose internationalism and uniting separate countries.
- All religions are valid -Valuing includes, postmodernists gravitate towards New Age religion. They denounce the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ as being the only way to God.
- Liberal ethics- Postmodernists defend the cause of feminists and homosexuals.
- Pro-environmentalism - Defending "Mother Earth," postmodernists blame Western society for its destruction.

Views of Philosophers on Post-Modernism

Postmodernism in philosophy "appears to be the outcome of the philosophical projects of Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. They are described as "the philosophical masters of distrust" (Joke 2008, p. 4). They were also referred by some others as masters of suspicion according to Joke, because they variously argued against the optimism of modernity and the overestimation of the human person as the last point of rational inquiry. The human person for them is not the master in his or her own home but a product of a barrage of forces (Joke 2008, p.4).

For D.P. Teague, Nietzsche completely rejected Kant's theory of transcendental categories, supposedly shared by all people, thereby, concluding that truth is nothing more than an illusion. Teague noted that "philosophers grappled with two major problems which gave rise to postmodernism."

The first problem is of hermeneutics — textual interpretation. It asks the question: "How do I know the true interpretation of a text?" For Hans-Georg Gadmer, an interpreter cannot objectively understand what the exact mind and intent of the original author of a text is. Meaning from a text only emerges as we engage in a dialogue with the text.

The second problem is that of language and asks the question: "Can language objectively describe truth?" Wittgenstein (1889-1951) holds that language cannot objectively describe truth. That is so because for him, all language is socially conditioned. For Wittgenstein also, truth is socially constructed.

The term "postmodernism" however, entered the philosophical lexicon first in 1979 with Jean François Lyotard's publication *The Postmodern Condition*. Lyotard referred to postmodernism as the "breaking down of the grand narratives." De Shriver (1996, p. 37) commenting on Lyotard's usage of the term noted that Lyotard used the term to signify "the dissolution of those universal principles that the organic intellectuals of modernity had advanced as authoritative rules for insuring the rational

improvement of social organization and individual conduct under the leadership of the modern, centralized state.”

Other philosophers like Michel Foucault, Roland Bathes, Jacques Derrida, Richard Rorty, and Jean Baudrillard are known postmodernists. Generally, the postmodern philosophers offer skepticism on many of the bases and values of Analytic Philosophy.

Matters Arising from Postmodernism: Merits and Demerits

Postmodernism with its rejection of subjective values and thought-pattern liberates the mind to taking decisions and accepting reality independent of the voices of traditional, religious and secular authority. Constraints are pushed off for more daring tasks and approaches, with the attempt to turn the world into a “global village” creating desires and mimetic personalities (Heelas 1998, p. 4). The liberation of the self and mind dangled by postmodernism offers its merits and demerits.

Merits of Postmodernism

- 1) The mind is freed from dogmatism — by claiming that facts are too limiting to determine anything, and what is presently factual can be false tomorrow, postmodernism shuns dogmatism and encourages free-thinking. Also, the dogmatic views and constraints of religious morals and secular authority are questioned.
- 2) Respect to personal feelings - Postmodernism in believing ethics to be relative subject morality to personal opinion. The postmodernists call for liberal ethics in which the cause of feminists and homosexuals are defended.
- 3) Religious Tolerance — Postmodernism values inclusive faiths. A new world religion is envisioned in which religious extremism is criticized, and the Christian claim of Jesus Christ as the only way to God is denounced,
- 4) Globalization — Postmodernism calls for the breaking down of barriers between space and time. Boundaries in human communication are rejected and the unity of separate countries proposed.

Demerits of Postmodernism

- 1) Destruction of many forms of knowledge through multiculturalism — De Sausa Santos (1996, p. 37) was of the view that modern science as knowledge and regulation, brought about the destruction of many forms of knowledge, particularly, knowledge of those subjected to western colonialism. The destruction according to De Sausa provoked silence, silencing the needs and aspirations of the people or social groups whose forms of knowledge were subjected to destruction. The argument is that it is impossible to engage in a multicultural dialogue with the reduction of some cultures to silence and their forms of seeing and believing the world becoming unpronounceable.
- 2) Postmodernism as Experimental and Avant-Garde — Jurgen Habermas (1987) is against the experimental and avant-garde strategies of postmodernism, and claims the postmodernists like Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida committed a performative contradiction in their critiques of modernism by employing such concepts and methods that only modern reason can provide.
- 3) Excessive Independency on Self— with postmodern view centred on the person and his opinions, the communal and familial way of living is being replaced not just with the self alone but with the mass media and computer games. Times spent with persons are carried out more through the social media than physical contacts. What is paramount to the individual seems to be what is concerned

with the self This withdrawal to the self is more pronounced in Africa with communal activities like moonlight tales, having meals from one bowl of food, and many activities and festivals that promote communality are minimized or completely eradicated.

Effects of Post-modernism on Economic Development

Njoku (2008) noted that “postmodernity’s breaking down of grand narratives corresponds to globalization’s breaking down of the barriers between space and time. Hence, postmodernity and globalization feed each other in profound ways.” This Heelas opinion has led to the growth and spread of mass media and ‘immaterial’ means of communication: electronically transmitted codes (fax, e-mail) and images (television). Advertising in view of consumption begins to fill the multilayered space of each one’s life-world. With postmodernism therefore, a larger market audience can be reached. Advertising of tobacco products could be targeted on the female gender without restricting the product to a male audience. This is due to the rejection of any conventional or dogmatic belief that tobacco smoking is restricted to the male gender alone.

Postmodernism, cuts across space and localities making it possible for the internalization of production and business management. “No one today buys an automobile made in one country alone. Design decisions may be made, or surveillance data read, in one location, while assembly lines hum, and workers are monitored in another. Thus the coherence of individual ‘societies’ is undermined, as global social relations erode an older sense of time and space” (Lyon 1993, p. 3).

The promotion of cross cultures and liberal ethics by postmodernism has led to attempting products seen in the media which are strange or even unacceptable in one’s cultures. Issues of cross-dressing, smoking, and so on which hitherto are out rightly considered abominable in some cultures becomes dared by and tolerated, thereby boosting the massive sales of such products.

Way Forward-The Effective Use of Information Technology, and Integration of Cultures

In seeking the approach to be utilized in achieving socio-economic development in a postmodern world, “the celebration of difference” as (Kantongole 2009), calls it should be duly considered. From a social perspective, while Africans seem to be wooed by western culture with postmodern society. Audu et al (2013) lamented the loss of Africa’s cultural dominance and identity to western cultural influence. This is engineered by more novel seeming goods, from clothing to music “stressing its own offensive features from obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social and political defiance, which transcend anything that might have been imagined at the most extreme moments of high modernism” (Audu et al 2013, p. 9).

While the effects of globalization should be lauded for its achievements, the negative effects of globalization “which has raped and will continue to rape Africa culturally, socially, and mentally” (Audu et al 2013, p. 9) should be properly treated. This cultural rape can be effectively handled by integrating different cultures, without allowing the western culture completely swallow what we have here in Nigeria. This is possible by holding firm to those cultures of ours which give us a unique identity; we have many of them ranging from our New Yam festivals, Arugungu fishing festival, Igue festival, Eyo festival and so on. Unfortunately, most of these festivals and other cultural events or mode of dressing have been readily branded by some as diabolic and fetish. These cultural festivals which are symbolic in themselves should be upheld with some of our traditional rites which are rich in themselves.

To properly harness and educate our youths, the use of Information Technology should be used for proper education about the culture of our people. Despite the flooding of smart phones into Nigeria, Nigerians are backward with the use of Information Technology. A lot of the gadgets being used in most companies, hospitals and industries are outdated. This is a worrisome as these improved and

more recent gadgets undeniably enhance productivity, contributing in no small way to economic development. We must have to utilize them, and profit from them.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Having seen the demerits and merits of postmodernism, we cannot refute its effects which can be maximized to one's gain. Postmodernism came with a view to unifying the world, and turning our world into a global village, where we can get in touch with any part of the world in milliseconds. The process of unifying the world and making life easier seems to be an ongoing process which has resulted in ingenious productions in technology that have adequately aided communication in the world.

This process of globalization can be effectively used in Nigeria's multi ethnic group. As a matter of fact, Nigeria is in a position to gain more from the effects of postmodernism. Rather than allowing postmodernism to swallow our rich cultural heritage, it could be a veritable tool, not just for our cultures but to be effectively utilized by the huge human resources with which we are blessed to improve our economy

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