

## IGWEBUIKE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PHILOSOPHICAL POLEMICS AND INITIATIVES FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to answer these questions: to what extent can African plan of economic development premised on a philosophical basis that is not African yield the desire economic development in Africa? What are the alternative philosophical approaches proposed by African thinkers for African Development? What lessons can we draw from Igwebuiké as an African Philosophy? The paper is, therefore, divided into five sections. Following the introduction, section two examines the concepts of philosophy and development. While section three discusses western dominated philosophical approaches to African development, section four focuses on the alternative philosophical approaches to African development. Section five discusses the lessons from Igwebuiké as an African philosophy and concludes.*

**Keywords:** Igwebuiké, Philosophy, Development, Knau Ikechukwu Anthony, African

### **Introduction**

The issue of African development has always attracted the attention of philosophers, scholars and policymakers within and outside the continent. The contribution of philosophy to developmental issues is not new. Philosophers and scholars have argued that Africa and its societies are underdeveloped or developing. Many explanations have been given by African and non-African philosophers on what they consider to constitute the root-cause of Africa's underdevelopment. Most studies are hardly complete without prescriptions of policies that should be implemented so that African societies can evolve from states of underdevelopment to states of development (Ntibagirirwa, 2010). There have been philosophical debates between Western and African perspectives on development. By the time African countries started gaining independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, the world had entered the Cold War era. The ideological contestation between the East and the West led to the gradual rise of capitalism and socialism. As a result, Africa's independent countries took a neutral stance in

theory, but in practice, they took a different direction with an infusion of African philosophy. This was reconstructed in a form of African Socialism. Among the countries that took the socialist path were Tanzania and Ghana (Masolo, 1994).

Since all theories of development presuppose some philosophy, then we can argue that philosophy is at the basis of theories of national development. While several external theories informed and shaped the adoption of strategies for African development, such strategies were neither produced in Africa, nor their philosophical basis African rooted. Among the dominant economic theories that have informed the adoption of African development strategies were the modernisation, dependency and neoliberal perspectives. On the one hand, neoliberal perspectives superintended by the modernisation theory views Africa's economic development as a modernisation process where focus is put on individualism, primacy of the market and the rising per capita income which is also considered as the central measure of growth. The modernization theory, influenced by the ideological contestation between the East and the West, sought to promote a European model of development based on aggressive industrialization. This no doubt permeated the thinking of post-independent African leaders. On the other hand, the dependency theory was perceived as a persuasive tool that could help Africans to launch a collective self-reliant and self-sustaining economic development. The ideological postulations from these theories informed the adoption of African development initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of action (LPA) and New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) (Agupusi, 2016). At the time of introduction of each of these development initiatives, African leaders who had assumed the postures of 'philosophical kings' were convinced that they would get Africa out of the underdevelopment trap. However, this is far from being achieved. It is obvious that while the LPA adopted in 1980 has ceased to be the reference framework for Africa's economic development, the NEPAD, since its adoption in 2001, leaves much to be desired in terms of development of the continent. One common feature of the two development plans is that they have used borrowed theories of economic development without sufficiently being sensitive to the African philosophical dimension. Thus, this paper seeks to answer these questions: to what extent can African plan of economic development premised on a philosophical basis that is not African yield the desired economic development in Africa? What are the alternative philosophical approaches proposed by African thinkers for African Development? What lessons can we draw from Igwebuikwe as an African Philosophy?

The paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, section two examines the concepts of philosophy and development. While section three discusses western dominated philosophical approaches to African development, section four focuses on the alternative philosophical approaches to African development. Section five discusses the lessons from Igwebuiké as an African philosophy and concludes.

## **Conceptualizing Philosophy and Development**

### **Philosophy**

The word philosophy is as old as mankind. As a discipline of study, philosophy has gained wide popularity especially given its connection with disciplines such as history, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, law, religion and the science. The term philosophy originates from two Greek words namely, *philos* and *Sophia*. *Philos* means love of, while *Sophia* means wisdom. From these two Greek words, we derive the etymological or literary meaning of philosophy as “Love of Wisdom”. Accordingly, the Philosopher is a “lover of wisdom.” But this definition is inadequate when seen against the background of what philosophers do today and philosophy has not kept up with modern developments. For instance Hawking (2010, p.5) claims that philosophy is dead. He enunciated a series of questions that philosophers have historically posed: ‘How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator?’ He argued that physics can now answer cosmological questions about our origins and purpose. On his own part, Pinker (2013), posits that science rather than religion must answer ‘the most ambitious, the deepest questions about who we are, where we came from, and how we define the meaning and purpose of our lives’. Pinker also claims that ‘the belief systems of all the world’s traditional religions and cultures’ are ‘factually mistaken’. He argues further that that is to replace those belief systems is a ‘worldview given to us by science’.

Contrary to the views expressed by Hawking and Pinker, philosophy rather than science remains the instrument for the creation of new knowledge. This explains, to a large extent, why the highest degrees that universities award the world over is the doctorate of philosophy (PhD). In its original sense, philosophy means love of wisdom, both theoretical and practical. We may go further to posit that philosophy is the comprehensive vision that tries to fit all of our experience into a comprehensible whole. It is the process of answering all the important questions that we cannot begin to answer with any degree of final certainty: how

did we get here, where are we going, and how are we supposed to live (Verharen et al, 2014). Philosophy can be used in two senses: the narrow sense and the popular sense. In the narrow sense, it refers to a discipline which uses conceptual analysis to arrive at truths. According to Wiredu (1980) philosophy can be used in the "nationalistic" sense. In his view, the nationalistic sense of philosophy would be concerned with "...accumulated wisdom of what might be called the collective mind of our societies, handed down through traditions both verbal and behavioural, including aspects of art, ritual and ceremonial (Wiredu, 1980, p. 28)". Drawing from this perspective, it is apparently in this sense that we will consider "African Socialism", "Ubuntu" and "Igwebuiké" and many others as philosophies in their own rights. Generally, philosophy can be used as the basis for understanding the fundamental questions of life, including developmental issues. It may also be used as an instrument for critically examining, evaluating and synthesising the conditions of human participation in history. Understood this way, it would be a contradiction for any authentic philosophy to be insensitive to criticism or progressive ideas at any given moment in history. Through many of its branches for instance, ethics, logic, aesthetics, axiology, epistemology, meta-ethics and mathematics, philosophy provides the basis for critically examining the basic foundations of man's social life by establishing a rational basis upon which rational development of man may be predicted.

### **Development**

Development is a term that has greatly been confused with economic growth. The two terms are not identical. Growth may be necessary but not sufficient for development. Economic growth refers to increases in a country's production or income per capita. Production is usually measured by gross national product (GNP) or gross national income (GNI), used interchangeably, an economy's total output of goods and services. Economic development refers to economic growth accompanied by changes in output distribution and economic structure. The pendulum has swung between growth and development. A major shift came near the end of the UN's first development decade (1960-70), which had stressed economic growth in poor countries. Because the benefits of growth did not often spread to the poorer half of the population, disillusionment with the decade's progress was widespread, even though economic growth exceeded the UN target. In 1969, Dudley Seers signaled this shift by asking the following questions about a country's development:

What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have become less severe, 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 has soared. (Seers, 1969, p.3-4)

Our focus in this paper is the philosophical view of development. Development is essentially a conscious act of every man by which he naturally and historically projects himself toward the essential realisation of his potentialities within his concrete existential conditions of living in society. This concept of development is contingent upon man's ability to rationally control and harness nature for social utility. This struggle of man's becoming needs freedom and in the absence of freedom, it must be the very process of struggle to restore the lost freedom. In fact, by its very nature, essential development is very much tied to both human labour and human reason. It implies the qualitative changes that man must effect in order to improve his well-being which is the most important primary objective of rational development. Every development undertaking which does not subsume the notion of man as the primary objective of development tasks is both unrealistic and philosophical. All development policies, objectives and strategies meaningful only with reference to man; there should be nothing more dignified in the process of development than the well-being of man.

### **Philosophical Perspectives on Development Theories and Africa Development Initiatives**

History has shown that all cultures have their conceptions and theories of development. While Africa is not lacking its own development thinking or initiatives, it would appear that these are dominantly shaped by external ideology, philosophy and theoretical perspectives. Since the 1950s, three Euro-American development ideologies, and their concomitant theories particularly, modernization, dependency and neo-liberalism have held sway over development thought and practice in Africa.

The modernization thinkers include, but are not limited to: W.W. Rostow, Emile Durkheim, Marquis de Condorcet, David Apter, Seymour Martin Lipset, David McClland and Talcott Parsons. Rostow's unilinear and universal stage theory divided the development process into five stages namely: the traditional society; the establishment of the preconditions for take-off; the take-off stage; the drive to maturity; and the era of high mass consumption. Rostow's major argument was that all societies, sooner or later, will go through these five economic stages. The modernization theory of development is predicated on the idealization and the

idolization of the modern era in the history of Western Europe. The modernization theory of development advocates for the mechanization of the modes of production from the land based feudal mode to the capital and technology based industrial mode. While feudalism was a prominent mode of production in the West, the idea of feudalism was foreign to most African societies. Proponents of this theory of development believe that development would have taken place in other parts of the world if industrialization took place in the same sequence it took place in the West, that is, if the capitalist-scientific mode of production were adopted worldwide. Unfortunately, modernization paradigm has not been able to deliver the expected development to Africa. A major shortcoming of this theory is its failure to realize that the historical values of an external or foreign culture are often not so compatible with the receiving culture. Aspect of modernization open to criticism is its insistence on the need to eliminate traditional values on the road to development. More so, the historical realities in Africa, characterized by rape of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization makes it difficult for Africa to play the catch up as posited in the modernization paradigm.

The second dominant theory that shaped African development strategy in the post-independence era is the dependency theory. The dependency theory received great attention under Raúl Prebisch at the Economic Commission of Latin America in the 1950s. Scholars that further developed the dependency school were André Gunder Frank, F.H. Cardoso, Immanuel Wallerstein, Claude Ake and many others. The proponents of the dependency theory reacted against two major theories of economic development which prevailed in Latin America, namely the structuralism represented by Arthur Lewis and the linear process proposed by Walter W. Rostow. Andre Gunder Frank was interested in identifying the causes of underdevelopment under the structural framework of the Metropoles and Satellites. Frank argued that the crucial mechanism for extraction of the surplus was trade and other kinds of exchange of goods and services not only international trade, but also exchange internally in the peripheral societies. Cardoso rejected the notion that peripheral countries could be treated as one group of dependent economies, and that the world market and other external factors should be seen as more important than intra-societal conditions and forces. Cardoso regarded the national bourgeoisies of the dependent societies as potentially powerful and capable of shaping development. These classes could be so weak that they mostly functioned as an extended arm of imperialism. Wallerstein (2004) favoured economic theory of a world system in which the nations of the world are divided into core states and

peripheral states. The core states and the peripheral states sandwich the semi-peripheral states who struggle between leaving the peripheral global economic region and being absorbed into the league of core states. In this economic system which incidentally is the prevalent model today, the core states specialize in the manufacture of finished goods using advanced technology while the peripheral states are made to produce raw materials for the industries in the core countries. The peripheral states are usually encouraged to concentrate on the production of a single commodity which is usually an agricultural produce or a mineral resource. A major shortcoming of the dependency theory is that it commits the fallacy of composition by equating delinking from capitalism with development. This is partly because it deems import substitution industrialization as a key pathway to development. The Eurocentrism of Dependency theory is easily gathered from Marx's description of the phases of social change. The most advanced phases corresponded to European experiences, and Africa was outside of the historical processes of change (Ntibagirirwa, 2010). There is no doubt that the dependency theory greatly influenced on development practice of many African countries. The doctrine of African Socialism and its attendant development strategies can be strongly associated with the Dependency School. Prominent among African leaders who advocated it are Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

The neo-classical theory goes back to Adam Smith's philosophical reflection on how the wealth of a nation could be created and increased. Smith argued that human behaviour is guided by self-interest and that the freedom to pursue it leads to collective interest (Smith, 1965, p.14). They dismissed the structuralists' appeal to state intervention to deal with structural obstructions in the economic development of less developed countries, and the dependency theory as unrealistic. They went as far as claiming that the dependency theorists had little knowledge of neoclassical economic theory, and argued that the economic underdevelopment was rather a consequence of poor economic policies as well as the excessive state intervention in the economy. Thus, the solution to economic underdevelopment was thought to be an efficient market economy achieved by eliminating market restrictions and by the limitation of state intervention. This was concretised by the promotion of the free trade and the elimination of state regulations which affect the market (Ntibagirirwa, 2010). The export of primary goods continued under the economic policies of structuralism. As such, the neo-classical theorists are later day disciples of the classical theory

of development. Essentially, they argued for free market, deregulation, privatization and non-interference of the government in the marketplace. For them, the 'invisible hand' of free market will eventually benefit all facets of the society. They are the main advocates for the so called Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the Third World. The SAP policies were promoted as conditionalities by the Breton Wood Institutions: World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization, when African countries sought loans and support for their economies in the 1980s-1990s.

To what extent are African development initiatives shaped by these development theories? Africa has come up with many development initiatives. These include, but not limited to the Monrovia Strategy in 1979, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 (APPER) in 1985; United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) in 1986; The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) in 1989; The African Charter of Popular Participation for Development (ACPPD) in 1990; The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) in 1991, Cairo Agenda for Action (1995), and AU Agenda 2063 (Adedeji, 2002). However, our focus in this article will be on two major development initiatives: the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of 2001. The choice of these development initiatives is because, historically, they are regarded as landmark development initiatives in Africa.

The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) together with the Final Act of Lagos (FAL) is still regarded as the Africa's first homegrown development initiative and landmark expression of its desire to developed utilising the region's resources. Its goal was also to build a self-reliant and self-sustaining economy. The other parallel objective was the establishing of an African Economic Community (AEC) by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Economic Commission for Africa, 1991). Historically, LPA is a culmination of an effort of four years initiated by the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) under the leadership of Adebayo Adedeji as Executive Secretary. Adedeji and his colleagues at the ECA reviewed the development paradigms that Africa followed since the period of independence in the 1960s and achievements of economic development by African countries. They concluded that economic performance in Africa was obviously in decline. By the late 1970s, Africa's economic crisis was and in dire need of realistic strategies at both national and regional levels to cope with challenges of the



period such as global economic recessions, low prices of export commodities, growing national debts and increasing poverty on the continent. In response to these realities, the ECA researched and prepared several draft plans. In 1976, the ECA proposed a *Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Order in Africa*. The draft plans were duly considered and adopted at the 16th Ordinary session of the OAU Heads of State and Government in Monrovia, Liberia, in July, 1979. This meeting adopted the Monrovia Declaration of Commitment of the Heads of State and Government of the OAU on Guidelines and Measures for National and Collective Self Reliance in Economic and Social Development for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (Adedeji, 2002). At the Extra Ordinary Session of the OAU Heads of State and Government held in Lagos, Nigeria, the Monrovia guideline was renamed Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos. The LPA was expected to serve as Africa's economic development plan between 1980 and 2000. The LPA emphasized collective self-reliance, self-sustaining development, and economic growth (OAU, 1980, p. 4).

Through the LPA, the ECA desired to Africans to move away from the external dependence (Adebayo, 1985, p. 13). However, LPA was based on adapted development theory, namely the dependency theory which has its philosophical and historical context in Marxism and the Latin American experience. Even though many African countries had embraced Marxism and its veneers such as socialism and dependency, African countries could not extricate themselves from the shackles of imperialism. The strategies designed by the ECA under the Lagos Plan fell short of expectations of donor partners in the developed countries and the Bretton Woods Institutions. Instead, the World Bank sponsored its own assessment team which came up with the Berg Report and recommended the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s. In the argument of the developed countries, Africa has remained poor and underdeveloped largely due to internal problems such as bad governance, corruption, mismanagement and deficient economic policies. On the contrary African leaders blamed external factors for its predicaments. SAP de-emphasized state-led development approach in favor of market-led strategy. The state led strategy had relied heavily on subsidized social welfare, industrialization through tariff-supported import substitution, deficit financing of public expenditure, etc. Whereas SAP favored rolling back the state from involvement in the economy by privatizing public interest and liberalization of the economy, this however, did not consider the side effects on social wellbeing of the African people.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted on 23 October, 2001, with the aim of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development on the continent, and to benefit from the opportunities of globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Akinrinade, 2003). Unlike the LPA, which was anchored on self-reliance and self-sufficiency, NEPAD was crafted in response to globalization and aligned with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the goal of reducing poverty. Accordingly, it sought to address two major issues relating to the economic development of African countries, namely: the effectiveness of development aid and the market economy as a solution to underdevelopment. With the World Bank jettisoning the LPA, African countries adopted SAP, which proved to be unattainable as a development strategy. By the late 1990s, standard of living fell lower than their positions in the 1980s. Africa became the poorest region in the world with not less than half of its total population living on less than US\$1 per day; Africa also accounted for only 1 percent of the global domestic product (GDP), while the income distribution highly showed disparity against the poor in favor of the rich; 1 out of 5 Africans lived under armed conflict, creating doubt about the region's future. African became the most indebted and most aid dependent region; Africa had the largest population infested with HIV/AIDS (NEPAD, 2002, p.54) Africa therefore entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the poorest, the most technologically backward, and the most debt distressed, and the most marginalized region of the world. The reality is that NEPAD deepened neo-liberal policies in Africa. SAP, which was rejected by Adedeji and his team, became entrenched under the neoliberal embrace of NEPAD.

Our examination of the LPA and NEPAD reveals that the conceptions of the nature and purposes of development as well as the theories and strategies for achieving them have remained a territory predominantly traversed by Euro-American theorist. Ebo (2018, p.211) has argued that African academicians tend to re-echo these development visions and philosophies in new forms and packages. It is also evident that these theories of economic development were not solely rooted in African realities. While the LPA was largely informed by the experiences of philosophy as well as theory of Marxism and dependency, it also builds on the experience of Latin America. NEPAD relies on the neo-classical economic theory (Agupusi, 2016). There is no doubt that Latin America shared with Africa certain historical features such as the colonial experience and certain economic features such as economic underdevelopment and asymmetric economic relationships with the developed countries. Nevertheless, Latin America and Africa differ in major respects: their respective philosophical and

cultural backgrounds. In the case of NEPAD, the neo-classical theory of economic development is a by-product of the philosophical and the cultural experience of the Western world (Agupusi, 2016). The question that remains unanswered is: to what extent can borrow philosophy and theories of economic development take root and help Africa to achieve the goal of development? Our examination of the Euro-American philosophies and development theories shows clearly that none of the constructs can be regarded as an 'ideal theory' most suited to the African peculiar existential situation. They are all more or less, cross cultural adaptations which are not ideally suited to African condition as argued by scholars such as Mazrui (1980). Even though the Euro-American philosophies and development theories may have been attractive to African leaders, economists and policy makers, they have not succeeded in promoting the goal of development of the continent. In fact, dissatisfaction with the external philosophies and development theories has led African philosophers to look inwards in search of alternative approaches to African development.

### **Alternative Philosophical Approaches to African Unity and Development**

The alternative approaches to African development have been put forward by mostly post-independence African leaders that assume the posture of "philosophical kings" proffering solutions, at national, sub-regional and continental levels, to all African development problems. Among these were Nkrumah (1909-1972), Senghor (1906-2001) and Nyerere (1922-1999). That is not to say that only those in leadership positions provided philosophical alternatives to African development. In fact most debates about philosophy and African development emanated from African and non-African sources, particularly from the academia. For example, even though Tempels' work, *Bantu Philosophy* (1947), contributed to denounce epistemological and cultural imperialism that earlier denied the existence of any particular philosophy beyond that inherited from the Greek genius. It also confirmed that African philosophy exists and has served as a search light for African people for a better life and existence. Other leading lights in philosophy and African development include Mbiti (1970), and Gyekye (1987), Adedeji (1980), amongst others. Some of the theories of development came about by way of pan-African movements, African identity, African unity, and developmental ideology. These ideas came to have a definite character and assumed a philosophic outlook and took different names such as; Pan Africanism, Consciencism, African socialism, African Humanism and Ubuntu (Kasanda, 2018).

Pan-Africanism is both an ideology and movement which according to Nkrumah sought the revival and development of the “African Personality,” temporarily submerged during the colonial period. Pan-Africanism finds expression in a re-awakening consciousness among Africans and peoples of African descent of the bonds which unite us - our historical past, our culture, our common experience, and our aspirations (Nkrumah, 1962). In essence, the Pan-Africanists argue that for Africa to development, its people will have to come to terms with their identity, culture, historical realities and forge a common aspiration. The leading lights of Pan-Africanism included African-Americans such as Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), W.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), G. Padmore (1903-1959), and M. Blaise Diague, amongst others. Even though the vision of Pan-Africanism and Pan-African movement began outside the continent in the 1950s and 1960s, it later took roots in the continent and championed the struggle of Africans and peoples of African descent for emancipation and the restoration of their dignity, against slavery, colonialism and all forms of racism and racial exploitation, and to overcome developmental challenges. The proponents of the Pan-African movement believed that there cannot be any real development in a colonized environment. Hence, the first step in achieving real development must be putting in place an enabling environment in form of decolonization. Others like Nkrumah, Nasser, Modibo Keita, Sekou Touré believed in the creation of a wide state structure inform of a United States of Africa. This, in their view, would serve the purpose of protecting Africa’s hard earned independence from imperialism as well as forge better unity and socio-economic development (Oruka, 1990).

Kwame Nkrumah also articulated his vision for development in the theory of Consciencism as an alternative to Western development paradigm (Nkrumah, 1959). He argues that Africa can never develop unless she is first liberated from the clutches of colonialism (Nkrumah, 1966). According to Nkrumah, the African personality is defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society. Therefore his vision was to awaken the philosophical Conscience of every African person in or outside the African habitat; to bring as many African people as possible to the understanding that the philosophical consciencism which accepts matter as primary reality is the key to total African liberation, unity and development.

The idea of African humanism is not in harmony with Western perception of humanism. While the two approaches consider the human being as their starting point, they interpret the human being differently. While the Western perspective

puts emphasis on human being as an individual being; African conceptions of humanism insist on human being as a social being. For Senghor, who stressed on the idea of negritude (black identity or Africanness) as an ethno-philosophy, a human being remains also the measure of everything. He criticized the theory of Marxism which stresses “materialism and determinism, praxis and means, to the detriment of dialectics and ethics, to the detriment of man and his freedom” (Senghor, 1964). Senghor describes African humanism as follows: “Thus, though our humanism must have West African man as its major objective. It cannot, without peril, end with West Africa, not even with all of Africa. Kaunda’s conception of humanism has egalitarianism enshrined in it. The equality of man should be maintained in everything despite all accidental inequalities that abound here and there. For him, all people have a moral right to equal opportunities.

An example of the expression of African humanism is with respect to the concept and practice of Ubuntu. It is related to the saying ‘*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ - a person is a person through other people. According to Mogobe Ramose (2002) ‘*Ubuntu* can be construed to mean that to be a human being is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establishing human relations with them’. Drucilla Cornell avers that Ubuntu is ‘the African principle of transcendence through which an individual is pulled out of himself or herself back toward the ancestors and forward toward the community and toward the potential each one of us has’ (Cornell, 2009). Bishop Desmond Tutu who popularised the concept of *Ubuntu* within the framework of his responsibility as the head of Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, argues that it recognises that ‘My humanity is caught up, and is inextricably bound up in yours’ (Tutu, 2002). Ubuntu therefore emphasises the treatment of people humanely, on interconnectedness, and on belonging. Ubuntu can also be seen as an African approach which falls outside Western discourses on development because it emphasises not individuality but social nature of our existence.

Another major alternative philosophical approach to African development put forward by African philosophers was African Socialism. This theory builds on the premise that communitarism and economic solidarity constitute the essence of African traditional life (Nyerere, 1968). African socialism was viewed as an authentic means of achieving the economic, social and political development of the new African States. The common characteristic in the African version of socialism is the attempt to claim that modern socialist planning is no more than a

redefinition of the communalistic basis of traditional African social organization. African socialism is quite different from others, especially the traditional Marxism. African socialism is communal, not collective, is democratic not totalitarian; and is founded on the primacy of law and not on the dictatorship of class. African Socialism was taken up as a theory of development and leadership ideology by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. In analyzing 'Ujamma' as the basis of African Socialism, Nyerere argued that socialism like democracy is an attitude of the mind, a disposition of considering wealth only in terms of its use for the service of other fellow men (Nyerere, 1968).

On the whole, Africa's alternative philosophical approaches to development are not in agreement with Western conception that the problem of development is not a purely economic one. African philosophers recognized the social nature of African societies. This partly explains the tendency for African leaders to propose alternative development frameworks that advocate socialism. A more concerted effort is offered by African philosophers who approach the issue from the analytical and holistic approach. It is in this regard that we examine lessons from Igwebuiké as an African Philosophy.

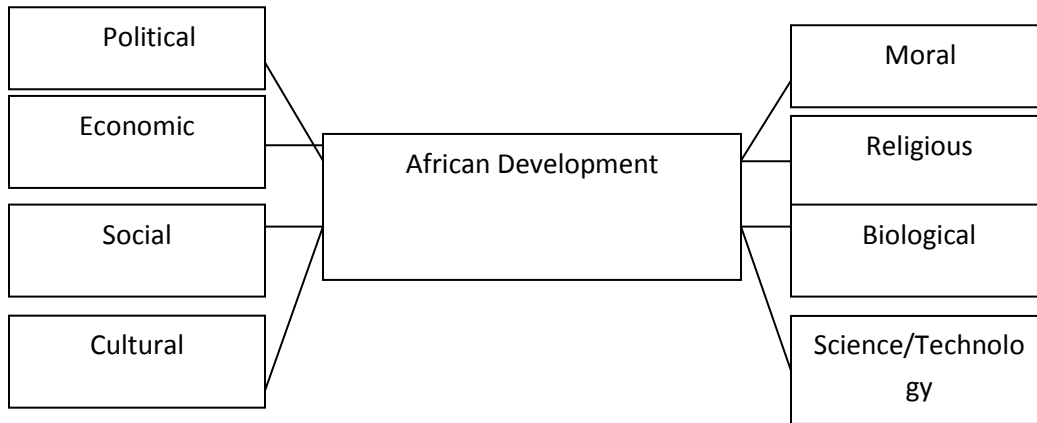
### **Lessons from Igwebuiké as an African Philosophy for Development**

This section of the essay argues that Igwebuiké as an African philosophy can provide us with viable lessons for African holistic development. Propounded by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, the philosophy of *Igwebuiké* has been employed as a philosophical lens for the interpretation of reality from an African perspective. Kanu argues that "*Igwebuiké*, which comes from three words - *Igwe bu ike* - is an Igbo word which means 'number is strength' or 'number is power' (Kanu, 2017a, p.3; Kanu, 2017d). Kanu further avers that as an ideology, *Igwebuiké* rests on the African principles of solidarity and complementarity (Kanu, 2017b, p.52). This philosophy of development shares some similarity with Ubuntu which roots one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others (Kanu, 2017e). A major strength of *Igwebuiké* model of development is the notion of 'reality as holistic'. A major shortcoming of modernization theory, classical liberalism and neo-classical liberalism is the emphasis on individualism. However, African philosophical thinkers emphasise communalism, solidarity, complementarity, and the whole notion of 'one for all and all for one'. *Igwebuiké* can be likened to the philosophy of the broom. If a broom was only made up of one bristle or broomstick, it would be useless and can easily be broken, but because the bristles or broomsticks are joined together, the results are incredible. From a philosophical perspective, this can symbolize

the unity and strength of a people. Another analogy is that of leadership-followership. The strength of a leader lies in the followership. A leader is able to implement development policies more effectively with the support of his people. This is made difficult when people neither support the leader nor his policies.

Igwebuike is an underlying social philosophy of African culture that talks of the collective consciousness of people. Igwebuike directs our thoughts towards African people's recognition of brotherhood, sharing and treating other people as not just human beings, but part of oneself. Igwebuike draws our attention to shared values and strength in numbers. In African and Nigerian (Igbo) tradition, the expression of compassion, reciprocity and humanity works in the interest of building and maintaining communal harmony and wellbeing (Kanu, 2017f). As a philosophy, Igwebuike is borne out of the fundamental belief that the power of number comes not just from the self, but community support. Beyond the conception of neo-liberalists emphasis on the notion of market and profit maximization, Igwebuike model of development is a holistic social process that includes: economics, social, political, cultural and moral dimensions of life as presentation graphically.

### **Model of Holistic Development**



**Source: Kanu (2017a)**

Kanu's notion of complete development agrees with the argument put forward by Michael Todaro. According to Todaro (1977) development to be so regarded as development, it should not be purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multidimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system, and bring about qualitative change in the people. This is imperative because, the people and the quality of their lives should be at the centre of the conception of development.

Fundamental, the perspective of Igwebuiké as an alternative philosophy of development recognizes the major challenges that undermine Africa's progress and development which must be addressed if Africa is to occupy its rightful place in the comity of developed continents of the world (Kanu, 2017a). These include, but not limited to leadership and governance crisis, corruption and mismanagement of resources, religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, ethnicity, tribalism, unbalanced distribution of power, human rights violations, and environmental injustice, amongst others (Kanu, 2017a). Accordingly, Igwebuiké provides a framework for addressing these factors that continue to undermine Africa's quest for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, Igwebuiké as an indigenous method of peace and conflict resolution makes a strong case for community-based approach which draws from the values of host communities, and founded on the custom and tradition of the African people (Kanu, 2007b). In contemporary times, several of African intra-state conflicts have emanated from religious and ethnic cleavages. As a proposition towards addressing religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, Igwebuiké philosophy calls for comprehensive dialogue between the adherents of different religions from time to time (Kanu, 2017a). Such dialogue should be institutionalized and transcend times of violent conflict. Igwebuiké, as an indigenous philosophy argues that the diverse religions in Africa should focus on their commonalities and elements that unite them.

The fact that corruption hinders African development is a reality that many African leaders and peoples have had to come to terms with. Towards addressing this cankerworm, Igwebuiké argues that the responsibility for fighting corruption does not lie only with the government, but also, individuals, private institutions, and religious institutions, and the civil society. In addition to strongly condemning the scourge of corruption, the stakeholders, particularly our religious institutions should reject donations of funds and financial gifts from questionable sources (Kanu, 2017a). In essence, there is need for solidarity in addressing the problem of corruption in African societies. Relating the principle of Igwebuiké philosophy to the interpretation of the violation of human rights, Kanu (2007c) posited that the violation of human rights is the greatest disservice to humanity and yourself. He also avers that a person that keeps quiet at the violation of another's human rights... is quiet at the violation of his own human rights. In essence, under the Igwebuiké philosophy, the fight for the preservation of human rights in Africa is viewed as the responsibility for all Africans. Closely linked to human rights is the issue of freedom. For a



meaningful functioning of philosophy in the development process, there must be essential freedom. This should manifest itself as economic freedom, political freedom, social freedom, intellectual freedom, national freedom, and individual freedom (Sen, 1999).

Some criticisms and shortcomings of the Igwebuike philosophy are apt. This is imperative, if the philosophy is to be popularized as a philosophy beyond its origins to guide national, regional and continental development. First, it treats people as a homogenous group that are ready to sacrifice the individual good for the common good. African countries, including Nigeria, are diverse in nature. Diversity refers to the plurality of identity groups that inhabit countries. They include individuals, societies, communities and socio-economic and cultural groups. Within and between ethnic groups, even within one community and ethnic group such as the Igbo, people tend to set themselves apart from others (we and them) and to distinguish one another from others. Nigeria is a case in point with more than 250 ethnic groups and having diverse religions – Christians, Muslims, and traditional worshipers. Despite Nigeria's popular aphorism of unity in diversity, its diversities are sometimes exploited by the ruling and political class resulting in ethno-religious and communal conflicts. The issues of race, ethnic and religious identities in Africa are not confined to the jurisdiction of a given state. For instance, the Fulani people are spread over some 19 countries, the Hausa people are found in five countries, the Luo live in Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Tanzania whereas the Somalis are fragmented into four of the Greater Horn countries (UNECA, 2011). In the case of the Fulani in Nigeria, the sporadic occurrence of farmer-herder conflicts reveals that the Fulani support and defend their kinsmen across national frontiers. Secondly, the Igwebuike philosophy is yet to be widely popularised and accepted beyond its roots of origin and few academicians that have engaged in the study of the philosophy. Like Ubuntu, the Igwebuike philosophy should be subjected to wider national, regional and even global discourse. In this regard, the major challenge to the popularization of the Igwebuike philosophy will continue to be factors such as the damage done by colonialism to African identity, cultural globalisation and the encroachment of modernity on traditional African culture.

That notwithstanding, the Igwebuike philosophy provides us with vital lessons in African development. It argues that development should be comprehensive, all-round, balanced and holistic in approach. Importantly, development should result in not only the expansion of our industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and cultural institutions, but also the quality of lives of individuals and

communities. African philosophical approaches such as Igwebuiké can contribute to African development and African consciousness. However, the West has continued misunderstand Africa philosophies and to disregard African solutions to its developmental problems as was the case with the LPA. African pragmatic development strategies are jettisoned and Western philosophies are being foisted on African people with the belief that the Western development strategies constitute the best option for African development. Africa's experiences with SAP attest to the fact that misreading of the African crisis results in deepening of its economic crisis. More so, Africans policy makers have dependent on western development models. According to Anyanwu most experts and professionals in Africa do not have self-confidence in their beliefs, ideas, and activities unless they are endorsed by the Western governments and institutions. Therefore, African experts and professionals have not been able to make any cultural impact on their societies to prove their relevance (Anyanwu, 1983, p.61). The significance of this point is that Africans need to have confidence in their own alternative approaches to development which should be informed by their conceptions of the African reality.

### **Concluding Remarks**

We have examined in detail the philosophical polemics revolving around the trajectory of African development. Our analysis of Western dominated philosophical approaches to African development reveal that modernization, dependency and neo-liberalism are the three Euro-American development theories that influenced and shaped Africa's approaches to development. Evidently, the two development plans, namely LPA and NEPAD that have been discussed were fuelled by two dominant theories of economic development – dependency and neoclassical theories. However, despite the arguments put forward by their initiators that they are “indigenous African development initiatives” they are largely adaptations and reconstructions of the American and Eurocentric paradigms discussed earlier. These ‘African’ frameworks were formulated without much input from African philosophers and African philosophical thinking. Hence, they were easily jettisoned by Africans that ought to own the continental development process. The major alternative philosophical approaches to African unity and development that are put forward by African philosophers and its philosophical kings place emphasis on the social basis of African societies, communality and solidarity as constituting the essence of African traditional life. These include: Pan Africanism, Consciencism, African socialism, African Humanism and Ubuntu, amongst others. A major point of departure from these perspectives is the philosophy of Igwebuiké, which

emphasises strength of number and grounded in African principles of solidarity and complementarity. The study concludes by noting that the Igwebuiké philosophy presents a huge prospect as a viable framework for understanding African development holistically. Consequently, the Igwebuiké philosophy should be further researched, developed and popularized as one of the alternative comprehensive and holistic philosophical approaches of African development. This point is being made against the backdrop of the conviction that philosophy and philosophers should, as a matter of practice, be open to further development. Only in this way can genuine philosophers rise above the Marxian challenge that: The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

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