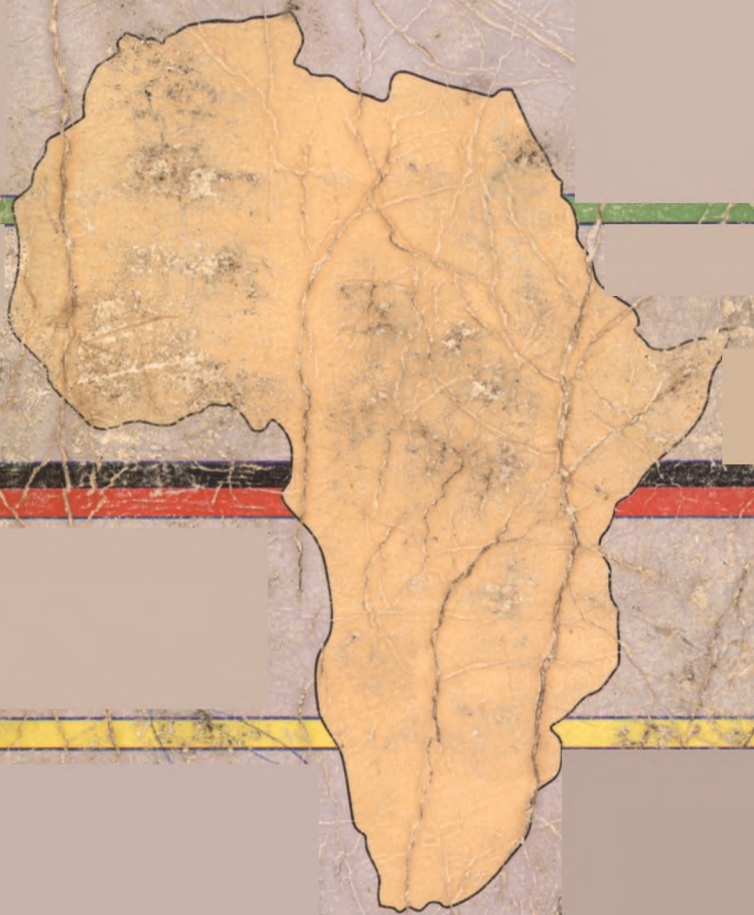


# **The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa**



Edited by

**Joseph G. Chivaura**

and

**Claude G. Margine**

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ISBN 0-908307-74-8

First published in 1998 by  
**University of Zimbabwe Publications**  
P. O. Box MP 203  
Mount Pleasant  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

Typeset by the University of Zimbabwe Publications  
Printed by **Mazongororo Paper Converters**

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Vimbai G. Chivaura and Claude G. Mararike



UNIVERSITY OF  
ZIMBABWE  
Publications

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# The Human Factor and Economic Development in Africa

Sarah O. Anyanwu

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## Introduction

The importance of adequate investment in the Human Factor (HF) for the myriad tasks of development has been emphasized in the literature by Schultz (1959), Becker (1962), Harbison (1973), Denison (1962), Kendrick (1961) and others. Investment in human capital has been found to create a productive labour force endowed with increased knowledge and skills necessary for sustained national development. In fact, out of four factors of production, namely capital, natural resources, labour and entrepreneurial ability, only labour, (the human beings) has been regarded as the active agent of development and modernization, while capital and natural resources have been regarded as passive agents. This is because human beings are the ones who are capable of accumulating capital, exploiting natural resources and building economic, political and social organizations and carrying forward national development (Harbison, 1973; Ojo, 1983).

The HF has been defined comprehensively by Adjibolosoo, (1993). According to him:

the HF comprises of a spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, political and economic institutions to function and remain functional over time. Such dimensions sustain the workings and applications of the rule of law, political harmony, disciplined labour force, just legal systems, respect for human dignity, sanctity of life and social welfare and many others (1993:4/5).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the HF is a necessary condition for development. Unfortunately, many less developed countries (LDCs) including those in Africa, have invested huge sums of money in the HF. Such investment has not led to sustained development. Most African countries are still economically backward, suffering from low per capita income, low GDP growth, low domestic savings and investment, low quality nutrition, minimum access to health services, shelter and clothing, low labour productivity, underdevelopment and unemployment, among others (Jhingan, 1975; Todaro, 1980; Meier, 1984). Many of them have failed to achieve their developmental goals and objectives. The situation seems to be degenerating instead of improving due to HF constraints.

It is important to discuss the background to those constraints and identify the various obstacles in developing the appropriate HF for economic development in Africa. We must also highlight the socio-economic implications for Africa's failure to not produce appropriate HF. We also must proffer some solutions to the problems and suggest the way forward.

## Human resources or Human Factor development

The role of human resources in development has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Harbison (1973), has rightly pointed out that human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. A country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop. Thus, a nation's natural resources must be supported by an appropriate manpower capability if it is to achieve growth and socio-economic development. Social progress and economic development are strongly related to the quality of the people and their motivation to engage in creative and innovative activities (A. Waritefe, 1988). Available studies of the sources of economic growth put human capital as the principal source of economic progress in the developed nations (Todaro, 1980). Schultz (1960) found out that in the United States, from 1900 to 1956, investment in education contributed 3,5 times more to the increase in gross national income than investment in physical capital (Jhingan, 1975).

Countries such as Germany and Japan have been cited as directly involved in the last two world wars which grossly devastated them. Yet, they have been able to develop and record high growth rates due to the availability of the appropriate HF who put their resources into use. The increase in the GNP over a period of time could be attributed to various other factors. Denison's estimates for the United States for 1929-57 show the contribution of education to the growth of total real national income as 23 per cent. The 'residual' factor, that is education, research and training, accounted for 31 per cent of the total growth of national income (Jhingan, 1975).

From the foregoing, an important impression is created that investment in education is an important input towards development. It means, therefore, that education through which appropriate manpower is developed for services in the political, social and economic sectors, must be given a chance in the conventional National Income Aggregate (NI). If we represent NI by Y.

$$Y = F(K, L, R, U) \dots (I)$$

where

K = capital stock

L = size of labour force

R = natural resources

U = socio-cultural context in which the economic activities take place.

Thus, it is essential that we include education as one of the variables in the national income aggregate.

However, contrary to expectation, LDCs including those in Africa, have been putting a lot of money into education (human capital formation). Yet, they are still struggling to develop. This situation has led to a growing awareness that expansion in education or human capital formation does not necessarily guarantee development. This is because if the HF does not possess the necessary attributes and qualities, development may not be possible. As observed by Adjibolosoo (1993), HF does not necessarily refer to mere human resources development and human capital acquisition through education and training. For HF to be productive, it must also acquire special characteristics that

encourage dedication, responsibility and accountability. It is these attributes that contribute to the successful or unsuccessful utilization of acquired knowledge and skills for articulation and fostering development processes of nations.

Thus, the HF produced through education seem to lack the necessary attributes needed to harness the available resources in Africa for development. This lack of HF attributes appears to have contributed significantly to the slow growth of African countries. This is an important development aspect that has to be addressed to facilitate the African development process.

### **Obstacles In developing appropriate HF**

A lot of obstacles have inhibited the development of appropriate HF in Africa. Some of them are highlighted as follows:

#### *Distorted pattern of investment in education and misplacement of priority*

In their attempts to build the HF for the myriad tasks of development, African countries have invested huge sums of money on education, especially university education, with low priority accorded to primary and secondary education, whose products provide the critical skills needed for economic development (Jhingan, 1975). The uncontrollable expenditure on university education has led to the production of graduates many of whom are unemployed, thus constituting social liabilities rather than assets. Priority is given to on-the-job training which aims at improving the skills and capacity of the workers, while agricultural education, adult education, vocational and technical education, whose products provide the necessary skills needed for the development process, receive secondary attention.

#### *Inappropriate education curricula*

Apart from too much emphasis on university education in Africa, the course content and curricula of education are geared towards the production of white-collar job workers in the urban sector. Thus, the education system as an off-shoot of Western education has neglected to develop many of the skills needed for the socio-economic development of Africa. The education system which is supposed to produce relevant manpower for national development is said to be producing manpower which is not relevant to Africa's development needs. Education curricula are not tailored for the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes, and acquisition of appropriate skills, attributes and competence, both mental and physical, for the development of individuals and society as a whole. Education curricula are not geared for the preparation of individuals to contribute effectively to national development.

#### *Lack of proper management analysis*

The manpower planning exercise in many LDCs, including those in Africa, is distorted and defective. This is the result of lack of accurate statistical data and unreliable census data. Therefore, lack of critical skills and surplus labour co-exist.

#### *Leadership constraints and poor governance*

Leadership constraints have served as big hinderance in the economic development of Africa. Good leaders usually possess certain characteristics which are critical for success and development. These include honesty, commitment to hard work, result-oriented,

vision, patriotism, integrity, responsibility and accountability, among others. Unfortunately, many African leaders have tended to be selfish, arrogant, greedy and undisciplined. They have become instruments for underdevelopment (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991). In addition, poor governance and lack of political will in African leaders have made it difficult for them to implement policy changes necessary for taking charge of Africa's development process. As noted by Global Coalition for Africa (1993),

poor governance impedes reform and development, reduces domestic savings, and discourages domestic and foreign private investment. Countries that sustain their development efforts also tend to be those that have fairly good governance characterised by predictability, accountability, transparency, and openness, among others.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see that in Africa, the success of any development plan depends, to a large extent, on the acceptance of the plan by the country's ruling class.

### *Socio-cultural obstacles*

Socio-cultural factors are among the non-economic factors that do influence economic development. Not in all cases though, are the socio-cultural practices and their attributable dispositions, inimical to development. It has been revealed, however, that LDCs possess negative values and practices that are not conducive to economic development. These include greed, indiscipline, dishonesty, self-gratification, negligence, smuggling, embezzlement, corruption, fraud and poor attitude to work. All these have to be eschewed to give room for development. As observed by Jhingan (1975), social attitudes toward education in LDCs are further inimical to economic progress. So-called pure academic education which trains people for government and other clerical jobs, is preferred to technical and professional education in such countries. There is prejudice against manual work which is despised and ill-rewarded. The consequence of such values and attitudes is the production of manpower which the economy cannot absorb.

Lack of independent organizations and institutions for mobilizing human efforts, and inefficient bureaucratic organizations, also contribute substantially to creating obstacles in the path of developing the appropriate HF for Africa. The proliferation of bureaucratic rules and regulations may lead to acts of corruption. There is, therefore, need for institutional reforms with appropriate HF content and thrust.

### **Some socio-economic implications of lack of appropriate HF in Africa**

Due to inadequate statistics on these, discussion will be based on available data on some development indicators in Africa.

#### *Average annual growth rates of GNP per capita*

As shown in Table 5.1 Sub-Saharan Africa, The Middle East and North Africa, experienced persistent decline in their average annual growth rates of GNP per capita, from 1965 to 1990. Between 1980 and 1990, the average annual growth rates of GNP per capita were negative for Africa. The performance of Asian countries during the review period was not too good, but better than that of Africa. The differences observed among the regions in Table 5.1, might not be unconnected to the absence or availability of the appropriate HF in these regions.



**Table 5.1: Average annual growth rates of GNP per capital in developing countries, 1965-90 (Per cent)**

Country group	1965-73	1973-80	1980-90
Low and Middle Income	4,3	2,6	1,5
Low Income	2,4	2,7	4,0
Middle Income	5,3	2,4	0,4
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,6	0,6	-1,1
East Asia and the Pacific	5,1	4,8	6,3
South Asia	1,2	1,8	2,9
Middle East and North Africa	6,8	1,0	-1,5
Latin America and the Caribbean	4,6	2,3	0,5

Source: A Sign and H. Tabatabai, 1992, p.408

*Real GDP growth (Average annual percentage change)*

Table 5.2 shows the average annual percentage change of real GDP growth in Africa. For all Africa (excluding South Africa), the average annual percentage change was 5,5 between 1965 and 1973. The figure stood at 2,1 between 1981 and 1987 and continued to fall until it finally came down to 1,8 in 1992. Even though there are variations in the performance of the real GDP growth among African countries, the overall situation shows low average annual percentage change.

**Table 5.2: The share of major regions in world production (1967-89)  
(Percentages, GDP at 1980)**

Region/Country	1967	1973	1980	1986	1989
United States	25,7	22,8	20,9	20,9	20,8
Western Europe	25,9	25,3	23,9	22,4	22,2
Japan	5,6	7,0	7,2	7,5	7,8
Developing Asia (Including China)	11,0	11,8	13,8	17,4	19,3
Latin America	7,1	7,7	8,8	8,0	7,5
Africa (excluding South Africa)	3,1	3,2	3,4	3,2	3,0
Rest of the World <sup>1</sup>	21,7	22,7	22,2	20,5	19,4

<sup>1</sup> - includes Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Gulf States, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Source: G. Van Liernt, 1993, P.455.

*Real agricultural growth (Average annual percentage change in value added)*

As regards average annual percentage change in real agricultural growth, the figures for most sub-Saharan African countries are generally low. Most of them recorded negative

average annual percentage change in real agricultural growth in 1992. North Africa seemed to have performed better. Africa as a whole (excluding South Africa) also had negative growth in 1992. Asian countries' performance was a bit better than that of Africa, but still comparably low when economically advanced nations are considered.

#### *Real industrial growth (Average annual percentage change in value added)*

Concerning the real industrial growth for Africa, though the good performance was from individual countries, North Africa's real industrial growth was higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa. For Africa, (excluding South Africa), the percentage fell from 8,8 between 1965 to 1973 and stood at 2,9 in 1992. Asian countries experienced an increasing trend in their real industrial growth.

#### *Real GNP per capita*

In terms of real GNP per capita growth (percentage a year), about 80% of Sub-Saharan African countries recorded negative figures since 1970 to 1992. About 90% recorded a fall between 1990 and 1992 in their average GNP per capita. The Asian countries outperformed Africa.

#### *Per capital food production (Average annual production of cereals, roots, tubers and pulses, (kilograms)*

On the aggregate, Africa's per capita food production is commendable. However, when individual countries are examined, especially sub-Saharan African countries, namely Lesotho, Sudan, Somalia, Mauritania, Botswana and Mauritius, the situation is alarming. The food import bills for many African countries are on the increase.

#### *Real export growth*

The export growth (percentage a year) for Africa (excluding South Africa), declined from 4,0 between 1988 and 1992 to 2,9 in 1992.

However, North Africa recorded a rising trend from 3,4 between 1988 and 1992 to 4,4 in 1992. For sub-Saharan Africa, the performance of most countries was very poor, showing negative figures. The Asian countries experienced an increasing trend in their figures, though the overall performance was still poor.

#### *Real import growth*

From 1970 to 1992, Africa has been experiencing a fall in her import growth (percentage a year), with the exception of South Africa whose figure rose from a negative import growth of 0,8 between 1970 and 1987 to 1.8 in 1992. Many Sub-Saharan countries had negative figures throughout the review period.

#### *Terms of trade*

The terms of trade for sub-Saharan Africa, (Eastern, Southern Africa and West Africa) have not been very favourable of recent. For all the regions, the terms of trade fell from over one hundred between 1974 and 1976 to about 88 per cent in 1992. This means that prices of Africa's exports were less than the prices of her imports. This could be the result of primary products constituting the bulk of Africa's exports.

Among the various regions/countries, Africa (excluding South Africa) had the lowest figures for the review period. In addition, Africa (excluding South Africa) experienced a decline in her world production. The figure was 3,1 in 1967, 3,2 in 1973; 3,4 in 1980,

3.2 in 1986 and 3.0 in 1989. The figures for the United States and Western Europe were about eight times higher than those for Africa (excluding South Africa).

#### *Life expectancy at birth*

It is very surprising to note that about 50 per cent of Sub-Saharan African countries still have the life expectancy of less than 50 years as at 1992. On the aggregate, for Africa (Excluding South Africa), the life expectancy figure rose from 46.5 in 1973 to 53.3 in 1992. This is still very low when compared with advanced countries.

#### *Total primary and secondary enrolments*

Little priority is being paid to secondary education whose products provide the critical skills needed for development. As at 1990, about 90 per cent of Sub-Saharan African countries had less than 40 per cent of their school-age children enrolled in secondary school. In fact, 80 per cent of the Sub-Saharan countries had 20 per cent of their school-age children enrolled in secondary school as at 1990. North Africa performed better than other regions in Africa: 64 per cent of her school-age children enrolled in secondary school.

#### *Economic mismanagement and political instability*

Economic mismanagement occurs as a result of poor governance on the part of some African leaders. There is a high rate of corruption, embezzlement of public funds, huge external debt stock, balance of payment problems, capital flight and incessant 'coup de' tats' leading to different factions and political instability (Umo, 1993). Most sub-Saharan African countries with frequent 'coup de' tats' invest more in military equipment and personal security of their leaders rather than in development of their countries. Many talented men and women who would be useful for development are lost in wars. Consequently, development is abruptly brought to a halt during war times. Also, frequent changes of governments hinder effective implementation of economic policies and programmes conceived for development. All these factors are inimical to the attraction of foreign private investment, which is much needed to supplement domestic investment for the acceleration of development in Africa.

Africa still has a lot to do in order to accelerate her development, given the socio economic implications of her inappropriate HF.

### **Proposed solutions**

Given the fact that an appropriate HF is needed to manage effectively the political, social and economic institutions of any nation, and to carry out the myriad tasks of development, all obstacles or impediments in developing an appropriate HF in Africa have to be removed. Depressing as the situation may seem, solutions must be found. Some solutions proffered are:

#### *Revamping the educational system and programmes and placing priority on HF content*

Given the fact that tasks for the job of economic development require manpower expertise with definite skill-mixes and numbers, and not just any type of education and skill (Yesuf, 1985), educational systems and programmes in Africa must be

revamped. High priority accorded to primary, secondary, vocational, technical, adult and agricultural education. This is important in accelerating the development process in Africa.

### *Relevant and meaningful education curricula oriented toward development needs*

Currently, education curricula in Africa are oriented toward the production and preparation of people for white-collar urban jobs. Thus, if education at all levels is to make maximum contribution to the economic development of Africa, there should be appropriate changes in education curricula and course content. Such content will make education relevant to the development process. The type of education curricula that Africa needs are the ones that instil in the HF, the desire to achieve, excel and possess attributes such as hard work, honesty, integrity, responsibility, self-discipline, and ability to apply the acquired knowledge and skills towards solving socio-economic and political problems.

### *Proper manpower planning*

Once the government of the day sets its short-term goals and medium and long-term objectives, there is need for thorough manpower analysis to determine the manpower implications of these goals for the nation as a whole, each sector and establishment during the plan period. Identification of shortages or surpluses of manpower will then determine the educational or training needs. Else, beautiful development plans without proper manpower planning will always lead to inability to achieve goals set in the development plans. In fact, manpower constraints have become perennial problems that hinder the execution of the development plans of most African countries. This can be remedied by proper manpower planning.

### *Good governance and responsible leadership*

Good governance and responsible leadership are necessary for economic development in Africa. Their absence inhibit execution of development plans and jeopardize development efforts. African leaders should endeavour to cultivate, promote and sustain good governance and accountability attributes. These should include high standards of honesty, self-discipline, a democratic spirit, desire to succeed, hard work, commitment to national reconstruction, and adequate knowledge to manage their nations effectively.

### *Promotion of developmental values and cultural practices*

Decay in certain socio-cultural values and attributes of the people of Africa need to be addressed if sustained development is to be achieved. These include bribery and corruption, greed, cheating, self-gratification, fraud, indiscipline, smuggling and poor attitudes to work. Governments should discourage them with appropriate punitive measures. Conversely, governments should promote, through incentives, appropriate cultural practices and attitudes such as industry, creativity, innovativeness, hard work, honesty and discipline to help accelerate development.

Though this list is not exhaustive, its effective implementation will go a long way towards solving certain developmental problems and fostering development in Africa.

## Conclusion

It has been necessary to discuss and examine the background and importance of the HF for the myriad tasks of development in Africa. We have also highlighted the various obstacles inhibiting the development of the appropriate HF. These include distorted patterns of investment in education, inappropriate education curricula, lack of proper manpower planning, leadership constraints, poor governance, socio-cultural obstacles, inefficient bureaucratic organizations, and lack of independent organizations and institutions for mobilizing human efforts. The socio-economic implications of the lack of appropriate HF development have also been explained. These cover poor performance of certain economic growth, trade and human condition indicators.

Some solutions suggested were revamping the educational system and programmes and placing our priorities right on relevant and meaningful education. Such education should have curricula content oriented towards development needs and proper manpower planning. Good governance and responsible leadership at all levels of government have also been discussed as essential for development. These should be complemented by efforts to promote developmental values and cultural practices which enhance the performance of Africa's HF. It is hoped that effective implementation of the above measures will go a long way towards solving certain developmental problems and consequently fostering effective and meaningful progress for Africa.

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