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## Research Article

### PRAGMATISM AND THE QUEST FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on pragmatism and the quest for integrated rural development. It is a credo that pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought will efflorescence, synergize and galvanize policy and programmes of sustainable integrated rural development, in the urban and rural sectors of Nigeria economy. Actions of government warped from pragmatic philosophical strand will ameliorate, add fillip to the standard of living of the rural inhabitants who are currently manacled and marooned in abject poverty. It is in this breath, that the millennium development goal can be achieved in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper defines the concept integrated rural development. The paper is explicated with the aid of pragmatism theory. It also discuss the nexus between pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought and integrated rural development. It finally concludes that, the only panacea to sustainable integrated rural development in Nigeria is via pragmatism. It is the desiderata for Nigeria economy rapid growth and development.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The issue of integrated rural development as a tool for developing the urban and rural economies of Nigeria has occupied a major place in the heart of academics. To the extent that various conferences and seminars has be held on it. (Okosun and Urhohide, 2012).

A corollary of the foregoing, is that there has been renewed vigour and interest on integrated rural development as the main plank for moving the rural areas out of economic woods. It is in this breath that federal government of Nigeria since the 1970s have adopted eclectic strategies in rural development. These strategies include agricultural extension, seed multiplication, infrastructural development, land reforms etc (Okafor and Onoekhoraye 1994).

However, a cursory look at strategies utilized by the central and states government will bring to limelight that it is devoid of pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought background. Integrated rural development policy and programmes that is rooted in pragmatism will bring in the much desired development (Omatseye, 1992).

The pragmatists opined that for growth and development to take place in any given society. There must be workability of a plan or arrangement of actions (Dewey, 1938). These actions

will enable the government, interventionist agencies etc to produce results, that will enhance the standard of living of the vast majority of Nigerians living in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. Hybridation of pragmatism with actions in rural development by the federal government is the panacea for Nigeria quest for development.

Given this background, the paper review the germane issue that are involved in the adoption of pragmatism in integrated rural development drive by the federal government. The paper is divided into sections beginning with an introduction. The second sections examine conceptual clarification of integrated rural development. It also presents the theoretical foundations. The paper is explicated with pragmatism theory. In the third part, the authors of this paper examines the nexus between pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought and integrated rural development. This section end with conclusion.

#### Conceptual Clarification

Many scholars in their definitions have addressed the concept integrated rural development. There are a plethora of definitions of the concept. Some scholars used the term integrated rural development while others use the term rural development. "This should not pose a problem at all. The two concepts of rural development and integrated rural development connotes the same thing" (Idemudia, 1990).

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Adeline (1992) contend that the concept integrated rural development constitute “a planned change of which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and transformation of the rural populace”.

A synthesis of the above definition will reveal that from Adeline perspective, integrated rural development are programmes designed by the government using diverse strategies to improve the well being of the rural populace.

According to Mabogunje (1977) “integrated rural development is mainly concerned with the improvement of the living standard of inhabitants in the rural areas on a self productive activities. He stressed further that agricultural development is just one aspect of life of the rural dwellers”.

From the above, integrated rural development is seen as the multidimensional programmes that are put in place by government to transform the condition of living of the rural dwellers. This entails the transformation of lives of the peasants farmers, fishermen, petty traders etc.

According to World Bank (1990), integrated rural development is a strategy designed to improve the condition of rural economics and the social life of the people, the rural populace. This involves extending the benefit of development to the rural poorest seeking a livelihood in the rural areas. This groups includes the small scale farmers, the tenants etc.

From the above quotation, it can be deduced that the definition of the World Bank is broader. This is because it is a reflection of the banks emphasis on the basic need of the people. This can be seen in the fact that economic with growth model has failed to provide answers to the myriad of inequality, poverty etc present in the ruralities (Iyoha, 1999).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

This paper shall be explicated from pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought strand.

In a bid to discuss the importance of pragmatism in rural development, it is expedient to explain the concept pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought.

Pragmatism is a method of philosophizing developed in America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The pragmatists argued that their method and theory could be of great utility in solving intellectual problems and in forwarding man’s progress.

Pragmatism is basically a method for solving or evaluating intellectual problems, and a theory about the kinds of knowledge we are capable of acquiring (Popkin, 1981). Pragmatists opined that ideas have practical consequences, that is an idea cannot be devoid of some effect on an existing situation. Pragmatism which originated from the Greek word ‘pragma’ meaning ‘that which works’, conveys the idea of practicality. For the pragmatists, the experience of nature constitutes the best test of what reality is.

Peirce (1958), opined that clarity in ideas ought to be the initial course of action. This view is that to determine the meaning of any idea, it would have to be put in the objective word of actualities to ascertain what consequences would be proved, then would the full meaning of the idea be realized. A thing is true if it makes sense within the context of real life experience,

an idea is true to the extent that it is profitable to our lives and the society.

Omatseye (1983), posits that the thrust of pragmatism is to establish a habit which would enable the individual to act in such a way as to produce some sensible result.

According to the pragmatic theory, our intellectual activity has as its main objective the attempt to resolve challenges that arise in the course of our attempts to deal with experience. The ‘cash-value’ of our ideas is to be found in the use to which ideas can be put (James, 1943).

James (1909), contends that theories are instruments. He further explained that we think only in order to solve our problems, therefore our theories are instruments that we employ in order to solve problems in our experience.

On pragmatism and ethics, a type of ethical theory can be developed from pragmatism. Ethics focuses on human conduct or human behavior in the society. The pragmatist’s method of determining what is good or bad, or right or wrong is this, given a problem in human behavior, one can ask whether performing certain actions is right in order to solve a given problem? The answer is to be determined in terms of whether the actions yield satisfactory results in the resolution of difficulty (James, 1943). If one ponders whether the right way to contribute towards rural development is to unlawfully and forcefully acquire vast acres of land from innocent citizens. A careful evaluation of the possible consequences of illegal acquisition of landed properties would lead one to conclude that such a theory does not work. Considering all the possible unsatisfactory consequences to oneself, such as legal tussle, strife or conflict with affected members of the community, resulting in killings, maiming, etc. Therefore one would conclude that ‘unlawful’ and ‘forceful’ acquisition in a bid to participate in rural development is wrong (World Bank, 1990). Pragmatism does not offer any absolute moral principles. One must always act on the hypothesis which works, this involves a purely subjective evaluation.

Developing a conception of the universe, pragmatists hold that there is no fixed world to be uncovered through experience, but, rather a continuous quest for workable solutions to difficulties. The continuing development of our knowledge of the world represents the meaningful idea that we have of the natural world. There is no single concept of the universe that is to be regarded as the final and complete answer. Our knowledge and the world itself are regarded as having an evolutionary quality of growth and development to meet new situations and new needs. (Popkin, 1981). Rural development therefore, ought to be dynamic and continuous in nature. It should not be a once and for all approach. Rather, a developmental stage should create another avenue for further development of Nigeria rural and urban economies.

In the twentieth century, John Dewey (1938) came up with the view called instrumentalism. This is a theory of knowledge which is essentially in terms of the biological and psychological role that the knowing-process plays in human affairs, and then tried to employ this conception as a guide in directing the application of human intellectual activities to contemporary social problems (Dewey, 1938).

Based on this view, Dewey developed the concept of 'Experience and Thinking'. According to Dewey, (1938) what constitute our experience is the interaction between a biological organism and its environment.

Experience is an action performed rather than an object known. In the course of the organism's activities, it faces situations in which it can no longer act. Thinking arises as a means of dealing with these disturbing situations, by working out hypotheses, or guide to future actions. Thought, especially scientific thought, is instrumental in problem-solving which leads to development. Actually, Dewey's instrumentalism was concerned more with social questions confronting America in her development drive.

Still on pragmatic approach to development, the pragmatic school propounded a 'theory of truth' which considers the idea of truth to be an affair of practical experience. Emphasis is on practicality. The claim of development is true if it is practicable and realizable. It therefore follows that development must have practical implication (Popkin, 1981).

Although truth in ordinary usage means agreement with reality, but with the pragmatists it connotes "usefulness", "desirableness" "satisfactory" and "expedient". These concepts appear to depict some of the qualities of development. With this theory, the entire epistemological view rejects dogmatism and accepts humanism. Humanistic in the sense that truth connotes practicality with human experience. This of course seems to be the hallmark of development.

#### ***The Nexus between Pragmatism As A Philosophical School Thought And Integrated Rural Development***

Pragmatism as a philosophy is primarily concerned with the workability of a plan or arrangement in order to bring about development. The notion of the pragmatists is that ideas have practical consequences. That is an idea cannot be devoid of some development effect on an existing situation or environment.

According to James (1909), an idea is true in as much as it helps us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience, that is, within the context of real experience. An idea is true to the extent that it is profitable to human lives. The criterion for pragmatic truth, secondly to James is the degree of its relevance. That is if consequences useful to life flows from it, and the major determining factor is development.

The main thrust of pragmatism is to establish a habit that would enable the individual to act in a way as to produce some sensible result. Actually, rural development entails a tangible and practical expression of thought. The meaning of development is to be found in that which is practical.

Pragmatist, like Dewey, cited in Russel (1938) saw the value of scientific inquiry in any aspect of development. In his view, Dewey (1938) quipped, that 'inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its consistent distinctions and relation as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole. This unified whole is the development arising from inquiry. Dewey's conception of inquiry is therefore an outcome of scientific steps taken to validate the logical arrangement of things that lead to development (Dewey, 1938).

The pragmatists view about 'inquiry' which leads to development is that the inquirer must formulate his ideas and test it on the anvil of ontological reality to determine its anticipatory accuracy. An inquiry as posited by Omatseye (1992), is intended to provide an opportunity for the knower and the object of knowledge – society and its environment – to interact in order to ascertain the validity of formulated and tested hypothesis. This can be transformed into theories and guide for future development. Inquiry is expected to give pertinent data which can be used to establish a network of information necessary for development.

Flexibility and openness characterizes the pragmatic quest for development of any society. Pragmatists accept all ideas as a proposed plan of action that lead to development.

When it comes to necessary knowledge required for the facilitation of the development of any society, pragmatism encourages empirical and rational processes needed for development. Whereas the pragmatists opined that for meaningful development to take place in any society, whether rural or urban steps, such as formulation of hypotheses, data gathering and analysis, and findings are expected to be taken. However, logical reasoning is also needed in order to establish a conceptual pattern from which generalizations could be made. This is necessary in order to establish a core of knowledge to guide rational action needed to be taken for development to take place.

The pragmatists have a strong conviction that education remains a veritable tool necessary for sustainable development to take place. While trying to describe the type of education that would be of relevance to development they came up with the term 'progressive education' (Omatseye, 1992).

According to Omatseye (1992), the term 'progressive education' was first used in 1910 when the pragmatists spearheaded the agitation for a new orientation which would alter the effect of schooling on the vocational, scientific and political life of each child. Critics of colonial education vehemently criticized the traditional school for what they considered to be benign and neglect of science, technical and vocational courses, charging that the lapse has been responsible for their countries' state of technological backwardness and underdevelopment. (Solarin, 1971).

However, scholars who are in defence of traditional African education, argued that though informal, the traditional African education was quite pragmatic, because it was an embodiment of the skills, values, attitudes, cherished customs, mores, symbols and social practices which age group learned in order to be fully relevant to the community. This school of thought holds that Africans have traditionally considered education as a process of living, doing and acting (Omatseye, 1992).

Fafunwa (1974), opined that the purpose of education in the traditional African society was basically functional; education was only a means to an end and not an end in itself. Education was considered as a part of an individual's preparation for adulthood, a stage at which he must participate in the social political, economic and vocational life of the community.

For there to be a meaningful rural development, there must be the need to join in the technological age, and the school must take the lead in changing the attitude of the younger generation.

To achieve this goal, the best in the rural-African culture must be kept alive and combined with western culture from which much has been appropriated. A synthesis of both would certainly give rural areas the best of the two worlds, especially in terms of material (economic) development (Omatseye, 1992).

In the view of the pragmatists, education is meaningful to the extent it is related to the experience of the individual concerned. Experience is necessary to the learner because it facilitates his adjustment to his social, physical and cultural environment.

For there to be rural development, there must be need for industrial expansion and this necessitates the need for vocational and technical education as advocated by pragmatists like John Dewey, Benjamin Franklin, Omatseye, Ehigie et cetera. The increase in technical and commercial secondary schools, trade centres, polytechnics and universities of technology, universities of agriculture in recent times gives credence to this fact.

While the pragmatists believe that social and physical changes are inevitable, it is within man's power to adapt himself to his circumstance. Development entails both change and adaptability. This can be done by relying on personal experiences as well as those of others. In essence, development of any society requires both individual and collective efforts. Differences of opinion and beliefs should be accommodated and encouraged as a way of fostering conducive atmosphere for the promotion of rural development. Their conception of the world as being in a state of flux has tended to encourage broadening the base of the decision-making process so as to benefit from the experiences of more participants in community/in rural sector of Nigeria (World Bank, 1990).

Rural development requires the recognition of the depth of intelligence and sense of creativity of every member of the community; hence pragmatic philosophers emphasize individual and group projects that would engage the rank-and-file members of the community. Until the cultivation of a scientific attitude as well as the principles of democracy by way of collective responsibilities become an integral part of any rural community, there may be no light at the end of the tunnel with regards to rural development.

Pragmatist's belief that adults, youths and children should actively participate in community activities with a view to getting more people involved in pushing for social change that would be beneficial to all-irrespective of your position in the community. Every institution certainly has a place in participating in the development of a planned society (World bank, 1999).

It is the pragmatists view for example that the school as an institution should actively turn out well educated individuals who would be involved with community development at the grassroot level and work to democratize and unify every phase of rural community life. This, it is believed will protect the economic interest and improve the quality of life for the people in the rural areas (Iyoha, 1999).

Due to the harsh economic realities of several rural communities, especially in several African countries, the

pragmatists quip that education should be looked upon to provide immediate and long-term solution to such problems as shortage of food, inadequate shelter, poor health care and sanitation, etc. This is probably why there is a strong case for vocational and technical education.

Dewey (1916), opined that education should be seen as utility. For him, and other pragmatists in the progressive movement when a problem arises, it is usual to first think our way through it before acting. But thinking is only one aspect of the situation. The rest is what Dewey, cited in Omatseye (1992), calls 'brute existence', that is, actually apply measures to eliminate or minimize it. It further explained that it is at this critical stage that our educational experience is put to test in terms of the effect of our thought and action. In tackling problems, we tend to reconstruct situation through inquiry so that knowledge becomes an instrument for creating favourable situations which effects can be felt by all. The argument, however, is that it is not how much physical energy is exhausted, but, the degree of application of knowledge derived from an inquiry to determine why a particular situation exists. In essence, we need to find out why rural communities are starving or lack adequate shelter or/and other social amenities in a country which is not lacking infertile soils or land space and materials. Thereafter, we begin to determine how best to change the situation. In other words, utility in education enables the rural communities as well as individuals to find practical solutions to problems such as unemployment, inadequate shelter, poor economy, hunger, lack of social amenities, etc.

Underdeveloped countries economies located in Latin America, Asia, Sub Saharan Africa must as a matter of urgency embrace pragmatism as philosophical thought if they are to experience rapid development. This is because in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States of America realized that technological growth and industrialization hold the ace for the nation development, hence she embraced and popularized integrated rural development (World Bank, 1990).

The current economic morass and miasma benighting Nigeria, the so called giant of Africa, Ghana, Togo, Mali etc can be galvanized and synergized through actions rooted in pragmatism. This is the orifice through which the rural areas will be streamlined into the vortex of national economy.

## CONCLUSION

This paper from its intent and purpose has discussed pragmatism and the quest for integrated rural development in Nigeria. The various strategies adopted by the federal government since the attained independence in 1960 was not deeply rooted in pragmatism. This largely was responsible for the abysmal failure of government policies. To reverse this ugly scenario bedeviling integrated rural development drive, the paper is advocating that pragmatism philosophical thought must be the hall mark of government polices and programmes. It is only through this medium, that rural development drive will achieve the desired result in Nigeria.

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