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**THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY
AMONGST THE NSENGA (ZAMBIA)**

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ABSTRACT

Development takes place in many forms. There is a need for a kind of development that meets the needs and people's aspirations in life. The question of this research is: *what could the role of theology and the church be towards an endogenous development process that is culturally orientated to the Nsenga ethnic group of Zambia?* The study is based on the working hypothesis that endogenous development provides the platform where the grassroots organisations and people become subjects of their own human development and transformation in life and society.

An endogenous approach to development is based on local strategies, values and innovations that encourage people in a given set-up to use their own resources, knowledge and initiative to develop new and better ways of doing things. This study considers culture as an important aspect of development and as a means to understanding and achieving forms of development from which people can draw meaning and fulfilment in life. Models of development that cannot integrate culture are likely not only to fail but also to cause damage to people's well-being. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study, both theoretical and methodological triangulations were employed. The methods of literature review, critical reflection, logical arguments and analysis were applied.

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper gives the motivation for studying culture and development and briefly describes the chosen research approach and methods. This research argues for an endogenous approach to development. This approach to development aims to empower local communities to take control of their own development process. Western theories of development, particularly the Modernization theorists) have long argued that, especially 3rd World, culture had been an impediment to development. This view is contradicted by Samuel and Sugden (1987:39) who argue that Development cannot effectively take place without taking into consideration People's culture and practices. Rodriguez and Tomaney (2006:95), suggest that development is interpreted as the enhancement of the local ability to produce, absorb and utilize innovations and knowledge through learning process. In the light of the above, the following questions helped to focus the research programme. (i) What is the relationship between theology, culture and development? (ii) How should theology be designed to help formulate an endogenous development framework? (iii) How can a cultural driven development process be sustainable and transformative in nature?

The major epistemological question of the research being:

What could the role of theology and the church be towards an endogenous development process that engages the Nsenga of Zambia culturally?

Research has shown that the participation of the people themselves in their own development is both an essential part of human growth and a process whereby the people themselves become aware of and understand their problems and the social reality within which they live in order to affect lasting change (Bowers 2005:35).

Conceptual Perspectives on Development and Culture

According to Dearman (1992:3), culture and development have always moved hand in hand because there is an expression of cultural symbols in a specific society where development needs to take place in a real life situation. It also takes its place in a cultural tradition which already has a past happiness, progress, evolution and points to change Merino in Dunne, (1969:121). Most development projects are culturally driven, and the separation of the two results in stagnation and less progress. Culture has been defined as the sum of all

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resources, material, intellectual, emotional or spiritual on which people draw to give meaning to their lives (Eade, 2002:2). Culture is the whole texture of society and the way language, symbols, meanings, beliefs and values organise social practices. Tanner (1997:25), further states that human beings have a culture which is the defining mark of their life. It highlights human diversity and varies with social groups. Culture creates the world we live in. It also allows us to understand and interpret our own actions and the action of others. The term development seems to be an expression which synthesizes the aspirations of mankind for more human living conditions. David's, Theron and Mahunye (2005:4), states that the body of knowledge we call development is relatively new and the scientific enquiry into the theory of development started shortly after the Second World War with the 1950's and 1960's being dominated by the modernization theory.

People-centred development: David Korten (2003:97) development should be people centred and a continuing process and this process should be driven by three principles namely sustainability, justice and inclusiveness.

Development as responsible well-being: For Chambers (1997:40), the objective of development is responsible well-being for all. Myers (2003:104) describes well-being as quality of life. Its opposite is ill-being. Well-being is open to the whole range of human experiences – social, mental and spiritual as well as material.

Development as transformation: Bragg (2003:95), claim that the characteristics of transformation should include life sustenance, meeting of basic human needs, equity which means equitable distribution of material goods and opportunities, justice within all social relationships including democratic participation; dignity and self-worth in the sense of feeling fully human and knowing we are made in the image of God.

Development is therefore based on human well-being (Coetzee, 2001:122). A theology of transformation approach to development is better designed to promote the kingdom values of God. Smith (1990:21) maintains that genuine transformation takes place in particular situations, histories and contexts.

Endogenous Development

Endogenous development is based on local peoples' own criteria of development, and takes into account the material, social and spiritual well-being of peoples (Barguero, 2002:73). Endogenous development is mainly based on local strategies, values, institutions and resources. Endogenous development empowers people to regain ownership and control of the resources that were originally theirs, and those that are as a result of own invention and creativity (Carmen, 1996:83).

Indigenous Knowledge: *There is a need to recognize and develop the local people's knowledge in order to conduct their struggle with a growing sense of direction and to enhance their capacity for self-management of the political, institutional, social and economic tasks that they encounter. De Beer and Swanepoel (2000:67) also observe that Local*

people are experts in their particular area and the values of their knowledge should not be underestimated. Furthermore, endogenous development also entails putting value on local people's innovations.

Local Development: *Unlike the exogenous, local development provides convenient vehicle for concerned people to do something rather than be mere spectators (Moseley, 2003:5). Thus, the locals, depending on their scale, coherence and culture, yield crucial local knowledge as well as a climate of greater mutual trust and shared responsibility. Local people, both individuals and groups, are key resources in endogenous development.*

Community initiatives: The community initiative approach to development improves people's participation in the development process which is birthed at the local level. In addition, organizing community-controlled development is a comprehensive approach and the right direction for preserving and improving people's well-being which encompasses all aspects of life whether social, political or economic (Murphy and Cunningham 2003:7).

Community Networking: *Gilchrist (2008:7) states that community networks create the conditions for collective actions, enabling people to work together to achieve shared interests. Community networks enable people to mobilize for campaigns and events, pulling effort and resources for collective benefit and shared goals.*

The Cultural Dimension of Development

Cultural dimension has been a long neglected aspect of development. According to Serogeldin and Taboroff (1994:9) most of the failures recorded in development efforts lacked a cultural dimension and values. People do not commit themselves to a development undertaking unless that undertaking corresponds to their deeply felt needs (Eade, 2002: 169). People should be able to derive the means for and motivate their development from their own cultural roots. *Culture as a life pattern:* Integrating the cultural dimension into development can lead to the adoption of a less reductive and a more all-embracing approach (Eade, 2002:9). This means that development partners especially the people affected have to make special efforts to integrate culture from the earliest stages. Cooke and Lazeritti (2008:48), note that culture provides a specific way in which a community understands the world and defines reality. Good development ventures must take into account the cultural values held by the community. Cultural beliefs harbour within them dynamism which when properly respected, can serve as the spring board for models of development which are more humane than those drawn from outside paradigms (Clarke, 2011:10).

Theological Basis for Engaging in Endogenous Development

Meaningful theology needs to take place primarily in the routine life of the people of God. It needs to be a discourse that engages with life and arises out of life (Chester and Timmis, 2007:151). A more authentic engagement with theology, development and culture should determine what development that brings transformation should be. It must

recognise that the value system of local communities has inherent God given strengths that can be harnessed to achieve sustainable development. Local values provide a dynamism that support new ways to approach development. The church's task is to take part in and give expression to the present and future kingdom of Christ (Samuel and Sugden, 1999:355). Hodge (2010:10) points out that the church consists of the 'called', and must depend on the nature of the call. Thus, the calling of the church is first to confront individuals with the gospel of God's grace in Christ. Dejong (1968:12) stresses the need of working towards the improvement of those distressful conditions, which make people suffer.

The Church as Public

Kim (2011:80) states that public theology seeks to engage with the social, political and spiritual issues of the day, bringing a coherent Christian perspective to bear upon public policy and cultural discourses. The church's nature, calling and theology are public. According to August (2005:24), the church is public in so far as (1) it appeals to warrant to be available to any intelligent, reasonable person; (2) it understands a religion as fundamentally a public communal activity, not a matter of individual's experience. (3) It effectively addresses political and social issues. August (2005:25) claims that 'it is important for the church and her operations to demonstrate her roles and duties to the public Arena in the doing of theology.'

Church as Mission Community

The church is God's mission strategy. God's purpose is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness, but rather to build his church, that is, to call out of the world a people for his own glory (Chester and Timmis, 2007:37). The church is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom, the sign and instrument of the reign of God that is to come. This must be done practically through carrying the good news across all borders and into the entire world as an essential part of the kingdom message, which Jesus brought and embodied. Lastly, the mission of the church includes both proclamation of the gospel and the response to immediate human needs, and it presses for social transformation and fighting the evil in social structures (Bosch, 1991:407).

Promoting Human Dignity

The participation of the church in development must bring about the desired human dignity and seek to redress unjust relations so as to allow every level of society enjoy peace and freedom from God our creator. Many developments have been vitiated by relationships that rob those who are already oppressed and in need of their dignity (Bragg 1987:42). Bruyns and Ulshofer (2008:66) state that human dignity needs to be defended and protected at all cost. This will allow human and social life to flourish in our societies, which cannot do without this aspect of life. Thus all human rights are at base the right to be human, and so to enjoy the dignity of having been created in God's image and of possessing in consequence unique relationships to God himself, to our fellow human beings and to the material world (Stott, 2006:199).

Nsenga Ethnography and the Practice of Endogenous Development

Research Procedures

A case study was undertaken in three communities namely; Mulera, Kanyenye and Masili in Petauke district. Most case studies involve the examination of multiple variables. The objective of the study was to examine the extent to which innovative local activities were promoting endogenous development in the area and to access how the community associations engage with the situation by utilizing their local resources.

Concepts of Endogenous Development among the Nsenga

The focus of this section is to determine the involvement of the Nsenga people and community organizations in Masili, Kanyenye and Mulera villages' participation in endogenous development.

Data Analysis on the Concepts of Endogenous Development

The method for data gathering was the following: Questionnaires were distributed in the 3 identified and targeted communities in Petauke namely: *Masili*, *Mulera* and *Kanyenye* villages to determine and find out how familiar the residents were with the concept of Endogenous development in the area. A total number of 52 respondents were interviewed in connection with their understanding of endogenous development in the above mentioned villages of Petauke district. According to Krishna (2002:86), development means different things to different people. What development means to the people of Petauke must be understood in the context of their concerns and aspirations for a better life.

Do you know anything about endogenous development? Explain what it means to you

In *Mulera* village 17 people were targeted, 15 respondents answered yes signifying that they were aware of endogenous development, and 2 respondents answered no. Over 90 per cent of respondents are well aware of endogenous development in Mulera community. While in *Masili* village 20 respondents were targeted and 16 respondents answered yes and only 4 answered no and in *Kanyenye* village 15 respondents were targeted and 13 said yes and two said no. 80 per cent in Masili indicated that they aware and 90 per cent in Kanyenye also indicated that they were aware. More than 85 per cent respondents from the three villages are familiar with the concept of endogenous development.

On the meaning of endogenous development, the response was as follows:

Firstly, about 30 per cent of respondents explained that endogenous development implies realizing one's vision by grasping development opportunity prevailing at that particular time. A self-motivated and initiated venture aimed at better life. This meant a better improved way of living in all aspects of life which included good farming techniques, improved ways of looking after one's livestock and a good initiative to start a new enterprise in order to take of one's family well.

Secondly, 25 per cent of the respondent's stated that endogenous development refers to self-improved way of living through doing something that as an individual you are confident to yield improvements in life. Some look at endogenous development as improving one's standard of living by way of utilizing his/her abilities, gifts, potential and skills that are vested in one's life. Thirdly, 45 per cent of the respondents looked at endogenous development as acquiring a skill, ability to solve problems so that one can stand on his/her own without entirely depending on the support of others. Generally women associated this kind of development as development that brings liberation, promote food security as it encourages individuals to be more self-reliant than depending on men and others in life. While men alluded to this kind of development as a development that brings personal enlightenment, promote hard work, innovation and enterprising as it encourages men to invest more and to learn from those who are doing better in life. This shows that in the three study areas people were aware about endogenous development and described it as a self-initiated, started from within the individual's heart and has brought about improved livelihoods and well-being in people's lives and communities.

Is there any relationship between endogenous developments with People?

On the relationship between Endogenous developments with people; all the respondents in *Mulera* agreed that there is a relationship between endogenous developments with the People. 100 per cent respondents indicated that there is a relationship between endogenous developments with people. In *Masili* village, 15 out of 20 said yes about 75 per cent, and in *Kanyenye* 14 said yes representing 80 per cent of the people who said there is a relationship between endogenous developments with people.

Does endogenous development help improve people's living standard?

Moreover on whether endogenous development help improve people's living standards; the majority of respondents said yes: 90 per cent in *Mulera*, 95 per cent in *Masili* and 90 per cent in *Kanyenye* while few did not indicate in their views on this aspect in all the three villages of *Mulera*, *Masili* and *Kanyenye*. Overall, over 90 per cent agree that endogenous development improve the living standards of the people.

Do people benefit from endogenous development?

Furthermore, respondents agreed that people do benefit from endogenous development which is understood as a self-initiated and birthed within people themselves. 95 per cent in *Mulera* agreed that people do benefit, while 90 respondents from *Masili* and 80 respondents from *Kanyenye* share the same views. In general, over 90 per cent from the three villages of *Masili* *Mulera* and *Kanyenye* benefit from endogenous development.

What elements comprise good development?

Most respondents claim that participation, empowerment, conscientization, consideration of people's values and traditional and local knowledge, cooperation and people's values are good elements of development.

How do people understand God's mission in connection with development in your area, in as far as the family, village and community are concerned?

People's understanding of God's mission in connection with development in their respective areas, family, village and community. This question provided divergent views by the respondents in all the three villages of *Mulera*, *Masili* and *Kanyenye*. There were two types of Respondents:

The first looked at God as being actively involved in development through all the works of creation, church activities and works of other non-governmental organizations that carry out different programs through various means.

Family level- included issues such as continuation of procreation, family ties and togetherness, advancement of family members in areas of education and other portfolios in life.

Village level- Included peace, good leadership, good rains, provision of natural resources such as land, water and other important cultural institutions such as sound issues which knit and attach society together.

Community level- included the provision of different skills, working together, natural assets, support systems and networks.

The second category of respondents looked at God as being silent and passive. The church should put concentration on preparing people for salvation of the soul.

Family level- God gave man all rights; it is up to man to utilize what God has already done through the potential in every family member.

Village level- Villagers must live and work towards promotion of good standard of living for all, demonstrate unity, mutual love and continuity of good.

Community level- This should embrace people together with their diversity. Use resources equally and uplifting those who are weak and vulnerable. God is watching to see offenders to receiving the punishment for failure to observe.

Do your church, cultural institutions, belief system help you participate in developmental activities?

On the question of Church, cultural institutions, belief systems helping people to participate in development activities:

The respondents in *Masili* 17 out of 20 answered yes, (representing 85 per cent) these help people to participate in development activities through the various ventures they promote in different societies and 3 (15 per cent) answered no, and in *Kanyenye* 10 out of 15 answered yes (representing 75 per cent) and 5 (representing 25) answered no. In *Mulera* 15 out of 17 said yes (representing 90 per cent) and 2 said no (representing 10 per cent). From this, about 85 per cent percentage in all the three villages agrees that church, culture and belief systems help people to participate in development activities. A smaller percentage (15 per cent) feels that these

institutions do not help. This is so because people are involved with development in different ways as individuals, through church programs and community work participation.

Describe what hampers development in your cultural system as regard, human dignity, social and political?

The description of what hampers development in their cultural systems as regard human dignity, social and political:

The following were generally noted from all the three villages:

Human dignity- Elders are highly favored at the expense of young ones. Women and youth's views are not highly appreciated in decision making.

Social- More emphasis is placed on communal rather than individual input as they concern an individual.

Political- The traditional leaders e.g. chiefs and headmen tend to be political deciders on behalf of the people. What appear to be the likes of the traditional leaders definitely become the likes of the people and vice versa. Others include lack of education, conscientisation and sensitization, failure to utilize potential in individuals persons who despite not being leaders but have unique abilities and talents.

What role does culture play to promote human right and development in your area?

The role of culture in promoting human rights in the three villages of *Mulera, Masili* and *Kanyenye* includes;

- There is a belief that all people are relatives born from one being and should consider each other as fellow human being. Assisting people in need, promoting communality, attending funerals of all people and never to comment badly on the dead.
- Help the elderly people and crippled whenever in dire need.
- Every person to have access to a farming land; place for constructing a house in the village, and burial rights.
- Rights to demonstrate their creativeness provided they do not harm fellow individuals within society.
- Encouraging family ties, unity, and respect, sense of belonging and value of individuals.

Evaluation and Analysis

The average level of involvement in endogenous development by the three communities is relatively good. Many respondents defined this kind of development as a form of self-initiated adventure with direct benefit to the individual, community and people involved. This shows that in the three study areas people were aware about endogenous development and described it as a self-initiated, born inside the individuals heart and has brought about improved livelihoods and well-being in people's lives and communities (Grillo and Stirrat, 1997:247). More than 80 per cent are involved in endogenous development activities. There is a relationship between endogenous development and people as people take a leading role in this development process. On God's mission with development, although respondents had different viewpoints

on this aspect, the following can be concluded; firstly respondents affirm that God is actively involved through the work of creation and the activities of the church. Secondly, God's mission is further demonstrated through the works of the church and the responsibility of humanity towards one another in the society. The above responses have given us a wider picture on the people's perceptions of endogenous development and the need for such a development approach in development.

Conclusion

Development has to be human centred and endogenous embedded in specific cultural settings so that people can be empowered to participate effectively. Endogenous development is also dependent on a people-cantered development. The church has a major task to play in the development agenda since God uses the church to bring about his kingdom closer to people on earth. When the church participates in development, people's well-being is met holistically. Finally Development has to be firmly based on human well-being, the quality of human life and a great deal of esteem. It has to focus on the aspirations and needs of people and these aspirations and needs must be defined by the people themselves. People should be the innovators to shape their own destinies in ways that do not conflict with their cultural values and norms. The people should participate in shaping the basis of their own existence and future. Development should be holistic and people centred and the goal must be to ensure wholeness and well-being. It should also be seen as a process of empowerment which enables participants to assume greater control over their lives as individuals and as members of the society.

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