

Globalization and Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Model

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to argue conceptually, that globalization entails challenges, opportunities and realities. It integrates and extends existing theory, focusing on the three pillars of sustainable development into a general framework presenting the fundamental importance of sustainable development strategies in a globalized world. Moreover, the objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework for globalization and how development can be sustained. A critical review of the multidisciplinary literature on globalization and sustainable development reveals a lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding sustainable development and accompanying strategies for sustaining development. Through a schematic representation of the relationships of the three pillars of sustainable development the paper concludes that a lasting solution to the impact of globalization on sustainable development can be crafted when current debate shifts from theory to the development of strategies to sustain development. The model if empirically evaluated, could serve as a blue print to guide policy and global discourse on how to achieve sustainable development; particularly so in developing economies.

Keywords: sustainable development, globalization, ICTs, governance.

1. Introduction

Contemporary literature reveals that sustainable development continues to gain widespread popularity in policy debates (Hens, 2015; Olsson, Hourcade, & Köhler, 2014). There are many reasons for this popularity; particularly so as it pertains to developing economies whose expectations are driven by the potential of sustainable development's ability to reconcile economic development with the need to conserve natural resources, protect the environment and meet social objectives (Köhler, 2014). However, "the quest to combine policies for economic growth and industrial competitiveness with those for environmental protection and social inclusion, has created confusion on the precise meaning of the concept sustainable development" (Köhler, 2014:77). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) describes globalization as the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology (IMF, in Wolf, 1997). There is growing interconnectedness between political, social and economic spheres of global economies which demand the use of sustainable management strategies (Blewitt, 2014). "During the transition to greater globalization, risks may arise as application to new economic methodologies outpaces their understanding and control and this complexity of the globalization processes therefore requires a truly integrated approach, combining social, economic and ecological aspects" (Blewitt, 2014:55). In order to answer questions about the overall impact of globalization, and to evaluate the mitigatory strategies, the debate on sustainable development should move from conferences and boardrooms into the field, for implementation in a sustainable manner (Hens, 2015).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Globalization defined

Globalization is a term that has become very popular and used in many different contexts (Powell, 2015). Norris (2012) links the definition of globalization to geographical borders. The author distinguishes between national, international,

offshore and global. On the other hand however, Amavilah et al (2014) defines globalization as the increasing integration between the markets for goods, services and capital. Redding's (2000) definition also links globalization to the breakdown of physical boundaries. Those in support of the globalization wave see it as an opportunity for economic growth while opponents perceive it as a threat to economic prosperity, political sovereignty, and cultural integrity (Amavilah et al (2014). In the case of developing countries, the primary concern is the threat to political sovereignty and losing control of their economies (Glatzer, 2012). As a result, literature on globalization includes many impassioned ideological arguments, both for and against (Glatzer, 2012). Most of these arguments, however, lack empirical support while some of the existing research findings are contradictory (Glatzer, 2012). To some, it is simply an argument about the virtues of free markets and supply and demand (Glatzer, 2012; Baylis et al, 2013). To others, it is a matter of economic fairness, cultural and political institutions and concern for environmental impact (Powell, 2015; Baylis et al, 2013). There is much and sometimes contradictory research on the financial and economic aspects of globalization while regrettably, the broader impact of this phenomenon has received much less attention by academics (Glatzer, 2012).

2.2 *Divergent views on globalization*

Debates on globalization and how it continues to affect the world economy continue to provoke more and more controversy (Jensen & Sandström, 2011). Friedman (2004) supports globalization citing the improvement in lifestyle of the global population while Klein (2007) argues otherwise on the strength of a plethora of information gathered through researches done in many economies in the world whose economies have witnessed restricted benefits after fully embracing the concept of globalization at the behest of the World Bank as a precondition for financial aid. Klein (2007) notes that privatization and liberalization of markets in certain countries in order to qualify for loans, has led to increasing poverty and growing inequality. Some critics claim that there is no longer any clear definition of globalization but even so, the term still arouses strong emotions in supporters and opponents (Jensen, & Sandström, 2011, Rosenberg, 2004; Machida, 2012). Various streams of literature suggest that the effects of globalization on developing countries are due to the policies driven by developing nations who coincidentally are in the driving seat of globalization (Kwok-Bun & Peverelli, 2010; Judt, 2007). On the other hand, others point to the advantages accruing to the rich countries through globalization and predict that their economies are stable enough to overcome further crises (Skidelsky, 2008; Mahutga & Smith, 2011).

A number of authors argue that globalization has made the world a better place, a world that will eventually lead to economic prosperity, political freedom, and world peace (Bhagwati, 2004; Moore, 2000). It is noted that one valuable benefit of a globalized world is the uninhibited movement of ideas, people, values, and systems across the globe (Paik et al, 2011; Fioretos, 2010). Bhagwati (2004) and Powelson (1998) also note that it was not only the economic status of men that improved but has led to the improvement in the livelihoods of many people across the globe. Stiglitz (2002), however argues that a lot of imperfections have been created due to globalization. To counter these imperfections, an entrepreneurial attitude is often required (Karagozoglu and Lindell, 1998; Knight, 2000; Peredo and McKenzie, 2002).

Even in the presence these entrepreneurial strategies, the challenges of globalization will always be in existence (Audretsch et al, 2011; Bhasin, & Venkataramany, 2010).

2.3 *Impact of globalization*

Although globalization has brought considerable benefits to many economies worldwide, its impact on the competitiveness of companies in developing countries remains a great challenge (Baffour & Amal, 2011). It is suggested that globalization's effects depend on the capability of firms to learn, innovate, and also on the institutional structure in these countries (Baffour & Amal, 2011). For example, access to new markets, lower costs for raw materials and the increased necessity to improve competitiveness are some key benefits of globalization (Julien and Joyal, 1994). To the contrary however, increased pressures resulting from the arrival of new products from developed countries cause loss of customers and intense competition to companies in least developed countries (Goriwondo et al 2012). This double edged sword of globalization is a common theme in the literature, with opportunities tempting entrepreneurs to capitalize on lower tariffs, and threats requiring an entrepreneurial attitude to improve products and services (Goriwondo et al 2012). This challenge is more evident in Zimbabwe and many other developing economies worldwide (Mutalemwa, 2015; Goriwondo et al 2012).

2.4 *Sustainable development*

Sustainable development has been adopted by the United Nations as a guiding principle for economic, environmental,

and social development that aspires to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (United Nations 1987). In this context, sustainable development demands the protection of the environment and natural resources as well as to provide social and economic welfare to the present and to subsequent generations (Elliott, 2012). Sustainability has been acknowledged as a major normative regulation principle for contemporary society which includes a long term ethical relationship of present generations with those of the future (Laws et al. 2004; Scholz 2011). It is therefore a concept which integrates the environmental, social, and economic aspects as three fundamental dimensions (Hall & Vredenburg, 2012). These three dimensions have been regarded as pillars of sustainability (Kajikawa 2008; Schoolman et al. 2012). However, the strategies used to balance these pillars have been criticized in recent years (Elliott, 2012; Mieg 2010). The reality is that a lot of complex issues must be addressed in order to balance the three (Kates et al. 2001; Scholz 2011; Schoolman et al. 2012). This paper thus takes a different perspective by using the three pillars as the basis for the search of synergies between the important goals of sustainable development.

2.5 *What must be sustained?*

A review of the multidisciplinary literature on sustainable development reveals a lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding sustainable development and its complexities (Hall & Vredenburg, 2012). The review shows that the definitions of sustainable development are vague (Hall & Vredenburg, 2012;); that the absence of an operative definition worsens the situation (Carew-Reid et al, 2013); that there is disagreement over what should be sustained (Elliot, 2012; Sachs, 1999); that the concept is unclear in terms of emotional commitment (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011; Solow, 1992); and that it "remains a confused topic" (Redclift, 1994:17), "fraught with contradictions" (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011; Redclift, 1987). There is no general agreement on how the concept should be translated into practice, going forward (Berke and Conroy, 2000). Tolba (2013: 25) further observes that "sustainable development is primarily symbolic rhetoric, with competing interests each redefining it to suit their own political agendas, rather than serving as an influential basis for policy development".

2.6 *Conceptual analysis*

Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify two main points related to the difference between theory and descriptions. The two authors note that "theory uses concepts where similar data are grouped and given conceptual labels, by placing interpretations on the data and the concepts are related by means of statements of relationships, where the data may be organized according to themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These themes may be conceptualizations of data, but are more likely to be precise summaries of words taken directly from the data (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). "The data is not interpreted in any way nor is there any attempt to relate the themes to form a conceptual scheme" (Leshem & Trafford, 2007: 95). In a broad sense, qualitative studies seek to describe and explain a pattern of relationships, which can be done only with a set of conceptually specified categories (Mishler, 1990). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a set of qualitative "tactics" that help in generating meanings from different texts and documents. Three distinct concepts were analyzed as they exist in the body of literature.

2.6.1 *The concept of equity*

For development to be sustained, a balance (equity) must be struck among the three pillars of the sustainable development (Agyeman, Bullard & Evans, 2002). Equity is a key social concept in sustainable development discourse (Murphy, 2012). In policy terms, it refers to the distribution of welfare goods and life chances on the basis of fairness and it applies to national, international, and intergenerational contexts (Murphy, 2012). This very broad conception of equity therefore covers a wide spectrum of policy areas and includes the promotion of freedom from discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, or race (Murphy, 2012). In this context, the concept of equity calls for the inclusion of all concepts cited above for effective sustainable development (Wueller et al, 2012). Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2002:77) argue that, "wherever in the world environmental despoliation and degradation are happening, they are almost always linked to questions of social justice, equity, rights and people's quality of life in the widest sense". The aforementioned researchers believe that a truly sustainable society is one in which wider questions of social needs; equity, welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems. Many scholars agree that sustainability could be achieved through the effective balancing of social, environmental and economic objectives (Berke & Kartez, 1995; Meadows & Randers, 1992; Robinson and Tinker, 1998; Scruggs, 1993). Meadows

and Randers (1992:209) for example define a sustainable society as “one that has in place informational, social, and institutional mechanisms that keep check on ... feedback loops”.

2.6.2 *The concept of integrative management*

This concept represents sustainable development's integrative view of aspects of social development, economic growth and environmental protection (Golder et al, 2012). From a policy perspective, the concept of integrative management seeks to create an integrative balance between living and non-living asserts (Foxall, 2014). This requires the integration of policy, planning and management levels; providing an effective legal and regulatory framework; making effective use of economic instruments and market and other incentives; and establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting Golder et al, 2012). The concept of integrative management posits that whatever changes are implemented, it is the duty of governments to do so while working in partnership with the private sector (Hill et al, 2014). In general however, the specific situations in which different countries are placed are the overall framework in which such integration takes place (Foxall, 2014).

2.6.3 *The concept of political global agenda*

This concept calls for inclusivity across national boundaries in order to achieve global sustainable development (O'Brien & Williams, 2013). In this regard, sustainable development has become the central adage of environmental policies around the globe (Dodds, 2000). This discourse conceives the earth as one unified globe (Carter, 2013). Given the recent economic crisis, scholars are calling for greater attention to the effective functioning of global institutions (Baylis et al, 2013). The capacity, power and actions of these actors in relationship to each other provide an understanding of the global political agenda (Baylis et al, 2013). Therefore, global institutions can study policy agenda setting processes across geographic boundaries to see how they mutually influence each other and what value they contribute to their own policy process (O'Brien & Williams, 2013).

2.7 *Existing models*

As Haughton and Counsell (2004:73) argue, “rather than focusing on searching for a definitive meaning of sustainable development, it is necessary to recognize the multiplicity of sustainabilities, and to analyze the ways in which these are shaped and mobilized in political discourse”. Probably the most common way of representing sustainable development is through the image of three overlapping circles, separately representing concerns connected with the economy, society and the environment (Barkemeyer, 2014). Sustainable development lies in the three-fold overlap at the center, where it integrates the three areas of concern (Barkemeyer, 2014). This representation has shaped many debates and is universally accepted (Peeters, 2012). It has been reproduced and has many variants which are however closely related (Hosseini & Kaneko, 2012). Therefore, the image of the three circles has helped to conceptualize sustainable development up to this date (Hosseini & Kaneko, 2012). The circles capture the differences between sustainable development and the previously separate concerns of policy and politics, suggesting a holistic and complementary concept towards sustainable development (Pinfield, 1996).

In light of the literature reviewed a conceptual framework for globalization and how development can be sustained is being presented.

3. **Conceptual Framework**

The new conceptual framework borrows extensively from existing models as depicted on figure 2 below. Its emphasis is identifying the key stakeholders and their roles in sustaining development in a global village. The framework proposes an integrative management stance to sustainable development which identifies and acknowledges the roles played by World governance policies and their relationship with national policies in a bid create global sustainable development. It shows that in order to anchor long term development in a sustainable manner, the world should be viewed as a stage where everybody has a role to play; including individuals and corporate bodies.

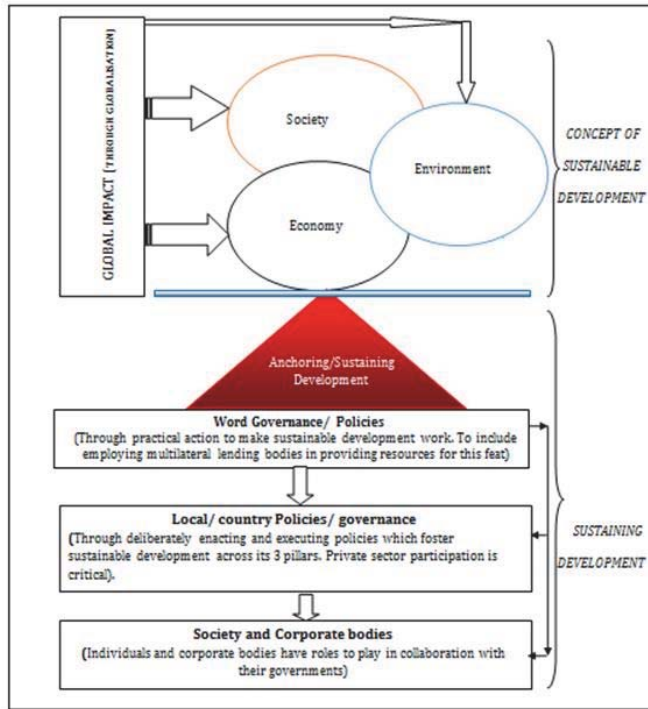


Figure 2: Researchers' Conceptual framework for globalization and how development can be sustained.

4. The Zimbabwean Case Study

The negative global economic outlook continue to create knock-on effects on emerging and developing economies (Manzungu, 2012). The impact of these turbulences on global capital markets are currently being transmitted to developing countries such as Zimbabwe particularly amplified by increased globalization and regionalism (Mpofu, 2013). In essence, the lack of effective policy instruments to absorb both the domestic and external shocks, relegates Zimbabwean policy makers to mere observers who pray that global developments remain favourable (Mpofu, 2013). Despite limited integration with the capital markets in advanced economies, the costs and risks of a fall from the country's growth path attained in the past three years remain disconcertingly high (Mpofu, 2013). Although the Zimbabwean economy is projected to grow by 9.4% in 2012, downside risks in the form of firming global food and fuel prices, amplified by the likelihood of a drought affecting the country and some parts of the region, will potentially have adverse ramifications on the budget (Manzungu, 2012). In view of the country's high commodity dependency, declines in global activity and commodity prices will have inescapable consequences for the country's export earnings, and hence its output, incomes, and fiscal revenues (Manzungu, 2012). Based on the outcomes of the above framework, this paper further examines the role of policy, ICTs and research and development within the Zimbabwean context.

4.1 Role of policy

Over the past ten years, Zimbabwe has opened itself considerably to the influences of the global economy through a process of liberalization (Zindiye et al, 2012). It embarked on this course so as to raise its growth rate by stimulating investment (Zindiye et al, 2012). However, in addition to its poor performance, its economic and social profile has not improved as well (Ndlovu & Heath, 2013). In the economic sphere, liberalization was introduced before macroeconomic stability and failure to address the budget deficit has contributed to inflation, which has driven the regressive income redistribution, to high interest rates, which have hindered domestic investment, and to exchange rate depreciation (Ndlovu & Heath, 2013). While some of this can be traced to lack of capacity, a good measure of it can be ascribed to the

political system, which does not punish policy makers for failing and therefore encourages inaction (Moyo, 2014). Governments are expected to provide a vision, strategy and an enabling environment to develop national information and communication infrastructures, and to play a coordinating role by establishing a framework and mechanism that ensures the participation of all sectors in implementing the national information and communication infrastructures and to guarantee that all sectors of society benefit from it (Moyo, 2014). In a globalizing world, policy-makers should be aware of the developments that take place simultaneously in the different domains, and the increasing interconnectedness needs to be the starting point for sustainable global policies (Moyo, 2014; Chirisa & Dumba, 2012). Moyo (2014) notes that the demands for environmental protection and economic development are said to be competing. Some claim an eternal competition, while others emphasize a possible win-win situation (Chirisa & Dumba, 2012). Therefore, in this context, instances of policy emulation are not dissuaded but rather encouraged; especially by all policy makers in the developing world (Chirisa & Dumba, 2012).

4.2 ICTs

There is a strong correlation between ICT diffusion and high economic growth (Kabanda, 2012). The solution to poverty and under-development in African countries is knowledge and economic empowerment (Kabanda, 2012). Zimbabwe is privileged to have a Ministry responsible for ICTs whose policy pronouncements have seen a remarkable growth of the sector through an accelerated uptake of ICT products which has consequently seen a rapid increase in the nation's teledensity Musiyandaka et al, 2013). The emergence and convergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has remained at the centre of global socio-economic transformations. If implemented properly and carefully, these technologies could reduce or eliminate the imbalance between rich and poor, and powerful and marginalized (Kabanda, 2012). However, ICTs and indeed development through technology requires adequate infrastructure to be put in place without which sustainable development may remain a pipe dream (Kabanda, 2012). Akhtar and Laviolette (1995) make the observation that Africa's information infrastructure is by far the least developed in the world with the smallest number of telephone lines *per capita*, most restricted access to computer equipment and most inaccessible media systems, which have resulted in the continent's relatively slow economic and social development. The donation of computers to rural schools is a noble idea only when it is accompanied by policies which seek to provide reliable and affordable energy sources in order to achieve sustainable development through technology (Kabanda, 2012). In the short-term, there is need is to strengthen institutions that are directly linked to matters of trade, while in the long term capacity should be extended to all government ministries (Paul & Uhomoibhi, 2012).

4.3 Research and development

Africa's total contribution to world trade is about 2%, and this is against the background of enormous natural resources (Nyikahadzo et al, 2012). It has been observed that Africa's major problem is that it has never participated in the intermediate and final stages of production on a significant scale (Nyikahadzo et al, 2012). The challenge for African leadership is to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills to manufacture finished goods. This failure to participate in the intermediate and final stages of production is replicated in the business of academic knowledge creation. African scholars in their research endeavours provide raw data to Western scholars who will then develop theories and products from the raw data. African scholars and institutions need to participate in the intermediate final stages of knowledge production by developing the capacity to formulate theories and to develop competitive products from research activities. Hountondji (1997:94) makes the observation that "modern science was introduced to countries in Africa by way of colonization". He further asserts that "there is a decisive stage in which African scholars have not yet been included, namely, the stage in between data collection and application of theoretical findings to practice. It is the stage of theory building" (Hountondji, 1997:95). As a result, a theoretical vacuum exists in which intellectual and experiential processes - the foundations to a culture of science - are missing because much of this work was done in the "mother country", not in the colonies. In the global knowledge economy, intellectual capital is a central factor in the production process. In support, Handy (1997) cites intelligence as the new source of wealth not the traditional accumulation of assets of land, raw materials or technology. He argues that the consequences are that organizations will have to understand the role of training and development to stimulate the growth of intellectual capital. Governments too, have a role to play as they provide access to learning for all of their citizens at all stages of life (Duvenage et al, 2013). The challenge is to capacitate research bodies and provide research funds to all deserving research institutions in order to undertake productive research for sustainable development (Duvenage et al, 2013).

5. Discussion

Making globalization work in a sustainable manner will not be easy. Those who benefit from the current system will resist change. However, in the case of developing countries, they must be able to use available resources well and take advantage of the new opportunities. A major determining factor on how well a country will do is the quality of the public and private institutions, which in turn is related to how decisions are made and in whose best interest, a subject broadly referred to as governance. Even if barriers are removed systematically, not everyone is equally in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities. It is easy for those in the advanced industrial countries to seize the opportunities that the opening up of the markets in the developing countries affords-and they do so quickly. Globalization and sustainable development will remain topical subjects of debate for quite some time come. The conceptual framework developed may provide an answer in finding ways of sustaining development in the global village. Further research will look in empirically evaluating the conceptual model to ascertain its relevance to the Zimbabwean context.

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