

Social Mobility and Economic Development

by

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Introduction

All societies have some mobility. There is no society with no mobility, none with complete mobility or interchange of position from generation to generation.

Occupational mobility plays an important role in economic development and, in turn, economic development has a major effect on occupational mobility.

One other aspect of social mobility specifically related to economics is the demographic mobility, especially the mobility from the rural to the urban area. This mobility plays an important part in the economic development as well as economic development increasing this kind of mobility.

Educational mobility and economic development are similarly interrelated.

Economic Activity in the Society

Economic activity derives its meaning from the norms of the society, and people engage in

economic activity for rewards often extrinsic to the economy itself. In peasant and primitive often extrinsic to the economy itself. In peasant and primitive societies the norms and values used to define a resource, a commodity, and control over certain goods and services are involved in economic activity. At the same time the distributive process and standards of economic behavior are norms governing most social interaction.

The functional interdependence of economy and society stems from the fact that the same persons are actors in the economic, the kinship, the political, and the religious phases(9,p.36). The causal interaction of economy and society pivots on the provision of facilities. For given forms of social structure a given variety and volume of goods and services are required and if there are shifts in facilities available, there will be shifts in the rest of society. Shifts in the social structure will change the volume and variety of goods and services a society produces. To discover the causal interactions of these processes, peasant and primitive societies undergoing change are studied (9,p.361).

Marx stated in clear fashion that the origin and development of the capitalist mode of production was the outcome of the transformation of

the bourgeoisie to the position of leading social class. The mutual interaction between social-structural change and economic development since that time has been recognized.

Economic Organization as a Social Environment

The economy imposes a structure of relationships between man and man, even between man and nature. Different economic forms may imply vastly different man-to-man relationships.

Because it fixes significant man-to-man relationships, because it rests on a peculiar system of power, and because it requires particular forms of activity and striving, economic organization can be evaluated intrinsically as a way of life (11, p. 174). Through the man-to-man relationships the different kinds of values appear and, therefore, the economic organization can be evaluated also for its impact on the human character and the social ethics.

Because of the operational prerequisites and because of the values and outlook it engenders, the prevailing form of economic organization will be more or less compatible with other political forms, for example, democratic government and social institutions such as the paternalistic family. Hence an

economic organization may be evaluated on the basis of its compatibility with other social forms and institutions that might be looked upon as desirable (11, p. 174).

Social Mobility and Economic Development

Social mobility is a basic characteristic of the modern society. All of the industrial societies now have more mobility than in the past. In any society this is a relationship between social mobility and economic development. As an example it can be observed that industrialization has occurred in countries in which there has been a high degree of social mobility. At the same time, increased consumer incomes which are likely to result from industrialization are a potent factor in social mobility.

Before discussing this relationship in detail it must be stated what is meant by social mobility and economic development.

Social mobility

Social mobility means the change in attitude, roles, opinions, and frames of reference that is often associated with a change in group affiliations (13, P. 313). It includes the movement of

individuals, families, and groups from one social position to another (5, p. 427). From these definitions and others it can be seen that the study of social mobility is a study of change- of movement. The degree of social mobility varies from one country to another from one group to another , and over time.

Lipset (7, pp. 5-6) stated that the study of social mobility involves several analytical steps :

- 1) study of the relationship between the starting point of a person's career and the point the person has reached at the time of the analysis.
- 2) A second major question involves the relationships between social inheritance (or starting position) and the means of mobility.
- 3) The processes involved in social mobility.
- 4) The consequences of social mobility.

Economic development

Economic development is defined as an increase in a nation's or an area's capacity to produce goods and services, coupled with an increase in production of these goods and services(5, P.166).

Development as a whole involves a complex series of changes in rates of growth, and the major changes in the rates depend on the occurrence of fundamental changes in the social structure of the developing society . Development in general takes place when an index of that is deemed desirable and relatively preferable increases in magnitude(1, p. 8). Long period increases distinguishes economic development from purely temporary variations in national income (4, p. 220).

Deyrup (2, pp. 335-336) describes the relationship between social mobility and economic development through illustrated example. If we assume that a merchant heretofore exporting craft products such as leather goods, textiles and brassware turns to wheat export, and as a result he changes that part of his income which he consumes. If his income continues to grow, we may be quite certain that his consumption habits will change : he will establish a comfortable standard of living including perhaps a servant or two to lighten his wife's housework; later he will live more luxuriously, moving his residence to an choice quarter of the city , hiring more servants, and perhaps at last venturing out into the social and cultural world. If his income continues to grow and if the

structure of society allows him to do so, he will move up to a higher social level, or he will try to push his children upward through marriage into a higher class or through launching them in careers more highly esteemed than his own.

Occupational mobility

One of the aspects of social mobility is the occupational mobility. With the growth of the society different kinds of occupations develop and at the same time others disappear, With the growth of occupations the economic development and also the status related to different types of occupations change over time. For example, the skilled man now has a higher status than previously since the income related to this type of occupation has increased. In Egypt, for example, the skilled workers are increasing in number at a rapid rate and with increases in salary. This was especially true during the period of building the High Dome.

At the present time the farmer in Egypt has developed a higher status than his father had and this will play an important role in developing the rural Egyptian economy.

Due to the increased economic growth ,

children can obtain a better education than their fathers had and thus obtain a better occupation. The economic development has created new jobs which did not exist before, and this is especially true for women.

On the other hand, the increase of people in better kinds of occupations assists in the improvement of economic development. From one generation to another many people have moved from one social class to a higher one according to the kind of occupations they have. The length of the step up (or down) the ladder of occupation might well be substantially greater in one country than another.

It must be mentioned that one country contains a greater percentage of mobile individuals than another and, therefore, countries do not have equal opportunity. The spread of technical education and the improvement of general education have greatly stimulated the vertical mobility of the population in the less developed countries.

The present trend is for people to leave the rural areas and go to the cities to seek employment. With the increase of this kind of mobility the economic activity increased more

rapidly than before. The increased economic development, in turn, creates a need for more workers and produces more development.

In observing the structural changes in occupations it can be noted that there is a shift from agricultural to nonagricultural activities. There is an increased demand in the industrial occupations. The specialization of the kinds of occupations becomes an important factor leading to economic development. This process of specialization makes exact occupational inheritance increasingly unlikely. Economic development appears to be accompanied by a long-term shift from manual to nonmanual occupations in nonagricultural occupations.

When studying all these kinds of occupational mobility, the occupational distribution of the previous generation must be considered to see how the mobility in occupations has changed over a period of time.

Demographic mobility

Rural-to-urban movement is a feature which goes along with economic development increases. The cities have long supported activities that have been absent in the rural environment,

particularly in the small village.

The extent of migration from rural communities to the cities has caused several problems. Some of these problems are : the increase in population in the cities, the problem of transportation, the resultant decline of rural population, and others. As a solution for these kinds of problems some nations have started to increase the economic activity in the rural as well as the urban areas.

As a result of demographic mobility new values appear which may be similar of different than the previous values. In any case it must be noted that the changes in the number and proportion of people in rural and urban areas is closely related to the society's orientation toward economic development (10, p. 259).

Educational mobility

The educational mobility has a positive relationship with family. The different kinds of education, especially the increase in higher education, has helped in economic development. Also the economic development produces a greater need for higher education.

The increases of economic development and

with the industrial development there will follow an increase in certain kinds of education, especially the industrial education. In the past there were few people who wanted an education, but this pattern is changing at the present time and will continue to do so in the future.

A number of studies have provided evidence of the close linkage between the distribution of literacy and education to economic development. An analysis of the relationship between levels of educational achievement and industrialization indicates that literacy and level of industrialization correlate quite highly on an international level (.87 for 70 countries in 1950) and that these two factors have been associated historically in the development of industrialized nations (3, pp. 108-113). Other studies suggest high positive relationships between level of secondary and higher education and statistical indicators of economic development (12, pp. 776-786).

Value Orientations and Economic Growth

Much of the analyses of the social requisites for economic development have suggested that a highly industrialized society requires the breakdown of traditional ties, a considerable

degree of flexibility in role relationships, the willingness to treat market forces and individuals impersonally, and a system of recruitment to important positions that is based largely on universalistic and achievement criteria (10, p. 42).

Ordinarily not all of the old values disappear with the economic development, but still some value changes are evident. Some of the old values change, others may be renewed, and some remain the same. This is dependent on the degree of social mobility and whether the development is rapid or slow.

Tradition and Economic Growth

A widely held body of ideas in the study of economic development is founded on the conception that advanced and underdeveloped countries are distinguished mainly in that the former have rationally organized economies, whereas in the latter tradition prevails. This distinction is often traced back to Max Weber and sometimes even to earlier writers in sociology and cultural anthropology.

Tradition is quite generally seen as a factor inimical to economic growth. Seemingly

whoever wants progress must get rid of tradition.

Are all traditions the same in their impact on economic growth? If it is granted that the prevalence of tradition makes for stability stationariness, can we not find some uses for tradition on a situation of rapid economic development when the threat of widespread social disorganization is ever present?(1,p.84)

The Consequences of Rapid Economic Development

Smelser and Lipset (10, pp. 12-13) state that rapid development sets up tensions between ascription and achievement, between differentiated and undifferentiated structures, between egalitarian and hierarchical principles, and between control and local power. These several tensions frequently make their appearance in the relationship between demands for mobility imposed by the exigencies of development on the one hand, and the supply of potentially mobile individuals and groups with appropriate motivation, attitude, and skills on the other.

Industrial development often demands social disorganization. For example, feeling a collective anomie, a drive for escapism and frenetic leisure time activities, and a nihilist attitude about the future tentativeness and cynicism about the present

are the trademarks of the developed society (8, p. 367).

Industrialization may bring about an increase in freedom and rationality, but it may also entail a marked rise in social disorganization. For example, we cannot argue the economic liberation of women without expecting a corresponding disintegration in family bonds. Nor can we hold on to individualistic values in the face of bureauratic drive for industrial rationality and order (8, p. 367).

The Role of the Sociologist in the Process of Development

The sociologist must deal with the problem of the price of change and how society has to pay this price. The decision to orient a society toward rapid industrial and technical development is basically a value decision, most often made by an elite group of the mass people. The sociologist must not only indicate the dangers of social dissolution but also anticipate and work out methods to overcome potential problems. The sociologist must measure the alternating and competing values that are a consequence of rapid industrial development.

The sociologist must distinguish between necessary roads to development and possible alternative roads. The sociologist must nevertheless constantly place before society the possible or probable costs of any anticipated gain (8, pp. 367-370).

These are some of the roles of the sociologist in the process of development. We can also add other duties to him .

S u m m a r y

Social mobility is an important variable in determining the rate and form of economic development. The economic development itself affects the social mobility.

The occupational, demographic and educational mobility play an important role in economic development, and the economic development in turn increases these kinds of social mobility.

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