NIGERIAN PEOPLES, CULTURES AND GOVERNMENT

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CHAPTER TWENTY - FIVE
SOCIAL CHANGE
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Introduction

Change is a continuous process that takes place from time to time in all human societies. No society whether developed, developing or underdeveloped had remained static since it came into being. Societies had witnessed transitions from tradition to modern, agrarian to industrial state. Change is a phenomenon that cuts across human activities. Change, according to Hornby (2001), is the act of becoming different or making something becoming different. He stressed further to say that change is making something to pass from state or form into another. According to Fadelye (2000) change is a normal occurrence of life. Social change is the process which different aspects of a society and its components parts are affected or pacified in the course of time.

Concept of Social Change

Social change has been defined by different scholars. Gabriel (1991) sees social change as the processes and results of alterations in the patterns of a group social behaviour. Wikipedia (2010) sees social change as that which may be a continual process, responding to local factors and the consequences of economic development or other forms of planned change. For instance, institutions, events, belief system, norms, values, dressing pattern, food cooking styles, change from one stage to

another. Social change is seen as the fundamental alterations in the patterns of culture, structure and social behaviour of people and society over time.

Types of Social Change

The two major types of social change are planned and unplanned social change.

Planned Social Change

Planned social change is that type of change that is planned by the government through the acts of parliament or by decree. For instance, there was a time where government made it compulsory for all motor-cycle users to use helmet.

Unplanned Social Change

This is the type of social change that could be brought by cumulative actions of individuals, private or public decisions. It is usually a gradual process in which case people's style of dance, norms, values, liaising, dressing, feeding etc can change (Fadelye, 2005) cited in (Ukadike and Iwegbu, 2015).

Processes of Social Change

Owo (1994) has identified three main processes of social change.

These include:

a.   Invention
  b.   Discovery
  c.   Diffusion

Invention: Invention is the creation of something new which is previously not in existence. Invention can be mechanical (material) or social. Mechanical invention could be invention of motor cars, aeroplanes, bicycles, trains etc. Social invention

could be religious. cultural. economic. political etc. Examples include pay as you earn (PAYE). socialism. valued-added tax (VAT). etc.

Discovery: Discovery is an act or the process of finding something or learning about something that was known about before. The act of discovery adds something new to the store house of verified knowledge in any community. although this reality may have existed and it becomes a part of the existing verified knowledge only after its discovery. For instance. two boiling point of water at $100^{\circ}C$ and freezing point at 0 degree. According to Owo (1994). a discovery becomes verified instrument of social change only when it is put to use.

Diffusion: Diffusion occurs when cultural traits and characteristics. spill over a wide area across cultural boundaries: giving rise to a new breed of culture or in some cases existing along the dominant culture of the people. In other words. diffusion is the movement of cultural traits from one group of culture to another as a result of interaction. People copy traits and characteristics of other people's culture during cultural festivals and sporting activities and also through formal education. For instance women wearing trousers. men wearing suit and knotting ties even in hot sun are all products of diffusion in Nigeria.

Factors of Social Change

The following are some of the factors responsible for social change:

a. Physical environment

b. Demographic factor

c. Cultural factor

d. Ideational factor

e. Economic factor

f. Political factor

Physical Environment

Though physical environment is an important factor which deeply affects social life, still it cannot be regarded as the only factor responsible for the growth of human society. Man is in position to affect change in his physical environment. Men adapt themselves to their environment but they have the capacity to transfer their physical environment according to their needs and requirements. Human misuse of the physical environment can bring very rapid changes in physical environment. which in turn change the social and cultural life of a people. Deforestation brings land erosion and reduces rainfall. Environmental destruction has been at least a contributing factor in the fall of most great civilizations. Many changed their physical environment through migration.

Demographic Factor

Demographic is concerned with the size and structure of human population. The social structure of human society is closely related with the changes in the size. composition, and distribution of population. The size of the population is mainly based on three factors birth rate, death rate and migration (immigration and emigration). The composition of population depends upon variables like age. sex, marital status, literacy etc. A stable population may be able to resist change but a rapidly growing population must migrate, improve its productivity or

starve. Migration encourages further change for it brings a group into a new environment and subjects it to new social contacts. Population changes have occurred all through human history because of migration, war, pestilence. changing mores etc. The decline of both the birth rate and the death rate bring social transformation.

Cultural Factor

It is an established fact that there is an intimate connection between our beliefs and social institutions, our values and social relationship. Values, beliefs, ideas. institutions are the basic elements of culture. All cultural changes involve social change. Social and cultural aspects are closely interwoven. Thus any change in the culture (ideas, values. beliefs etc) brings a corresponding change in the whole social order. Culture gives speed and direction to social change and determines the limit beyond which social change cannot occur (Dawson and Gettys. 1945). If we choose to travel by a ship, the direction in which we travel is not predestinated by the design of the ship but it is the culture that decides the direction and the destination of both. Thus the port will remain a cultural choice. Cultural factor is not only responsive to technological change but also acts back on it so as to influence its direction and its characteristics.

Ideational Factor

Among the cultural factors affecting social change in modern times, the development of science and secularization of thought have contributed a lot to the development of the critical and imperative character of the modern outlook. We no longer

follow many customs or habits merely because they have the age-old authority of tradition. On the contrary, our ways of life have increasingly become the basis of rationality. Some writers have interpreted social change at ideational level and asserted that all social change is ideational. They opined that ideas could influence the course of social change. Ideas and ideologies are powerful motivating forces in social change.

In modern times, not only the way we think, but the contents of ideas have also changed. Ideas of self-betterment, freedom, equality and democratic participations are largely creations of the past two/three centuries. Such ideas have served to mobilize processes of social and political change including reformation movements and revolutions.

Economic Factor

Of economic influences, the most far-reaching is the impact of industrialization. It has revolutionized the whole way of life, institutions, organization and community life. In the traditional production systems, levels of production were mainly static since they were geared to habitual customary needs. Modern industrial capitalism promotes the constant revision of technology of production.

Political Factor

The state is the most powerful organization, which regulates the social relationship. It has the power to legislate new laws, repeal old ones to bring social change in the society. The type of political leadership and individuals in power also influences the rate and direction of social change. In many societies, the political leadership controls the economy; also

scientific technological and non-technological changes are also dependent on political development which indirectly affects social change. (Http www.sociologyguide.com socialchange/factorsofchangephd).

Theories of Social Change

A theory is a formal set of idea that is intended to explain why something happens or exists. It is also an idea or opinions that somebody believes is true but that is not proved. Theories are formal set of ideas and principles that is intended to explain issues or events in human development. Wikipedia sees theories as sets of statement or principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that have been tested and repeatedly found to be true. It further defined theories as proposed explanation and a branch of field of knowledge that deals with its principles rather than practice.

The major perspectives are:

   a.   Evolutionary perspective
   b.   Functional perspective
   c.   Conflict perspective
   d.   Social exchange theory
   e.   cyclical perspective

Evolutionary Perspective

Spencer on his part offers an evolutionary theory that society prepares based on population growth and structural differentiation. Evolution involves something intrinsic; change not merely in size but at least in structure also. For example, when we speak of biological evolution, we refer to the emergence of certain organisms from others in a kind of

succession.'

Contemporary approaches take a multi-linear view of evolution. Their proponents recognize that change does not necessarily imply progress, that change occurs in quite different ways and that change proceeds in many different directions. The evolution theory stated that the society started primitive stage and later increased to complexity, held together by the government.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is purely an attempt to explain, analyze, predict and interpret some social events or ideas in human societies in the areas of human social behaviour, social institution and organizations. According to Obi (2001) social exchange theory is based on the belief or idea that no human can live in isolation and still meet up their daily needs for survival, comfort and development. This theory is premised on the fact that all human beings are social animals that live in groups and interacts with one another in order for them to achieve their various aims in life. This is in other words or otherwise known as theory of inter-dependence. The theory basically analyzes the cause and effect of the various exchanges humans undertake in their environment.

Impact of Social Change on Social Institutions in Nigeria

In traditional, Nigerian societies, values were homogeneous and sacred, while in contemporary Nigeria, value is heterogeneous and secular in character. Social norms involved high moral significance while modern Nigeria's norms are marked by variable moral significance.

Production institutions in traditional Nigeria depended on human labour and animal energy, while in present day Nigeria, advanced energy from electricity, solar etc are basis of production. Communication from family to other institutions was face-to-face, today face-to-face is supplemented by mass media. The extended family system is fast giving way to nuclear family and the benefits provided by the extended family system is now demanded by the state, such as social security.

The settlement pattern in traditional Nigerian society was small, sparsely populated and dispersed; the settlement pattern in modern Nigerian society is large with high concentration of people in towns. Before this recent time education was limited to elites in terms of formal school. Today mass education is the expected benefit and right of every person of school age. Nigeria is gradually turning to religious secularization and pluralism, as against ancient time where religion was homogeneous to a particular settlement, in which religion guides world-view. The age of small government chamber type is over, giving way to large scale government with high state intervention in civil society affairs. The rigid social stratification is also giving way to a state of high mobility (Bassey, 2014).

Conclusion

Social change can also be defined as the process which different aspects of a society and its component parts are affected or pacified in the course of time. Social change is equally regarded as the change noticeable in our ways of life, alterations in our cultural patterns, changes in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the society and its people.

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