

## Book Reviews

**Globalization and Social Policy in Africa: Issues and Research Directions**, Tade Akin Aina, CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal (1997) ISSN: 0850-8895 (p/b), 92 pp, US\$8.

### Introduction

Tade Akin Aina's working paper on *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa: Issues and Research Directions* provides a critical and certainly an interesting re-examination of the now popular 'buzzword' of *globalization* especially as it relates to the nature and dynamics of social policy in Africa. Although a fair amount of information already exists on precisely what the concept of globalization is concerned with, not much critical and analytical work in the context of the African experience exists. In this regard then, Aina's proposed study must be a relevant and timely study and one which will be useful not only to policy makers, but in the provision of a deeper understanding of economic and social phenomena implied in the globalization process.

The author begins by defining the concept of globalization, showing the divergences in theoretical perceptions about the phenomenon and explaining the basis upon which a broader framework for understanding the concept must be established. His carefully selected and fairly extensive choice of the current literature on the issue provides a balanced understanding of the divergences of opinion in this field. The author's objective critique succeeds in the *deglorification* of the concept of globalization. His critical examination of *the other side* of the coin, namely, the *ugly* side of the issue, in a sense does revive certain fundamentals embodied in Amin's centre-periphery debate and Frank's *Development of under-development*. Aina's point of emphasis differs somewhat from the aforementioned theorists largely in the manner in which he assesses the relationship between globalization and social policy.

Social policy is defined both as a theoretical and empirical issue. It is treated as the dependent variable in the broader framework of globalization. The role of "*State-Society, State-Economy Relations, Inequality and Poverty, Gender Relations, Economic Restructuring and Social Change and Citizenship Rights*" in shaping a deeper understanding of globalization and social policy are discussed.

The relationship between globalization and social policy underscores the primary focus of the paper. The analysis of this relationship begins by providing a critical appraisal of conventional approaches which tend to undermine or underplay important social issues such as inequality, gender relations, poverty and

citizenship and human rights, to name a few. As the author puts it, social policy must be analysed, *"in terms of its history, nature, dynamics and relationships not only with internal forces, various forms of social relations and structures, but also as they are affected by external pressures and dynamics."*

The ultimate objective of the working paper is to identify key issues of research around the theme of globalization and social policy. Three broad research themes are identified, namely:

- a) Development, Globalization and Social Policy-Making in Africa.
- b) External Influence and Social Policy.
- c) Globalization, Social Policy and the State and Society.

An in-depth analysis of these themes is aimed at the re-examination of social policy issues in Africa in terms of origin, design and effectiveness.

## **The Concept of Globalization**

The author presents a divergence of views and perceptions on the issue of globalization. Proponents of globalization have tended to glorify this phenomenon, focussing mainly on what Tade Akin Aina refers to as the *"sugary notions of interdependence, global flows and exchanges,"* a view which clearly presents globalization as a benign force, a *"creative process producing new technologies and expanding opportunities."* The author's own analysis of the process differs fundamentally from the above. For him, globalization is, *"the transformation of the relations between states, institutions, groups and individuals, the universalization of certain practices, identities, and structures and...the expression of the global restructuring that has occurred in recent decades in the structure of modern capitalist relations"* (p 8). Embodied in that definition is the idea that the process of globalization has brought about fundamental changes in relations across nations in various aspects of social, political and economic life. The author criticises conventional wisdom on globalization in the sense that it downplays or underestimates issues of *"coercion, conflict, polarization, domination, inequality, exploitation and injustice"* (p 11). Globalization has led to further imperfections in labour and capital goods markets and has introduced new distortions, social hardships and marginalisation of communities.

There is an extensive review of literature to show the divergence of opinion embodied in the above section.

## Globalization and Social Policy

The ultimate objective of the proposed research is not just to present the theoretical variations in notions of globalization, but rather, to determine the nature and impact of those processes on the design, implementation and effectiveness of social policy in Africa. The impact on social policy is investigated in the context of:

- State-Society and State-Economy Relations.
- Inequality and Poverty.
- Gender Relations and Gender Analysis.
- Economic Restructuring and Social Change

There is the fundamental premise that globalization engenders certain kinds of responses as the various interest groups in society (state, civic society and labour) protect or enhance their interests which may be at stake through the globalization process. It is these responses that the author wishes to investigate.

There is also a fundamental premise made that globalization has impacted the design and effect of social policy. The proposed research aims to explore the interrelationships between globalization and social policy within a dynamic context such as characterises the African economies today.

## Identification of Research Themes

The author identifies and discusses very clearly the research issues emerging from the debate on the relationship between globalization and economic policy. The key research questions to be investigated are: (and to use the author's categorisation):

### ***Theme I: Development, Globalization and Social Policy Making in Africa***

This aspect of the study is intended to focus on the historical evolution of and the nature of social policy-making in different administrative and management systems in Africa. The origin, the design, the gender, class, ethnic and socio-political dimensions of social policy-making will be explored.

### ***Theme II: External Influence and Social Policy***

This section will focus on the impact of global social and economic developments on social policy.

It examines the role of multilateral and international and regional financial and trading institutions on the administration and management of social services. Key issues to be studied in this regard include (p 78):

- adjustment and economic restructuring and social policy;
- urbanisation and urban poverty;
- household and family health; and
- rural development and poverty.

### ***Theme III: Globalization, Social Policy and the State and Society***

Taking cognisance of the fact that globalization has engendered certain political, economic and social responses (both positive and negative), the author chooses this as another research theme. In particular, the author intends to study how "*households, communities, social movements and several strategic groups have devised and utilized strategies and various means of pursuing and defending their interests*" (p 78). This is important in terms of tracing the evolving nature of, for instance, definitions of social rights and citizenship status in relation to issues of access and entitlements to social services and other benefits of social policy.

### **Comment on Methodological Issues**

Regarding the research methodology to be employed, the author chooses to dwell on the more general (albeit very important) study approach to be adopted in this particular research rather than focus on the more standard description of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research, such as methods of data gathering and analysis. His methodology emphasises the following principles:

- "*open, bold, critical and disciplined*" (p 80). The emphasis lies on the need to go beyond the "*singular and monolithic, ideological and theoretical and disciplinary orientation*" (p 80).
- "*inter and multi-disciplinary, comprehensive, open to combination of various modes of investigation.*"

### **Critical Appraisal of Working Paper**

Aina's working paper on globalization is a must for all those keenly following the globalization debate. It provides a refreshing departure from conventional arguments which clearly portray the issue in a very limited and biased manner which chooses to ignore some of the adverse effects that globalization has had on the design and impact of social policy in Africa. His paper introduces balance in the assessment of the impact of globalization and social policy.

A major strength of the paper lies in its very extensive review and analysis of the nature of the discourse on globalization, pointing out the shortcomings of each

argument. Thus, the proposal to re-think social policy in light of the multi-dimensional analysis of globalization constitutes a key policy as well as a research issue.

Although the paper makes very interesting reading, there are a few problem areas. The choice of thematic areas for research, whilst relevant, is too broad and one is not too sure that justice will be done to all these chosen areas of study.

A major weakness of the paper, though, lies in the serious omission of the quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques the author intends to use. Clearly, in the final analysis, the legitimacy of many of the author's alternative views on the issues of globalization and social policy must rest on the extent to which they can amass relevant data and information on the issues, and so the methodological issues should definitely have been elaborated in a lot more detail than has been done.

The shortcomings of the paper notwithstanding, Tade Akin Aina's paper on globalization is an interesting work which provides a critical appraisal of the whole globalization debate. His attempt to *deglorify* globalization may be an ambitious undertaking but his theoretical frame convinces the reader that he is very likely able to do so.

It therefore remains to be seen whether in fact he can demonstrate his perception of globalization as a predominantly pervasive or negative process in relation to social policy.

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**The Tanzanian Peasantry: Further Studies**, edited by Peter G Forster and Sam Maghimbi, Avebury, Aldershot, England (1995), ISBN 1-85628-493-X, 329 pp inc index. Price: N/K.

Many studies have been carried out on Tanzania, focused on the need for rural development with a view to alleviation of poverty and the concomitant precarious conditions of existence. The context in which these studies took place was greatly influenced by the policies of Julius Nyerere, a leader who anticipated a large-scale transformation of society, by the creation of *ujamaa* villages.

In this collection of essays, the contributors take note of Tanzania's transition phase when its leadership flirted with the Bretton Woods institutions, a period which was characterised by conflict with them and eventually, the capitulation. Not only did this result in a change of leadership, but also an acceptance of economic "liberalisation" in the context of "structural adjustment."

Such changes it is argued, were not dealt with in the contributions to the first