Interdependence Of Population Growth And Economic Development

Question One

A) Demographic transition is the phasing-out process whereby population growth rates goes from a stable or slow growing population as a result of high birth rates and low death rate, to a stage characterized by modernization associated with better public health delivery, incomes and healthier diets among others along with a significant reduction in mortality rates and thus increased life expectancy and to a final stage where the influences of modernization and development caused a decline in fertility levels along with lower death rates consequently no population growth.

B) Hidden Momentum of Population Growth is a phenomenon whereby population continues to rise even after substantial fall in birth rates due to a large existing youthful population expanding the populations base of potential parents. Many developing countries especially those in sub-Saharan Africa experience this phenomenon as they have a large youthful population. This however exists as high birth rates cannot be altered overnight due to social, economic and institutional factors that prejudiced fertility for decades and cannot disappear by the influence of national leaders.

C) Youth dependency refers to the number of the young people under the age of 15 that solely rely on the working population aged 16 to 64 for support in a country. This phenomenon is usually calculated as a ratio that is the proportion of the youth to the working population in a country. Populations that have a large youth base relative to the working population are said to have a high youth dependency ratio.

D) The Malthusian population trap or the low-level equilibrium population trap was proposed by Reverend Thomas Malthus to explain the relationship between population growth and economic development. Malthus proposed that based on the law of diminishing marginal returns , the rate of population increase was bound to stop as land and food supplies which are essential to sustain life could only grow at an arithmetic rate and would be insufficient to cater for an increasing population growing at a geometric rate doubling every 30 to 40 years.

Question Two

Population growth and economic development for several years has been widely discussed among development economists who have had diverse opinions on whether population influences development or not. The famous economist Reverend Thomas Malthus argued that population growth would depress living standards in the long run. He put forward a theory which simply stated “given the fixed nature of quantity of land, if population were to grow rapidly, the amount of food produced would not be enough to cater for the consumption needs of the increasing population, ultimately resulting disease, starvation and war. Many development economists today see his indispensable insight into the peril of population growth to development as influential and informative to international development policy agendas. The

subsequent discussion summarizes four main arguments in favor of the opinion that population growth is an immense obstacle to development in developing countries.

i) The population poverty cycle and the need for family planning.

The population-poverty cycle theory is one of the main arguments put forward by economists which explains the gravity of the negative consequences that go with a rapid population increase and should be treated a real concern for developing countries. Population growth rate is believed to deprive the existing population of a better life as well as reduce savings at the national level which in turn is likely to put more strain on the existing social, economic and psychological problems of the economy. Consequently, posing a serious problem to the governments as the limited revenue reserves are going to be drained simply to provide economic, health and social services to cater for the additional increase in the population. Consequently, reducing the prospects of the country to provide any improvement in the level of living of the existing generation and helps transmit poverty to future generations of low-income families thus slowing down development in many years to come. Thus, in order to enhance development in an economy the population should be sensitized on the need of family planning to reduce numbers in the future.

ii) Extremists argue that population is the primary cause of global crises.

Activists view population as a problem causing all the world economic and social crises. Todaro and Smith claims that, the level of population growth if unrestrained can be seen as a major crises facing mankind today, he sees it as the principal cause of poverty, low levels of living, malnutrition, ill-health, environmental degradation and a wide array of other social problems. Afzal (2009), gives an example of Pakistan, attributing the serious environmental problems faced by the country to rapid population growth. He says the attempt to cater for the increasing population has put immense pressure on the country's natural resource base and have significantly increased levels of pollution. This rapid expansion in population led to increases in levels of industrial waste, water pollution, solid waste, and vehicle emissions that resulted in serious health problems in various areas of the country. The country valued the environmental costs in Pakistan and estimated the environmental damage at $1 billion to $2.1 billion per year, or 2.6 to 5.0 percent of GDP in 1992 values. These are quiet large figures and it is evident if these resources where channeled into more productive ventures aimed at the development of the economy it would have gone a long way to develop the country.

iii) Quality education is a very important factor in the attainment of development.

Developing countries rely very much on human capital for production of goods and service which is obtained from the population. Thus, it is seen prudent for an economy to have a well-educated populace to ensure a constant supply of human capital. However, the rapid population growth over the years implies that, despite investments there may have been to increase the quality of education, a large proportion of the population will still be denied access to quality education. In most developing countries, larger family sizes and low incomes result in restricted opportunities of parents to properly educate all their children. For example, in some rural and even a few urban parts of Ghana , is it common for parents to educate the sons as compared to daughters in attempt to secure their future in their old age and for the few population of girls that

can attend school, are more likely to drop out to be able to take care of their younger siblings. Thus, with an increase in the size of the population is it is more likely to see a reduction in levels of educational attainment at higher levels. To avoid this, educational expenditures would be spread more thinly to cater for the large number thus, lowering quantity for quality sake. Consequently, the human capital base reduces therefore retarding the growth of the country's economy.

iv) Food insecurity is severed with a rapid increase in population.

It can be argued that an increasing population would make feeding the world's population a very difficult one. Studies according to Population Action international, show that, even though enough food exists for all the worlds people, almost one in seven people around the world are chronically hungry, lacking enough food to lead healthy and active lives. Sub-Saharan Africa hold the highest population growth rate in the world as well as the largest proportion of people without food security. The Food and Agriculture organization projects that by 2050, population and economic growth will result in the doubling of demand for food globally. If this increase is not matched with an introduction of new methods of food production, it calls for serious problems in the feeding as well as the wellbeing of the population. In the face of these issues, it becomes paramount for the economies of these developing countries to find ways to be able to cater for the food needs of its increasing population. In so doing, they may resort to imports of food to feed the people which creates a negative balance of payment and in much extreme cases, more strain would be put on limited lands and water supply as well as the destruction of forest lands with the aim of expanding the land or the overexploitation of already exiting lands. In an economy's strive to develop all these draw back any progresses made thus it is paramount for an economy to be able to regulate the population growth through family planning or population policy agendas in order to regulate the population growth in line with the capacity of the economy to accommodate a number of persons in the country. This is necessary for any developing country to attain development status.

To sum up, tackling economic development alongside rapid population growth has been a challenge for many countries such as China, India, Pakistan and Ghana just to name a few. Through all their attempts to tackle the negative aspects of underdevelopment it is inevitable that the main problem peeps form the ever-growing numbers of the population. However, solutions such as the use of strong reproductive and family health planning and population control policies which have been used and have worked in different countries such as China, it is evident that for economic development to occur there must be a decline in the population numbers.

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