

TRANSPORT: A CATALYST FOR SOCIO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

R MWANYEPEDZA

Department of Economics and Business Management
University of Fort Hare
Tel: 084 691 0468: E-mail: mwanyeps@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

South Africa is one of the nation in Southern Africa with virtuous transport system as compared to most nations in the region. The refurbishment of road, rail, water and air transport has enhanced standards of living of most citizens. Even though transport industry has created employment and increased trade between South Africa and other nations worldwide, it has caused high levels of poverty since logistics costs constitute 45% of household income. This has resulted in high levels of inequality between high and lower income earners. The transport industry is characterized by high levels of road accidents which has claimed more than 4500 lives in 2014-2015 period. The socio economic status of South Africa characterized by high levels of gender and income inequality and poor educational standards especially in rural areas. However through the provision of free public ambulances and public scholar transport, equal opportunities for rural and urban scholars and settlers who travel long distances to school are and hospitals are created. Reduction in automobile dependency can lessens the threat transport industry is exerting on the environment, promoting non-motorized services which reduces congestion and rural infrastructural development through the construction of bridges and tared road to stimulate economic accomplishments in rural areas can improve the eminence of natural life of societies.

1. INTRODUCTION

This assignment seek to highlight the importance of transport industry in enlightening the quality of lives of people staying in rural and urban areas of Southern Africa and the speed at which socio economic objectives of poverty, inequality, gender disparity, excellent health services and effective educational system can be achieved given an efficient and effective transport industry. It also attempts to find out development opportunities that are available to solve the challenges of poor transport communication network both in rural and urban, environmental sustainability and the threat of transport upon human health. The aim being to provide sustainable, affordable, safe, clean transport services for all.

Development can be defined as a systematic way of improving societal standards of living placing more emphasis on three main components which are sustenance, self-esteem and freedom (Todaro and Smith, 2012). He further elaborated that the

concept of sustenance promotes the ability of individuals and households to meet basic necessities like health, education and the extermination of deficiency and starvation. Smith and Todaro (2012) progressed to accentuate on the need for self-esteem as individuals, giving affirmative valuation on what they do. The last concept of development is freedom, without freedom to choose, of speech and redress the quality of life of many people will be low. This essay focus on the relationship between the transport industry and socio economic development and how the industry speed up the rate at which socio economic developmental objectives are accomplished. Possible solutions are identified in relation to the state of the South African socio economic status.

2. THE IMPACT OF TRANSPORT ON SOCIO ECONOMIC GROWTH

2.1 Poverty and Inequality

According to World Bank (2013), the level of poverty in South Africa stood at 57.2% in 2006, 53.8%, 2009 and 45.8%, 2011. Of which they spent 45% of their incomes on public transport (Whitehead, 2011). This shows that the transport industry in South Africa contributes to extreme levels of poverty and inequality since its public transport cost is far beyond internationally recommended charges of 5% to 10%. Therefore the transport industry becomes an obstacle to development since it is encumbering the prospects of endurance economic ingenuities.

2.2 Employment and Trade

The improvement of South Africa marine and ports system increased trade between South Africa and other nation worldwide (Rossouw, et al., n.d). Statistics from the aviation sector has proved that in 2011 the department contributed ZAR50.9billion (2.1%) of the gross domestic product, 227 000 people were employed and contributed 6 billion to public finance (tax) (Oxford Economics, 2011). Therefore the transport industry has impacted lives of many citizens through economic growth (Liu, 2009). This has shown that they is a positive affiliation between conveyance investment and commercial reimbursements.

2.3 Education

The quality of education has become an area of concern in South Africa after its poor performance in mathematics and science subjects and the overall quality of education (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In most institutions these two subjects usually starts the day. However the author of this paper argues that lateness and tiredness are some of the causes since long distances are travelled to school especially in rural areas. This is proved by poor performance in matric pass rate in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal. in Availability of suitable transport for scholars plays an important role both in urban and rural areas to make the long distances short and eliminate tiredness of walking long distances to school (Gollins and Rodgeron, 2014).

The provision of transport to the education sector promotes gender equality since the burden of traveling long distances without a suitable means of transport affects female scholars in most areas. It also reduces the disparity between the rich and the poor since they are given equal opportunities to acquire education.

2.4 Road Accidents

Brits & Antony (2010), specified that there are high rates of accidents, unsafe and unaffordable means of transport in most towns and cities. Peters (2015) maintained that road accidents has claimed 4500 lives of 5500 in 2014 to 2015. 80% of these people are from the age of 19 to 34years. 76% of people dying are blacks while whites account only 8%. The minister further explained that these accidents occur during the weekend. The causes of accidents are over speeding and alcohol. This shows that the transport industry is important in improving life expectancy of South Africans and reducing the dependency ratio since the economically active are the one perishing in road accidents. This results in limited labour force and unavailability of labour turn out to be an obstacle to growth.

3. SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa is characterized by extraordinary intensities of unemployment, countries such as Zimbabwe with unemployment rates standing at 95% and the lowest being Botswana with 7.5% in (2007) while South Africa standing on an average of 25,2% (Sadc, 2013). This shows that there are very high levels of poverty in Southern Africa. This has been buttressed by the fact that half of the population spent less than a dollar per day (Sadc, 2013). Gender inequality in the region is still problematic, in some countries women are not fully empowered so that they can participate in economic activities. Only Tanzania has going as far as 86% of women and 93% of men are fully participating in economic activities. Due to climate change a lot of natural disasters like droughts and floods are still persisting in Southern Africa. However the transport industry has a role to play in eradication high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment in region.

4. THE STATE OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Poverty and Inequality

South Africa is one of the best country in Southern Africa with good transport network which even compete in global markets but still have very high logistics cost that constitute about 45% of household income (Whitehead, 2011). This has resulted in high levels of inequality which stood at 0.72 in 2006, 0.70 in 2009 and 0.69 in 2011 (World Bank, 2013) in the distribution of income. This proves that they is a larger disparity between high income earners and low income earners. Due to high transport costs it becomes expensive to seek for jobs especially to rural settlers who seeks jobs in towns and cities (Liu, 2009). This has contributed to high rate of unemployment in the country that stood at 25.2% in 2013 (World Bank, 2013).

4.2 Rural and Urban Disparities

There is high levels of inequality between rural and urban settlers (Sahn and Stifel, 2002). Poor transport infrastructure like roads and bridges causes settlers to face difficulties in accessing education, health and employment since more economic activities are done in urban areas where they is good transport communication network than in rural areas. So lack of infrastructure in remote areas is posing a bigger threat upon population living in rural areas. The following development opportunities in the transport industry can insist in achieving socioeconomic objectives of eradicating poverty, inequality and excellent education and health services.

5. POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS THAT IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

5.1 Development opportunities in rural areas

Transport development in rural areas does only need implementation of strategies without carrying needs analysis (Cambridge Systematics, 2008). Mueller (2007) also maintained that identifying the transport needs in a particular community enables the government to design the most important project that will assist in improving the standards of living. Needs analysis plays an important role because different rural communities have different resource endowments, therefore understanding of the areas potential yields better results (Havengwa and Jan, 2014). When establishing solutions for rural infrastructure development, they is need to consider the upgrading of all means of transport that are used in rural areas because improving rural transport services does not necessarily mean that all means of transport should be motorised (Havengwa and Jan, 2014). So improving footpath that links one village to another village, tracks, bridges, feeder roads that connects one district to another and trails can improve the standard of living since trade will trade will be well facilitated in rural areas and they will be excellent links between villages and districts.

5.2 Provision of public ambulances

The unavailability of efficient and effective transport communication network has imposed threats on health development in rural areas in South Africa (Hall and Robert, 2006). Poor gravel roads, long distance to bus terminuses, taking longer time waiting for the transport which is usually expensive as compared to urban rates as per kilometers travelled has increased child and maternal mortality rate, the number of people dying due to unavailability of effective modes of transporting them for medication (Flourie and Yollanda, 2007). The efficient toll free ambulances will increase the life expectance of people.

5.3 Reduction in auto mobile dependence

The provisions of electrified power trains which links one city to city and construction of infrastructure which facilitates the strategy enables passengers to shift from using automobiles to electrified trains. Since the trains will be efficient than road transport, consumers move to an alternative. This process will reduce problems associated

with congestion, green house emission, release of carbon monoxide, methane gases and depletion of non-renewable resources that are used in processing fuel which causes spillover effects upon the environment. Promoting the use of lower emission devices at a larger scale like fuel cells, light weight batteries which promotes the use of electrified motors and actuators must be practical so that so that sustainability is attained (Mitchel, et al., 2011).

5.4 Provision of non-motorist services

The provision of facilities that are favorable for non-motorized devices like cyclists and pedestrian infrastructure reduces congestion. This can be further reinforced by imposing laws which encouraging people to cycle or, not driving within a specifies distance for example no one is allowed to drive for distance less that 5kms, re amendment of high way codes to favour more cyclist and pedestrians also reduces the likelihood of diseases such as obesity heart diseases, weight gain and diabetes. This reduces the threat transport is imposing on healthy.

5.5 Provision of public scholar transport

Most children are being hindered to get their right to education due to distance travelled. Females are mostly affected, this fact continue to worsen the gender disparity. However the provision of public transport in rural and urban areas plays a very important role in in promoting equality and sustainable educational sector. Public transport in rural areas will enable every student to acquire education without any compromising of distance travelled, this will eliminate the disparity between gender hence creating equal opportunities

6. CONCLUSION

Transport can reduce levels of inequality between gender and small elite groups with different incomes, due to scholar transport everyone is able to go to school despite of distance travelled, businesses are able to collect raw materials, excess markets and distribute goods hence employment will be creation. In order for the communities to continue benefiting from the transport industry they must be development opportunities in rural areas and the provision of rural transport delivery. This improves rural standards of living and reduces the problems of women being a means of transport to fetch water and firewood. The provision of public ambulances, reduction on automobile dependency, promoting the use of lower emulsion devices and provision of non-motorized services provides sustainability upon healthy and environment.

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