

Revision Notes

Measuring development

The countries of the world all exhibit different levels of development. There are many subtle indicators to measure a country's overall level of development, and the factors which affect it may be economic, social, cultural or technical.

Measuring development

Studying development is essentially about measuring how developed one country is compared to other countries, or to the same country in the past. There are many different ways of considering development, but the two most important are economic development and human development.

Economic development is a measure of how wealthy a country is - and of how this wealth is generated (for example agriculture is considered less economically advanced than banking). Human development measures the extent to which people have access to wealth, jobs, knowledge, nutrition, health, leisure and safety - as well as political and cultural freedom. The more material elements in this list, such as wealth and nutrition, are often grouped together under the heading standard of living. The less material elements, such as health and leisure, are often referred to as quality of life.

Development indicators

There is no simple, single way to calculate the level of development of a country, region, or people, because countries and economies, cultures and peoples differ so much. Instead geographers use a series of development indicators to help them judge a country's level of development. For example:

Health. Do all the people in a country have access to medical care? What level of healthcare is available - basic or advanced? Is it free or paid for? Industry. What type of industry predominates? LEDCs tend to focus more on primary industries, such as farming, fishing and mining. MEDCs focus on secondary industries, such as manufacturing. The most advanced countries tend to focus more on tertiary industries - services businesses, such as banking and information technology. Education. Do all the people in a country have access to education? Is it free? What level of education is available (ie primary education, secondary education or further/higher education)?

The slideshow below shows examples of these indicators. For each one, ask yourself whether it is an economic or a human development indicator

Manila

The city of Manila in the Philippines has attained high levels of development by focusing resources on educating people to work in its high-tech industries.

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Computers in a school

The education system in a country is a good measure of its development. The population of a developed nation will have a high level of literacy, numeracy and computer skills.

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