

OBREAL

PAU Pan African
University



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITES AFRICAINES
اتحاد الجامعات الأفريقية



FIRST CONFERENCE ON LEVERAGING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INTEGRATION

7-8 April 2025
Yaoundé, Cameroon

ABSTRACTS

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance
and Accreditation in Africa
HAQAA3

Global
Gateway



African
Union



Generalitat de Catalunya
Government of Catalonia

L'innovation par l'éducation est-elle nécessaire à la mise en oeuvre de la ZLECAf ? Une étude de cas des pays de la CEDEAO

Youssifou AGUORIGOH

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the effect of innovation captured by higher education on the trade potential of ECOWAS countries in the dynamics of the AfCFTA. To achieve our goals, we use the gravity model estimated by *reghdfe* and *ppmlhdfe* estimators. To test the robustness of our results, we use alternative estimators. First, we estimate the model with TOBIT, which takes into account the limited nature of the dependent variable, *NEGBIN*, which takes into account the super dispersion of the data, and the two variants of zero inflate (*ZIP*, *ZINB*), which take into account the high prevalence of zero. We found four (04) key results: (i) the AfCFTA has a positive and significant effect at the 1% threshold on trade in value terms and diversification. (ii) there is an initial unexploited trade potential for individual ECOWAS countries of between 20% and 86% in terms of trade volumes and between 24% and 64% in terms of the number of products. (iii) the initial unexploited trade potential increases in 8 countries when focusing on innovative products and decreases in the other countries. (iv) Notwithstanding these previous results, the number of countries in which trade is created has fallen considerably for all ECOWAS countries, from 7% to 42% for trade by value and from 29% to 62% for trade by number of products. These results call to increased funding for research and development and higher education to ensure that the potential effects of the AfCFTA are significantly perceptible and inclusive.

Economic Impacts of Higher Education Integration on Member States of the AfCFTA

Ibrahim Musa AKANBI, Yusuf SULEIMAN & Yusuf Olasunkanmi IBRAHIM

A key component of the revolutionary process is higher education, which is why the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a noteworthy step towards economic integration throughout the continent. In order to provide a thorough analysis, this study uses a mixed methods approach to investigate the economic effects of higher education integration on member states under the AfCFTA. The study aims to grasp the complex relationship between higher education integration and employment, innovation, and economic development in all AfCFTA member states by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study's quantitative component entails an econometric analysis of secondary data sourced from multiple databases such as the African Union, UNESCO, and World Bank. To find correlations and causal relationships between the integration of higher education and economic outcomes, key indicators are analysed, including GDP growth, employment rates, and research and development expenditure. In order to collect quantitative information on the perceived economic advantages and difficulties of higher education integration, surveys are also carried out with stakeholders from higher education institutions, governmental bodies, and private sector businesses. The qualitative component consists of in-depth interviews and focus groups with important informants, such as students, academic leaders, industry experts, and policymakers. Through these interviews, we hope to gain more detailed understanding of the precise processes by which the integration of higher education under the AfCFTA affects economic growth. We go into great detail on subjects like international cooperation, the mobility of skilled professionals and academics, and matching educational curricula to industry demands. Findings of the quantitative analysis show that economic performance and higher education integration are positively correlated, with significant economic benefits accruing to nations with higher levels of academic collaboration and mobility.

The qualitative information highlights the role of higher education in encouraging innovation, improving workforce skills, and boosting regional competitiveness while also clarifying the channels through which these benefits are realized. The challenges that have been identified are the differences in infrastructure and educational quality between member states, bureaucratic obstacles to mobility, and the requirement for standardized accreditation systems. Policy interventions that can maximize the economic benefits of higher education integration under the AfCFTA are recommended in order to address these issues. This study adds to the body of knowledge by offering rich qualitative insights and empirical support for the economic effects of integrating higher education into the AfCFTA framework. A thorough and comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics at work is ensured by the mixed methods approach, which provides insightful advice to stakeholders, educators, and policymakers who are dedicated to using higher education as a catalyst for economic development in Africa.

Rethinking Legal Education: Changing African Markets and Integrative Pedagogy

Damilola AWOTULA

Legal education in Africa is largely jurisdictionally constrained and maintains pedagogical orthodoxies despite increasing push for economic liberalization. Without any doubt, economic integration programs do disrupt trade and services praxis, including the legal market. More also, emerging technologies and multinational technology corporations continue to introduce complex legal realities that cross multiple borders in Africa. Legal transnationalism in Africa is becoming increasingly visible, and rigid spatial legal regulations would gradually become docile. Integrating economies and mobility in Africa will therefore implicate current bordered legal traditions, with effects that transcend national borders. As envisaged by the AfCFTA, legal systems are expected to interlock and necessitate cross border legal practice. This paper argues that forging legal professionals who will be able to provide effective cross border legal services require nuanced reforms that go far beyond current practices of merely removing procedural barriers like the right of establishment. Rather, emphasis must be equally placed on pedagogical reforms that target harmonisations of legal thoughts and traditions; to wit, recourse to comparative and transsystemic pedagogies.

When Brains Move: Leveraging the AfCFTA to boost African human capital through enhanced student and academic mobility

Amanda BISONG and Pierre SAUVE

The enhancement of African human capital is crucial for the continent's economic development and integration. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents a significant opportunity to enhance African human capital through improved student and academic mobility. This paper explores strategic initiatives to boost human capital by leveraging the AfCFTA framework by promoting educational exchanges and knowledge sharing across the continent. The paper argues that given the availability of human capital on the continent, upskilling is critical in ensuring that this capital can be of benefit to the continent and better harnessed through the AfCFTA. Such upskilling can be achieved through the enhanced mobility of students, academics and researchers, leading to the increased supply of skills on the continent. The paper first inventories what exists in regional and continental policy documents regarding skills mobility and the mobility of students and academics. Drawing on a range of regional and global initiatives, the paper explores how promoting intra-African collaboration and mobility among researchers and academics can promote skills mobility on the continent, using the AfCFTA as the driver. The paper identifies key strategies to promote heightened mobility, including by establishing regional education hubs, harmonizing education standards, developing funding mechanisms, enhancing digital infrastructure, and facilitating visa and immigration procedures. By aligning educational mobility initiatives with AfCFTA's goals of economic integration and freer movement of factors of production, African countries can create a conducive environment for knowledge exchange and skill development. This, in turn, will drive innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development across the continent.

Innovation, Regional Integration and International Student Mobility in Africa

*Denis N. YUNI, Chukwunenye
F. EMEREKARAONYE and
Evelyn N. OGBEIDE-OSARTINO*

International student mobility constitutes a significant proportion of global migration not only because prospective students migrate in search of higher quality education, but also as an entry point for the search for greener pasture. However, the prevailing statistics from UNESCO suggests that African students are more interested in emigrating to western economies than within Africa. Literature posits that innovation and regional integration are potential factors to international student mobility. It is partly for this reason that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) promotes the free movement of people so as to enhance intra-regional student mobility. Intra-regional student mobility will improve the revenue of countries that attract more international students and retain human capital for African development. Nevertheless, empirical evidence on the subject is sparse. It is on this premise that this study seeks to understand the extent to which innovation and regional integration, jointly and separately affects international student mobility in Africa. The study adopts the Bayesian OLS with Markov Chain Monte Carlo algorithms to estimate a cross sectional analysis of 34 countries with relative available data. The study finds that, while regional integration significantly and positively affect inbound student mobility, as well as its complementarity with innovation, innovation does not independently affect international student mobility significantly. The study highlights several policy implications that could improve intra-regional student mobility in the region, especially with the enforcement of the AfCFTA.

From Lecture Halls to Continental Trade Halls: Impact of AfCFTA and other African Trade Agreements on Continental Higher Education

Juliana NIJIRIRI

The adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other African Trade Agreements (ATAs) kickstarted the process of economic continental integration. This paper explores the potential impact of these agreements on higher education, particularly how they might reshape the African educational arena to support continental trade and mobility. By enabling the free movement of students, researchers and professionals and mandating the mutual recognition of qualifications, ATAs aim to harmonize educational standards and practices across member states. The paper begins with an outline of the current state of higher education in Africa then proceeds to review how various ATAs are breaking the chain of fragmentation in African higher education. The author then precedes to presents a case study of the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and European higher education integration. Drawing from the European experience with the Bologna Declaration, the paper makes a comparative analysis to identify lessons that could be applicable to Africa's higher education integration efforts. The Bologna Process successfully created a more cohesive European Higher Education Area, enhancing student mobility and employability while addressing the challenges of diverse national educational systems. Ultimately, the paper argues that while Africa faces significant hurdles in integrating its higher education systems, the alignment of educational and economic goals under AfCFTA and other ATAs presents a promising avenue for fostering a more unified and competitive continent.

Opportunities and Challenges of African Continent Free Trade Area: Role of Universities in Enhancing Sustainability

Dr. Wycliffe Misuko NYARIBO

Globally many countries are breaking down trade barriers and embarking in creating free trade areas. Free trade area creates an environment where countries are able to trade with one another and it has become instrumental in creating a global economy. The African continent is also in the forefront in creating African free trade area (AfCFTA). Free trade area create immense opportunities for the countries that involved and it is regarded as one the way of enhancing economic development. However, there are surmountable challenges that can be experienced in creating free trade area. This paper explores the opportunities and challenges of African continent free trade area. Further the article delves the role of Universities or higher education institutions to mitigate the challenges. This paper will provide thought provoking ideas for those involved in implementing AfCFTA on the role that universities can undertake in order to achieve agenda 2063 for the African continent. Additionally, it will provide a foundation for further research.

Leveraging Quality Assurance Tools to Build Resilient and Inclusive Higher Education Systems in Africa: A Case Study of Covenant University

Olubanke O. OGULANDA, Joseph O. KEHINDE, Foluke O. JEGEDE, Francis B. ELEHINAFE, Adefunke F. OYINLOYE, Priscilla O. AJAYI, Ladunsi LANIPEKUN, Casey EPHRAIM, Oluwaseun F. AMULEYA, Ahzegbobor P. AIZEBEOKHAI, Emmanuel O. AMOO, Samuel E. SANNI, Isaac I. AKINWUMI, Asotie C. OMONHINMIN, Akan B. WILLIAMS, Regina A. TOBI-DAVID, Olujide A. ADEKEYE, Abiodun H. ADEBAYO

The advancement of African resilient education systems is crucial for ensuring continuous, inclusive, and quality lifelong learning. This study examines how Covenant University (Covenant) leverages quality assurance (QA) tools to build a resilient and inclusive higher education system. The Covenant Quality Assurance and Academic Standards Committee (QAASC) was established using a bottom-up approach, engaging key stakeholders such as students, staff, and faculty to develop robust and adaptive processes. Key QA instruments, such as graduate exit surveys, student evaluations of courses and course lecturers, faculty surveys, lecture attendance monitoring, and exam conduct assessments, provide critical feedback that informs strategic decision-making, enhances student/faculty engagement and fosters inclusivity. Results revealed an increase in student satisfaction rates from 86% to 88% in the pedagogical skills of lecturers and from 88% to 90% in clarity and quality of learning materials between the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions. Faculty satisfaction levels also improved in areas such as campus infrastructure and programme engagement, although concerns persist regarding promotion processes and welfare provisions. This study highlights the transformative role of QA instruments in fostering resilience and inclusivity in higher education. It offers actionable insights for African institutions seeking to enhance educational quality and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable quality education. The findings contribute to broader efforts in advancing institutional frameworks that support lifelong learning and systemic improvement across the continent.

The Role of AfCFTA and Other African RTAs in Advancing Higher Education Integration in Africa by Adopting the Erasmus Model of EU

Prof. Michael C. OGWEZZY, PhD

This paper wishes to discuss how student's mobility and cooperation in higher education will have a strong influence in shaping the landscape of higher education in Africa. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) and its protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment though not yet in force will be pivotal in achieving such initiative. Accordingly, the strategy for achieving this will among other things include the process of standardizing higher education in Africa by creating an African Continental Education Area (AfCEA) through a protocol to agreement to AfCFTA. This is intended to remove barriers to learning and improve access to quality education for all which will engender collaboration between member states of the African Union and stakeholders to build a more resilient and inclusive national education system that will accommodate students from different countries in Africa studying at higher degree levels in another African country. The paper argues that AfCEA will have to strengthen its international cooperation with countries and regions around the continent and world to promote Africa as a partner in higher education. This requires that Regional Trade Areas (RTAs) such as the SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS and EAC will be involved in the modification of their programmes to bring some level of uniformity in course structures and introduce African languages in most university courses to aid adaption in regional education mobility and employment within African countries. This paper concludes that, this is achievable using the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programme among European Union (EU) Countries.

Developing Policy Framework for Higher Education Integration to Support AfCFTA's Objectives

Dr. Yusuf SULEIMAN, Dr. Weade KOBBAH-BOLEY, Dr. Waheed OLANIPEKUN & Ike MAKIWA

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to create a single market for goods and services across Africa, fostering economic growth, industrialization, and sustainable development. However, the achievement of AfCFTA's objectives is significantly hindered by the fragmentation and disparities in higher education systems across the continent. While higher education institutions (HEIs) are pivotal in developing the human capital, research capabilities, and innovation necessary for economic integration, the lack of coherent and harmonized policy frameworks poses a substantial barrier to effective higher education integration. Currently, African countries exhibit diverse educational policies, accreditation standards, and quality assurance mechanisms. These variations impede the mobility of students and faculty, restrict cross-border academic collaborations, and limit the recognition of qualifications across borders. Consequently, the potential of higher education to contribute to economic development and trade facilitation under AfCFTA remains underutilized. Additionally, inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and limited government support further exacerbate the challenges faced by HEIs in fostering integration. This mixed-methods study explores the development of policy framework to support higher education integration in alignment with AfCFTA's goals. The study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain comprehensive insights into existing policy structure and identify strategic areas for policy enhancement. Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys administered to a diverse group of stakeholders, including policymakers, academic leaders, and industry representatives across selected African nations (Nigeria, Liberia, Gambia, and Botswana). These surveys evaluated perceptions of current policy effectiveness, integration levels, and the impact on AfCFTA objectives. Statistical analyses, including descriptive and inferential techniques, were conducted to identify key trends and correlations.

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 29 key participants, such as university administrators, government officials, and trade experts. Thematic analysis was used to extract in-depth insights into the challenges and opportunities in developing cohesive higher education policies. These qualitative findings provided a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved and highlighted successful case studies of policy integration. The study's results indicate significant efforts towards higher education integration, yet substantial gaps remain in policy coherence and implementation. Challenges identified include disparities in national education policies, insufficient funding, and limited cross-border academic collaboration. However, successful instances of integrated policy frameworks demonstrate the potential for higher education institutions to drive economic development and trade facilitation under AfCFTA. Based on these findings, the study proposes a set of policy recommendations to enhance higher education integration. These include harmonizing accreditation and quality assurance standards, increasing investment in higher education infrastructure, and promoting greater collaboration between universities, governments, and the private sector. By perusing these policy gaps, higher education can significantly contribute to the economic benefits envisioned by AfCFTA. This study explains the critical need for coherent and supportive policy frameworks to foster higher education integration in support of AfCFTA. Finally, the mixed-methods approach provide a robust analysis of the current state and future directions for policy development, offering actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to advancing economic integration and development across Africa.

Higher education and regional integration: The case of a regional community of islands in Africa

Assodah TIRVASSEN

This study examines regional integration in higher education, with a particular focus on a community of island states in the Indian Ocean (IOC). The research is informed by the literature on higher education integration and higher education in island states. A general case study approach, utilising document analysis and secondary data, has been adopted. The study looks into the potential for the integration of higher education amongst the Southwest Indian Ocean islands within the purview of The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). This intergovernmental organisation comprises five member states, namely, the Union of Comoros, Reunion Island (A French department), Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. This community of islands faces the issue of low level of trade amongst its members. Higher education is being considered by the economic communities in several regions as a possible catalyst for regional integration. This study explores the possibilities of a harmonized higher education system within the framework of five key areas: policy, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, degree frameworks, and research.

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation in African Higher Education: Examining Regional and Continental Interactions within the SADC Context

Lockias CHITANANA (PhD)

This paper examines the ongoing harmonisation efforts within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to enhance academic mobility, institutional credibility, and global competitiveness in African higher education. It explores SADC's alignment with continental initiatives, particularly the African Union's Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) initiative. By analysing policies, conducting stakeholder interviews, and reviewing existing literature, this study evaluates key accomplishments, such as developing common accreditation criteria and promoting mutual recognition of qualifications and persistent challenges, including system disparities, resource variation, and political complexities. Emphasis is placed on opportunities to enhance coherence between regional and continental initiatives through capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and sustained political commitment. Additionally, the paper considers how regional trade frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) support workforce mobility and economic development. The findings underscore the importance of coordinated quality assurance networks and highlight the need for continued alignment between regional and continental efforts to foster a resilient, competitive African higher education system.

African Free Trade and Higher Education: A Two-Way Street

Wail BENJELLOUN

In 2021, only 15% of African exports were intra-continental, compared with 60% for Asia and 67% for Europe (not including informal trans-border trade which in some cases is considerable). AfCFTA therefore represents an opportunity to improve continental integration through trade. Its implementation will require complex negotiations, within the framework of the overall objectives of the Agreement. These specific fine-tuning measures are necessary to deal with the economic imbalances that exist between partner countries, and to protect nascent industries. African countries will need to develop expertise in several areas, along with the establishment of reliable mechanisms for data collection and treatment. Although not mentioned directly in the initial Agreement, vocational and higher education must thus be considered as priority areas, essential to the success of AfCFTA. The Agreement will, in turn, favor the exchange of students, faculty and staff through intra-African mobility (the protocol on free movement of persons is under consideration). It creates the conditions for cross-border collaborations, including jointly funded universities and research and innovation centers to enable the continent-wide flow of knowledge, contributing to African HE integration. Other initiatives such as the education Free Trade Zone (FTZ) planned in Nigeria by the University of Abuja will be discussed. These measures will additionally contribute to building the trust and common values necessary for African academic and economic integration in the spirit of Agenda 2063.

Advancing Higher Education Integration Through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Reflections from the East African Community (EAC)

Michael Mwareri WANGAI

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an innovative initiative aimed at fostering economic integration across Africa. Recognized as one of the continent's most ambitious projects, its primary focus has been on economic cooperation and trade liberalization. However, this paper shifts the focus to the broader potential of AfCFTA, particularly its role in enhancing the integration of higher education systems across African nations. By examining current literature, policy frameworks, and regional initiatives, this paper explores how AfCFTA can improve student and academic mobility, encourage cross-border academic collaborations, and standardize educational frameworks throughout Africa. Despite these opportunities, the realization of such goals faces several challenges, including infrastructural disparities, regulatory fragmentation, and insufficient political commitment. The African Union's Agenda 2063, along with regional initiatives, presents a roadmap for overcoming these challenges and leveraging AfCFTA to improve higher education. The Pan African Quality Assurance Framework, central to this effort, includes the Harmonization, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation in Africa (HAQAA) initiative, which has been crucial in advancing regional cooperation. Since the launch of HAQAA 1 in 2015, followed by HAQAA 2 in 2020, and the most recent phase, HAQAA 3 in 2023, significant strides have been made in harmonizing accreditation processes and improving the quality of education. This paper proposes strategic policy recommendations based on the African Union's Agenda 2063 and other regional frameworks to harness the potential of AfCFTA for advancing higher education. By doing so, AfCFTA can contribute to Africa's sustainable development and enhance its global competitiveness, fostering a more integrated and equitable educational landscape across the continent.

Facilitating Collaborative Research and Innovation through Regional Trade Agreements in Higher Education Integration

Sesha NYANGA

This study examines the role of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) in facilitating collaborative research and innovation within African higher education institutions. Through analysis of case studies including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and Pan African University (PAU), the research explores how trade integration frameworks can enhance academic collaboration and knowledge sharing across the continent. While RTAs have traditionally focused on economic integration through tariff reduction and market access, their potential impact on higher education remains underexplored. The study finds that RTAs can serve as effective mechanisms for promoting cross-border educational services, fostering research partnerships, and driving innovation through resource pooling and knowledge transfer. However, several challenges impede successful implementation, including varying institutional capacities, inadequate funding, infrastructure limitations, and lack of cohesive strategies for educational integration. The SADC case demonstrates how regional protocols can facilitate student mobility and qualification recognition, while the AfCFTA presents opportunities for pan-African collaboration despite lacking specific provisions for higher education. The PAU model illustrates successful regional integration through its network of specialized institutes, though it faces persistent challenges in research infrastructure and funding. The study recommends policy harmonization among member states, increased investment in research infrastructure, promotion of interdisciplinary initiatives, development of capacity-building programs, and establishment of monitoring frameworks. These findings contribute to understanding how trade integration mechanisms can be leveraged to advance higher education collaboration and sustainable development across Africa.

The Role of Higher Education in Fostering the Achievement of The AfCFTA's Objectives

Adaeze Agatha ANIODOH

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are crucial in tackling global challenges like environmental, economic, and social issues. They play an important role in shaping future leaders, conducting research, and influencing policies to drive change, especially in promoting sustainability. As sustainability becomes essential for long-term well-being, HEIs can help by including it in their courses, research, and policies. This is particularly important in Africa, which faces challenges like poverty and political instability but also has the potential to lead in sustainable development through innovative solutions. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is a key initiative aimed at improving trade and political stability across Africa, and it could help boost economic resilience. However, its success depends on having the right systems in place. HEIs can support this by conducting research and helping create new economic models that align with the AfCFTA's goals. Education plays a vital role in preparing a skilled workforce for this transition, but it's often overlooked in the agreement's current plans. For the AfCFTA to succeed, there needs to be more focus on education, policy development, and collaboration between all sectors to ensure sustainable growth across Africa.

Building a Unified Geoscience Education in Africa: Leveraging the AfCFTA for a Resource-Rich Future

Uriah Alexander LAR (Ph.D., FNMGS)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a key initiative of Agenda 2063, aims to enhance intra-African trade, strengthen Africa's global position, and drive socio-economic development. This paper explores AfCFTA's potential to unify geoscience education across Africa, recognizing its vital role in addressing challenges like resource management, environmental sustainability, and disaster risk reduction. Currently, geoscience education in Africa is fragmented, with disparities in curricula, resources, and institutional capacities. The study advocates for standardized curricula, regional centers of excellence, and a pan-African accreditation system to ensure quality education and professional mobility. AfCFTA can facilitate staff and student exchanges, fostering knowledge transfer and collaborative research on issues like sustainable mining and geohazard mitigation. A unified curriculum will provide students with essential competencies aligned with industry needs, while regional centers will serve as hubs for advanced research and professional development. A continent-wide accreditation system will enhance the recognition of geoscience qualifications, improving employability and academic mobility. By leveraging AfCFTA, Africa can establish a robust geoscience education framework, addressing disparities and equipping the continent to tackle future challenges, ultimately fostering sustainable development and resilience.

L'innovation propulsée par l'IA : un levier majeur pour le développement économique de l'Afrique

Giuseppe D'ARONCO

L'Afrique est à la croisée des chemins. L'essor de l'intelligence artificielle (IA) offre au continent une opportunité sans précédent de remodeler son avenir économique et social. Loin de se limiter à une avancée technologique, l'IA représente un moteur de transformation capable de résoudre certains des défis les plus pressants de l'Afrique, tels que l'accès à l'éducation, la modernisation de l'agriculture, et l'amélioration des services de santé. Parallèlement, la Zone de Libre-Échange Continentale Africaine (ZLECAf) redéfinit les perspectives économiques du continent. En créant un marché intégré pour 1,3 milliard de personnes, elle ambitionne de transformer la structure des échanges intra-africains et de stimuler la croissance économique. Ensemble, l'IA et la ZLECAf forment une combinaison puissante pour propulser l'Afrique vers une ère de prospérité partagée et de développement durable. Cependant, réaliser ce potentiel nécessite une stratégie coordonnée et des solutions inclusives. L'insuffisance des infrastructures numériques, le manque de compétences spécialisées, et les disparités réglementaires représentent des obstacles majeurs. Ce document explore comment l'Afrique peut tirer parti des synergies entre l'IA et la ZLECAf pour accélérer son développement tout en répondant aux aspirations sociétales de ses citoyens.

AfCFTA, Mutual Recognition of Legal Professional Qualifications and International Human Rights Law: Common Law West Africa as a Case Study Unit

Somadina IBE-OJILUDU, PhD

The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) alludes that it is borne out of the desire to fulfil the aspirations of Agenda 2063 which envisioned an African continental market that boosts of 'free movement of persons, capital, goods and service' which are necessary for a deepened economic integration, among other goals. AfCFTA's vision of a continent of free movement of persons and labour enhance the advancement of higher education integration in Africa. The integration of higher education in Africa entails mutual recognition of qualifications (academic or professional), among other benefits. AfCFTA Agreement provides for not only AfCFTA but also for Protocols on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment, Intellectual Property Rights, and Competition Policy. AfCFTA's Protocol on Trade in Services envisages mutual recognition of professional qualifications by foreclosing any disguise of 'restriction on trade in services' or discriminatory recognition of education, experience, certification or licenses of state parties. With reference to legal practice, lack of mutual recognition of professional qualifications envisaged by AfCFTA is acutely felt in 'Common Law' West Africa. To which extent does this lack of mutual recognition of legal professional qualifications, which impairs the realisation of AfCFTA vision, undermine international human rights law? The paper answers this research question by arguing that the lack has in effect led to the impairment of the rights to fair hearing, freedom of movement, education and adequate standard of living/income.

Fostering Agricultural Innovation through Higher Education: The Role of Regional Trade Agreements in Africa

Olumayowa Joseph IYANDA

This study focuses on how regional trade agreements, especially the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), might promote agricultural innovation in Africa by integrating higher education. Strengthening educational frameworks is essential for sustainable development and food security, given the critical role that agriculture plays in the continent's economy. The study looks at how the AfCFTA makes it easier to standardize agricultural curricula while maintaining high levels of cross-border academic and professional mobility. Regional agreements facilitate the smooth transfer of knowledge and skill development by standardizing the accreditation and quality assurance procedures. The study also emphasizes how cooperative research can help address issues in agriculture like crop diversification, soil degradation, and climate change. It talks about how trade agreements can encourage collaborations between academic institutions and research centers, boosting their ability to do research and encouraging creativity. Additionally highlighted is the incorporation of multidisciplinary abilities into agriculture education, demonstrating how universities may support economic growth by offering creative courses. Successful instances of educational innovation and integration fuelled by trade agreements are demonstrated through case studies from several African nations. In order to generate a qualified workforce, improve research collaboration, and shape the future of agricultural education, the article makes the case that regional trade agreements are crucial. AfCFTA and comparable agreements can promote sustainable agricultural transformation and economic prosperity throughout Africa by tying trade and education policies together.

Internationalisation of Higher Education in Mauritius: Opportunities and Challenges

Boopen SEETANAH & Kiran BHUJUN

This paper delves into the strategies Mauritius has adopted to internationalise its higher education sector, focusing on the interplay of geographic, cultural, and economic advantages. It evaluates the efficacy of key initiatives, examines persisting challenges, and offers actionable recommendations to establish Mauritius as a prominent regional knowledge hub. The internationalisation of Mauritian higher education has been catalysed by strategic policies such as the Mauritius-Africa Scholarship Scheme, which has notably increased the influx of students from across Africa. Concurrently, public-private partnerships have spurred innovation and expanded institutional capacity. Of particular significance is the role of the private sector, which, through its agility and responsiveness to global trends in fields like Medicine, Business, and STEM, has attracted a diverse international cohort. However, the Mauritian higher education sector grapples with challenges, including stagnant enrolment growth, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and stiff competition from established education hubs. Yet, the country's bilingual education system, political stability, and strategic location offer unparalleled potential for fostering regional collaboration and niche academic programmes. Addressing these challenges requires robust investments in quality assurance, infrastructure, and digital education, alongside progressive policy reforms such as streamlined visa processes and enhanced scholarship schemes. With such measures, Mauritius can cement its status as a vibrant knowledge hub and a beacon of regional academic excellence. The paper concludes with an analysis of policy implications and provides recommendations aimed at enhancing the country's position as a leading knowledge hub.

Sustaining AfCFTA Initiative via Cross-Regional Harmonization of Universities' Curricula and Free Movement of Faculties: Case Study of West Africa

*Prof. Adebusuyi Isaac ADENIRAN & Dr. Ruth Abiola
ADIMULA*

Aside from existence of multiple exchange systems and differing border policies, discrepancies in various Universities-based curricula in relevant regional integration connected disciplines have been a major clog of various regional integration plans and initiatives in Africa. For instance, while French speaking African scholars prefer to associate with French speaking out-of-Africa institutions across the globe, English speaking African scholars prefer to associate with English speaking out-of-Africa institutions globally. Though vestiges of colonialism might be implied in this regard, it is absolutely necessary to interrogate why same-lingua franca African scholars have found it herculean to utilize similar Curricula in related subject areas across the continent. Using a mixed-method approach (which combines both quantitative and qualitative sources) and regional sustainability theory, this research interrogates how to build on the opportunities offered by the AfCFTA initiative to facilitate harmonization of curricula in regional integration connected courses – economics, sociology, peace, development and migration studies on one hand. On the other hand, it examines how harmonization of such integration-connected courses could enable sustainability of the AfCFTA initiative in terms of acceptability, and facilitation of a borderless African migratory space for faculties. For the purpose of the research, two countries (Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire) are focused with two universities selected from each of the countries (Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University and University of Ilorin; Cote d'Ivoire: Universite Cocody and Universite Pele Foro Gon Coulibaly). This is essential in order to derive in-country comparative data sources and out-country comparative data sources. All imperative variables as location, language, teaching focus, research focus, type of institution et cetera were factored into the selection process. Preliminary findings from the study have shown that harmonizing identified regional integration-focused curricula at university level could provide the much-needed lifeline to continued relevance of AfCFTA in setting agenda for a 'borderless Africa' whose goal is primarily enablement of free flow of human and businesses across the borders.

L'innovation en tant que secteur clé pour relier l'enseignement supérieur et le développement économique

Atse Kambo MARTIAL

La Côte d'Ivoire occupe la 15ème place au niveau africain et 112ème mondial selon le rapport « Global Innovation Index 2023 : Innovation in the face of uncertainty » de l'Organisation Mondiale de la Propriété Intellectuelle. L'étude mesure les performances des écosystèmes innovants dans 132 pays du monde et met en évidence leurs atouts et faiblesses en se basant sur 80 indicateurs regroupés en 7 piliers. En vue de faire de la R&I un mécanisme de la transformation économique et industrielle, il est impératif de développer un capital humain fort dont la compétence et l'expertise sont alignées aux besoins de développement nationaux et la Côte d'Ivoire consacre 0.34% de PIB à la Recherche. Nous avons vu la réouverture des universités publiques avec pour effet de réhabilitation et nous pensons à ce départ nouveau avec ces coûts exorbitants de ces réhabilitations de ces infrastructures universitaires. De 2016 à 2020, un nouveau Plan national de développement élaboré sans que nous percevions le rôle de l'enseignement supérieur et par ricochet la recherche dans son apport au développement national de la Côte d'Ivoire. La métaphore est que les universités étaient encore fermées avant leur réouverture, la Côte d'Ivoire a eu un chiffre de croissance environ de 7% de 2012 à 2018. Cela nous a tarabudé notre esprit et nous nous demandons pourquoi la recherche ne participe pas grandement au développement national en Côte d'Ivoire de 2012 à 2023 ? L'objectif de cette communication est de comprendre les raisons de ce fossé entre la recherche et les différents Plans Nationaux de Développement (2012-2016 ; 2016-2020 ; 2021-2025) en Côte d'Ivoire. La Côte d'Ivoire a élaboré un plan National de Développement de 2021-2025 en cours et nous avons encore ce problème de l'apport de la recherche dans le développement économique et social du pays. Nous allons faire de la recherche documentaire et des entretiens avec les acteurs de l'enseignement supérieur en Côte d'Ivoire Pour répondre à cette problématique, nous ferons un état des lieux de la recherche en Côte d'Ivoire d'une part en essayant de comprendre les bifurcations entre l'enseignement supérieur et le développement national en Côte d'Ivoire d'autre part.

Culturo-Cyber Theory of Trade

Fred AWAAH

This paper proposes a culturo-cyber theory of trade (CCTT) to demonstrate how the relationship between the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), e-commerce, cybersecurity and indigenous knowledge in entrepreneurship will influence the achievement of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This paper adopted a cultural method of teaching entrepreneurship in line with the aspirations of the CESA, shifting from physical cross-border trade to e-commerce and adapting cybersecurity measures to mitigate the dangers of e-commerce within the AfCFTA. The theory suggests that entrepreneurial intentions amongst Africans, especially students, and subsequent practice can be fostered when cultural teaching methods such as the Culturo-Techno-Contextual Approach (CTCA) are adopted to teach entrepreneurship in African universities, drawing evidence from the rich traditions and values. The theory further suggests that following the glaring challenges of the movement of goods and services within Africa, as reflected in issues of customs and immigration, the AfCFTA can be bolstered by adopting e-commerce, which comes with a myriad of benefits. The framework is novel because it shows how African businesses can employ cybersecurity measures to protect their investments within the AfCFTA. Though it focuses on the Ghanaian context, this theory can be applied in other countries if they use their culture to teach entrepreneurship and adopt e-commerce and its attendant cybersecurity measures as a basis for bolstering trade.

From Standards to Mobility: How Accreditation Shapes International Opportunities

Yuliia BLESHEMUDT & Rebekka WALKER

From Standards to Mobility: How Accreditation Shapes International Opportunities. Global higher education is expanding rapidly, with the number of graduates projected to reach 300 million by 2030, expending innovation and economic growth. The increasing prevalence of joint and multiple degree programmes enhances global mobility, yet challenges remain as not all countries have ratified key agreements like the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Tokyo Convention, which facilitate recognition and cooperation. Beyond quality assurance, international accreditation can serve as a strategic tool to foster trust, harmonize standards, and bridge regulatory gaps between education systems. This paper explores whether the international accreditation may unlock further opportunities for student exchanges, faculty collaboration, and joint research initiatives in an increasingly interconnected global higher education landscape.