

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

By

Juliana Njiriri*

For Submission to

**The First Conference on Leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area
(AfCFTA) for Higher Education Integration**

To be held in

Yaoundé, Cameroon

Between 27th and 28th January 2025

* An advocate of the High Court of Kenya, Lecturer, Chair Person Africa Nazarene University Law School.

ABSTRACT

The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other African Trade Agreements (ATAs) marks a significant step towards economic integration across the continent. This paper explores the potential impact of these agreements on higher education in Africa, particularly how they might reshape the educational landscape to support continental trade and mobility. The provisions under Article 13 of the Protocol establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons and Right of Establishment, and Article 10 of the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services; seal the role of education in fostering a more interconnected and economically vibrant Africa. By enabling the free movement of students, researchers and professionals and mandating the mutual recognition of qualifications, these protocols aim to harmonize educational standards and practices across member states. The paper begins by providing a clear overview of the current state of higher education in Africa, focusing on how national policies have shaped it while, highlighting the significant hurdles to harmonizing higher education across the continent. The author then precedes to presents a case study of the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and European higher education integration. Drawing on the European experience with the Bologna Declaration, this 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. This study also examines the similarities and differences between the European and African contexts, offering suggestions into how Africa might overcome its unique challenges while leveraging opportunities for cross-border collaboration in higher education. 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. The author concludes by making recommendations for policy-makers on how to effectively pursue these ambitious goals such as standardizing education qualifications across the continent.

Keywords: AfCFTA, ATAs, Higher education, Bologna Declaration, Harmonization, mobility.

Abbreviations

AfCFTA – African Continental Free Trade Area

ATA – African Trade Agreements

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

AU – African Union

RECs – Regional Economic Communities

SADC – Southern African Development Community

REC – Regional Economic Community

EAC – East African Community

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

IUCEA – Inter-University Council for East Africa

AU – African Union

UNECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

COMESA – Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In today's highly interconnected and competitive world, education is fundamental to societal advancement, serving as the foundation for innovation, effective governance, thriving businesses and sustainability. As such, education lies at the heart of social, political and economic progress globally. Since African countries gained independence, higher education has played a crucial role in nation-building and addressing the aftermath of colonialism. Through higher education, nations have trained essential professionals: lawyers, doctors, economists, educators and many others who are vital to the nation's development. Therefore, transforming African education systems to equip current and future generations with 21st century skills is essential (Mwabe & Omer, 2024). Following a global summit on Transforming Education convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2022, AU Chairperson Moussa Faki proposed that the AU adopt 2024 as the 'Year of Education.' This proposal was approved during the 36th Ordinary Session in February 2023, with the theme '*Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive, Lifelong, Quality and Relevant Learning in Africa*' (Edutab Africa, 2024; African Union, 2024).

Africa is the youngest continent globally, with over 70% of the population being under the age of 35 years. A significant portion of this demographic falls within the age group for tertiary and higher education. According to a World Bank publication, gross tertiary education enrollment in Sub-Saharan Africa stood at 9.4% in 2021, significantly below the global average of 38% (Gangwar et al., 2021). By 2024, overall enrollment improved slightly to around 11% across the continent, though it remains far below the global average (University World News, 2023). This denotes the need to undertake measures to ensure higher enrolment among them harmonizing higher education to ensure more people are able to join tertiary institutions even if their mother nations do not have the capacity to establish enough institutions.

Currently, control over higher education in Africa remains within the jurisdiction of individual states. As a result, student mobility across the continent depends heavily on national policies, which play a critical role in shaping access and recognition of qualifications. In a recent and notable development, some African countries have openly declared that they will not recognize degrees from certain other African nations. For instance, in 2024, Nigeria announced it would not recognize degrees from the West African countries of Benin and Togo, as well as the East African countries of Kenya and Uganda (Waruru, 2024). Such developments raise important questions about Africa's vision for harmonized integration. How can we anticipate a unified Africa in the field of education if countries continue to reject degrees from fellow states, thereby creating barriers to workforce mobility across the continent?

Higher education integration has long been a complex goal for African nations. A major milestone in the effort to make it realistic, is the Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, adopted in 1981 to encourage regional cooperation through academic mobility for lecturers and students. As of now, the convention has 20 signatories, 19 of which are African nations (UNESCO, 2002). In 2010, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government further advanced this vision by establishing the Pan African University to support the revitalization of higher education and contribute to the African Union's goals (Pan African University, 2024).

Additional frameworks, such as the Protocol establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons and Right of Establishment, and the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services; further strengthen the quest for economic and educational integration across the continent. Articles 13 and 10 respectively of these agreements, emphasize the need for students, researchers and labour mobility, advocating for the mutual recognition of qualifications among member states. Also, the Regional Economic Communities maintain supplementary agreements to enhance mobility within their regions.

Consequently, this paper aims to examine the effects of the AfCFTA and other African Trade Agreements (ATAs) on higher education across the continent. The specific objectives include:

- i. Reviewing the current landscape of higher education in Africa.
- ii. Analyzing the direct impacts of AfCFTA and ATAs on African higher education.
- iii. Conducting a comparative study of higher education integration in Europe, focusing on the Bologna Declaration and potential lessons for Africa.

The study also intends to serve as a blueprint for unifying higher education across Africa while contributing to the existing literature on continental higher education integration.

1.2 Research Methodology

The paper's research methodology applies desktop and library research technique that is interpretive in nature, drawing from peer-reviewed journals, statistics, legal documents, credible news publications and internet sources to provide comprehensive analysis.

1.3 Theoretical Background

This paper is grounded in the theories of Regional Integration and Internalisation.

1.3.1 Regional Integration Theory

Regional Integration Theory seeks to explain why and under which conditions countries or states transfer political authority to regional organizations, as well as how these organizations expand their roles and influence states and societies within their jurisdiction (Schimmelfennig, 2018). The origins of this theory can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s during the European integration process. According to an overview by the World Bank (2024), regional integration helps countries reduce divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, people and ideas. A central argument of the theory is that

these divisions hinder economic growth, particularly in developing countries, by creating barriers to trade and cooperation.

In the context of higher education, this paper argues that regional integration allows countries to complement each other's educational and professional needs. Countries can access labor and resources from neighboring nations to address gaps, facilitating knowledge exchange and cooperation across the region. However, critics of the theory argue that regional integration can limit a country's sovereignty, especially when it comes to determining educational priorities and controlling professional demands. Furthermore, integration may intensify competition among countries, potentially undermining their ability to regulate educational intake and job opportunities (SARPn, 2005). While these concerns are valid, the theory remains essential in understanding how trade agreements can shape the development of education systems and academic mobility in the region.

1.3.2 Internationalization Theory

Knight (2004) defines internationalization as the process by which international and intercultural aspects are integrated into the goals, functions and delivery of educational, research and service activities. In the context of higher education, internationalization refers to incorporating international, intercultural or global elements into the academic mission, curriculum and exchanges (Wikipedia, 2023). Over the past few decades, higher education institutions worldwide have adopted various internationalization strategies to meet the challenges of a competitive global academic market. These strategies aim to enhance visibility, attract skilled researchers and students and promote global cooperation (Tran et al., 2023). Internationalization has increasingly become a significant trend in universities around the world, transforming both educational practices and institutional strategies.

The internationalization of higher education has also attracted growing attention from sectors beyond education, as its goals, operations and impacts are closely aligned with social, cultural, economic and political concerns. Issues such as migration, workforce development, post-study work rights and the economic benefits of international education are now central to discussions on the internationalization of higher education. As Tran et al. (2023) argue, international education has become a key tool to address skills shortages and contribute to national development. This research agrees that by ratifying trade agreements, countries open the door to enhanced international cooperation in education. This not only fosters academic mobility but also facilitates the global development of skills needed in today's competitive workforce.

While internationalization offers opportunities for universities to engage in a broader academic network, critics argue that it can exacerbate inequalities between higher education systems. For instance, wealthier countries with better resources may attract more students and faculty from developing nations, thereby intensifying brain drain and further entrenching continental disparities in educational outcomes. This concern highlights a tension in internationalization policies: while they promote global knowledge exchange, they may also contribute to the unequal distribution of educational benefits.

1.4 Literature review

Historically, universities have included international dimensions in their research, teaching and societal outreach, albeit in ways that were often informal, uncoordinated and implicit rather than systematic or clearly defined. However, by the final decade of the 20th century, factors such as accelerating globalization, regional economic and social integration, the demands of a knowledge-driven economy and the end of the Cold War

created a foundation for a more strategic approach to internationalizing higher education (De Wit, 2020).

Academic mobility is important for the progress of science and the spread of knowledge (Laakso, 2020). Van der Wende (2001) highlights that the increased mobility of scholars and students, institutional branding and a shift from cooperative to competitive approaches became central to the internationalization agenda in higher education. Quantitative data on international degree-seeking students, academic mobility, institutional partnerships and co-authored publications in high-impact journals exemplify this internationalization trend and have actively influenced its direction and priorities (De Wit, 2019; Jones & De Wit, 2014). Much of the existing research on academic mobility focuses on intra-European movement or North America as a destination region (Altbach, 2004). In contrast, studies on African academic mobility often center on the economic aspects of brain drain, particularly the emigration of African scholars or the challenges within African higher education, such as inadequate infrastructure (Oucho, 2008; Teferra, 2000).

The global movement towards expanding intraregional cooperation and harmonizing national systems is gaining momentum. Knight (2024) argues that Africa is now part of this global shift, with the regionalization of higher education accelerating across the continent. Bissoonauth (2021) highlights Africa's significant demographic advantage, with 60% of its population aged 25 years and below, emphasizing the need for substantial investment in education. Lagami (2019) points to the mismatch between available skills and the labor market's needs, which has hindered the continent's development. She further asserts that successful implementation of agreements like the AfCFTA is expected to offer substantial benefits to higher education and facilitate the mobility of professional labor across Africa.

Several scholars agree that the successful implementation of multilateral or bilateral trade agreements between nations impacts higher education. According to Mlambo and Mkhize (2022), unemployment is one of the most pressing issues confronting governments globally. Moore and Ranjan (2005) and Anyanwu (2014) argue that trade agreements increase the demand for skilled labor while reducing the demand for unskilled labor, thereby encouraging more individuals to seek higher education to remain competitive in the job market. Varghese (2008) emphasizes that trade agreements have led to increased student and academic mobility, promoting international trade in higher education services. He attributes this to factors such as lower education costs, improved employment opportunities and more accessible visa policies resulting from countries ratifying trade agreements. Kwaramba (2012) and Trines (2024) further assert that agreements like those within SADC have facilitated student mobility by streamlining visa processes.

However, while African Trade Agreements (ATAs) are expected to positively impact Africa's higher education landscape, some scholars highlight significant barriers to realizing these goals. Heugh (2019) notes that Africa's multilingual nature presents challenges, as many African countries communicate in different languages. Empirical research indicates that migrants often prefer countries where they share a linguistic or cultural connection (Indiana University Press, 2020; Daqiq et al., 2024). Moreover, academic mobility, despite the existence of ATAs, is influenced by factors such as the quality of education and the availability of scholarships. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) argue that while many African countries aim to establish academic connections globally, they often send academics to Western countries in Europe and America. These countries offer more scholarship opportunities, which many African nations do not provide. Consequently, scholars from African countries may be drawn to study or

conduct research in Europe or the U.S., where they can learn about advanced academic systems and benefit from the scientific competence of Western universities.

2 CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The higher education landscape in Africa is marked by diversity, shaped largely by each country's historical context and colonial legacies. Each country has distinct systems, languages of instruction and curricula that reflect unique perspectives. Language diversity is particularly influential in African higher education, as countries tend to adopt languages aligned with their colonial histories; resulting in anglophone, francophone and lusophone educational systems; where English, French and Portuguese are commonly used (Mukama, 2007). This linguistic diversity impacts student and academic mobility, as well as employment opportunities for graduates across Africa. A subregional migration analysis highlights significant patterns related to language: in East Africa, where English predominates, the majority of individuals (52%) migrate within the region. An additional 26.5% relocate southward to other English-speaking areas, whereas minimal migration occurs from East Africa to West Africa, where French is the primary language, with a migration rate of just 0% to this region (Shimeles, 2010). Similarly, 89.5% of West African citizens migrate within their region, with few moving to non-French-speaking areas. These migration patterns suggest that language compatibility plays a crucial role in higher education mobility across Africa, as students and professionals are more likely to relocate to regions with shared languages.

Table 1: Subregional Migration Matrix In Africa

<i>Origin</i>	<i>East Africa</i>	<i>Central Africa</i>	<i>North Africa</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>	<i>West Africa</i>
East Africa	46.6	14.8	12.1	26.5	0
Central Africa	30.2	50.3	5.7	6.5	7.2
North Africa	51.2	26.9	20.4	0	1.5
Southern Africa	34.6	0.1	0	65.3	0
West Africa	3.2	6.6	0.7	0	89.5
Total	26.5	14	6.4	14.6	38.5

Adapted from "Migration Patterns, Trends and Policy Issues in Africa" (Working Paper No. 119), by A. Shimeles, 2010, African Development Bank Group.

Another dominant feature of higher education in Africa is that it is state controlled, with minimal harmonization within the RECs. For instance, the EAC has adopted the East African Qualification Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE), which is overseen by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA). This framework defines the length, structure and learning outcomes of academic degree programs. Furthermore, it establishes a common credit system, known as the East African Credit Accumulation and Transfer (EACAT) system, which specifies minimum credit requirements for benchmark qualifications. The EACAT system is designed to enhance the comparability of academic qualifications, facilitate the transfer of credits between programs and ease the recognition of prior learning across the region (Trines, 2018).

Table 2: EAQFHE qualifications

The East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE)			
QUALIFICATION TYPE		MINIMUM CREDITS REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION	EAQFHE LEVEL
Postgraduate	Doctoral Degree	540	8
	Master's Degree	180	7
	Postgraduate Diploma	120	
	Postgraduate Certificate	60	
Undergraduate	Bachelor's Degree	360	6
	Advanced Diploma	300	
	Graduate Diploma	240	
	Graduate Certificate	120	
Upper Secondary and Post-secondary Education and Training	Diploma	240	5
	Certificate	120	4
Lower Secondary School	-	-	3
Upper Elementary	-	-	2
Lower Elementary	-	-	1

Source: Inter-University Council for East Africa



Adapted from Bologna-type harmonization in Africa: An overview of the common higher education area of the East African Community by S. Trines, 2018, World Education News & Reviews. Retrieved from <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/12/common-higher-education-area-of-the-east-african-community>

According to Trust Africa (2011), the prevailing model in many African countries places the state at the forefront of higher education, overseeing governance frameworks, curriculum development, funding allocation and the establishment of policy priorities, with limited involvement from private sector players. This state-centralized approach results in curricula that are largely focused on meeting each country's specific needs, which restricts the scope of education and limits the opportunities for graduates to explore employment opportunities outside their home country. The curricula, often narrow in scope, fail to adequately prepare students for advancing job markets in other nations. As Smith and Doe (2023) assert, there is a critical need for curriculum reforms to

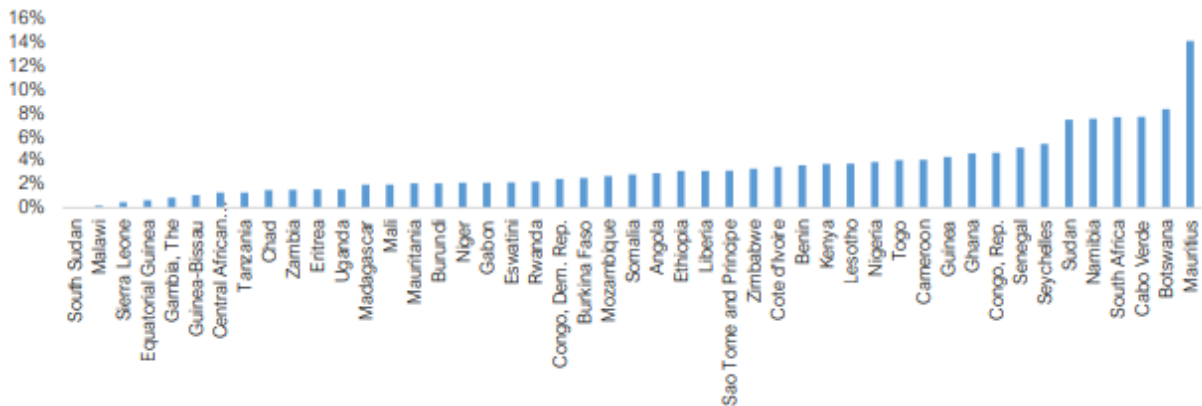
address these limitations. This paper argues that curricula should reflect continental diversity rather than just national priorities, which would open up opportunities for students to explore broader job markets within Africa. The increasing internationalization of higher education, exemplified by trade agreements such as the AfCFTA, denotes the need for higher education to align with the continent's evolving economic landscape.

Additionally, the current landscape of higher education in Africa is characterized by low institutional capacity, which can be attributed to insufficient government funding and the traditional focus of many African higher learning institutions on academics rather than research and innovation. This limited focus hinders their ability to become self-sustaining and secure their long-term viability. As of today, Africa is home to over 1,500 higher education institutions. Mba (2017) highlights that many of these institutions face significant challenges that require intervention from various stakeholders, including national governments and development partners, in order to optimize student learning outcomes and enhance their contributions to the workforce. He further asserts that many of these institutions have experienced a decline in the quality of teaching, research and research output.

The final and perhaps most critical feature of the higher education landscape in Africa is the low enrolment rate. The transition from basic education to tertiary education remains a significant challenge for many African nations. Kigotho (2023) emphasizes that while the global Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for tertiary education grew from 19% in 2000 to 40% in 2020, Africa remains the only region where this ratio is still below 20%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the average enrolment rate is a mere 9.4%, which is well below the global average of 38%. This low enrolment rate is indicative of a number of structural barriers that persist in the region. One of the primary reasons for the low enrolment is the lack of

sufficient infrastructure, funding and resources in many African higher education institutions, limiting their capacity to accommodate larger student populations. Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as high levels of poverty, limited access to financial aid and the rising costs of education, often deter prospective students from pursuing tertiary education. Furthermore, cultural factors and limited career guidance in many regions contribute to a lack of awareness regarding the importance and benefits of higher education. The low enrolment rates in Africa also reflect a broader systemic issue of inadequate investment in education at both the national and regional levels, which undermines the potential for socioeconomic mobility through education.

Fig 1: Percent of tertiary education students out of total enrolled students



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics data.

3 BREAKING THE CHAIN OF “FRAGMENTATION” ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The AfCFTA and other ATAs have been implemented at a critical juncture for African countries, which are increasingly recognizing the need for enhanced regional and continental integration. Historically characterized by policies of individualism, the continent is now shifting towards frameworks that promote collective growth and cooperation. Education trade has emerged as a significant framework for facilitating the cross-border movement of students, educational institutions, academic programs and educators (UNESCO, 2010). Since the adoption of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995, education has been classified as a tradable service (UNESCO, 2010; Finney & Finney, 2010; Lewandowski & Faaij, 2018). The ATAs are instrumental in shaping the dynamics of cross-border trade in educational services, alongside their broader impact on other service sectors. This paper examines the provisions of the AfCFTA and its protocols regarding the mobility of higher education across the continent. It further explores the Protocol Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Establishment, COMESA-EAC-Tripartite Agreement,, as well as the education-related protocols of SADC and ECOWAS.

3.1 AfCFTA and its Protocols

The AfCFTA agreement, was adopted in 2018 as part of the AU's Agenda 2063 "*The Africa We Want*," which aims to restructure African economies and significantly increase intra-continental trade. By uniting 55 countries and 8 RECs, the AfCFTA has created the largest free trade area in the world. According to the World Bank, full implementation of the AfCFTA by 2035 could lift at least 30 million people out of extreme poverty and another 60 million out of moderate poverty, with real income gains projected to increase by 7%, or approximately USD 450 billion (World Bank, 2023). This economic transformation is closely tied to education. Bissoonauth (2021) and Ngom (2023) emphasize that AfCFTA urges African governments to invest in education and skills development, advocating for

reforms to enable young people to fully participate in the agreement's benefits. Education underpins sustainable development and inclusive growth, making its integration into the AfCFTA's objectives critical.

The AfCFTA explicitly recognizes the importance of higher education in its article 3, which outlines its objectives to create a single market for goods and services, facilitated by the movement of persons. This provision seeks to deepen economic integration across Africa, guided by the Pan-African vision of "*An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa*" enshrined in Agenda 2063. By harmonizing social and economic systems, the agreement promotes the mobility of academics, students and graduates, enabling them to study and work across member states without facing the scrutiny and challenges currently imposed by fragmented systems.

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services, adopted in 2019, further strengthens these goals. Article 10 specifically addresses the mutual recognition of education and professional qualifications, stating:

- i. State Parties may recognize education, experience, or certifications obtained in another member state, either through harmonization or mutual agreements.
- ii. Such recognition should align with agreed continental standards, ensuring compatibility and reducing barriers to mobility for professionals.

By encouraging member states to adopt common criteria for recognizing academic certifications, the protocol fosters greater alignment in higher education systems. This alignment enhances the mobility of students and professionals, contributing to broader socio-economic development.

3.2. Protocol Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Establishment

It was adopted on January 29, 2018, as a follow-up to Article 43(2) of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, which was adopted on June 3, 1991, in Abuja, Nigeria. As of 2023, 32 countries had signed the protocol, with only four countries: Rwanda, Niger, São Tomé and Príncipe and Mali having ratified it. This is far below the threshold of 15 ratifications required for the protocol to come into force (UNECA, 2023).

Article 13 of the Protocol specifically addresses the free movement of students and researchers. It outlines the following provisions:

- i. State parties shall permit nationals of another member state, who hold registration or pre-registration documents, to pursue education and research in their territory, in accordance with the policies and laws of the host member state.
- ii. Host states shall issue student permits or passes to nationals of other member states admitted for studies, in accordance with regional registration policies.
- iii. State parties are required to develop, promote and implement programs that facilitate the exchange of students and researchers among member states.

Additionally, Article 14 extends the provisions of free movement to workers, thereby enabling students and graduates to transition from higher education institutions into employment opportunities within any member state that has ratified the protocol. This supports the broader goal of integrating higher education systems across Africa, effectively connecting "*lecture halls*" with "*continental trade halls*" and labor markets where graduates can seek employment opportunities across the continent.

3.3 COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Agreement

The COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Agreement, signed in 2015, encompasses 29 countries across the three RECs, representing 53% of the AU membership. This bloc accounts for more than 60% of the continent's GDP which is approximately USD 1.88

trillion and a combined population exceeding 600 million people (Onyango, 2020). The agreement officially came into force on July 25, 2024, after reaching the required threshold of 14 ratifications across the three RECs. Member states that have ratified the agreement include Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (COMESA, 2024).

According to Article 4, the agreement's general objectives are to promote economic and social development, establish a single market, facilitate the free movement of goods and services to boost intra-regional trade, enhance regional and continental integration, and build a robust Tripartite Free Trade Area for the benefit of the region's population. Onyango (2020) emphasizes that in addition to trade in goods and services, member states within the tripartite framework should also prioritize cooperation in education, recognizing its importance in fostering sustainable development. The formation of this Tripartite Agreement, which creates a free trade area among three significant regions, is a pivotal step toward the broader goal of continental integration envisioned under AfCFTA. This alignment is expected to strengthen cooperation in various sectors, including education, further advancing the continent's integration agenda.

3.4 Regional Protocols and Agreements on Higher Education

Several RECs across Africa have adopted protocols and agreements aimed at fostering higher education integration and cooperation within their regions. These frameworks provide clear guidelines for collaboration in higher education and support the transition of its outcomes from "*lecture halls*" to "*trade halls*" across the continent. This section of the paper focuses on two key regions: the ECOWAS and the SADC specifically examining the ECOWAS Protocol A/P3/1/03 on Education and Training and the SADC Protocol on Education and Training.

3.4.1 ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training

The ECOWAS Protocol A/P3/1/03 on Education and Training establishes a comprehensive framework for integrating education systems across the region. Article 2 highlights the phased introduction of equivalence, harmonization and standardization of educational and training systems among member states. Article 3 outlines objectives such as establishing efficient systems for collating and exchanging educational data, mobilizing resources and reducing constraints that hinder access to education.

Article 4 emphasizes cooperation in education and training policies, acknowledging the need for regional collaboration despite the existence of national policies. It calls for harmonized, coherent and comparable education and training policies to foster mutual assistance across member states.

A critical provision is Article 7, which focuses on cooperation in higher education and training. Key directives include:

- i. Reserving at least 5% of total spaces in higher education institutions for foreign students from other ECOWAS member states.
- ii. Standardizing admission requirements across the region.
- iii. Providing grants and financial support to foreign students on par with local students.
- iv. Facilitating the movement of students and teaching staff within the region for study, research, and teaching purposes.
- v. Encouraging cooperation in specific disciplines while recognizing national policies' primary role in undergraduate education.

Furthermore, Article 8 highlights cooperation in research and development, and the protocol mandates the establishment of an ECOWAS training fund to support its objectives.

3.4.2 SADC Protocol on Education and Training

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training mirrors many principles found in the ECOWAS Protocol, focusing on eliminating barriers to higher education across member states. Article 7 explicitly calls for cooperation in higher education and training, including:

- i. Ensuring that 5% of admission slots in higher education institutions are reserved for students from other SADC member states.
- ii. Harmonizing and standardizing university admission criteria.
- iii. Collaborating in the design of academic programs and developing bilateral and multilateral links for split-site teaching and consultancy.
- iv. Producing shared learning materials, facilitating examiner exchanges, and creating regional professional associations and university heads' networks.
- v. Establishing centers of specialization to build institutional capacity and offer training in critical and specialized areas.

Both protocols underscore the importance of regional collaboration in education as a cornerstone for socio-economic development and integration. By standardizing educational systems and fostering cross-border student and faculty mobility, these agreements strengthen the link between education and regional trade, contributing significantly to the vision of continental integration.

4 COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY: BOLOGNA DECLARATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION INTEGRATION IN EUROPE

4.1 overview

The Bologna Declaration, was signed on June 19, 1999, by 29 European ministers of education, as the foundational document for what is now known as the Bologna Process. This declaration proposed the creation of a European Higher Education Area, designed to enable students and graduates to move freely across European countries, with their qualifications recognized and accepted in each participating nation (Crosier & Parveva, 2013). The process was initiated as a voluntary harmonization effort aimed at making European higher education more comparable and accessible.

Key objectives of the Bologna Declaration include:

1. **Adoption of a system of comparable and easily readable degrees:** This was intended to enhance the employability and international competitiveness of European higher education
2. **Establishment of a two-cycle system:** The Bologna Declaration emphasizes a two-cycle structure for higher education that is; undergraduate and postgraduate programs (Kaiser & Kiessling, 2010). Entry to the second cycle requires the completion of the first cycle, typically lasting a minimum of three years. It introduced the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to facilitate the mobility of students by ensuring that academic credits are transferable across institutions. The declaration also stipulates those degrees awarded in the first cycle should be recognized by the European labor market and serve as a prerequisite for postgraduate study across Europe.

In addition to these structural reforms, the Declaration advocates for the promotion of student, teacher, researcher and administrative staff mobility, aiming to remove barriers that hinder the free movement of individuals (Reinalda, 2008). It also encourages cooperation in quality assurance, with the goal of developing consistent criteria and methodologies to ensure high standards across institutions. As noted by Reinalda (2008),

the Bologna Process has had a profound and lasting influence on the landscape of European higher education since its inception in 1999.

4.3 Comparative analysis between higher education in Africa and Europe

Aspect	Higher Education in Africa	Higher Education in Europe
Degree Structure	Primarily follows a national or regional system, with variations between countries. Bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels are standard but not always consistent.	Standardized across Europe, with a clear two-cycle system: Bachelor's and post graduate as per the Bologna Process (Crosier & Parveva, 2013).
Mobility	Limited student and staff mobility due to infrastructural, financial and political barriers.	High mobility through the initiatives such as Erasmus+ program founded in 1987 to finance international exchange programs and other EU initiatives, allowing students and staff to move easily between universities (Kabanbayeva et al., 2019).
Quality Assurance	Varies greatly by country, with efforts being made to strengthen national and regional accreditation bodies.	Strong quality assurance systems, with cooperation between national agencies and the European

		Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
Access to Education	Access is often limited by socio-economic factors, geographic location and the availability of resources.	Generally widespread access, with strong public funding in many countries, though access issues still exist in certain areas
Recognition of Qualifications	Recognition of qualifications varies and is a barrier to mobility; efforts are being made to harmonize credentials.	Degrees are widely recognized across the EU due to the Bologna Process and qualification recognition is a key focus of the European Higher Education Area (Crosier & Parveva, 2013).

4.4 Lessons for Africa

Following the successful implementation of the Bologna Declaration, which has now entered its third decade of achieving greater heights (Kroher et al., 2021), this paper suggests that Africa should consider adopting the following lessons to harmonize continental higher education and ensure its continued relevance and realism:

- i. **Adoption of a standardized framework for degrees**, such as the cycle system, which would provide clarity and facilitate the recognition of qualifications across African countries.

- ii. **Implementation of a credit transfer system** similar to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which could promote student mobility, enabling African students to study across the continent with greater ease (Kaiser & Kiessling, 2010).
- iii. **Quality assurance** in Europe could serve as a model for African institutions to establish more effective accreditation processes, ensuring that degrees are of high quality and internationally recognized.
- iv. **Creating regional cooperation networks and sharing resources**, which would help address challenges such as funding and infrastructure.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE AFCFTA AND OTHER AFRICAN TRADE AGREEMENTS (ATAs) ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Maslen (2015) raises concerns that the expansion of free trade and commercial agreements, such as the AfCFTA, could significantly affect global higher education systems. This section explores the direct implications of the AfCFTA and other ATAs on higher education in Africa, examining both the potential benefits and challenges these agreements may bring.

5.1 Merited Implications

- i. **Harmonization of higher education standards** (Sirat, Azman, & Abu Bakar, 2016): the mutual recognition of qualifications and the standardization of curricula across African nations will facilitate better alignment and comparability of educational qualifications. This harmonization enhances academic mobility, reducing barriers to cross-border education and ensuring that African qualifications are widely recognized across the continent.

- ii. **Increased academic mobility:** the AfCFTA's provisions for the free movement of students, researchers and academics promote access to diverse educational opportunities (Altbach, 2004). Enhanced mobility fosters cross-cultural exchanges, enriches academic experiences, and facilitates the sharing of knowledge and resources among African institutions.
- iii. **Promotion of research and innovation:** the AfCFTA encourages collaborative efforts between nations across Africa, leading to innovations that are tailored to local and regional challenges. Such collaborations are crucial for aligning academic research with the socio-economic development goals of African countries, contributing to sustainable solutions for pressing issues.
- iv. **Expansion of access to education:** by liberalizing educational services, the ATAs promote the establishment of cross-border educational institutions. This expansion helps address gaps in educational access, particularly in underserved regions and supports equitable development across the continent (Sawiński, 2018).
- v. **Enhanced competition and quality assurance:** increased competition among African universities drives improvements in teaching quality, infrastructure and faculty development (Hayward, 2006), as universities strive to attract students and staff, this competition results in higher educational standards, improving outcomes and making African institutions more globally competitive.
- vi. **Cultural exchange and pan-African identity:** the AfCFTA fosters cultural exchange and academic collaboration, nurturing a shared pan-African identity. Such sense of unity can inspire a common vision for Africa's future, encouraging collaborative efforts to address the continent's challenges through education.

5.2 Demerited Implications

- i. **Risk of brain drain;** while academic mobility offers opportunities for growth, it may also contribute to the brain drain, as skilled professionals and academics might be attracted to better-funded institutions or opportunities abroad. This could deplete talent from countries with underdeveloped educational infrastructures, perpetuating inequalities in educational development (Oucho, 2008).
- ii. **Potential erosion of local educational practices:** the standardization of curricula to align with continental norms may inadvertently lead to the erosion of local educational practices and cultural identities. While harmonization offers benefits, it could result in a loss of diversity in educational systems, diminishing the representation of local knowledge and traditions in African higher education.
- iii. **Unequal benefits across regions:** the benefits of the ATA's educational provisions may not be distributed equally across the continent. Countries or regions with more robust, competitive higher education systems are likely to gain more from these agreements, while others may be left behind. Such disparity could expound existing regional inequalities, undermining the overarching goal of continental integration.
- iv. **Increased competition without sufficient support:** while the ATA's liberalization of education may lead to greater competition among universities, those without adequate financial resources or infrastructure may struggle to keep up.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper has been to examine the effects of the AfCFTA and ATAs on higher education. The paper reviewed the relevant provisions of these agreements, particularly their implications for higher education in Africa. Additionally, it explored the Bologna Declaration as a successful model for fostering educational exchange and the mobility of professionals, students, and researchers in Europe. Through this analysis, the paper concludes that ATAs, including the AfCFTA, are poised to significantly impact continental higher education. These agreements are expected to enhance academic and professional mobility across the continent, enabling graduates from one country to work in another with mutual recognition of qualifications. However, the research also highlights potential negative effects, such as brain drain, which may challenge the sustainability of these agreements. In comparison to the Bologna Declaration, the analysis reveals that Africa still faces substantial hurdles in achieving continental integration in higher education. Addressing these challenges is crucial to facilitate the seamless movement of students, researchers, academics and professionals across the continent, thereby transforming education from a localized experience to a key driver of continental trade and integration.

5.2 Recommendation

This paper proposes the following recommendations to strengthen the link between trade agreements and higher education in Africa:

1. **Adoption of a Continental Protocol on Higher Education:** AU member states should develop and adopt a standardized protocol to harmonize higher education systems across the continent. This will ensure uniformity in integration efforts, particularly in regions like North Africa that currently lack robust educational agreements.

2. **Easing Mobility Restrictions:** African countries should eliminate visa and mobility barriers for students, academics and professionals from other African states. Such measures will enable greater access to education and employment opportunities across the continent.
3. **Establishment of a Continental Higher Education Regulatory Body:** Create an African Higher Education Quality Assurance Association to oversee academic and professional exchange programs, similar to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education under the Bologna Process. This body would regulate and standardize educational frameworks to promote education as a tradable service.
4. **Increased Investment in Higher Education:** Governments and regional bodies should boost investment in higher education through capacity-building initiatives and scholarship programs, such as an African equivalent of Erasmus+. These programs should facilitate cross-border learning opportunities for students, enhancing their exposure to diverse educational environments.

By addressing these recommendations, Africa can better leverage its trade agreements to create a robust and interconnected higher education system, fostering academic excellence and driving economic integration.

REFERENCES

- African Union (2024) Investing in Tomorrow: The African Union Year of Education Catalyzing Progress for Africa and the World: Commemorating the African Union's Year of Education | African Union. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240925/investing-tomorrow-african-union-year-education-catalyzing-progress-africa>
- Altbach, Philip G. 2004. "Higher Education Crosses Borders: Can the United States Remain the Top Destination for Foreign Students?" *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 36(open in a new window) (2(open in a new window)): 18–25. doi:10.1080/00091380409604964.
- Anyanwu, J. C. (2014). Does intra-African trade reduce youth unemployment in Africa? (Working Paper No. 201). African Development Bank Group, Office of the Chief Economist.
- aqiq, B., Akramy, S.A., & Barati, A.M. (2024). The Impacts of English Language Proficiency on Employment Opportunities. *American Journal of Science Education Research*, 183. Retrieved from www.cmjpublishers.com
- Bissoonauth, R. (2021, April 6). Education: A key to the success of the African continental free trade area (AfCFTA). *Global Partnership for Education*. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/education-key-success-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta>
- COMESA (2024). *COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area to come into force on 25th July 2024*. <https://www.comesa.int/comesa-eac-sadc-tripartite-free-trade-area-to-come-into-force-on-25th-july-2024/>
- Crosier, D., & Parveva, T. (2013). The Bologna Process: Its impact in Europe and beyond. <https://repositorio.minedu.gob.pe/handle/20.500.12799/1660>
- de Wit, H. (2019). Internationalization in higher education: A critical review. *SFU Educational Review*, 12(3), 9–17.
- de Wit, H. (2020). Internationalization of higher education: The need for a more ethical and qualitative approach. *Journal of International Students*, 10(1), i-iv. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i1.1893>
- Edutab Africa (2024) African Union: Year of Education – Educating Africans Fit for the 21st Century – Edutab Africa. (2024, March 20). <https://edutab.africa/2024/03/20/african-unions-theme-for-2024-educate-an->

african-fit-for-the-21st-century-building-resilient-education-systems-for-increased-access-to-inclusive-lifelong-quality-and-relevant-learning-in-afr/

- Finney, T. G., & Finney, R. Z. (2010). *Are students their universities' customers? An exploratory study. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 19(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841240902904703>
- Gangwar, M., Bassett, R. M., UNESCO Institute of Statistics, & World Bank. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Tertiary Education in SSA. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/908af3404023a2c31ef34853bba4fe60-0200022022/original/One-Africa-TE-and-COVID-19-11102021.pdf>
- Hayward, F. M. (2006). Quality assurance and accreditation of higher education in Africa. Paper presented at the Conference on Higher Education Reform in Francophone Africa: Understanding the Keys of Success, June 13-15, 2006, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228783075_Quality_assurance_and_accreditation_of_higher_education_in_Africa
- Heugh, K. (2019). Multilingualism and Education in Africa. In Cambridge University Press eBooks (pp. 577–600). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108283991.020>
- Indiana University Press. (2020, June 2). Book - Indiana University Press. <https://iupress.org/9780253071477/the-verbal-art-of-mobility-in-west-africa/>
- Jones, E., & de Wit, H. (2014). Globalized internationalization: Implications for policy and practice. *IIEnetworker*, 2014(Spring), 28–29.
- Kabanbayeva, G., Gureva, M., Bielik, P., & Ostasz, G. (n.d.). Academic mobility and financial stability: A case of Erasmus student exchange program. *Fundacja Centrum Badań Socjologicznych*. Retrieved from <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=787158>
- Kaiser, H. J., & Kiessling, C. (2010). Two-cycle curriculum – bachelor-master structure according to the Bologna agreement: The Swiss experience in Basle. *Netherlands Journal of Medical Education*, 29(1), 22–29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12507-010-0005-5>
- Kigotho, W. (2023, November 23). *The right to HE is not yet a reality in Africa – Report*. University World News. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20231121130700884>
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5–31.

- Knight, J. (2024). Higher education cooperation at the regional level. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 26(1), 101–115. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jice-09-2023-0021>
- Kroher, M., Leuze, K., Thomsen, S. L., & Trunzer, J. (2021). Did the "Bologna Process" achieve its goals? 20 years of empirical evidence on student enrolment, study success, and labour market outcomes. *IZA Discussion Papers*, No. 14757. Institute of Labor Economics (IZA). <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/250418>
- Kwaramba, M. (2012). Internationalisation of higher education in Southern Africa with South Africa as a major exporter. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, 2(1). <http://www.jielusa.org/home>
- Laakso, L. (2020). Academic Mobility as Freedom in Africa. *Politikon*, 47(4), 442–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2020.1840023>
- Lewandowski, I., & Faaij, A. P. C. (2018). The concept of bioeconomy and its sustainability challenges. In I. Lewandowski (Ed.), *Bioeconomy: Shaping the transition to a sustainable, biobased economy* (pp. 27–38). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91881-5_9
- Ligami, C. (2019, July 16). Free trade agreement offers a wealth of HE benefits – Report. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190716112200497>
- Maslen, G. (2015, February 4). *Universities at risk under free trade agreements*. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20150204080738725>
- Mba, J. C. (2017, May 3). *Challenges and prospects of Africa's higher education*. Global Partnership for Education. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/challenges-and-prospects-africas-higher-education>
- Moore, M., Ranjan, P. (2005), "Globalization vs. skill biased technical change: implications for unemployment and Wage Inequality", *The Economic Journal*, Volume 115, Issue 503, April, pp. 391–422.
- Mukama, E. (2007). Rethinking languages of instruction in African schools. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Issue 4, Voices from the Global South. Retrieved from <https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-4/rethinking-languages-instruction-african-schools>

- Mwabe, J., & Omer, H. E. (2024, February 15). Making education in Africa fit for the 21st century. Global Partnership for Education. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/making-education-africa-fit-21st-century#:~:text=School%20completion%20rates%20have%20increased,its%20fast%2Dchanging%20professional%20landscape>.
- Ngom, M. (2023, February 23). AfCFTA: Reaping the benefits of the world's most youth and women-friendly trade agreement. *Africa Renewal*. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/february-2023/afcfta-reaping-benefits-world%E2%80%99s-most-youth-and-women-friendly-trade-agreement>
- Onyango, C. (2020). *Why the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area is ideal for strengthening African continental integration*. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. <https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Tripartite-FTA-is-ideal-for-strengthening-AfCFTA.pdf>
- Oucho, John. 2008. "African Brain Drain and Gain, Diaspora and Remittances: More Rhetoric Than Action." In *International Migration and National Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Adepoju Aderanti, Ton van Naerssen, and Annelies Zoomers, 49–66. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.
- Reinalda, B. (2008). The Bologna Process and Its Achievements in Europe 1999–2007. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 4(4), 463–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512160802414012>
- Reinalda, B. (2008). The Bologna Process and Its Achievements in Europe 1999–2007. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 4(4), 463–476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512160802414012>
- rines, S. (2018, December 11). *Bologna-type harmonization in Africa: An overview of the common higher education area of the East African Community*. World Education News & Reviews. <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/12/common-higher-education-area-chea-of-the-east-african-community>
- SARPn. (2005). Regional integration concepts and the Southern African Development Community (SADC): A conceptual framework. SARPn. https://sarpn.org/documents/d0001249/P1416-RI-concepts_May2005.pdf
- Sawiński, Z. (2018). Social change, educational expansion, and inequality in access to education. In *Dynamics of class and stratification in Poland* (pp. 151–172). Central European University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789633861561-010>

- Schimmelfennig, F. (2018). Regional Integration Theory. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.599>
- Serpa, S., Caldeira, S. N., Damião Serpa, M. S., Gonçalves, R. L., Montenegro, H. M., & Rego, I. E. (2015). Mobility in the internationalisation of higher education institutions. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4(2), 105. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v4n2p105>
- Shimeles, A. (2010). *Migration patterns, trends and policy issues in Africa* (Working Paper No. 119). African Development Bank Group.
- Sirat, M., Azman, N., & Abu Bakar, A. (2016). Harmonization of higher education in Southeast Asia regionalism: Politics first, and then education. In *Social and Political Science 2016* (pp. 103–123). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784712358.00014>
- Smith, J., & Doe, A. (2023). Curriculum reform in African higher education: Solving society's problems and meeting its needs. *Higher Education Studies*, 4(2), 105-118. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-023-00206-x>
- Teferra, Damtew. 2000. "Revisiting the Doctrine of Human Capital Mobility in the Information Age." In *Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa, Exode des Dompetences et Developpement Descapacites en Afrique*, edited by Sibry JM Tapsoba, Sabiou Kassoljm, Pascal V. Holieno, Bankole Oni, Meera Sethi, and Joseph Ngu, 62–77. Addis Ababa: ECA/IDRC/IOM.
- The Pan African University. (n.d.). History of the PAU. Pan African University. <https://pau-au.africa/about/background>
- Thusi, X., Mlambo, V. H., & Mkhize, N. (2022). The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA): Possible benefits for women and youth in Africa. *Latin American Journal of Trade Policy*, 13, Universidad de Chile. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363418719> The African Continental Free Trade Area Agree-
ment AfCFTA Possible benefits for women and youth in Africa
- Tran, L. T., Jung, J., Unangst, L., & Marshall, S. (2023). New developments in internationalisation of higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(5), 1033–1041. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2216062>
- Trust Africa. (2011). *Strengthening and transforming higher education in Africa*. Trust Africa. <https://nru.uncst.go.ug/xmlui/handle/123456789/1093>

- UNECA (2023, March 29–30). *Experts' Group Meeting (EGM) to review policy report on free movement of persons for trade: Towards an accelerated ratification of the AU Free Movement of Persons Protocol in support of the implementation of the AfCFTA*. Nairobi, Kenya. Retrieved from <https://www.uneca.org>
- Unesco. (2002, December 2). Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Africa. <https://oasis.col.org/items/99b54223-dbaf-4c26-840c-dbd5066e4f81/full>
- UNESCO. (2010). *Trade in education services: Trends and emerging issues*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000214997#:~:text=Today%2C%20trade%20in%20education%20has,trade%20in%20services%20including%20education.>
- University World News (2024) Higher education in Africa: Pathways to relevance and impact. University World News. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240403123756208>
- Varghese, N. V. (2008). Globalization of higher education and cross-border student mobility. National University of Educational Planning. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44839105_Globalization_of_Higher_Education_and_Cross-Border_Student_Mobility
- Waruru, M. (2024, May 20). Nigeria bans degrees from five countries. The PIE News. <https://thepienews.com/nigeria-bans-degrees-from-five-african-countries-over-credibility-questions/#:~:text=The%20government%20of%20Nigeria%20says,the%20two%20West%20African%20countries.>
- Wikipedia contributors. (2023, August 12). Internationalization of higher education. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationalization_of_higher_education#:~:text=Internationalization%20of%20higher%20education%20in,of%20commercializing%20research%20and%20postsecondary
- Woldegiorgis, E. T., & Doevenspeck, M. (2015). Current trends, challenges and prospects of student mobility in the African higher education landscape. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4(2), 105-105. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v4n2p105>
- World Bank (2023) The African Continental Free Trade Area. In World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area>

World Bank (2024) World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/overview#:~:text=Regional%20integration%20allows%20countries%20to,%2C%20energy%2C%20people%20and%20ideas.>