

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: NECESSARY CONDITION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Economic integration in post-independent Africa remains a pervading challenge. It is of scholarly interest that various African states are revisiting the ideals of economic integration, with renewed vigour. Part of the steps taken is the replacement of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established in 1963 as the continental apex organisation for achieving the objectives of political and economic emancipation, with the African Union (AU) and the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a core programme. The question is whether progress is being made and targets achieved. In this paper, an analytic attempt is made at appraising economic integration in Africa. The correlation between economic integration and development are also critically examined.

Keywords: Integration, Economic, Development

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I. INTRODUCTION

The growing gap between the developed and developing countries has dominated literature and discourse on international relations and diplomacy for a long time (Akonor 2008:40). The main objective of economic integration in Africa is to consolidate conditions for rapid economic development in the interest of Africans and African economies.

Economic integration in Africa would imply increasing trade and investment in African economies through building large regional and continental markets to support production and investment at critical and significant levels. Another desideratum for economic integration in Africa is conscious and collective maintenance of peaceful coexistence within and between African countries. This implies peacefully resolving any dispute or conflict through commonly subscribed mechanisms at national, continental and regional levels.

For sustainable economic integration in Africa, there is also the need for African States to sufficiently embrace the principles of good governance as embodied in constitutional democracy and the rule of law as guiding both intra-state and inter-state actions or inactions. Meeting the stated conditions for economic integration in Africa would no doubt not only impact on strengthening solidarity among Africans, but also dignify the identity of the average African in the comity of nations (Guy, 1992).

II. INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

Msuya (1995) confirms that there are many scholarly works on the process of integration in Africa at continental and regional levels. Most of the literature traces the origins of the process of integration to a series of Pan-African Movement Conference, held in 1900, 1919, 1921 and 1923 in London and in other cities. The 1945 Pan- Africa Congress is particularly significant and historic. The 1945 Pan- Africa Congress was attended by important African Leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah. The 1945 Pan- Africa Congress was concerned with anti-colonialism, the demand for national independence in Africa and the rights of the black people in general. Prominent scholars and Pan-Africanists include Padmore (1956), Legum (1962) and Nkrumah (1956) (Msuya, 2011:6-10).

It is the ultimate philosophy of Pan-Africanism to pursue ‘One Powerful United Continent’. Central to the achievement of this goal is the ability of managers of African economies to present a holistic understanding of the dynamics of economic integration and socioeconomic development.

Pan-Africanism is a driving force behind African economic integration. Based on a common belief in a united continent among the states, Vines (2005) submits that “Pan-Africanism is an invented idea; propelled towards achieving Africa’s economic and political independence. The three waves of institutionalizing this idea are the Pan-Africanism Congress, the creation of the OAU, and finally, the foundation of the AU,

Economic realities in Africa, over the years, suggests that it is the case that either African political leaders do not understand the rhythm of economic integration or that managers of African economies enter into programmes of economic integration in uncoordinated and waste-inducing manners. A study of the salient issues responsible for the transformation of the four Asian Tigers economies, for example, are indicative of the fact that there is , in Africa, the dearth of conscious regional integration initiatives that will bring about substantive integrative leaps.

III. INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Bach (2000) defined integration, in general as the unification of a number of hitherto independent units into a larger whole, which is more than the sum of its parts. Integration can be conceived of as a process (dynamic), terminal conditions (static or combination of both). As a process, integration involves the establishment of common legal rules and legal system for citizens. Integration as an outcome can take the form of bureaucratic and political institutionalization, while as a process it handles development from a state of isolation to a condition of unification and incorporation. Integration also occurs at various levels of society (local, regional, national and international), and takes economic, social, cultural and political forms. Its success or failure is determined by the interaction of enabling and inhibiting variables (Bach, 2000:13).

In ordinary language, the term 'integration' means to bring parts of an object into a complete whole, while in economic terms it would imply, in its narrowest sense, the coordination of economic activities within a country for the purpose of enhancing the development of that particular country (Ochieng 2015:3). Economists have defined the term 'economic integration' in several different ways over time. Economic integration is a process of eliminating restrictions on international trade, payments and mobility of labor (Carbough, 2004). Economic integration thus results in the uniting of two or more national economies in regional trading agreement. According to Jibola (2015) regional economic integration involves the process of trade, economic and financial convergence of integrating states (Jiboku. 2015:14). Ochieng further gives the term a wider meaning, and indicates that it implies the process of integration of various economies in a given region into a single unit for the purpose of regional economic development. In more precise way, economic integration occurs when two or more nations undertake policies that result in greater mutual economic interdependence.

Development is one fundamental concept that we cannot but seek to clarify in pursuit of the overall objective of this work. The concept 'development' like some other concepts, is characterized by the phenomenon of definitional pluralism. There is the tendency, in some contexts, to actually confuse development with growth. When talking about development, especially national developments, the reference is about increases in the Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP), otherwise known as economic growth. But a state may be growing without development because the fruits of growth have not been equitably distributed throughout the state. Development is conceived as an integral process of widening opportunities for individuals, social groups and communities, and mobilising the full range of their capacities for the common benefit in social, economic and political spheres (Iwara, 2015:4).

IV. DESIDERATUM FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The pace of economic change in Africa has been extremely slow since independence. The size of the African economy, when adjusted for differences in purchasing power, is getting smaller. There is not much extraordinary economic performance; this was particularly driven by changes in government economic policy that have progressively done much damage to market forces.

The agricultural sector has been left unattended to for decades. This was extended gradually to industry and large parts of the service sector.

The most promising approach to overcome the economic balkanisation of many parts of the African continent is economic integration, regional in particular. Colonial borders in Africa have divided once connected economic spaces and networks and eventually created a paperwork of small economic entities that are unable to overcome the narrowness and limitations of their markets by themselves (McNamee 2014:103).

The setback in the economic integration process in Africa could likely be traced to lack of deep integration initiatives. According to Van Langenhove, an effective regional integration initiative should, in the main pursue eight critical interrelated objectives: the strengthening of trade integration in the region; the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development; the development of infrastructure programmes in support of economic growth and regional integration; the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance; the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society; contribution to peace and security in the region; the building of environment programmes at the regional level; and the strengthening of the regions interaction with other regions of the world (Langenhove, 2007:377).

A careful look at the salient issues emphasized the need for Africa to revisit its approach to economic integration, especially at the regional level. Africa should not be seen to be attempting to achieve globally, what it is failing to achieve regionally. Past efforts have often been focused on removing barriers to free trade in the region, increasing the free movement of people, labour, goods, and capital across national borders reducing the possibility of regional armed conflict, and adopting cohesive regional stances on policy issues, such as the environment, climate change and migration. Trade between countries in the region of Africa however remains frail. The level of trade and commodity exchange in the region is indigent.

Economies in Africa have over the years served primarily as sources of raw materials for metropolitan industries and also as markets for products (including wastes) from metropolitan

countries. Changing the economic misfortune of the 21st century African States require far-reaching changes, through planning for the attainment of sustainable growth and development. The problems of poverty, diseases and ignorance that are widely prevalent in many African countries since the early years of independence are incontrovertibly surmountable through effective economic integration. Planning plays a leading role in effecting changes in economics and societies for sustainable growth and development (Paru, 2013).

V. Conclusion

If Africa must develop a sustainable integrated economic system, it must ensure the success of integration, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Economic integration is indeed a desideratum for African states. Integration of economies is indeed a trending phenomenon. With increasing globalisation and the advent of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), other parts of the world have embraced the idea of integration. Besides EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), others include; Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), in the Caribbean Council of Arab Economic Unity, (CAEU) in Central America (Shodganga, 2017). Africa needs to take upon it, the challenge to ensure that it succeeds in regional economic integration as a pathway to global relevance and Integration in the 21st century.

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