

EDUCATION, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND LABOUR MOBILITY: THE CASE OF ECOWAS

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Abstract

Labour mobility is a situation where skilled and unskilled labour migrate in search of greener pastures and is fast-tracked by regional integration, which involves national or international states forging co-operation, mutually beneficial relationship or common front to work together through exchange of ideas, knowledge, labour goods, services and technology. Education facilitates enhanced labour mobility and attracts higher returns in terms of wages which boosts personal status and national economy of both the sending and receiving countries. This study, using quantitative and descriptive methodology, examines the roles of education, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional body, and education in labour mobility in West Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. The study finds out that level of education and professional specialization influence labour mobility; that labour mobility produces a win-win-win situation where the migrant, the sending and receiving countries each benefit from the movement and that despite these, it is fraught with dangers especially for the migrant who faces discrimination, underpayment and underemployment, expulsion and all forms of stigma and ill-treatment from the receiving countries. It also discovers that while regional integration bodies like ECOWAS were supposed to facilitate labour mobility through friendly laws and protocols by members of the regional bodies a lot still has to be done in liberalizing movement through more relaxed protocols. It recommends, among other things, that ECOWAS protocol and such other similar international protocols on free movement of persons, goods and services, should be exhaustively and comprehensively implemented by all member states to improve labour mobility.

Introduction

Mobility and migration have always been an intrinsic part of human capital development, and migration can be considered as a capacity-enhancing

act in itself. A search for better or more secure livelihood is the main cause of migration (de Haan 1999; Ellis 2003). Majority of Africans migrate within their own country, while estimated 31 million Africans are international migrants – and at least half migrate within their sub-region (Ratha, 2011). In Africa, migration represents a necessity for some, and an opportunity for others. In some cases people move due to stress factors such as climate change, war and poverty. Migration is a response to relative deprivation, and can represent a livelihood strategy and investment or insurance function for more income diversification (Quinn 2006; Taylor et al, 1999).

Mobility of labour is the ability and capacity of labour to move from one place to another or from one occupation to another or from one industry to another. According to Shaik (2017), Long and Ferrie (2018), mobility of labour refers to alternative employment and takes the forms of changes in the location of workers across physical space (geographic mobility) and across a set of jobs (occupational mobility). Geographic mobility can be further subdivided into short-distance and long-distance moves, as well as into voluntary and coerced migration. Occupational mobility can be lateral – within a broad class of jobs similar in socio-economic status – or vertical (from one job to a better or worse job).

Some advantages accrue to mobility of labour. Workers who leave their villages to industrial centres are able to improve their prospects. They are able to raise themselves economically. Labour mobility is also helpful and useful for improving the structure of industry: when labour is mobile, it will be withdrawn from decaying industries and can be diverted to expanding ones. Mobility of labour checks unemployment because as labour moves from where it is not wanted to where it is required, unemployment is reduced.

Education and labour mobility

Mobility of labour also depends on education and training (Long and Ferrie, 2018). The higher or more a person is educated and skilled, the higher the chances of moving from one occupation to another. Vertical and geographical mobility are very much dependent on education and training. The inner urge to rise in life equally propels labour mobility. Optimistic and broad-minded workers are likely to move to other jobs and places. Differences in language, habits, culture, religion, climate, etc, will not constitute a hindrance to an optimistic worker in his mobility. Means of transport and communication largely encourage mobility of labour. A well-developed means of communication, where a worker knows that in case of emergency at home he can easily be in touch with his family by phone or travel by road, rail or air can encourage labour mobility.

Migration contributes to human capital formation. Evidence abound that the income from remittances is disproportionately spent on education and health rather than the everyday consumption (Adams, 2005; World Bank, 2006b; Valero, 2008; Nagarjan, 2009; Mohapatra et al, 2010).

The issue of skills competitiveness is inherent throughout ECOWAS region and is closely associated with the development, cause and consequences of labour mobility for individuals and states. To profit from emerging industries such as banking, extractive industries and information and communications technology (ICT), ECOWAS states require high-skilled innovative entrepreneurs for economic transformation. Even with entrenched unemployment and under-employment, ECOWAS states' economies face labour skills shortages. Further, the workforce is often inadequately educated, and skills shortages in ECOWAS nation-states represent the most important labour market issues for investors (World Bank, 2008). There is therefore a pressing need to train, retain and attract skilled professionals within the sub-region, and ensure geographic equity between poorer and richer areas.

Migration can help strengthen educational relationships, by fostering greater educational growth and also through the personal communications migrants bring with them.

Agreements by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and ECOWAS include a natural treatment of obligation clause that applies to all service activities covered by these agreements. Further, heavily regulated professions such as law, accounting, engineering, medical and pharmaceutical professions, demand commonly accepted standard examinations before accreditation to practice. The lack of migration management in Africa and ECOWAS in particular, leads to brain drain. The highest levels of brain drain occur in least developed countries, and insufficient pull mechanisms in under-served areas are negatively affecting human capital development of those left behind. In ECOWAS states, regional GDP per capita masks intra-regional differences and wide gap between relatively low rural incomes (which often export cheap labour). This has broad implications amongst others for health services, where mobility of health workers affects quality of service delivery in origin countries, creating mobility towards medical hubs. Poor regions remain under-staffed, exacerbated by the overall lack of skilled workers and too few incentives pulling workers to under-served areas.

On the other hand, social set up can also hamper labour mobility (Stephenson and Hufbauer, 2010). Labour mobility is hampered in a society dominated by caste system and tight family ties while disintegrated family encourages labour mobility. Industrial development fuels labour mobility. According to Cattanco, Engman, Saez and Stern (2010), industrialization gives

rise to urbanization workers move from rural and semi-urban areas to industrial centres and big cities. Not to be left out is the development of trade and business which spread out their offices and institutions related to them in different parts of the country resulting to workers moving from one place to another and one occupation to another to work in trade and business offices, banks, insurance companies, etc.

Long and Ferrie (2017) opine that peace and security play a vital role in the mobility of labour as they guarantee safety of lives, property and investments and ensure free movement of occupations to other places. Outbreak of war, hostilities or natural disaster could trigger forced labour migration. Long and Ferrie (2017) further expressed the view that social relations and accommodation problems in cities, monetary cost of movement as well as political and communal factors could hinder labour mobility. This is also true of age restrictions, differences in ability, job meant for a particular gender, long period of training and education, trade unionism and labour laws in receiving countries.

Labour Mobility and Regional Integration

A process of states coming together to sign agreements to cooperate in certain areas common to them constitutes regional integration (Gathi, 2007). This process is overseen by the governments of the specific states. The decision to enter into a regional economic community is based on many considerations. In many parts of Africa and the world, the coming together of different sovereign states is based on shared cultural, political, economic and societal values as well as shared history of association or cooperation. Indeed, regional cooperation can take different forms, depending on the objectives of states that are involved. States may want to come together for economic reasons or even further to form a political alliance or union. Many states across the globe enter into regional agreements for economic purposes. In Africa in particular, there has been a clamour and trend towards integration with numerous regional blocks being formed in various regions of the continent. For instance the African Union (AU) has eight regional economic communities and they include Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Communauté des Etats Sahéli-Sahariens (CEN-SAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Inter-Governmental Authority (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). This is the case of ECOWAS where members consist mainly of former British and French colonies. In addition, shared values and history, geographical

boundaries also form an integral part of the formation of regional blocs. Most regional economic groups have shared geographical boundaries.

Regional integration does not always serve an economic function alone, but can also be looked at from the angle of a progressive, dynamic process that entails a country's willingness to share or unify into a larger whole (Bohwasi, 2000). The degree to which it shares what it shares determines the level of integration. There are different degrees of integration depending on pre-defined criteria. According to Kabbanji (2017), regional integration demands that a state relinquishes part of its sovereignty willingly in order to be part of a larger group. Many countries are willing to create or join regional blocs but are unwilling to surrender their sovereignty even considering the great benefits they stand to gain. The fear of loss of sovereignty is one of the greatest impediments to regional integration.

Omhae (1996) traced the first attempt at regional integration on the global stage to Europe under the European Union (EU). To date the EU stands as the world's model of supranational regionalism. The EU has managed to incorporate political elements in a deep economic integration. Omhae (1996) further argues that regional economies are the new engines of prosperity while the traditional nation states have become unnatural and even impossible business units in the global economy.

But for Stephenson and Hufbauer (2012), opening of labour markets probably constitutes the most sensitive of all the liberalization dimensions of international trade. As a result, agreements to open labour markets are not as numerous as other agreements, and they are typically more restrictive. Movement of labour is one of the four fundamental economic freedoms, along with free movement of goods, services and capital. Of the four, it is met with least reciprocity on the part of receiving countries in the international economy, whether developed or developing. Even the most spirited-free traders such as Chile, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, China, have been reticent about opening their borders to admit labour from abroad. More than 2,800 bilateral investments have been signed to date, but nothing equivalent exists in the area of labour (Vis-Dunbar and Nikiema, 2009). The number of trade agreements covering services is growing rapidly, yet the willingness to incorporate meaningful provisions on labour mobility into services package is limited, and most agreements contain the modest market access opportunities for foreign workers. As observed by Vis-Dunbar and Nikiema, 2009; Nita, Pecoud, De Lombaerde, Neyts, and Gartland (2017), several recent free trade agreements (FTAs) contain no provisions at all in this area. Leaving aside formal bilateral and regional trade agreements, it is

extremely difficult to determine the number of bilateral agreements and arrangements for temporary workers.

The problem with the present situation, according to Mattoo and Sauvé (2010) is two-fold: the first has to do with its unbalanced nature. Developed economies have a comparative advantage in the export of capital and thus benefit tremendously from the openness of capital markets and the welcoming character of investment regimes. The second problem is that the entire world suffers from a loss of potential income that could be realized through greater mobility. Depending on what assumptions are made by researchers, the potential gains could be quite substantial and could easily surpass the combined gains anticipated from free trade especially in agricultural and manufactured goods.

One of the most important arguments for open borders is that enhanced labour mobility increases world gross domestic product (GDP) and leads to a more equitable distribution of wealth (Clemens 2011). Also liberalization of movement of workers could significantly reduce world poverty mainly achieved through an income increase of people who move, as well as increase in remittances to be sent to countries of origin. Therefore, migration remains a key livelihood strategy for Africans. According to AfDB (2008), the present situation of restricted movement signals a critical lack of coordination and collaboration on youth employment, labour market flexibility, innovative cross-border social safety nets and social policy reforms. Such efforts require strong commitment, political will and ownership from ECOWAS member states.

The treaty of ECOWAS requires the community to ensure removal of obstacles to free movement of persons, goods, services and capital and to guarantee the right of residence and establishment (ECOWAS, 2000). To date, ECOWAS has signed three supplementary protocols on this subject. The first provides for the free entry of community citizens for a period of 90 days without visa, provided that they possess travel documents, and also grants them right of entry, residence and establishment. The second protocol allows community residents to reside, seek employment, and engage in income-earning employments in any member state. The protocol specifically refers to migrant workers, defined as nationals of community member states who seek or propose to hold employment, are already holding employment, or have in the past held employment in a member country. Special provisions are made for four protocol categories: migrant workers, itinerant workers, seasonal workers, and border workers (Mattoo and Sauvé, 2010).

Despite early provisions on free movement of persons, implementation within ECOWAS has been slow and hampered, in particular by efforts of

young member states to affirm their sovereignty. In certain years, several measures have been undertaken – in particular since 2000, in the harmonization of passports, as well as joint border operations by customs and immigration offices. Even at that, only eight out of the 15-member states (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) use the regional passport (OECD, 2008; Stephenson and Hufbauer, 2010).

It must be emphasized that mobility of labour brings about migration. In 2015, more than 244 million people reside in countries other than their country of birth; many migrated within their region or towards high-income Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) countries (Nita, Pecoud, de Lambaerde, Neyts and Gartland, 2017).

Most migrations – internal or international – lead to higher prospects for migrants' children. Since 2000 there has been a surge of optimism over the benefits of migration on development. *The Human Development Report 2009* outlined evidence about positive impacts of migration on human development, such as increased household incomes via remittances and improved access to education and health services – mainly from north-south migration flows. More than three-quarters of migrants travel to countries with higher level of human development than their country of origin (UNDP, 2009).

In an African context, most movements occur between countries with contiguous borders and small differences in income. As a majority of these migrants moving to another country are poor, even small increases in income can have significant impacts on their human development and family (Woutersee and Taylor, 2008). Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 63% of intra-regional flows and the numbers are even higher for sub-regions (Ratha, 2011). Migrants merely stay within their sub-regions, as in West Africa, where about 7.5 million migrants move within the region, accounting for 71-86% of total emigration (OECD-SWAC, 2008).

It should be pointed out that ECOWAS' 90-day visa-free movement policy is not enough to reap enough long-term benefits of labour mobility. Language differences, as well as failure to harmonize community immigration procedures, documents and fees, constitute drawbacks to the fulfilment of treaties and protocols. Attempts have been made in the past to enhance free movements within the region. For instance, the Treaty of ECOWAS (1975) aimed to eliminate all obstacles to the free movement among the 15-member states, while the protocol on free movement of persons and the Right of Residence Establishment, ratified in 1980, agreed to free entry of community citizens without a visa for 90 days as a first phase, and the right of residence as a second phase for 1986. Although biometric ECOWAS passport was

introduced in 2000, which can also be used to travel to third countries, many ECOWAS nationals do not possess travel documents or birth certificates to take advantage of it (Adepoju, 2005).

The free and unregulated movement of people is one of the least developed areas in regional integration. Migration has been on the agenda of the African Union (AU) and various regional economic communities (REC). Although ECOWAS has made notable progress, most of the REC initiatives suffer from slow ratification of protocols or relatively modest commitments toward free movement by member states.

In periods of rapid growth, ECOWAS member states welcomed labour migrants but sometimes expelled them en masse during crises. For instance, the immigration of ECOWAS citizens into Nigeria gathered momentum after the protocol on free movement of goods, capital and people was ratified in 1980 which coincided with the era of oil boom. However, the influx was disrupted by the expulsion orders of 1983 and April 1985 (Afolayan, 1988). As if in reciprocation, Ghana in 2019 reportedly deported 723 Nigerians over accusations of cybercrime, prostitution, illegal residence and unruly public conduct (Daily Trust, 2019). Other countries such as Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Senegal have violated guarantees provided by ECOWAS protocol by expelling non-nationals (World Bank, 2010).

Labour Mobility and Inclusive Growth

Much of intra-Africa migration is irregular and migrants face systemic disadvantages without access to basic services, thus reducing the potential contributions of intra-African migration to development. Higher levels of irregularity of African migrants stem in part from restrictions on immigration and high costs of travel documents combined with porous borders. Globally, an estimated 50 million people are today living and working abroad in an irregular condition (World Bank, 2011). Sub-Saharan African economies are mainly built on informal sectors, and the majority of intra-African labour migrants remain unemployed in the informal economy, often due to difficulties of obtaining legal residence status or work permits.

Living as a Migrant

Migrants are not as totally free as expected. They live under disadvantaged conditions and are expected to be more loyal than the average investors in times of stress even as they are often willing to do jobs that locals no longer are interested in such as care for the elderly (UNDP, 2009). When migration is induced by a conflict or natural disaster leading to sudden inflow of migrants, the displaced people may resort to unsustainable activities in

absence of other means of survival exacerbating existing environmental problems and creating new ones (Hugo, 2008). On the other hand, migration can work as a channel for adoption of more environmentally friendly production and consumption practices.

Social cohesion and inclusive growth is furthermore challenged by limited land ownership rights for migrants, the non-recognition of qualifications of dual citizenship, and limited opportunities for family reunification. Historically, agricultural labour migrants were given a land share to cultivate their own crops as compensation for helping out on large farms, as in Cote d'Ivoire. Current challenges include immigration pressures and unequal rights, which exacerbate social exclusion. Finally, few integration efforts have allowed xenophobia and social factionalism to gain ground. The social cost of lacking integration includes risks to health and cohesion.

Emigration can serve as a way to release political pressure which diminishes the incentives of the established political elite to reform, increase corruption and reduces overall government effectiveness. Political instability is probably one of the most important determinants of migration pressure. Citizens of most ECOWAS countries reeling under repressive regimes prefer to emigrate as a way of escaping sufferings occasioned by bad government. as many as 11, 929 and 1,1979 Gambia citizens are living in Italy and Libya respectively as at September 2017 as they escaped the reign of Yahaya Jahmmeh (Zanker, 2017). Furthermore, a six-country survey by Kirwin and Anderson (2018) suggests that individuals are migrating for economic reasons but statistical analysis of the Nigeria data reveals a different set of push factors behind the desire to migrate. In fact, economic standing has a limited effect on Nigerians' desire to leave their home. Instead, individual perceptions of the strength of Nigeria's democracy are most strongly associated with Nigerians' desire to migrate abroad.

Migration shapes values and attitudes towards gender roles within the household. When women move, their role as care givers changes, and men have been found to be more likely engaged in domestic activities such as caring for the children and the elderly. When men emigrate, women are empowered to take prominent part in community decision making, control their own income, and expand their role in domestic sphere. Even other domestic norms, such as a greater emphasis on girls' schooling, higher age marriage, can filter from destination country to sending society. Migration decision is also an integral part of family planning decisions and lead to differences in fertility rates among migrants and non-migrants.

Migration does not only imply movement of people, but also movement of cultures (Castles and Miller, 2009:41). Successful assimilation

to the destination country requires the migrants to interact with the new society, while keeping the culture of the origin country alive and creates a positive environment for the multi-cultural identity to form. On the other hand, some migrants may resort to the customs of the origin country more rigorously as they would have done back home. This highlights the importance of integration of immigrants, and supporting them in creation of their new multi-cultural identity.

International migration is increasing in the ECOWAS sub-region, though labour markets remain less integrated than markets for goods, services or capital markets. Following global trends, the number of migrants in the ECOWAS sub-region has increased over recent decades. However, international labour migration remains relatively small and less dynamic compared to cross-border flows of goods, services and finance.

Greater labour market access for migrants from developing countries has the potential to deliver substantial development gains, in excess of the benefits from further trade liberalization. Increased migration has the potential to deliver win-win-win benefits to: migrant workers themselves; (developing) countries of origin; and host country economies. World Bank estimates of the welfare gain from greater labour mobility show that 3 per cent increase in global migration could deliver benefits of over \$350 billion (ESCAP, 2014). Sending countries generally benefit from outward migration. Migration can increase wage rates for those left behind as labour becomes scarcer; remittance inflows support consumption and investment; and the prospect of migration increases incentives for would-be migrants to develop skills and knowledge. These positives generally outweigh the cost of the so-called 'brain drain' although in certain sectors this can be damaging, especially in small countries. Receiving countries also benefit from migration when it meets labour market needs. Despite public common concerns, there is little evidence that migration substantially impacts wages for local workers. Migrants are often entrepreneurial and can foster economic dynamism and business creation.

Enhancing the contribution of labour mobility to development will involve deepening existing agreements – as well as concluding new arrangements – with an emphasis on well-managed temporary labour market access for developing countries could have a larger positive impact on development than any other policy intervention. Host countries would also benefit if workers were allowed to fill specific labour shortages. To achieve this, more bilateral corporation on labour mobility is needed. This can be achieved through free standing bilateral labour agreements or as part of wider trade deals.

People from the ECOWAS region are six times more mobile within their region than Europeans are (SWAC-OECD 2006). In other words, “more than 80 million Africans have migrated from rural to the cities” (SWAC-OECD, 2006: p.18). Further, 56% of West African population is under 20 years of age; 66% are under 25 years of age as compared to 12% and 15% respectively in Europe. There has been incredible progress in education with the number of literate adults doubling every 10 years since 1970.

In 2013, West Africa hosted the largest number of international migrants on the African continent, with around 6.7 million people of whom 3.1 million were females and 3.6 million were males (UN, 2013; Kabbanji, 2017). In relative terms, West Africa falls behind Southern Africa, with international migrants accounting for 2% of its total population. Since the 1980s, this proportion has fluctuated in West Africa rising to 2.5%, therefore scoring somewhat below global trends.

A dominant feature in regional arrangements, irrespective of the economic, ‘political-security’ and socio-cultural context is the framing of free movement agreements around potential economic gains for citizens or a perceived shared regional identity. The latter is premised on common interests with regard to specific migration challenges and/or the mutual trust that is forged by a common past. Another important characteristic is the influence of domestic politics on the implementation of regional priorities. Concerns over border security and fears of political backlash in contexts marked by socio-economic inequalities may affect the commitment to arrangements seeking to further liberalize free movement and result in divergences from agreed regional standards. The aforementioned obstacles, the severity of which differs from region to region, have had significant consequences on the rights of migrants and most notably among the most disadvantaged.

Women’s mobility is still determined by gender inequality. Unequal gender relations either force them to leave their homes or restrain them from moving (Kabbanji, 2014). Across West Africa, men tend to be more likely to want to leave than women, although this varies based on religion. In Nigeria and Burkina Faso, both countries with significant Christian populations, women are on par with men in their desire to migrate, while in Niger, which is majority Muslim, women are half as open to leaving Niger. In Nigeria, for example, the difference between Muslims and Christians in desire to migrate is stark. According to Kirwin and Anderson (2018), about two-thirds (68%) of Muslims wish to stay in their country, compared with 39% of Christians. Across all six countries, urban residents are also more likely to want to depart, which is perhaps unsurprising since many urban dwellers have already made at least one move from rural to urban areas. Black and Collyer (2014) argue

that urban residents also often desire to migrate but cannot, since they are frequently poor and marginalised but have greater access to information.

The growing involvement of external actors in the region has had an important effect on its reconfiguration of priorities of migration. This has been shown by the measures adopted in the framework of the Common Position of ECOWAS on migration. A comparative analysis of documents developed by the organization before and after 2000 reveals three principal changes: an increased importance given to the management of migration between West Africa and Europe; an increase in the tools for restricting migration; and an increase in development strategies aiming at population retention.

During the 1970s and 80s, ECOWAS was primarily invested in the implementation of mechanisms allowing the freedom of intra-community migration through the granting of three sets of rights for the nationals of Member States: the right to be admitted on the territory of one of its States without an entry visa for stays of less than 90 days; the right to reside there; and the right to establish there.

However, the adoption of the Common Position in January 2008 refocused the objectives of the organization in the area of migration. It was no longer only a matter of establishing free movement of persons within the community space, but also of adopting measures relating to interregional migration, particularly between West Africa and Europe.

ECOWAS member states in line with Article 14 reserve the right to expel migrant workers and members of their family in certain situations, among others, for reasons of national security, public order and accepted standard of behaviour. For instance, the outbreak of Ebola virus placed severe strain on free movement in the region from 2014. Kabbanji (2014: p.100) observes that during this time:

Senegal...closed its border with Guinea; Guinea...closed its borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia; Sierra Leone...closed its borders with Guinea and Liberia; the Ivory Coast...banned certain flights to and from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and...closed its borders with Guinea and Liberia; Nigeria...banned certain flights to and from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Article 17 specifies that member states must allow migrant workers to transfer their earnings and savings, but always subject to the terms of member state's legislation, while an important section added to this section of the article addressed the responsibility of member states to work together over the long term to harmonize their employment and labour practice.

The right of establishment which is the additional Protocol A/SP2/5/90 relate to “the right afforded to the citizen, national of a member state, to install or establish himself in a member state than his state of origin, to participate in economic activity, to exercise as well as set up and manage companies, particularly companies set up under the laws of the host member state for its own nationals” (Kabbanji, 2014: p. 101).

Impact of Migrations on Educational Systems/Policies in the ECOWAS Sub-region

ECOWAS countries are still far behind in approximating the African Union’s target of devoting 1% of GDP to gross domestic expenditure on research and development. According to UNESCO Science Report (2015), only Mali comes closest (0.66% in 2010), followed by Senegal (0.54% in 2010), trailed by Ghana (0.38% in 2010), Nigeria and Togo (0.22% in 2007 and 2012 respectively), Burkina Faso (0.20% in 2009) and Gambia (0.13% in 2011).

In an attempt to overcome this, the ECOWAS policy on Science and Technology came into effect in 2011 (ECOWAS, 2011). It provided for a framework for member states wishing to improve their own national policies and action plans for science, technology and innovation (STI) as well as evaluating the policy’s implementation, which unfortunately was often overlooked. Among the set targets set by member countries through ECOPOST are to:

- raise gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) to 1% of GDP, as recommended by the African Union in 2003; in 2013, research intensity averaged 0.3% in West Africa;
- define their own research priorities, so that researchers are working on topics of national interest rather than those proposed by donors;
- create a national S&T fund which would allocate funds to research projects on a competitive basis;
- establish science and innovation prizes;
- define a harmonized regional status for researchers;
- put in place a national fund for local innovators which would also help them protect their intellectual property rights;
- adapt university curricula to local industrial needs;
- develop small research and training units in key industrial fields, such as lasers, fibre optics, biotechnology, composite materials and pharmaceuticals;
- equip research laboratories, including with information and communication technologies;

- establish science and technology parks and business incubators;
- help companies specializing in electronics to set up business in their country and develop the use of satellites and remote sensing for telecommunications, environmental monitoring, climatology, meteorology, etc.;
- develop a national capacity to manufacture computer hardware and design software;
- facilitate the spread of modern information technology infrastructure to foster teaching, training and research;
- incite the private sector to finance research and technology through tax incentives and related measures;
- create networks between universities, research institutions and industry to promote collaboration;
- foster clean, sustainable sources of energy and the development of local construction materials;
- establish national and regional databases on research and development activities.

(George, Nouhou & Almamy, 2015, p.30-31).

Available data indicate shortage of qualified manpower despite this elaborate arrangement. Senegal has 361 full-time equivalent researchers per million inhabitants in 2010, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, followed by Burkina Faso (48), Ghana and Nigeria (39), Togo (36) and Mali (32) which falls below the world average of 176 per million inhabitants in 2014. It is pertinent to point out that despite the disproportionate representation among low-skilled migrants employed in areas such as cross-border trading, women's share of highly skilled migrants from the ECOWAS sub-region increased by 180% from 1990 to 2000.

The impact of migration on educational policies and systems in the ECOWAS region is low compared to other sectors. This can be attributable to some problems such as language and cultural barriers. Article 23 of the Supplementary Protocol provides for "the right to equal treatment of nationals in regard to employment security, re-employment in case of job loss, training and professional education" (Supp. Protocol A/SP.1/7/86, Article 23). There was also the ECOWAS Youth Employment Action Plan for 2013-aimed at encouraging intra-regional mobility identified as a priority area, to be achieved through the development of certificate equivalence frameworks, as well as through studies to better understand the situation of young migrant workers and cross-border traders. The Action Plan also has among its priorities to

strengthen labour market information systems in the sub-region, as well as to reinforce youth employability through education and vocational training.

Cognisance of the fact that recognition of qualifications across borders is key to encouraging mobility and ensuring that migrants can find employment which match their skills and experience, to the benefit of both countries of origin and destination as well as migrants themselves, the ECOWAS Convention on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and other Qualifications in Member States was adopted in 2003 to increase mobility of students, teachers, and other skilled workers. The Convention committed Member States to recognise the validity or equivalence of degrees and certificates with the same Support for Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa academic value. It also committed them to providing training and education that comply with international standards, while taking into account the regional context.

But faced with difficulties in its implementation, mainly due to language barriers and variations in education systems based on different colonial legacies, the ECOWAS Commission launched a feasibility study on the implementation of the Convention in 2009. The outcome of the result of the report was the agreement on the need for a system of recognition for all diplomas awarded within ECOWAS to facilitate student mobility and the exchange of teachers and researchers. Based on the result of the study, an ad-hoc Committee was set up to guide the implementation process.

The Education, Culture, Science and Technology Directorate has as one of its objectives to harmonise education and training systems, guided by the General Convention on the Recognition of Equivalence of Certificates. Since the adoption of the feasibility study on the establishment of a Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in 2012, the Directorate has been seeking funding for sensitisation and capacity building to develop the frameworks. The Education Division has also focussed on the promotion of vocational education and training, through the roadmap for the revitalisation of the ECOWAS Technical and Vocational Education (TVET).

But in order to strengthen the educational policies and systems in the region, there is the dire need for the following to be taken into urgent consideration:

- i. public enlightenment, concerted advocacy and public education campaign in all countries of the sub-region;

- ii. comprehensive migration management to include the development of a comprehensive policy framework to take into account direct and indirect impacts of sectoral policies on trade, investment, employment, health and education;
- iii. since a viable starting point to the formation of attitudes favourable to migration is through the formal educational system, there is need for the “catch them young strategy” to inform young students in schools about the positive roles and benefits of migration, as well as the duties and obligations of migrants. Youths should be involved in cross-cultural activities to foster the integrative agenda of ECOWAS, and also to reverse the top-to-bottom approach of the functioning of ECOWAS. Exchange of students should be encouraged more so since these are leaders-in-waiting, and are expected to assume the mantle of the Community leadership in the future.
- iv. There is also the need to fully implement the compulsory use of the major languages in the sub-region – English and French in schools and adopting them as the lingua franca of the sub-region.

Hindrances to migration

In some cases, such as that of Burkina Faso, employment laws do not specify that preferential treatment should be granted to nationals of ECOWAS and UEMOA Member States. All foreign workers are treated the same way (Soulama, 2003). Thus, ECOWAS citizens are liable, in the same way as all non-nationals, to the cost of a work visa. Moreover, in Burkina Faso, employment legislation from 1992 stipulates that the employer must apply for a visa, for which the related costs have been revised upwards since 22 June 2004. A new law was introduced, fixing graduated tariffs according to the net monthly income of the worker. Thus, for foreigners earning less than 100 000 CFA francs per month, the visa tariff was set at 25 per cent, while, for those with a salary between 100 001 and 500 000 CFA, the tariff rises to 30 per cent.

Trafficking in women and children has been increasingly reported throughout the ECOWAS region. Women are often taken away from Ghana, Nigeria, Mali and Sierra Leone, to be exploited as sex workers of the countries in the European Union. Children are also trafficked, often from plantations in Togo, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, to become domestic workers in Gabon (Yaro, 2008).

Conclusion

In conclusion, a lot of obstacles inhibit regional integration and migration in the ECOWAS region among which include deficit and

deficient infrastructural system which affect transportation, energy and communication; ambitious schemes and deadlines which are seldom met; the structural characteristics of the integrating economies most of which are exemplified by small economies, infrastructural deficit, poverty, low population and low GDP; failure to implement decisions resulting in, even some when eventually implemented, to work against conditions conducive to integration; divided loyalty which make some ECOWAS countries more loyal to the colonial masters than the regional body. They maintain and sustain economic, political and colonial heritage with their colonial masters through monetary cooperation and trade. Other factors include economic instability, and revenue losses as most member states do not benefit from the immediate benefit of the integration process.

Recommendations

Integration, it must be accepted, is gradual, lengthy and progressive and as such member states should thoroughly understand what it entails. In that case, there must be concessions on the clear objectives to be achieved by member states. That being the case, it is recommended as follows:

- Efforts backed by strong political will must be made to eliminate discriminatory practices and barriers among member states.
- There must be agreed and clear objectives.
- Integration must be progressive with clear and realistic derivables and derogations must be granted with caution.
- There must be in place a framework that allows a party to be able to cope with shocks.
- ECOWAS protocol and such other similar international protocols on free movement of persons, goods and services, should be exhaustively and comprehensively implemented by all member states to improve labour mobility.

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