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Education policies and continental integration: A historical analysis of the OAU's agendas (1963-2002)

Kebede Kassa Tsegaye *

Senior Coordinator; Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Intergovernmental Authority on Development Health and Social Development Division Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

This paper reviews top-level continental commitments, at the council of ministers and heads of state and government, the two highest levels of continental diplomatic-cum-policy organs of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The data is generated from the decisions, declarations, and resolutions adopted by these high-level political/decision-making bodies of the OAU from 1963 to 2002. About 110 decisions, resolutions, declarations, etc. were adopted/endorsed by these bodies during the study period. The African Union has put a list of all the decisions, resolutions, and declarations up to the current year on its website. For this paper, the search was made using keyword entries: education, science, technology, training, curriculum, scholarship, and others. The latter refers to terminologies such as school, institutions, literacy, etc. The study aims at highlighting the recurrent themes around education, and in what connection were these concepts used. It asks questions such as, what were the direct and indirect goals of education? The paper is an analysis of primary sources. The study aims to highlight the recurrent themes surrounding education and analyze how these concepts were addressed in OAU's policy decisions. The national-level effectiveness of those policy discourses, though, is beyond the paper's scope. Based on the available evidence, the paper concludes that education, including literacy, training, science, and technology assumes important policy space at continental level. It also found that some of the decisions tend to be repeated, for lack of follow-up mechanisms of earlier decisions. Moreover, the paper found out that emphasis on education-related objectives changes through time following changes in other political and socioeconomic realms.

Keywords: OAU; Decisions; Declarations; Education; Development, Integration; Decolonization; Partnership

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* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* kebede.kassa@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) came into existence earlier than other regional groupings in an organized and well-structured manner. The OAU was established in 1963 by the then Independent African states, with its Headquarters (HQ) in Addis Ababa. The choice of that City as its HQ was symbolic since Addis Ababa boasts of being the capital of the only truly independent country. The Organization is best known for its emphasis on decolonization and total independence of Africa (Binaisa, 1977; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). As Kwame Nkrumah said, "the independence of Ghana is meaningless, unless it is linked to the total liberation of Africa" (Essuman Esq, 2010). The issue of decolonization was one of the major preoccupations of the OAU, especially until the 1990s. Though decolonization in the sense of achieving independence from the colonial masters was accomplished, the question of decolonization of education and development was not successfully complete. The continent has seen waves of neocolonialism and indirect influences of former colonial masters in the name of the commonwealth enterprise economic aid and humanitarian-cum-military assistance. Education, science, and technology are not still colonial in form and substance but have also not contributed to socioeconomic transformations of the continent. Therefore, despite the decades of emphasis on education, science and technology as means of elevating the region out of poverty, these entities have become mere symbols of political liberation but not freedom from want. Seen from these angles, the OAU can be said to have deplorably failed the continent (Schalk et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, the OAU considered education and training as key areas of inter-state, regional and international cooperation. While this is true, there are always lingering questions. What were some of the main aspects of educational themes recurring in the OUA's agenda which the leaders were requested to provide policy directive or guidance? What did the continent's leaders want to achieve through education? In other words, what can we learn from these themes? Which of the themes are still valid? These are some of the questions the paper intends to answer and, by so doing, draw lessons from the present to the future.

As we can see later, the very fascinating fact about education in the OAU is that it was on the agenda right at the founding summit of the OAU. Initially, the subject of education was under "Education and Culture," but soon it became part of Education, Culture and Health with a Commission under that name. The purpose of education was to facilitate regional integration by minimizing the fact of colonially imposed physical fragmentation and cultural isolation. The continent's leaders were "Desirous of strengthening educational and cultural ties amongst the peoples of Africa ... considering that the educational and cultural co-operation ... will break down linguistic barriers and promote understanding amongst the people of the continent" (OAU, 1963b). The Charter of the OAU also provides that the Organization promotes solidarity and unity of Africa through the coordination of education, culture, and human resources development.

Therefore, right from its early years, the OAU gives certain importance to education, training and skills building among African citizens. The prime significance attached to education and training was triggered by the realization, among the leaders of the newly independent African states, of the need to assist those displaced by the struggle for liberation, on the one hand, and the desire to staff the emerging bureaucracies by educated African, on the other. The study identifies five overlapping and recurring themes related to education and its derivatives. These themes include education and decolonization; education, solidarity, and regional integration; education and development; education, equity and inclusion and education and international cooperation (see Figure 1). Each of these clusters will be treated separately in the discussion section.

2. Methodology

The study used a combination of techniques including discourse analysis, descriptive methods, and historical approaches. Contrary to its use in language analysis, discourse analysis is employed here to interpret the decisions, resolutions, and declarations of the OUA, most of which give guidance or directives to the OAU Secretariat, line ministries, and partners to engage in collaborative action. At times, the decisions, declarations, resolutions, etc., refer to past accomplishments whereby the policy directives were implemented and the leaders of the continent express commendation, appreciation, or encourage further actions. The historical approach refers to the timespan of forty years, from 1963-2002. In other words, the paper relies heavily on text and context analysis. Therefore, the study period starts with the establishment of the OAU in 1963 until 2002, when the Organization was about to cease to be replaced by its successor, the African Union (AU). The criteria used to select the policy-oriented documents were references of these decisions, resolutions, or declarations to education, science, technology, and terms associated with them. Accordingly, the data collection techniques included the use of entries. The entries included terms such as education, training, science, technology, innovation, scholarship and curriculum, employment, refugees, students, or their derivatives. These key terms were used to locate the decisions, resolutions, and declarations adopted throughout the 40 years of the OUA. Then the purpose for which goal education, science, technology, and their associates or derivatives were used was determined as can be shown in the discussion section. Once these entries are employed to search the specific policy instrument adopted. Then a detailed examination of that instrument is carried out. The focus was on the subject or theme in which education, training, science, technology, innovation, and curriculum is used. Then the purpose of the reference to these entries is determined.

2.1. Limitations

This paper deals with materials from the OAU. The data comes from the policy directions set by African Heads of State and Government (AHG) and the Council of Ministers of the Organization who are ministers of foreign affairs or ministers of external relations and cooperation. Therefore, the paper does not focus on the literature about education in Africa during the OAU. Nor does it devote attention to the theoretical aspects of education be it in Africa or elsewhere. These may be a subject for other researchers or the same researcher in other papers. The paper also deliberately excludes the decision, declarations, resolutions, etc., since the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU). That will be a subject for another paper.

3. Why education matters for the OAU

Education is both a human right and a tool for socio-economic transformation and regional integration (Chou, Huisman, and Lorenzo, 2024; World Bank, ND; Agwu and Chukwu, 2019). A thorough and systematic examination of the OAU records: decisions, resolutions, declarations, conventions, and treaties produced between 1963 and 2002 revealed the following themes. These themes are depicted in a diagrammatic schema to make them visible. As seen in the diagram, at the core of the discussion is education. The various documents revolve around decolonization, inter-state collaboration and integration, development, equity/equality and partnership or cooperation at national, regional, and international levels. Each of these components are

discussed in the light of the evidence gleaned from the policy documents of the OAU during the period under consideration. As indicated in the “Limitations” section, the study should be regarded as a compilation made from primary sources: decisions, declarations, resolutions, policy frameworks, etc. In a sense, the paper is intended to serve as a springboard for further empirical research. However, this is not to say that nothing has been done about education at continental level. It is just another look into the available material.

The rationale for conducting the study is the desire to avoid repeating the past by the successor organization, the African Union (AU) unless it is extremely important to do so. For example, the Year 1996 was declared as the Year of Education in Africa. Almost three decades later, 2024 is declared as the Year of Education in Africa. The AU should establish the link between the two and explain what binds or separates them, what has been achieved during the previous Year of Education, and what is desired in the new Year of Education in 2024. Partners that support the AU have responsibilities to understand what went before and what should be done at present as well as in the future.

There is no harm in dedicating a year to something else, but this decision must be made with full knowledge of what has gone on before and needs to be done today or tomorrow. Anyway, the facts are presented here thinking that doing so might help future generations of researchers can do more, and vigorous analyses. The sections that follow will examine each of these themes in some detail. To make clear the linkage between the various purposes for which education was used as a continental policy agenda for four decades, the following flow charts illustrate these recurring themes.

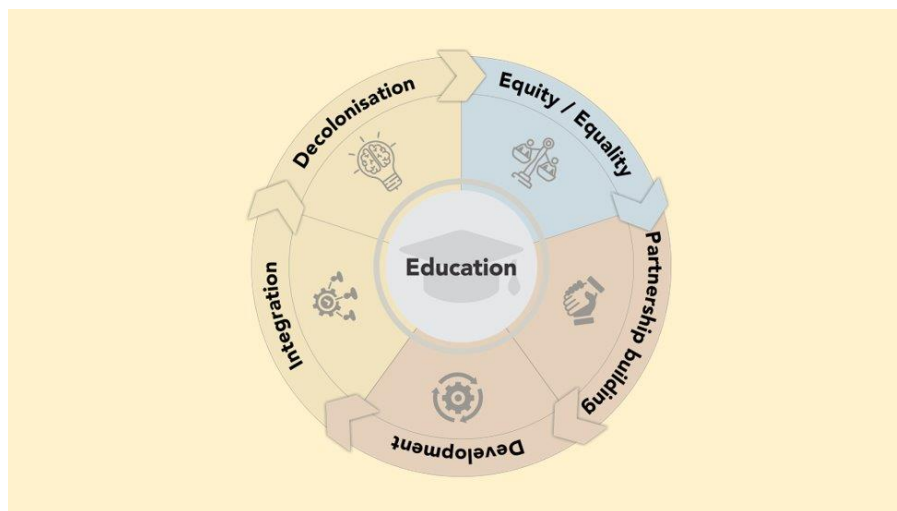


Figure 1. Diagram depicting recurrent themes in the OUA's decisions, resolutions

4. Discussion

4.1. Education and decolonization

To state the obvious, Africa was under the yoke of colonialism between the last quarter of the 19th century and mid-20th century. However, the Second World War that began in Africa (Ethiopia) was followed by

independence for the Continent. The winds of liberation began in the late 1950s; and by the early 1960s, several African countries could achieve independence. After a series of diplomatic wrangling, these countries decided to create an umbrella regional organization to help consolidate the political gains of liberated countries. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was born in 1963.

During the founding Conference of independent states of Africa, the leaders of the continent identified education, along with culture, as one of the areas of interstate collaboration. This was made clear in the Charter of the OAU which provides, among others, that “Member States shall coordinate and harmonize their general policies, especially in the following fields: (a) Political and diplomatic cooperation; (b) Economic cooperation, including transport and communications; (c) *Educational and cultural cooperation* [emphasis added]; (d) Health, sanitation and nutritional cooperation; (e) Scientific and technical cooperation; and (f) Cooperation for defence and security”(OAU, 1963). To the extent of helping refugees in the spirit of African solidarity OUA had established a Bureau of Placement and Education of Refugees. That Bureau h played certain positive roles in promoting education for African in conflict-affected countries, especially during the struggle for liberation.

One of the overarching policy themes, especially in the first decade or so, was decolonization. The emphasis on decolonization takes two forms. On the one hand, the colonial system had to be removed from the Continent's political system. This means education and training were required to shape a new citizenry in the newly liberated countries while the struggle to liberate countries still under the yoke of colonialism was to continue.

Accordingly, education of the mind and the body was deemed necessary for the complete decolonization. Education was also deemed essential to replace the white rulers and newly educated Africans assume a greater role in running the newly independent countries. In other words, assisting countries to achieve full independence, and help those still under the colonial administration get out of their precarious conditions. The other dimension of education for decolonization was articulating the need for education of refugees, especially young people under apartheid in South Africa. This made education a vital tool of decolonization and solidarity among Africans. Such emphasis on education as a means of decolonization and solidarity was made clear when the Council of Ministers, in 1966, “Reaffirms Support for humanitarian programs designed to assist the victims of apartheid ... and program to grant scholarships, educational facilities, and employment opportunities to refugees from South Africa” (OAU, 1966). To facilitate this, the Organization created an institutional arrangement entitled Bureau for the Placement and Education of Refugees (BPER) to coordinate regional and international efforts to respond to the education needs of young people impacted by the struggle against colonialism, including apartheid.

The political elites leading the independent states of Africa realized, at least theoretically, that education is a powerful tool, both for supporting the attainment of other goals, and as a field of development itself, and hence needs to be strongly pursued. Of course, this is true. Education, training, science and technology and curriculum harmonization are important instruments for national, regional, and international transformation. They are always useful for all kinds of social and economic development in the region as elsewhere. Yet questions remain as to whether the targets put in the various policy/political decisions were achieved. Though data on the direct or indirect impact or influence of emphasis on education is hard to obtain, it is possible to state that most of the commitments of the member states of the OAU remain unachieved. Moreover, post-independence South Africa could not keep the expectations of the continent as migrants to that rainbow nation

continue to suffer from occasional maltreatments. However, the disconnect between expectations and reality, with regard South Africa, needs thorough empirical investigations.

Moreover, this study does not find evidence on decolonization of education itself. Far from it. The calls articulated in the various policy documents of the OAU were to accelerate the growth and expansion of Western education. It was to serve the countries struggling to decolonize everything, politics, with the science, technology, and innovation of the system they wanted to remove. Moreover, reference to even indigenous system of knowledge was almost nonexistent. There was only one reference in a resolution entitled "Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development: The Cairo Agenda for Action" adopted by the OAU heads of state and government in 1996. This contradiction (the desire to decolonize, on the one hand, and to keep elements of the most dehumanizing system of colonialism, on the other, has characterized Africa since independence. Though local practices and knowledge are rich enough for people to lead a meaningful life, they are not developed to the extent of relegating education, science, and technology from outside. This is one dimension of the problem. African leaders were shy to articulate African indigenous knowledge. The other dimension, even if they were to articulate it, is that education, especially higher education, science, and technology are by their nature international. No one nation will be sufficient unto itself to engage in its own system of education, science, and technology though it can make innovations possible and even excel others. As the saying goes, it is "easier said than done". The third dimension of the problem is that due to the unfavorable domestic and international political situations, for example, to scale up investment in the sector since independence, the continent could not make a breakthrough in education, science, technology, and innovation.

4.2. Education, solidarity, and regional integration

Right from the start of the OAU, education and culture were seen as essential elements of inter-state cooperation, solidarity, and regional integration. Throughout the decades of the OUA, education, and culture were considered an important aspect of regional and continental integration. Realizing this fact, the Heads of State and Government, at their May 1973 summit in Addis Ababa, "Recommends the adaptation of educational programs to African realities and, to this end, the promotion of an African system of technical cooperation particularly, in education" (OAU, 1973). Integration is one of the reasons for the existence of the Organization of African Unity. Education, training, science, and technology are identified as key galvanizing entities whose functions as unifying factors are justifiable. By their very nature education, science, technology, and innovation are borderless. If it were to materialize, the movement of students, professors, researchers, and innovators could have been one of the means of regional and continental integration and people-to-people interaction. This was what the leaders of the OAU, at least in theory, wanted to see happening. Has this movement really materialized as expected? The answer to this question differs from region to region and from the perspective one sees it. During the time of the OAU, some of the regions of the continent were better integrated while others were in the process of doing so. Notable examples include the East African Community (EAC) and the West African CFA zones (UNECA, ND) where citizens, goods, and services move across borders with less difficulty, whereas in other regions (notably in the eastern and Horn of Africa regions) this was at its earliest stage. Despite this disparity between regions and between intentions or actual integration, the continent's leaders were very optimistic about the integration powers of education, science, and technology. In 1963, they were: "Desirous of strengthening educational and cultural ties amongst the peoples of Africa" ... since they were

convinced “... that the educational and cultural co-operation amongst African States will break down linguistic barriers and promote understanding amongst the people of the continent (OAU, 1963).” Understanding between people in the different geographic regions of the vast continent was supposed to take place primarily through education and gradually through institutions with shared visions for the future of Africa.

One major area of integration, if it was achieved, was the Pan African News Agency (PANA) within the prerogative of the Educational and Cultural Commission. The PANA and the Pan African University (PAU) were seen as two of the most integrative institutions. Yet, both lived only on paper during OAU. The latter came into existence after the OUA itself ceased, though that period is outside this paper’s scope. Furthermore, there is no evidence that PANA ever existed. Training of African citizens in technical skills, especially those needed at continental organizations like the OAU were crucial factors of integration. So, member states would be occasionally urged “to promote, help and encourage as far as possible, the training of their nationals who wish to make a career in [the] direction in which the needs of Africa are still very far from met (OAU, 1967).” Training is an integral part of education to fit people to a purpose. With the view to assist refugees, especially the ones affected by the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the OUA had established the afore-mentioned specialized Bureau. To enable BPEAR discharge its duty, especially in making education accessible to refugees, in 1974, OAU called upon its “... Member States to give the BPEAR their moral, material and financial support and to take the necessary measures for the success of its activities in the fields of Education and Placement.” This was one of the typical moves of solidarity and regional integration: the desire to address one of Africa’s burgeoning problems, the refugee crisis, in a coordinated and cooperative manner. Further illustration of the OUA’s desire to facilitate regional integration through institution building in the fields of education, science, technology, and training can be seen in the 1978 resolution of the Council of Ministers to establish the “Scientific Council of Africa” [*emphasis added*] (OUA, 1978). Such institutions were supposed to bring the continent closer together through the knowledge-based services they render to member states. Students, professors, and researchers were also expected to move from country to country to benefit from regional facilities when time, resources, and circumstances permit. However, even if education and its by-products were given considerable attention by the policy/decision-making organs of the OUA, there remained a mismatch between intentions and implementations, a chronic problem that continues to plague Africa till today.

4.3. Education, improved quality of life and development

The nexus between education and development is well established. The political elites of the OUA were firmly convinced that by introducing and expanding education, science, and technology, they would achieve development, peace, and stability in their respective countries and on the continent. This was one of their overarching goals for education. The emphasis on education as a midwife for development also led the continent to draw attention to teachers’ development, adult literacy, the education of boys and girls as well as the use of education to protect the environment and the health of their population. To this effect, African leaders subscribed to 1970 as the International Year of Education (OAU, 1970); 1996 as the Year of Education in Africa and the First Decade of African Education that commenced in 1997. The declaration of the Decade was premised on the “... understanding that its main objective would be to remove obstacles to progress towards education for all (OAU,1996).”

The link between education and development has been seen by the leaders of Africa in two ways. On the one hand, education was seen as a means of catalyzing socioeconomic development by keeping people healthy,

literate, well-nourished and fit for the development of their nations and continent. In endorsing the recommendations of their ministers of education, the OUA heads of state and government stated that they believed "... education in science and technology are indispensable for industrialization and rapid economic development in Africa." On the other hand, education was treated as a development sector on its own. If it were to bring the desired change in society, it was believed, it should be developed and reach significant levels. For this reason, the Council of Ministers, in 1976, "Adopts the recommendations [of their counterparts, the Ministers of Education] which deal with: a) the development of literature in African Languages, b) the development and promotion of technology geared to African realities, c) the study of procedures to establish an inter-African educational information network concerned with educational innovation, d) the feasibility of establishing a team of experts to deal with science, technology and education for development (OAU, 1976a)." A more direct correlation between education and development is observed when the Council of Ministers urged all stakeholders "...to adhere unswervingly to the view that culture, together with science and education, lies at the very heart of the development process" (OAU, 1976b). In addition to formal education, adult literacy and lifelong learning were accepted and declared at continental level as indispensable instruments of full participation of citizens in socioeconomic and political life. Adult education was the fashion of the day in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly as some of the OAU member states were claiming to have made a dent in reducing illiteracy rate among their populations including women, farmers, and the rural poor. However, despite the stress on functional literacy and education for social transformation, Africa has not made significant strides in achieving the stated objectives for and through education for the reasons mentioned above.

4.4. Education, equity, and inclusion

The theme of equity assumed many dimensions in the OUA's parlance. It refers to women, girls, children, young people, refugees, and those affected by conflicts. Education was supposed to address these and similar issues of inclusion and equity at national, regional, and continental levels. There are plenty of references about the inclusiveness of education in the decisions, resolutions, declarations, etc., of the OAU leaders, especially after independence was consolidated. In 1975, the Council of Ministers appeals to member states "...to pay special attention to increasing opportunities for the increased participation of women in the development of their countries through intensified programs for education and training ..." (OAU, 1975). Regarding making equitable access to education for refugees, the Council of Ministers at its July 1977 summit "recommends that they [member states] make more vacancies, bursaries and scholarships available to these refugees in their educational institutions" (OAU, 1977). The issue of equity in terms of access to education lies between solidarity (a shared continental identity), and a sense of mutual development, not leaving behind those unfortunate Africans in parts of the region languishing under apartheid or other colonial masters.

Similarly, equity and inclusion have also come to mean making education, training and skills building among women, girls, and young people among the mainstream population of Africa. Equitable access to education as well as to science technology as a means of achieving health, wellbeing and improved quality of life were important areas of focus especially since the 1990s and 2000 following the adoption of the Plan of Action of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); the Beijing Platform for Action; the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development and the Millennium Development Goal. It is also important to mention Africa's own commitments as enshrined in the Dakar/Ngor Declaration of 1992, the

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child of 1991, and the First Decade of Education in Africa, declared in 1997. Nevertheless, given the deplorably poor state education, science, and technology in Africa, it is difficult to state with certainty that the Continent has achieved the goals of inclusion, equity, and educational quality.

4.5. Education and international cooperation

The common theme when it comes to education as both a means to achieving goals in other sectors and an area of development of its own, is international cooperation. Most of these cooperations during, the OAU, as in the AU, refer to the UN agencies including UNESCO, UNECA, UNDP; ITU (International Telecommunications Union), the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization in the context of Afro-Arab Cooperation, African Bureau for Educational Science, Cultural and Technical Co-operation Agency (CTCA), and other international and regional institutions. The Cooperation between the OAU and the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization was based on "the similarity of the objectives" (OAU,1985) of the two organizations. An inter-African system of technical assistance was called for as a way of showing solidarity and "knowledge-based" cooperation.

At one of the earliest summits of the Council of Ministers, in July 1964, they adopted a resolution entitled "Relations with UNESCO" and urged the Administrative Secretary-General "... to maintain contact with UNESCO and to submit a draft Agreement to the Educational and Cultural Commission at its next session" (OAU, 1964). The cordial relationship between OAU and UNESCO continued without major hurdles, it seems, for good or bad, one can notice the invisible hands of the UNESCO on African educational and cultural affairs, among others. The summit of the heads of state and government held in July 1996, "Hails the efforts being made by UNESCO to strengthen cooperation among African Higher Educational Institutions and Universities and to ensure their effectiveness in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Association of African Universities (AAU) notably under UNESCO's Special "African Priority" Program." For some of these organizations, cooperation with the OAU was a two-way traffic. For example, when the United States of America threatened to pull out of its membership in UNESCO, both institutions were gravely startled. This issue was a hot topic for the top-level decision-making organs of the OAU. The Council of Ministers, at its March 1984 sessions expressed its concerns as follows:

- Considering that UNESCO and the OAU have since the 1960's maintained fruitful co-operation in the fields of Education, Social and Human Sciences, the Natural Sciences, Culture and Communication ...
- BELIEVES that such an action, if it does materialize, would deprive the Organization and its Member States of a valid representative in the fields of Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication (OAU, 1984).

Some of the international cooperations were in specific fields of education such as "the activities of the OAU in the field of Computer Science and Informatics Education" (OAU, 1981). The relationship between the OAU and UNECA was also focused on issues of continental significance. A 1970 session of the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution entitled "Inter-Africa Technical Assistance" (OAU, 1970). The Council of Ministers also "Encourages the Secretariats of OAU and ECA to strengthen their co-operation to extend and ensure the survival of operation 'Inter-African Technical Assistance'" (OAU, 1970). This and many other deliberations at high-level leadership level discussed in the foregoing sections make it abundantly clear that the OAU was keen to exploit education, science, technology, and affiliated disciplines for regional integration, decolonization,

solidarity, equity, and socio-economic transformation. However, how many of the continental policy directives have been translated into action is difficult to ascertain with conclusive evidence.

5. Conclusion

The study reviewed forty years of OAU's policy documents; decisions, resolutions, declarations, and the OAU Charter. The analyses focused on what the highest policy-making bodies: the council of ministers consisting of ministers of foreign affairs, international or external cooperations of the member states, and heads of state and government. The analysis revolved around education, science, technology or technical cooperation, training, scholarship, and curriculum development. These concepts were used as key entry terms for the search conducted in the various decisions, declarations, resolutions, and the Charter.

The research found that, contrary to common sense knowledge that most of the OUA's time was spent in decolonization or unrealized political integration, the leaders of the continent were concerned with socioeconomic aspects of life. These included education, health, employment, and livelihood., among others. This paper was concerned with the recurring themes in education throughout the forty years of the OUA. Education, which is used here to also refer to science, technology, training, and curriculum development, was used in five diverse ways discussed in this paper. Greater emphasis on education, especially scholarship, was meant to help people in difficult or vulnerable situations resulting from the struggle for independence and decolonization. In a sense, education was seen as one of the weapons of decolonization. However, there was a clear mechanism suggested to avoid colonial education or to decolonize education since this was almost impossible to do, but to expand more of western (for that matter colonial) education, science, technology, and innovation, though this was a dream unattained. Higher-level intentions were not matched by adequate strategy and resources either from outside or from within to undertake evaluative studies and to determine the success or lack thereof the various decisions, resolutions, or declarations at continental level. The struggle continues. Victory is not yet assured in this matter, and a lot of work is expected to be done by the AU. Yet, measuring efficacy is outside the scope of this paper. Other researchers on the educational history of Africa may be interested in addressing it. The same author may also return to the question of impact or efficacy of the policy directives of the OAU leaders in another study.

Education was also needed to speed up economic development in the region. Therefore, development was one of the recurring themes in or related to education, science, technology, and training. More concretely the 1980s and 990s characterized by increased emphasis on education to mid-wife accelerated socioeconomic development. The period coincided with the international movement towards balanced development with the adoption of the ICPD Plan of Action, the Copenhagen Conference on Social Development, and other international commitments. Education was considered as a catalyst for development. This is demonstrated by the declaration of 1996 as the Year of African Education and beginning in 1997, as the first Decade of Education in Africa. The promotion of adult education and lifelong learning, technical training, and functional literacy were expected to open new chapters in the lives of the diverse population of Africa thereby facilitating socioeconomic, cultural, and overall development. The prevention of diseases, including the fight against HIV/AIDS, placed strong emphasis on education. This was a major preoccupation of policymakers in the late 1980s, throughout the 1990s and beyond.

The adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the ICPD, Plan of Action the Beijing Platform for Action, etc., also served as convincing reason to articulate equitable and inclusive access to education. Education of women, girls and children had become an issue for the rights groups and had attracted considerable attention among development agencies, NGOs, and rights activists. External funding was attached to the promotion and protection of these rights and African leaders were eager to exploit the potential in the areas of education as well as other sectors, though the 1990s saw cutting foreign aid for social development sectors including education because of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was launched in 2000, at the close of the OUA days, attempted to reverse the loss in emphasis on education though most of the focus was university access to primary education at the expense of science and technology, vital for the transformation of continent.

The role of education in promoting, cementing, and expanding interstate, regional, and international cooperation was of paramount importance to African leaders. Cooperation - bilateral and multilateral - was requested in education, science, technology, and training. The study identified several partners requested by African Leaders to provide technical, financial, and all-rounded support to develop the sector and to make it relevant to other sectors as well. Obviously, UNESCO was considered an indispensable cooperation partner in education, science, and technology. UNECA too assumes a greater role in promoting training and technical support for Africa. The major challenge, however, is how to substantiate the gains Africa made from its partnership with different agencies both in Africa and globally. This applies to all the themes outlined in the paper though the subject will be a topic for another work.

Overall, African leaders considered education as one of the tools for complete decolonization, rendering support to those affected and impacted by the wars of liberation, and a means to promoting equality, equity, and inclusion. All these are expected to lead to socioeconomic transformation, improved quality of life, and enhanced cooperation with relevant stakeholders at regional and international levels. Seen from this perspective, education and its derivatives were given certain levels of policy space though not at par with the political liberation, economic freedom, peace, and stability which received greater attention though much remains to be desired even today.

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