New Approaches to Higher Education Policy Orientation in Africa: An Assessment of the African Union's 2063 Agenda within the Context of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community

Doctoral thesis submitted to the Committee on Political and Administrative Sciences, and the Doctoral School of the University of the National Education Commission, Krakow, in partial fulfilment of the requirements necessary for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and Public Administration.

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JUNE 2024
Kraków, Poland

Nowe podejścia do polityki szkolnictwa wyższego w Afryce: Ocena programu Unii Afrykańskiej 2063 w kontekście Środkowoafrykańskiej Wspólnoty Gospodarczej i Walutowej

Rozprawa doktorska przedłożona Komisji Nauk o Polityce i Administracji oraz Szkole Doktorskiej Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie w celu częściowego spełnienia wymagań niezbędnych do nadania stopnia doktora nauk humanistycznych w zakresie nauk o polityce i administracji publicznej.

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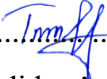Kraków, Poland

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Abstract

This study critically evaluates the alignment of higher education policies in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) with the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA). By employing qualitative research methodologies using grounded theory and NVivo, including literature reviews, policy analysis, and interviews with 16 key stakeholders, the research assesses both existing and emerging higher education policies trends in CEMAC countries. The findings highlight significant discrepancies in educational standards, linguistic barriers, and the lingering impact of colonial educational systems, which hinder the effective implementation of CESA and Agenda 2063. The study underlines the necessity of synchronising educational frameworks to promote sustainable development, emphasising the need for integrated educational policies to enhance human capital development. It draws on postcolonial and decolonial theories, modernisation theory, and human capital theory to provide a succinct understanding of the historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural factors influencing higher education policies in the subregion. Key findings reveal that the misalignment between higher education policies and CESA/Agenda 2063 objectives poses a significant barrier to the socio-economic development of the CEMAC subregion. This misalignment is attributed to colonial legacies, inadequate governmental leadership, and the prevalence of the "certificate syndrome," which prioritises certification over critical skills and knowledge development. The study concludes with recommendations aimed at fostering subregional cooperation, enhancing educational standards, and promoting policy reforms to establish a more structured and effective higher education system. This study contributes to the broader discourse on education and development in Africa, providing practical implications for policymakers, educators, and development practitioners. It also provides valuable insights into the potential of higher education as a catalyst for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063, arguing for the alignment of educational policies with CESA to enhance human capital and promote long-term socio-economic development.

Keywords: higher education, CEMAC, Agenda 2063, policy harmonisation, sustainable development, Africa.

Abstrakt

Niniejsze badanie krytycznie ocenia dostosowanie polityki szkolnictwa wyższego w Środkowoafrykańskiej Wspólnocie Gospodarczej i Walutowej (CEMAC) do Agendy 2063 Unii Afrykańskiej (UA) i Kontynentalnej Strategii Edukacyjnej dla Afryki (CESA). Korzystając z metodologii badań jakościowych, w tym przeglądów literatury, analizy polityki oraz wywiadów z kluczowymi interesariuszami, badanie to ocenia zarówno istniejące, jak i nowe polityki szkolnictwa wyższego w krajach CEMAC. Wyniki wskazują na istotne rozbieżności w standardach edukacyjnych, bariery językowe oraz utrzymujący się wpływ systemów edukacyjnych z czasów kolonialnych, które utrudniają skuteczną realizację Agendy 2063. Badanie podkreśla konieczność synchronizacji ram edukacyjnych w celu promowania zrównoważonego rozwoju, zaznaczając potrzebę zintegrowanych polityk edukacyjnych w celu zwiększenia rozwoju kapitału ludzkiego. Badania czerpią z teorii postkolonialnych i dekolonialnych, teorii modernizacji oraz teorii kapitału ludzkiego, aby zapewnić kompleksowe zrozumienie historycznych, politycznych i ekonomicznych czynników wpływających na polityki szkolnictwa wyższego w subregionie. Kluczowe ustalenia ujawniają, że brak zgodności między politykami szkolnictwa wyższego a celami CESA/Agendy 2063 stanowi znaczną przeszkodę dla rozwoju społeczno-ekonomicznego subregionu CEMAC. Ta niezgodność wynika z dziedzictwa kolonialnego, niewystarczającego przywództwa rządowego oraz powszechnego występowania „syndromu certyfikacyjnego", który priorytetowo traktuje certyfikację nad rozwój krytycznych umiejętności i wiedzy. Badanie kończy się zaleceniami politycznymi mającymi na celu wspieranie współpracy subregionalnej, podnoszenie standardów edukacyjnych oraz promowanie reform politycznych w celu ustanowienia bardziej zorganizowanego i skutecznego systemu szkolnictwa wyższego. Niniejsze badanie wnosi wkład do szerszej dyskusji na temat edukacji i rozwoju w Afryce, oferując praktyczne implikacje dla decydentów, edukatorów i praktyków rozwoju. Dostarcza cennych spostrzeżeń na temat potencjału szkolnictwa wyższego jako katalizatora realizacji celów Agendy 2063, promując zgodność polityk edukacyjnych z celami rozwoju kontynentalnego w celu zwiększenia zdolności ludzkich i promowania długoterminowego postępu społeczno-ekonomicznego.

Słowa kluczowe: szkolnictwo wyższe, CEMAC, Agenda 2063, harmonizacja polityki, zrównoważony rozwój, Afryka.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, who have consistently provided me with encouragement throughout my academic career.

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

List of tables

List of abbreviations

AAU	Association of African Universities
ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AfriQAN	African Quality Assurance Network
AIDA	Accelerated Industrial Development
AISN	American International School of N'Djamena
AOPL	Africa Online & Publications Library
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BTS	*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*
BCE	Before the Common Era
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAMES	*Higher Education Council for Africa and Madagascar*
CCTAS	Comprehensive Computerised Tracking and Assessment System
CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CFA franc	*Franc of the Financial Community of Africa*
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CWA	College of West Africa
DEUG	*Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales*
DUES	*Diplôme Universitaire d'Études Scientifiques*
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENCG	*Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion*
ESCM	*Ecole Supérieure de Commerce et de Management*
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development

xvi

ESGT	*Ecole Supérieure de Gestion et de Technologie*
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FIDES	Funds for Investment for Economic and Social Development
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GT	Grounded Theory
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INP	National Polytechnic Institute of Equatorial Guinea
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
LMD	*License-Master-Doctor*
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MIP	Minimum Integration Programme
NCFMEA	National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Plan
NVivo	NVivo (Qualitative Data Analysis Software)
PAQAF	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework
PAU	Pan-African University
PAUGHSS	Pan African University Institute for Governance Humanities and Social Sciences
PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SARA	State Authorisation Reciprocity Agreement
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SJR	SCImago Institutions Rankings
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
STER	Internationalisation for Training and Research Excellence
STC	Specialised Technical Committee
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCGE	Catholic University of Equatorial Guinea
UKEN	University of the National Education Commission Krakow
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNED	National Open University of Equatorial Guinea
UNGE	National University of Equatorial Guinea
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNILAG	University of Lagos
UOB	University of Omar Bongo
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDE	United States Department of Education
USNEI	United States Network for Education Information
VAE	Validation of Acquired Experience
WB	World Bank

CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

Intellectual debates about higher education in Africa often include many theoretical frameworks, models, perspectives, paradigms, theories, and typologies. In this light, postcolonial and decolonial theorists such as wa Thiong'o (1987, 2012a, 2012b), Aidoo (1990, 1995), Mignolo (2007, 2012), and (Mamdani 2016; 1993) have concentrated their research on the bearing of colonial legacies on higher education and current indigenous knowledge systems in Africa. Africa also regularly features in the works of Todaro (1996, 1997), and Becker and Chiswick (1966), who have advanced theories that perceive education as an investment in human capital, which ultimately contributes to economic progress. Badsha (2018), Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017), Woldegiorgis (2013), Woldegiorgis et al. (2015), Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), Woldegiorgis and Scherer (2019) and Hinson et al. 2022), on their part, have written extensively on the singularity of globalisation and regionalisation in higher education, specifically probing its effects on the African continent. Feminist perspectives are also a recurring theme in education, and the case of Africa, often focusing on gender-related conundrums (Stromquist 1999; 1990; Stromquist and Monkman 2014; Stromquist, Klees, and Lin 2017; Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist 2012a; Haugen et al. 2014; Mama 2007; 2004; 2003; Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist 2012b) while intellectuals such as Friedman (1955), Knight and Tadesse Woldegiorgis (2017) and Botha (2011) have provided contrasting views on the subject of neoliberal economic agenda and its influence on the organisation and financing of higher education in African settings. Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric ideologies have also been used for a long time to pinpoint the meaning of African solidarity and the protuberant role of African values in educating the African populace. Notable historical figures like Nkrumah (1963, 1965) and Asante (1991, 2012, 2020) have equally made substantial contributions to discussions on the potential of higher education in promoting African identities, values, unity and integration. Conflict theory, derived from Karl Marx's ideas and subsequently expanded upon by various scholars, may also be used to grasp the interconnection between educational inequalities and conflicts within broader socio-economic structures. This is particularly relevant in several African countries grappling with social unrest, economic disparities and civil wars. For example, Ngenge (2022), and Ngenge and Tazoacha (2023) exceptionally examine the impact of armed conflict on higher education and the role of education reforms in promoting violent

conflicts in Cameroon. Last but not least, and when analysing the influence of technology on higher education in Africa, is the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education, supported by scholars such as Prensky (2005, 2006) which has tremendous significance.

The many theories and their proponents outlined above provide extensive and rich literature on higher education in Africa, placing emphasis on the intricate and varied nature of experiences across the continent. Every theory, in addition, offers a distinct perspective for understanding the challenges and opportunities in African higher education. As Africa is witnessing the emergence of new forms of national, subregional, and continental policy agendas, alongside the reinforcement of existing ones, and with the appeal for internationalisation at home, updated rules and regulations governing authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance processes, environmentalism and sustainability in education as well as digitalisation, a pertinent question arises: Are these conventional theories, perspectives, frameworks, models, and paradigms sufficient to hypothesise and elucidate higher education dynamics in Africa? How the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) is in synchrony with national and subregional education agendas, policies, programmes, and strategies within and across CEMAC, for example, are of particular interest in the framework of this study.

CEMAC is an organisation founded by Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon, as will be covered in more depth in chapter two. Its goal is to make economic integration between member states easier, given that they all share the CFA franc (Franc of the Financial Community of Africa) as their currency. Of particular interest to this study is also intra-African mobility, seen as an alternative or complement to study abroad for CEMAC students and staff, and a comparison of higher education policy reforms in CEMAC member states on the one hand and the United States on the other, with close attention to authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance processes. Additionally, this work illuminates the Pan African University Institute for Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS), located in Cameroon, as a trailblazer in setting benchmarks for higher education standards across Africa.

1.1 Background to the study

Africa has huge untapped human resources that have yet to be fully harnessed and nurtured (Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017b). This, amongst other things, includes the continent's

increasing youth population, which doubles as the youngest in the world, "with more than 400 million young people aged between the ages of 15 to 35 years" (Africa Union, 2024; UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, 2023; Yami et al., 2019). This youth demographic is compounded by the current gross tertiary education enrolment ratio in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) of 9.4%, which translates to around 9 million students. This accounts for 3% of total student enrolment in Africa (World Bank 2020, 1). Although the 9.4% ratio and 3% student enrolments are significantly lower than the global average of 38% and the total number of tertiary education students worldwide, they are still considerably higher compared to the fewer than 200,000 tertiary students enrolled in Africa in 1970 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010, 1). This gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education increased by an average of 8.6% each year from 1970 to 2008, higher than the worldwide average of 4.6% over the same timeframe. From 1990 to 2014, the number of public universities in SSA also grew from around 100 to 500. By contrast, the quantity of private tertiary institutions surged from about 30 in 1990 to more than 1,000 in 2014 (Bloom et al. 2014; Darvas et al. 2017, 12). The same study states that:

> Despite the rapid growth, only 6% of the tertiary education age cohort was enrolled in tertiary institutions in 2008, compared to the global average of 26%. However, the region has come a long way since 1970, when the GER was less than 1% […]. Despite rapid expansion over the past several decades, tertiary education systems in sub-Saharan Africa are not equipped to absorb the growing demand that has resulted from broader access to secondary education.

The above statistics, which are both disturbing and promising, show variations within countries, across subregions, and on a continental scale. In conjunction with limited resources, inadequate female representation, and a significant migration of students from SSA seeking tertiary education abroad, policymakers in Africa have to anticipate increased pressure to augment the tertiary education system to accommodate the escalating need. This entails developing the capability to influence and involve the youth population of Africa, thus promoting individual development, ingenuity, self-reliance, participation in decision-making processes, and provision of viable employment prospects.

One school of thought holds that the success, building of effective institutional capacity and workable systems for African higher education, may depend much on the coordination of reforms and policy objectives at the national, subregional, and continental levels that reflect not

only the continent's unique history and challenges, but also its promising future (Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017; Woldegiorgis 2013, 2021, 2022; Woldegiorgis et al. 2015; Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck 2013, 2015; Woldegiorgis and Scherer 2019) . In order to upshot this kind of change and educational advancement, it would, therefore, be necessary to establish, implement, maintain, and sustain reforms and policies that are somewhat radical, cutting-edge, evidence-based, practical, and verifiable, across the higher education sector in Africa. Two significant frameworks that hold relevance in this direction are the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union (AU) 2063 Agenda for "the Africa we want" (African Union Commission 2015). These agendas have not only facilitated the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but have also contributed to Africa's long-term development trajectory. They emphasise the value of sustainable and inclusive growth, structural transformation and development of knowledge economies through investment in human capital.

CESA, nested within Agenda 2063, and designed to be implemented between 2016 and 2025, covers all levels of education in Africa and "envisions the type of education and training systems that need to be in place by next year in order to propel Africa towards the attainment of the goals set out in both the vision and the agenda" (African Union 2017, 21). It is based on six guiding principles and seven pillars. The vital aspects necessary for promoting knowledge societies, as described in Agenda 2063, are underscored by these guiding principles. They support the idea that having highly skilled individuals is central for the development of these societies. They emphasise the importance of comprehensive, inclusive, and fair education, effective governance and leadership in managing education, coordinated education and training systems to facilitate movement within Africa, and the critical role of high-quality, relevant education, training, and research in promoting scientific and technological innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship (African Union 2017, 7). Furthermore, these principles publicise the need of preserving the physical and socio-psychological wellbeing of students. The pillars enhance these principles by specifying the major strategic goals of CESA (African Union 2017, 8). The objectives include revitalising the teaching profession, creating favourable learning environments, utilising ICTs to improve education, achieving gender equality, eliminating illiteracy, strengthening science and maths   curricula, improving technical and vocational education, expanding higher education, promoting peace education, enhancing education system management, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders to effectively

implement CESA (African Union, 2017, p. 8-9). These concepts and pillars provide the basic structure that outlines the strategic path for educational progress and growth across Africa.

Figure 1. CESA 16-25 – general procedure
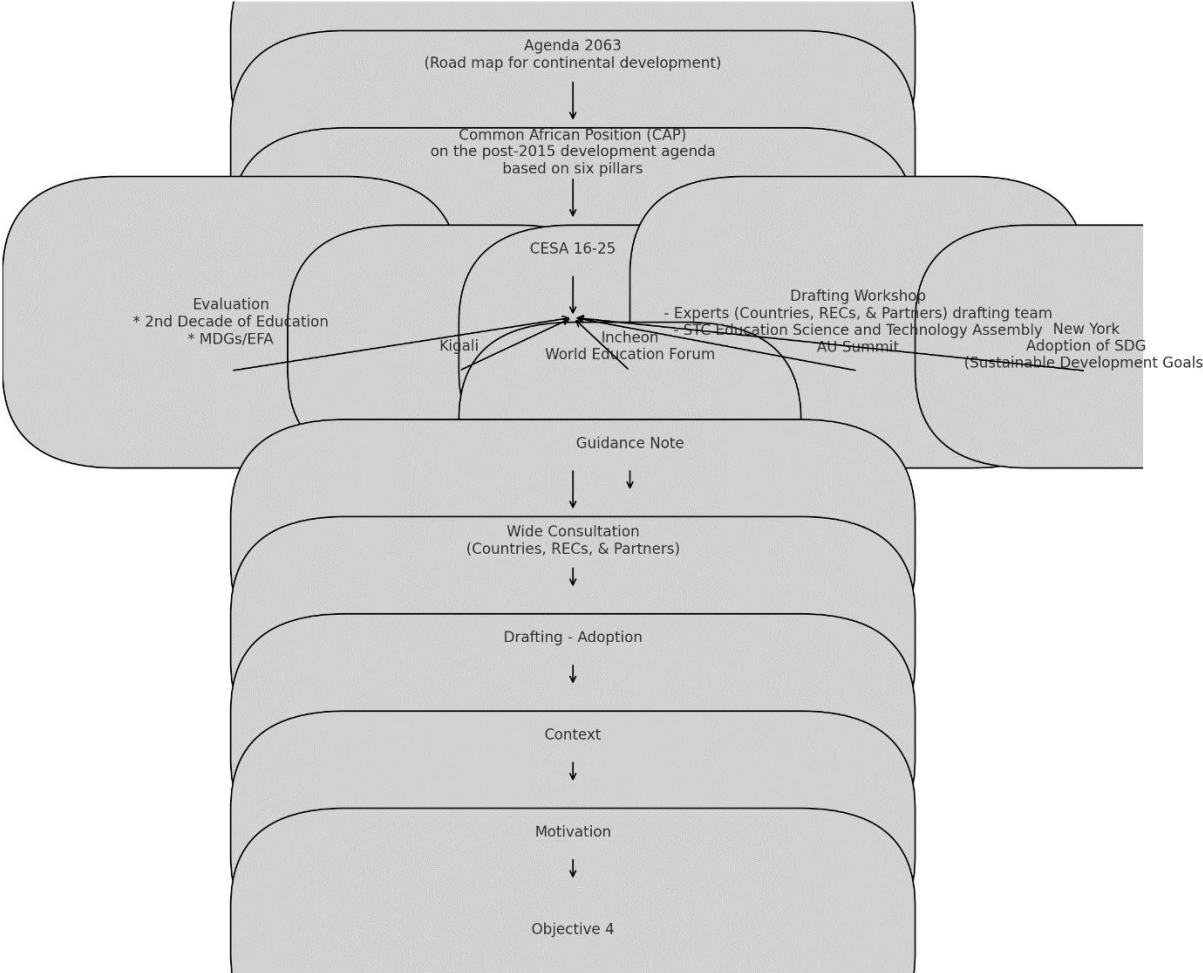
Source: CESA, 2016

The guiding principles, pillars, and strategic objectives are reflected in the general procedure pictured above (African Union 2017, 11). CESA was, therefore, conceived to not only provide the education needed for the achievement of Agenda 2063 but also to overcome the challenges facing the evolution of education in Africa in general and higher education in particular.

The challenges in postsecondary education in Africa (African Union 2017, 19) include aligning enrolments, research, and innovation with economic, social, and industrial growth. To accommodate a large number of graduates, infrastructure needs to be increased and advanced techniques like distance learning, open/virtual learning, and ICTs adopted. Postsecondary education is also suffering from an ageing faculty, a need for staff renewal, and enhancing working and living conditions is critical in appealing to a younger generation. The increasing

costs of higher education require collaboration at continental and subregional levels and business sector involvement to improve accessibility, pertinence, and excellence. The integration of the education system with the labour market faces additional challenges. The extensive scale of Agenda 2063 and the existence of a multitude of national and subregional agendas clash with the immense size of the continent and its multiple autonomous administrations, which might hinder smooth implementation.

Fragmentation into subregions, each guided by unique educational goals within Regional Economic Communities (RECs), risks fostering conflicting interests with similar objectives but differing implementation strategies and timelines. Irrespective of the promise to "promote policy dialogue within national parliaments, council of ministers, regional conference of ministers (Specialised Technical Committee for Education), subregional (IUCEA, SADC, CAMES, SARUA and ECOWAS), continental (AAU, ADEA, AfDB, FAWE), and global bodies (UNESCO, UNICEF)" (African Union 2017, 19), managing these many hierarchies, layers and levels of implementation, diverse range of objectives in an convoluted, politically tense, and conflict-ridden environment have not only proved difficult but also seems to be impeding the smooth incorporation of these multifaceted endeavours. The above acronyms stand for Inter-University Council for East Africa, Southern African Development Community, Higher Education Council for Africa and Madagascar, Southern African Regional Universities Association, Economic Community of West African States, Association of African Universities, Association for the Development of Education in Africa, African Development Bank, Forum for African Women Educationalists, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

Therefore, to effectively and efficiently contribute to the continent's aspirations for growth and development (Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017; Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017; Pillay et al. 2017), there is a need for the above-mentioned policy configurations to both be tailored at national, subregional, and continental levels, as well as with the systems of higher education and existing political, economic, and sociocultural philosophies of each and every country, owing to their seemingly similar yet unique histories.

Again, this study focuses on the member states of CEMAC, exploring the connection between Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 and the access to and improvement of higher education quality within this subregion (Teixeira and Shin 2020). Aspiration 1 boils down to CESA, which emphasises the significance of aligning national and subregional higher education agendas,

policies, reforms, and systems in Africa. In addition to examining the correlation between Agenda 2063 and the higher education components of CESA within the CEMAC subregion, the study addresses the inconsistencies that cut across their systems, policies, and histories. In the following sections, an introduction to the historical background that forms the basis of this study is provided, the statement of the problem is presented, along with the key issues subsequently analysed. The urgency and relevance of the topic are also justified, and the research objectives and questions are outlined. Additionally, key terms are defined, and the scope and organisation of the study are delineated.

In hindsight, in a letter dated January 26, 2014, the former Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Nkosazana Dlaminin Zuma, introduced Agenda 2063, and in so doing delineating Africa's future development trajectory (African Union Commission 2015). The visionary Agenda draws upon the historic symbolism of Pan-Africanism, which originated in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 that later evolved into the AU in 2002. Zuma delivered her address to the African people from the scenic town of Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, as preparations were underway for the Union's centennial celebrations. She underlined the role of the younger generation in expressing discontent with the past, advocating for faster progress towards integration and fostering change through initiatives like the African Union Clubs (AUCs) in educational institutions and digital platforms.

The Pan-African University (PAU) and the broader academic sector, along with the intelligentsia, have been instrumental in advancing this process already (African Union Commission 2015, 2). While CESA and Agenda 2063 emphasises the importance of high-quality education and research in Africa, questions remain regarding its compatibility with the multiplicity of higher education systems, policies, chapters, and frameworks across the continent, including those found in the CEMAC subregion, which bear imprint to the British, French, and Spanish colonial legacies.

A central argument in this work is that policies and reforms in higher education within the CEMAC subregion, like elsewhere in Africa, are far from doing away with the vestiges of colonialism and neocolonialism, often lack substance, and continue to focus on the "certificate syndrome," where universities prioritise issuing certificates and neglect the development of students' knowledge, critical thinking skills, and competences aligned with 21st-century market demands. These skills gaps evident in the delivery of higher education in the CEMAC subregion and across Africa, exemplified by the prevalence of the certificate syndrome, are a direct

consequence of the subregion's reliance on educational frameworks and systems that are reminiscent of their history, misplaced priorities, and inadequate policy direction. This situation is further intensified by the incompatibility of their policies, reforms, and institutions with CESA and Agenda 2063, which appears implausible (Teixeira and Shin 2020).

1.2 Statement of the problem

To this day, the survival of policies and structures that were originally designed to serve the interests of European colonial powers is not surprising given the history of higher education in Africa (Teixeira and Shin 2020; Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck 2013, 35). In fact, it is disconcerting that Africa, a continent known for its historical creativity and innovation and usually considered to be the cradle of humanity, currently contributes less than 2 percent of global knowledge. This outcome can be partly attributed to outdated and colonial-styled higher education policies and systems (Makinda 2007; Fonn et al. 2018; Thondhlana and Garwe 2021a). The influence of this colonial legacy on contemporary higher education systems and institutions in Africa, particularly in SSA, is undeniable (Bateman 2008, 2f.). Colonial higher education policies and systems not only provided access to education for a limited number of Africans who would assist in colonial administration, but also imposed the language of the colonial masters as the medium of instruction, curtailed the freedom and autonomy of academic institutions, and shaped the curriculum at African universities to align with disciplines that reinforced colonial administration (Teferra and Altbach 2004a).

Interestingly, when African leaders conceived Agenda 2063, they apparently overlooked the remarkable diversity of Africa, not only in terms of its unique cultures, languages, and peoples but also within its higher education sector, where policies and systems seem to vary significantly based on their colonial and neo-colonial histories. This raises challenges regarding the foundation of Agenda 2063 and casts doubt on its successful implementation, particularly in relation to national and sub-regional agendas, as would be observed in the case of the CEMAC subregion and its individual member states. Therefore, it is essential to examine the compatibility of national and subregional higher education policy orientations in the CEMAC subregion with Agenda 2063 and evaluate the extent to which these policies either facilitate or hinder the development of human capital, research, and knowledge production, which are crucial for catalysing economic growth, social progress, and political development within the subregion and across Africa as a whole.

8

1.3   Justification and contributions

In the first place, this study may be seen as a lifeblood to the academic scholarship on CESA and Agenda 2063, as it could provide valuable insights into the alignment of this continental development framework with the higher education policies and systems of CEMAC member states. By establishing this connection, the study might also assist in facilitating the efficient and effective implementation of Agenda 2063. Additionally, the study could serve as a potential mechanism for the redesign and overhaul of higher education systems and policy direction within each individual CEMAC member state. It also prompts a re-evaluation of these member states' relationships with Agenda 2063 with regards to higher education. This need for re-evaluation is particularly justified by the sluggish pace of higher education policy reforms in these countries, which can be attributed, in part, to the lingering effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on the continent (Tella 2018).

The unique nature of CESA and Agenda 2063 necessitated an assessment of its compatibility with the existing higher education policies and systems in CEMAC member states. In this light, the study demonstrates how the misalignments between the CESA and Agenda 2063 on the one hand, and the higher education policies and systems of these countries on the other, continue to affect its implementation (Bloom et al., 2014a). By shedding light on these incompatibilities, the study educates proponents of Agenda 2063, especially the AU and its external partners, about the potential challenges and opportunities involved in translating the Agenda into practice. In terms of its contribution to academic scholarship, this study holds both relevance and significance by providing a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between Agenda 2063 and higher education policies and systems in the CEMAC subregion, filling a crucial knowledge gap in the existing literature.

According to Mohamedbhai (2011, 2013, 2014), Africa's higher education landscape is characterised by diverse and inherited systems from the continent's colonial past. These systems include Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone higher education, with some Arab countries in North Africa having their distinct systems. Consequently, the movement of staff and students across countries is hindered, posing challenges to regional integration and collaboration. This study also serves as a springboard for further harmonisation and standardisation of higher education systems within CEMAC countries, by aligning their respective higher education policy directions. This harmonisation process would necessitate the coordination of educational programmes in accordance with fundamental academic standards

and the establishment of equivalence and comparability of degrees across and within higher education institutions in the CEMAC subregion. This approach would simplify the promotion of quality and mobility of staff and students across the subregion and eventually Africa (Mohamedbhai 2013, 6).

Moreover, the harmonisation and standardisation of higher education systems in the CEMAC subregion would contribute to the broader goal of regional integration and cooperation in Africa. By creating a more cohesive and interconnected higher education landscape, the barriers to free movement of staff and students could be reduced, fostering cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange (Carvalho, Rosa, and Amaral 2023).

This work also holds significance as a broad policy document that could enable AU officials to evaluate the progress, identify challenges and capitalise on opportunities regarding higher education policy orientation within the CEMAC subregion. With the implementation of Agenda 2063 now in its ninth year and CESA expected to have been completed by 2025, it is vital to assess the progress made thus far. A notable example in this context is the PAU, which was conceived in 2008 as part of the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa. The PAU was established with the aim of revitalising higher education in Africa and aligning with the vision of the AU (Pan African University 2023). Within the CEMAC subregion, Cameroon is hosting one of the five Institutes that comprise the Pan-African University. This particular institute is called the Pan-African Institute of Governance, Human and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS) (Wilson 2021). Established in 2002, it currently offers two master's and doctoral degree programmes: Governance and Regional Development at the University of Yaoundé II-Soa, and Translation and Conference Interpretation at the University of Buea's Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters, both based at the University of Yaoundé II-Soa (ASTI) (Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017b; 2017a).

The Translation and Conference Interpretation programme equips young Africans with essential skills in translation, conference interpretation and African and cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, the Governance and Regional Integration programme aims to empower Africans with intellectual and practical capabilities for good governance, sustainable development and the promotion of regional development in Africa (PAUGHSS 2022). To evaluate the effectiveness of the Pan-African Institute of Governance, Human and Social Sciences, several criteria can be applied. These include the number of students enrolled from different parts of Africa, the quality of the teaching staff, the number of graduates, the

employment status and locations of these graduates. Therefore, this work equally serves as a repository of information, documenting the achievements and outcomes of the institute.

This research offers practical implications for real-world applications while revising existing theories and providing additional perspectives to studying policy in higher education in Africa. When applied to the field of education, these new approaches demonstrate how the outcomes of an educational system are influenced by the inputs it receives. These inputs encompass not only policies, reforms, and resources, but also implementation strategies, follow-up actions, and adjustments, while considering historical context, cultural factors, and diversity. The study presents perspectives through which Agenda 2063 can be examined, ensuring that any gaps in its implementation process are identified and addressed regularly. While the proposed policy frameworks may not introduce entirely original principles, they are undeniably innovative in their practical application.

David Bloom, David Canning, Kevin Chan, and Dara Lee Luca of Harvard University argue in an article published in February 2013 on higher education and economic development in Africa that tertiary education has been overlooked as a method of enhancing economic growth and alleviating poverty (Bloom et al. 2013). Their research challenges the idea that tertiary education plays little role in the reduction of poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where higher education enrolment rates continue to hover around 6%, the world's lowest rate (Bloom et al. 2005, 2006, 2013; Bloom et al. 2014b). Their findings suggest that tertiary education can have a positive correlation with economic growth. In a similar vein, this research is noteworthy because it   adds to the body of literature demonstrating that higher education improves career opportunities, salary potential, and the capacity to save and invest. Good enough, the knowledge economy has   not been excluded from Agenda 2063, which is a growth strategy for Africa and serves as a road map for the continent. As a result, the study paves the way for AU officials to collaborate with leaders of CEMAC in increasing tertiary education accessibility, equity, and quality through policies that facilitate human capital development, thereby enhancing the capacity of CEMAC countries to maximise economic growth in the present and in the future.

1.4   Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- Explore ways CEMAC countries' higher education institutions and policies can be aligned with Agenda 2063 to effectively contribute to the development of human capital.

- Identify and assess emerging paradigms in higher education policies within CEMAC countries that adhere to Agenda 2063 and evaluate their impact on human capital development.

- Examine the factors within the systems and policies of higher education that may promote or hinder alignment with Agenda 2063 and analyse the resultant effects on socio-economic progress.

1.5 Research questions

Consistent with the objectives above, the study attempts the following research questions:

- How do CEMAC countries' higher education policies and institutions align with Agenda 2063 to effectively contribute to the development of human capital?

- Why are certain paradigms in higher education policy emerging within CEMAC countries that adhere to Agenda 2063, and how do these paradigms facilitate or hinder the development of human capital?

- How and why do systemic and policy factors in CEMAC member states' higher education systems either promote or impede their alignment with Agenda 2063, and what are the resulting implications for socio-economic progress?

1.6 Material and methods

A qualitative research method was employed, further elaborated upon in chapter four. Data came from both primary sources as well as secondary sources. Various avenues were explored to gather data, including administrative and government departmental records, scholarly publications such as journal articles, legal texts, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and reports accessed through internet searches and library resources. The collected data underwent analysis employing grounded theory, historical, thematic, and literature review approaches. These analytical methods were used to incorporate the study's assumptions into policy frameworks.

1.7 Definition of key terms

In scientific and academic research, the inclusion of key terms is crucial as they not only represent the themes of a study but also exhibit variations in conceptualisation across different academic fields and by different authors. This section delves into several key terms such as education, higher education, higher education systems, policies, institutions, CEMAC subregion, Agenda 2063, modernisation, and human development capital. These terms are defined within the specific context of their usage, aiming to clarify their meanings and enhance the scope of the dissertation. Importantly, this does not limit the interdisciplinary nature of the study, as it includes various disciplines ranging from political science, public administration, higher education studies, policy research, and history.

1.7.1 Education

The meaning of education is subjective and varies from individual to individual. Nonetheless, the objective of education remains the same - to obtain knowledge, skills, and enhance human abilities (Rothstein and Jacobsen 2006). According to (Reimers et al. 2006, 10f.), the creation of meaning in education involves four distinct levels that follow an ascending value chain, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Value chain of the creation of meaning process

INFORMATION   KNOWLEDGE   LEARNING   MEANING

Data goal   Information goal   Knowledge goal   Learning goal

Complex

Qualitative

Simple

Community

Quantitative

Individual
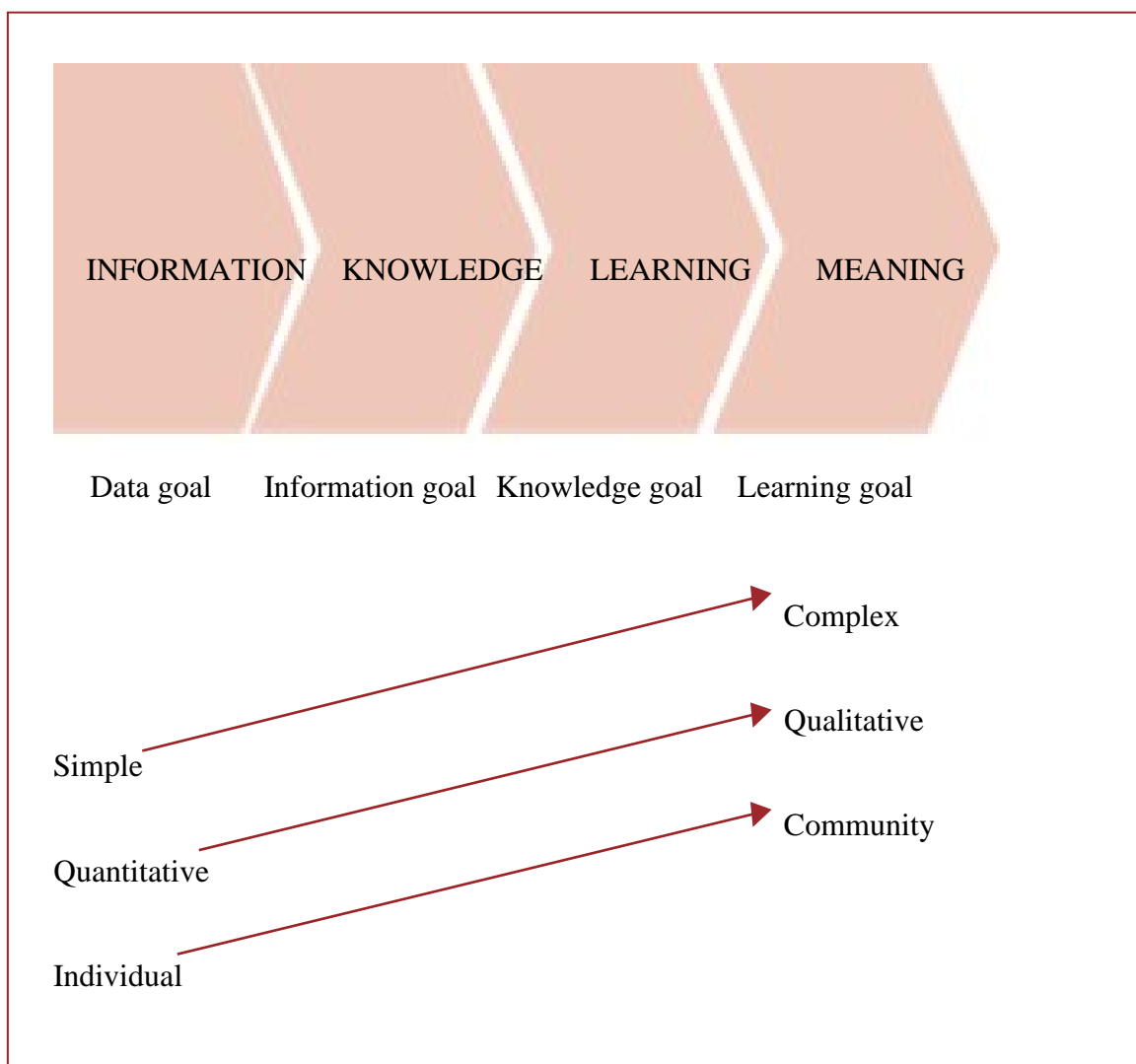
Source: Adapted from Reimers et al. 2006, 10

Reimers et al. (2006, 10) observe the emergence of an information society that restructures data to enhance its accessibility. Currently, efforts are focused on developing meta-data to fuel the expansive information universe of mass media. The authors propose a multi-stage framework for societal evolution. Firstly, information is transformed into knowledge, propelling the development of a knowledge society, supported by knowledge infrastructures and networks. The next stage involves a transition from a culture characterised by the rapid dissemination of information and knowledge to a civilisation governed by the ecology of learning. This phase is defined by the human capacity to maintain a high standard of educational search quality. The final stage, known as meta-learning, cultivates meaning-creating awareness. This progression signifies advancement towards a higher stage of life, where transformative learning occurs not only as a result of habitus but also as a pursuit of integrity. The journey from acquiring

14

fundamental knowledge to attaining profound meaning represents the threefold maturation of the human condition: from simple to complex, quantitative to qualitative, and individual to communal. Similarly, this dissertation explicates the process of formulating higher education policies as a progression from one stage to the next that creates meaning for the systems.

1.7.2 Higher education

In the foreword to the "World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action and Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education," the World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action (UNESCO 1998, 1), defines higher education as follows:

> higher education includes 'all types of studies, training or training for research at the postsecondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities'.

Additionally, higher education is tremendously broad, ranging from short courses to bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees (UNESCO 2024). There is a large measure of variation across countries and regions with regard to size, cost, course offerings, techniques, tradition, governance, and quality. Large institutions, for instance, could include departments, graduate schools, faculties, departments, and linked research centres; as a result, there might be a lot of people who are interested in teaching, research, and making contributions to society. On the other hand, there are a great number of polytechnics, teacher training schools, specialised technical schools, and other forms of institutions whose primary mission is unmistakably the provision of educational opportunities. The figure below gives an idea of the various levels and different types of institutions involved in education (Institute for International Cooperation 2004).

Figure 3. Levels of education

(Educational Institutions)　(Educational levels)　(Main Functions)

(Educational Institutions)	(Educational levels)	(Main Functions)
Graduate School University (Undergraduate) Junior College/Polytechnic Technical Training School Broadcast University Online University Virtual University	Higher Education	Education Research Contributions to Society
High School (General/Vocational Education) Junior High School	Secondary Education	Education
Elementary School — Basic Education	Primary Education	Education
Kindergarten Nursery School	Pre-school Education	Education Care

Source: Institute for International Cooperation 2004, 2

The highest level of education, also known as higher education, postsecondary education, or tertiary education, may be found at the very top of the chart shown in figure 3. Educational institutions at this level such as universities, professional schools, and vocational colleges are examples of establishments that primarily offer formal education in the form of subjects, courses, or disciplines. Other examples include medical and dental schools. Higher education can be found in the CEMAC subregion at a variety of universities, including the Pan-African Institute of Governance, University of Yaoundé I, the University of N'Djamena, the University of Bangui, the Université Omar Bongo, the Denis Sassou Nguesso University, and the National University of Equatorial Guinea. Other examples include the University of Bangui and the University of Omar Bongo. (Chankseliani and McCowan 2021, 1) state that the university has a lengthy history, beginning as an educational institution and then taking on the duty of knowledge creation. This study makes extensive use of these universities, in addition to others,

and incorporates numerous references to the changes that brought about their establishment as well as the rules and regulations that govern them.

1.7.3 Higher education policy

Education policy is a phrase that is used throughout this study to refer to the reforms, procedures, laws, bylaws, rules, texts, and agreements that define and regulate the management of higher education institutions. In point of fact, the formulation of policies relating to higher education is the central focus of the study. The core ideas revolve on which considerations should be given the most weight when formulating policies about higher education. Who exactly ought to be engaged, and in what capacity, and when exactly, and so on? Considered in context, is it possible for Agenda 2063, for instance, to rectify the shortcomings that exist in higher education throughout Africa and the CEMAC subregion? Is it acceptable for the CEMAC subregion to have other national higher education agendas in addition to Agenda 2063? Where does Agenda 2063 overlap with these national agendas being pursued in the CEMAC subregion? How exactly does this constitute a botched attempt at policy creation? How exactly would this influence the actual carrying out of the policy? Are the member states of the CEMAC subregion dedicated to carrying out the provisions of Agenda 2063? What resources are available to make the implementation of the Agenda easy and smooth? What indicators exist to show that the effective implementation of the Agenda is within the grasp of the nations that make up the subregion? More on this will be examined in the chapters on theory and data analysis.

1.7.4 Policy orientation framework

Policy orientation framework is defined in this study as a collection of concepts, ideas and approaches that drive policy. These ideas, concepts and approaches are based on the core belief that the design, adoption, and adaptation of a policy are significant variables in deciding whether or not the policy will be successfully implemented and sustained. In other words, a well-designed policy with realistic and efficient implementation methods will lead to success, whereas the contrary may be the case.

1.7.5 Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 is a colloquial expression that refers to Africa in the year 2063. This year is the deadline by which Africa strives to deliver on certain fundamental economic, political, social, and educational ambitions. The name is taken from the year OUA was founded. Aspiration 1

of Agenda 2063 includes, among other things, the commitment to building Africa's human capital through the effective formulation and implementation of policies. These policies are intended to cause higher education systems and institutions to work better and more efficiently.

1.7.6 Modernisation

Even though Rostow (1991b) may be considered as the father "modernisation", the underlying concept is that higher education institutions in Africa, particularly in the CEMAC subregion, need to go through a number of policy levels and phases in order to produce the human capital that is necessary for the economic, social, and political progress of its countries. Despite the fact that it is widely considered to be relevant in the gradual development of higher education systems through effective policy formation, implementation, feedback processes, and reformulations, modernisation as a theory is taken with a pinch of salt because of its Eurocentric nature, which frequently undermines local realities in the context of Africa, for example. This is a concept that is felt regularly through this work, but used in a critical sense most of the time.

1.7.7 Human development capital

The concept of human development capital is one that may be thought of as a component of modernisation that has a more precise and focused definition. In this study, human development capital implies extending people's possibilities. This means that improving people's access to high-quality education should be one of the primary goals of Agenda 2063 and any other relevant policy agendas that aim to improve people's lives in general. One of the ways in which this can be accomplished is by expanding people's opportunities to lead lives that are both meaningful and fulfilling.

1.8 Scope of the study

This study covers higher education in the CEMAC subregion, which includes Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo. It does a critical analysis of the alignment of the higher education systems and policies of the countries to Agenda 2063, which is the strategic framework for socio-economic transformation for the next 50 years of Africa as a continent. The rationale behind the choice of the geographical area of the research, the CEMAC subregion, is the relatively underdeveloped nature of the higher education sector of its member states compared to the rest of Africa, as well as all other economic and political dynamics affecting the higher education sector in the

subregion. The alignment with Agenda 2063 made the context unique for the study of regional integration and socio-economic development through education.

CEMAC may also be understood as a Regional Economic Community (REC) in terms of geography and economics. It was created in the year 1994 with the goal of fostering a more intimate unity between the populations of the member states in order to enhance the geographical and personal friendship that exists among them. There are at present three separate systems of higher education existing   within the CEMAC subregion, all continuing on the basis of colonialism and neocolonialism. Given that there appears to be a misalignment between Agenda 2063 and the higher education systems and policy direction of its member states, it is intriguing to scrutinise how the implementation of Agenda 2063 unfolds in the subregion. Below are two maps; the first shows the CEMAC zone inside Africa, while the second shows only the CEMAC zone by itself.

Figure 4. Maps of CEMAC subregion with and without the African map
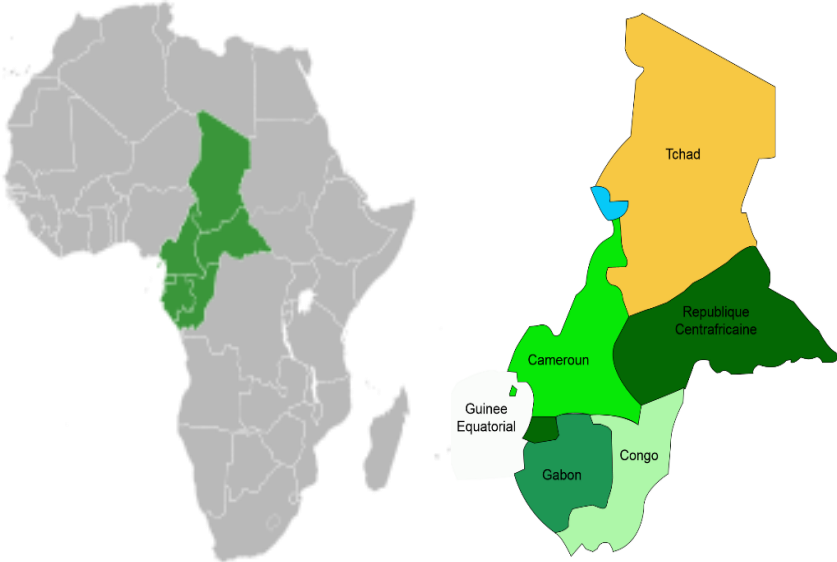
Source: CEMAC, 2022

It is important to emphasise here that the CEMAC subregion is not used in this study in an economic and monetary sense. Rather, it is used to describe a defined geopolitical area of African countries, except for Cameroon, with mediocre higher education systems compared to the rest of the continent. In other words, the CEMAC subregion is employed to highlight the similar tribulations underlying their education sectors. Outside the CEMAC subregion as a geographical entity, this work rotates around Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063, a policy framework agreed by African Heads of States and Governments in 2015 to promote development in Africa. Although higher education is a mammoth subject, this study confines its focus to components

19

of Agenda 2063 that lay a major emphasis on higher education and strives to grasp these elements in context of higher education policy direction and systems in CEMAC member states. The temporal scope of the study includes historical perspectives, contemporary dynamics and future prospects in a more particular context in view of the Agenda 2063 timeframe between its adoption in 2013 and the target year of 2063. This reflects the past and present educational policies, systems and reforms in the CEMAC subregion insofar as they are congruent with the long-term aspirations of Agenda 2063. Therefore, the past and current status give a complete picture of the evolution of higher education policies and their harmonisation with long-term strategic objectives such as Agenda 2063. This has led to the analysis of past tendencies, present realities, and future potentials.

As a result, this work is an interdisciplinary scientific study combining education policy and political science with economics and development studies. It especially focuses on the policy analysis of higher education in regard to the impact of such policies on human capital development and regional integration, as well as the socio-economic progress of the CEMAC subregion, within the broader goals of Agenda 2063. Interdisciplinary scientific scope was deemed a fitting choice for the in-depth analysis of the multifaceted impact of higher education policies. The study, therefore, explores the role that higher education plays in the context of the development of the subregion of CEMAC, political dynamics and economic growth.

1.9   Study outline

The first chapter establishes the context by providing a meticulous account of the backdrop, highlighting the substantial untapped human resources in Africa and the notable deficiencies in higher education. It goes further to highlight the issues being examined in the research, focusing on the enduring effects of colonialism on African education systems and the resulting consequences. The research's rationale, goals, and questions emphasise the significance of the study and the qualitative framework that guides its methodology. The study's scope, essential definitions, and overview provide a clear understanding of its range and thematic areas of attention.

Chapter two examines the state of higher education in CEMAC countries, carefully analysing the lasting effects of colonial influences and assessing higher education systems in relation to the goals of Agenda 2063. This comparison reveals the differences and similarities throughout

the subregion, providing a foundation for understanding the particularities and difficulties encountered.

In the third chapter, the discussion expands to include an in-depth and critical analysis of the history and theory of higher education. It traces the development of higher education in Africa from before colonial times to the post-independence period, while also exploring the theoretical frameworks that influence higher education in Africa. This encompasses dialogues on the dynamics of colonial, postcolonial, and global education, as well as examination of how these ideas are applicable to the CEMAC setting.

Chapter Four provides a detailed explanation of the research design and methodology, which includes the study's philosophical foundations, methodological approach, data gathering methods, and analytic procedures. This component ensures that the study adheres to high academic standards and ethical principles. The second-to-last chapter covers the major findings obtained from interviews with stakeholders, revealing the complexities of higher education legislation, governance, student mobility, and quality assurance within the CEMAC subregion. This analysis compares these results with international practices, providing a detailed picture of the educational situation in the subregion and recommending strategies for policy improvement and advancement.

The last section integrates the acquired knowledge, providing a concise overview of the main findings and their significance for harmonising higher education in the CEMAC subregion with the objectives of Agenda 2063. The text critically examines the limitations of the research and presents a definitive case on the crucial role of higher education in advancing socio-economic development within the context of regional and continental objectives. This comprehensive framework, spanning from the beginning to the end, enables a succinct exploration of the connections between higher education systems and broader developmental objectives. It makes a significant contribution to the discussion on educational reform and policy direction in Africa, specifically within the scope of the transformative Agenda 2063.

1.10   Chapter conclusion

A robust continental space of higher education and research is required to facilitate academic mobility and cooperation among African countries and their higher education institutions (Mohamedbhai 2013, 6). Perhaps, one option to achieve this is to begin at the level of RECs. As a consequence, this work serves as a blueprint in analysing Agenda 2063, a policy

framework with one of its key aims being to develop a viable, reliable, and sustainable continental space for higher education and research in Africa. This chapter draws attention to the challenges surrounding CESA and Agenda 2063, and the direction of higher education policy in CEMAC countries. Also, it identifies objectives of the study and research questions, relevance, specified key phrases, delineates the scope and explains the study's structure.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Higher education in CEMAC and Agenda 2063: Aspirations vs. realities

Having introduced the theme of policy orientation in African higher education as viewed through the lens of Agenda 2063 and CESA in chapter one, this chapter is designed to serve four objectives. Firstly, it weighs in on the postcolonial state of higher education in Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, CAR, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo, and in the process, provides the context within which it evolved, and addresses issues relating to the laws and institutions that guide higher education policies, reforms, and structural transformation in these countries. Secondly, it appraises the higher education systems within and across the specified countries, highlighting their similarities and differences, while underlining the core principles of harmonisation and regionalisation, which can be argued to be some of the fundamental ideals behind Agenda 2063 and CESA. Thirdly, it presents Agenda 2063, including its historical background and educational ambitions, particularly in relation to the CESA initiative that aims to be achieved by 2025. Finally, it discusses the strategies for implementing Agenda 2063 and highlights their relevance within the CEMAC subregion, thereby giving meaning to the continental higher education policy framework within the subregional context.

2.1   State of higher education in Cameroon

The higher education system in Cameroon is both complex, diverse and in a state of continual evolution. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cameroon are grouped into three. There are three of what is called University Institutes of Technology (IUTs)**,** located in Douala, Bandjoun, and Ngaoundéré, focusing on technology-oriented education (Campbell & Ismar-Jabot 2021, 15-22). The second group of HEIs are state universities, with the country boasting 11 in total spread across the 10 Regions, including Université de Yaoundé I and II, Douala, Buea, Dschang, N'gaoundéré, Maroua, Ebolowa, Garoua, Bertoua and Bamenda. These institutions cater to the needs of the bulk of higher education students in Cameroon. The third group of HEIs in Cameroon are the private universities and HEIs. The Ministry of Higher Education Places the number at approximately 450 (MINESUP 2024). The private higher education sector plays a significant role in Cameroon's higher education landscape. Additionally, there are 46 *Grandes écoles de Formation* under the supervision of state universities and technical ministries

like the *Ministère des Travaux Publics du Cameroun* (MINTP) and *Ministère des Postes et Télécommunication du Cameroun* (MINTC)

The Francophone system mirrors the French education model with the LMD *(Licence, Maîtrise, Doctorat)* structure introduced post-Bologna. Degrees include *Licence, Maîtrise, DEA, Doctorat du 3e cycle*, and *Doctorat d'Etat*, transitioning to Licence, Master, and Doctorate as part of the CEMAC reform (order Nº 02/06-UEAC-019-CM-14) with the introduction of ECTS credits (Campbell and Ismar-Jabot 2021). Significant reforms in the Francophone system include the adoption of the LMD system, based on CEMAC order Nº 02/06-UEAC-019-CM-14 of 10/03/2006, which reorganised higher education in Central Africa within the LMD framework. These reforms aimed at harmonising the educational system with European standards, enhancing mobility, and ensuring quality assurance across HEIs (Campbell and Ismar-Jabot 2021). The Anglophone system follows the British model with pre-Bologna awards like bachelor's, postgraduate diploma, masters, and doctorate (PhD), and maintains a similar structure post-reform with the addition of ECTS credits. Technical education awards include the Higher National Diploma (HND).

The complexity of the higher education system lies in Cameroon's tripartite colonial past and its persistence across decades of independence, as seen by the disregard for integrating indigenous knowledge systems into the deeply rooted and inherited colonial institutions (Gwanfogbe 1995; Ndille, Ndille, and Litt 2018; Doh 2007; René Ngek Monteh 2018; Mabeu and Pongou 2021). While German influence faded over time due to their loss and withdrawal from Cameroon in 1916 as a consequence of the First World War (Lee and Schultz 2011, 9), the handwriting of the British and the French, who double as the German successors are still boldly written on the walls of classrooms visible in the languages used in instruction, such as English and French (Laitin 2019). In the words of Campbell and Ismar-Jabot (2021, 16), higher education in Cameroon today "follows the dual education system with institutions either following the Francophone or Anglophone system based on the French and British higher education ladder." Also worthy of note is the fight to preserve the Anglo-Saxon (British) system of education, which is on the verge of being submerged by the Francophone dominated government through a process that has been politically described as harmonisation. The evolution of the higher education system in Cameroon stems from this grudging but ultimately successful process of harmonisation that has ensued since independence and reunification in the 1960s. Evolution may also be seen in the proliferation of private higher education

institutions, which went from having none in the 1960s to over 400 presently, approximately 300 of which have government authorisation to operate. Compared to Ngu's (1993, 29) scientifically supported description of the bizarre and dilapidated nature of the system, the public sector has now undergone substantial transformations, leading to the establishment of more state institutions, higher budget allocations, enhanced capacity to accommodate more students, higher graduation rates, introduction of international collaborations, and improved, though not satisfactory, staffing conditions.

At independence, Cameroon had only one higher education institution, namely the University of Yaoundé, commonly referred to as "the mother of Cameroonian universities" (Njeuma et al. 1999). Subsequent reunification on October 1st, 1961 marked the creation of the Federal University of Cameroon on 26 July 1962, which became the University of Yaoundé in 1973 (Konings 2004, 291). Only in the 1990s were a series of historic reforms implemented to increase access to higher education and decentralise the University of Yaoundé, including the establishment of six new state institutions in the middle of an economic crisis, despite the World Bank's advice. What Konings (2004) fails to acknowledge though is that the World Bank (WB) was largely responsible for Cameroon's economic crisis caused by the failure of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s, which exposed liberalisation, such as the encouragement to allow private universities to flourish without any mechanisms in place to control the amount of tuition they charged and quality of education the provided. The main reform in 1993 was the establishment of the National Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions, which is in charge of ensuring that the quality criteria and standards for each Cameroonian higher education institution are respected and accredited in order to run degree programmes.

Notwithstanding, one of the few good legacies left behind by the 40-year Biya regime in Cameroon has been the establishment of state universities in all 10 regions of the country, as well as the remarkable expansion of the country's higher education industry in recent years. While the establishment of these universities, as well as the recognition and accreditation of a large number of private higher education institutions, are positive advances, issues of access, equity, and quality continue to exist and Cameroon's dual higher education system remains a source of conflict and uncertainty. So, Cameroon's growing number of state universities does not mean that everyone has equal access to higher education. It also does not mean that policies are being followed when it comes to accreditation and quality assurance processes. In addition,

the state universities in Cameroon are deficient in facilities, and a majority of the close to 430 private institutions that exist in the country do not meet government regulations and have subpar quality of lecturers. At the policy level, Ngu (1993, 29-30) sees failure in governance under the aegis of the Council of Higher Education, which is led by the Minister of Higher Education, as habitual to blame for a lack of training and gaps in the quality of knowledge offered by teachers, poor academic leadership, and a reluctance to embrace innovative and technological practices in pedagogical approaches.

Despite the fact that Cameroon has enacted its own policy agenda, Vision 2025, and Higher Education Policy in Cameroon (Law No. 2023/007 of 25 July 2023), and is an active member of the AU and committed to its 2063 Agenda and CESA both nationally and as a member of CEMAC, the country still appears to be a little coherence in the manner in which these are implemented. Thus, it is valid to assert that Cameroon's higher education policy orientation is in a constant state of flux, with reforms occasionally misconstrued as new policies and so many policy commitments at various levels that are, for the most part, frequently inconsistent and never met.

2.2 Chad

Chad's higher education system is still modest and undeveloped when compared to other CEMAC countries. According to the International Monetary Fund (2010, 22) "low school enrolment ratios explain the high illiteracy rate in the Chadian population" and this is something that has been like this since independence. Just a decade or so ago, Fonchamnyo and Sama (2016, 209) found that Chad fared the lowest continentally in terms of education efficiency while spending the most on education, civil wars since independence in the 1960s and terrorism (Niam 2003), partly explaining the low enrolments rates captured by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

For a bilingual country like Chad, with French and Arabic as official languages, it is bizarre that 99% of public schools are taught in French while 90% of non-government schools teach in Arabic, making it difficult or nearly impossible for the majority of Arabic-speaking students to attend Chadian universities (Niam 2003, 1-2). In their words, Niam (2003, 1-2) states:

> The education system in Chad is subdivided into early childhood education (almost non-existent, gross enrolment rate (GER) of 2%), six years of primary education, four years

of lower secondary education, three years of upper secondary education, and higher education (The World Bank 2019, 4).

The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation in Chad oversees the regulation of all public and private higher education institutions, including universities, colleges, and institutes. The said ministry not only regulates institutions but also supervises and grants all bachelor's and master's degrees. In 2017, two doctoral programmes were formed in N'Djamena (Hoinathy and Eizenga 2019, 10). These programmes are governed by the same ministry and are available to students from all institutions in the country.

In the last few years, the higher education sector in Chad has progressively grown, with the government opening more universities to decongest the University of N'Djamena, formerly the University of Chad founded in 1971 and the only university in the country until the 2000s (Hoinathy and Eizenga 2019). The university had two campuses in N'Djamena: Ardep Djoumal, focused on human sciences, administration, and law, and Farcha, committed to teaching the hard sciences.

From the 2000s forward, further universities and institutions started to emerge. Currently, there are a total of eight distinct public universities located in various cities of Chad, namely Ati, N'Djamena, Abeché, Doba, Mongo, Moundou, Pala, and Sarh. In 2014, the government established a new campus of the University of N'Djamena at Toukra, located on the outskirts of N'Djamena. Chad has seven institutions and four teacher training colleges, which are all overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education, in addition to the universities and campuses mentioned. Additionally, there are some privately-owned colleges and institutes of higher education, namely Emi Koussi University, Francophonie University, and *Hautes Etudes Commerciales Tchad*. URF was among the pioneering private institutions in the nation. In contrast to other universities, it is an Arabophone institution that was first located near the major mosque of N'Djaména. Currently, URF operates as a partially public institution, receiving funds and undergoing administrative oversight and control from the state. Formal education at the postsecondary level is categorised by Bulder (2007, 5) as follows:

Figure 5. Postsecondary university and non-university studies in Chad

Category	Non-university-level post-secondary studies	University
Age level	From 19 and more	From 19 to 26,
Certificate awarded	*Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP),*	*Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Générales* (after 2nd level), *Licence* (after 3rd level), *Maitrise* (after 4th level), *Doctorat* (after 7th level)
	Brevet d'Etudes Professionnelles (BEP),	
	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS)	
Length of the programme (years)	7	7

Source: Bulder 2007, 5

For teacher training education, teachers in primary schools must complete a three-year upper secondary course at an *Ecole normale d'Instituteurs*, leading to the title of *Instituteur*. Those who leave after two years earn the title of *Instituteur adjoint*. The entry requirement for this course is the *Brevet d'Etudes du premier Cycle* (BEPC) (Bulder 2007, 8). Secondary school teachers can obtain the *Certificat d'Aptitude professionnelle de l'Enseignement aux Collèges d'Enseignement général* (CAPCEG) from *the Institut supérieur des Sciences de l'Education, N'Djaména*. Since 1989, teachers with the CAPCEG can also take a two-year course at the *Institut supérieur des Sciences de l'Education*, leading to the *Certificat d'Aptitude professionelle de l'Enseignement dans les Lycées* (CAPEL) (Bulder 2007, 9).

> For the University, same requirements as in other countries. In the *Ecoles normales*, teachers must hold a *Licence en Sciences de l'Education* or the CAPEL. For the *Institut supérieur en Sciences de l'Education*, teachers must hold the DEA, the *Maîtrise en Sciences de l'Education*, the DES or the *Doctorat* (Bulder 2007, 9).

Government policy in Chad is designed to improve education accessibility, equity and effectiveness. They recommend adjusting school infrastructure, curriculum, teaching techniques, materials, and pedagogical supervision for practicality, sustainability, and efficiency. The Geneva IV Roundtable mandated a ten-year educational assistance programme in 2002 to achieve universal quality education by 2015.

Despite the above efforts, the higher education system in Chad still faces notable challenges, such as a pronounced gender disparity with women being notably underrepresented, especially in scientific disciplines. Additionally, the general participation rate in tertiary education remains poor, as shown by a gross enrolment ratio of just 1% (Bulder 2007). There are also challenges in terms of accessibility, as admission requires either a *Baccalauréat* or a special entrance examination. Although the grade system ranges from 0 to 20, the educational setting is hindered by insufficient allocation of teachers, inadequate credentials and subpar infrastructure, including a lack of suitable classrooms, libraries and student amenities. The government's endeavours, demonstrated by the creation and backing of the University of N'Djamena since 1971, its decentralisation in the 2000s and the allocation of financial assistance, face challenges due to the high rates of student failure. These failures can be attributed to the scarcity of competent high school graduates, inadequate living conditions, and a shortage of qualified teachers. These factors highlight the pressing necessity for comprehensive educational reform in Chad.

The Chadian government reaffirmed its commitment to provide universal access to education for all citizens by 2015, as stated in the background paper for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 titled "Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality" (Fall 2003, 3). In addition, the integration of language and religion in the educational system not only separates students and teachers but also obstructs equal access to education, resulting in a literacy rate that is less than 50% (Ness and Lin 2015). These problems emphasise a lack of coordination between policy ideas and their execution, worsened by a lack of thorough educational reform. The presence of non-state religious organisations and the rivalry between secular and Quranic schools contribute to the fragmentation of the education system, making it more difficult to achieve the government's goal of providing universal access to education by 2015. The intricate network of difficulties implies that attempts to bring about change must be comprehensive, including not only educational systems but also socioeconomic and cultural obstacles.

2.3   CAR

Academic literature on higher education studies in the CAR is scarce. This is partly owing to the sectors and countries low level of development. It is not too different from Chad. Like all CEMAC countries, education in CAR is a relic of European colonialism. CAR was part of

French Equatorial Africa (Bernault 2021). It borders the Republic of Chad in the north, Cameroon in the west, Congo (Brazzaville) and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the south, and the two Sudans in the east (Koyt-Deballé 2020). On December 1, 1958, President Barthelemy Boganda proclaimed Ubangi-Chari a republic and renamed it the CAR. The country gained independence from France on August 13, 1960. Originally, most students from CAR attended university in France. But this changed in 1969 when the country started its own post-secondary education. The country has both the public and private sectors in its higher education system, with public education predominantly centred on the University of Bangui and private institutions specialising in technical and management training.

The University of Bangui, founded in 1969, is the main state institution for higher education in the CAR. It was established after the collapse of the Foundation for Higher Education in Central Africa and has legal, administrative and financial independence. The university has many faculties, institutions, and a heterogeneous academic community. It now primarily consists of domestic staff after receiving support from foreign professors. The institution places a strong emphasis on fostering collaboration with other universities, especially those that are French-speaking and African organisations.

Private higher education has seen a significant increase during the 1990s, with the establishment of several private institutions that mostly focus on technical topics and middle management training. Typically, these schools do not do research and instead depend on academic members from the University of Bangui and the corporate sector. The academic organisation and governance of the institution include decision-making bodies at political, administrative, scientific, and academic tiers. The Rector is responsible for overseeing management, with support from Vice-Rectors, Deans, and Directors of various departments and services.

Both governmental and private higher education institutions in CAR provide a variety of certificates and degrees. The University of Bangui offers a wide range of degrees in several faculties, whereas private schools mostly focus on providing technical certifications as well as bachelor's and master's degrees. The booklet offers a thorough overview of the various academic fields and levels of education these schools offer.

The implementation of the BMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) system in CAR began in 2004, with an initial emphasis on the introduction of Master's degrees before fully embracing the BMD framework. The implementation of BMD-related policy has been hindered by problems like institutional instability and numerous crises. The objective of the system is to synchronise

higher education in CAR with international benchmarks while also addressing the specific requirements of the local context.

CAR's higher education policies and changes, including the adoption of the BMD system, demonstrate a deliberate effort to conform to international educational norms while still meeting domestic requirements. Nevertheless, these endeavours encounter obstacles as a result of the lack of stability in institutions and the occurrence of socio-political upheavals. The transition from conventional structures to the BMD system demonstrates a dedication to enhancing academic excellence and global harmonisation. However, the success of these changes depends on stabilising the educational infrastructure and guaranteeing consistent policy execution despite the country's ever-changing socio-political environment.

2.4   Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is a small country situated in west-central Africa, with around 1.4 million inhabitants. In 1968, the country achieved independence from Spain and has since seen substantial political and economic transformations. Within this particular framework, the higher education system has seen significant changes and advancements over the course of history. Equatorial Guinea's higher education system comprises universities, polytechnic institutes, and other institutions of higher education. The Ministry of Higher Education and Science has the responsibility of supervising the system, while the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) serves as the main institution. In addition to UNGE, Equatorial Guinea is home to many other educational institutions, including the National Polytechnic Institute of Equatorial Guinea (INP), the National Open University of Equatorial Guinea (UNED), the Catholic University of Equatorial Guinea (UCGE), and the Spanish National Distance Education University (UNED). Aside from universities, vocational and technical institutes also provide instruction in fields such as agriculture, medicine, and tourism. These institutes include the National Institute of Health Sciences, the National Institute of Agriculture, and the National Institute of Tourism.

The higher education system in Equatorial Guinea has seen substantial transformations in recent decades. Prior to achieving independence, the nation lacked any institutions of higher learning, necessitating students to go outside in order to pursue further education. Nevertheless, throughout the early 1970s, the government established UNGE with the purpose of tackling this problem.

In subsequent years, the government made substantial investments in higher education, leading to the establishment of other institutions such as INP and UCGE. The administration implemented measures to encourage education, including the provision of free basic and secondary schooling as well as expanding opportunities for scholarships in higher education.

Nevertheless, despite these diligent efforts, the quality of higher education in Equatorial Guinea continues to be subpar. According to a World Bank (WB) study, the nation's higher education system suffers from inadequate funding, outdated curriculum, and a lack of qualified instructors. In addition, the universities in the nation have a restricted research capability, and there is insufficient cooperation between academics and industry.

Recently, the government has implemented measures to tackle these problems. In 2014, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science established a strategy plan to advance higher education in the nation. The plan includes strategies aimed at enhancing the calibre of education, augmenting research capabilities, and fortifying collaborations between institutions and industry.

The higher education system in Equatorial Guinea has seen substantial changes in recent decades. The government has endeavoured to enhance the availability of higher education, although the issue of education quality persists as a barrier. In response to this matter, the government has formulated a strategic blueprint with the objective of enhancing the standard of education and bolstering the research capabilities within the nation. Yet, the effectiveness of these attempts at enhancing the nation's higher education system is still uncertain.

Equatorial Guinea, a country with a developing higher education system, has challenges due to a lack of instructional materials and infrastructure, particularly a high-speed Internet connection. Additionally, the scarcity of research initiatives is attributed to the restricted availability of research resources. Another issue of concern is the lack of university-level courses dedicated to educating future field teachers. Furthermore, the meagre salary at educational institutions serves as an obstacle to entering the field, as previously pointed out by Bassett et al. (2017). To ensure proper compensation, it was essential to analyse the linkages between Agenda 2063 and the higher education initiatives at the national level in this country.

2.5   Gabon

The higher education system in Gabon has seen significant changes throughout time, transitioning from a colonial education system inherited from France to a more contemporary

and varied structure. The education changes in Gabon may be categorised into three distinct historical periods: 1960 to 1989, 1990 to 2009, and 2010 to the present (Mba, 2021). The issue of inadequate funding for education that the French colonial government had left behind arose quickly after Gabon gained independence from France in 1960 (Mba 2021, 4). The higher education system in Gabon is centralised and overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Gabon's higher education system consists of many state and private institutions. The University of Omar Bongo (UOB) is the primary government-funded institution of higher education, providing a wide range of academic programmes across several disciplines. Additional governmental institutions comprise the National School of Administration, the National School of Magistracy, and the National School of Water and Forests. The private educational institutions in Gabon consist of *Ecole Supérieure de Gestion et de Technologie* (ESGT), Ecole Supérieure de Commerce et de Management (ESCM), and Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion (ENCG). Private colleges provide a diverse range of courses in management, engineering, and economics.

Gabon achieved independence from France in 1960, and the University of Libreville, the country's first institution of higher education, was founded in 1970. In 1977, the institution amalgamated with the National School of Administration to become the UOB. Over time, the higher education system in Gabon has seen substantial transformations in order to fulfil the country's requirements. In 2004, the government initiated the National Programme of Higher Education Reform with the objective of strengthening the quality of higher education, expanding enrolment, and fostering research. The government has augmented its expenditure on higher education, with the budgeted budget for higher education rising from 10.8% in 2009 to 16.6% in 2018. This investment has resulted in the creation of new institutions and the growth of existing ones.

Recently, Gabon has prioritised enhancing women's access to higher education. The government has implemented affirmative action measures to augment the representation of women in higher education and has also established scholarship programmes exclusively tailored for women. The evolution of time has negatively impacted the higher education system in many African nations, including Gabon. Law number 20/92 of March 8, 1993, seems to be a crucial law in improving the salary circumstances of professors in Gabon. This legislation conferred a distinctive position on the education sector and officially recognised it as a public

utility. This document delineates the advantages, entitlements, and extraordinary advantages that are afforded to people employed in the education industry. Nevertheless, Bah-Lalya and Yénikoye (2011, p. 72) argue that a lack of variety in course options is a crucial element that impacts the outcomes of the higher education system in Gabon. This is shown by the sluggish progress of specialised vocational education in comparison to more broad-based programmes, as well as the limited job opportunities that arise after completing such training.

2.6 Republic of the Congo

Socio-political developments in the Congo Brazzaville have had differing impacts on higher education institutions (Paulin, 2021, p. 6). In 2010, the World Bank performed research that revealed that the higher education system in the Republic of Congo suffers from a lack of sufficient physical infrastructure and a paucity of possibilities for teacher training. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research governs the higher education system in the Republic of the Congo. The system comprises both public and private institutions and provides a variety of degree programmes, spanning from undergraduate to doctorate levels.

The higher education system in the Republic of the Congo is organised into two tiers, including universities and other institutions of higher education. Currently, there are five state universities and other private institutions in the country. Marien Ngouabi Institution, situated in the capital city of Brazzaville, has the distinction of being the oldest and biggest institution.

The Congolese government has recently undertaken initiatives to enhance the higher education system via investments in infrastructure and the expansion of educational opportunities. In 2017, the government initiated a nationwide higher education development plan with the objective of enhancing the quality of education and research as well as augmenting the quantity of graduates. Notwithstanding these efforts, the higher education system in the Republic of the Congo encounters several obstacles. These factors include insufficient financial resources, the absence of necessary facilities, and restricted access to education, particularly for women and students residing in rural regions. Moreover, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant influence on the higher education system, leading to the adoption of online learning and restrictions on face-to-face teaching in many institutions.

2.7 Comparative analysis of the systems in CEMAC

Looking back at each CEMAC member state, it is observed that Cameroon's higher education sector is characterised by its diversity and dynamism, consisting of three primary types of institutions: university institutes of technology, state universities, private universities, and HEIs. The country has implemented the LMD framework, indicating a transition towards the European education paradigm. Cameroon's higher education system continues to be affected by the lasting impact of colonialism, as seen in ongoing linguistic differences and the division between the Anglophone and Francophone institutions. The government has implemented substantial changes with the objective of enhancing accessibility and decentralising higher education. All the same , there are also obstacles that need to be addressed, such as unequal access, ensuring responsibility and accountability in university administration, and incorporating the traditional knowledge systems of indigenous communities. Overcoming challenges in harmonising national higher education policies with Agenda 2063 and ensuring consistent implementation is also required.

Chad's higher education system is smaller and less developed in comparison to other countries in the CEMAC region. Historically, the country has seen low enrolment ratios and high illiteracy rates as a result of long-lasting civil conflicts and acts of terrorism. The country's bilingualism (Arabic and French) has resulted in a discrepancy in the language used for teaching, which has contributed to difficulties in accessibility. In recent years, there has been an expansion in the sector, as the government has established other institutions to address overcrowding at the University of N'Djamena. Yet, the system continues to encounter substantial obstacles in terms of infrastructure, quality assurance, and alignment with national development objectives. Chad is now in the first phases of expanding and enhancing higher education. However, there is a significant disparity in connecting these efforts with the goals of Agenda 2063.

The higher education sector in CAR is significantly undeveloped, mostly due to political instability and a lack of funding. The University of Bangui continues to be the primary state institution for higher education. Similar to Chad, CAR has challenges in successfully implementing impactful changes in higher education and integrating them with Agenda 2063. The absence of stability and infrastructure greatly impedes the development of a unified higher education policy framework that is in line with regional and continental goals.

Equatorial Guinea has seen progress and improvements in higher education with the construction of institutions such as the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE).

Notwithstanding this advancement, the nation encounters comparable obstacles as its CEMAC counterparts, such as the need to ensure the quality and pertinence of higher education in relation to the country's development objectives. The continuous endeavour to enhance the higher education system has considerable obstacles in integrating these efforts with Agenda 2063, similar to other CEMAC nations.

The higher education system in Gabon has transitioned from a colonial education system to a more varied and inclusive framework. Notwithstanding the augmented allocation of resources by the government and the creation of new organisations, there are still ongoing difficulties, such as insufficient financial support, a lack of alignment between the curriculum and real-world needs, and the incorporation of higher education into the job market. Gabon's efforts to reform and invest in higher education showcase a dedication to enhancement. However, there is still a need for better synchronisation with Agenda 2063 in order to fully harness the potential of higher education to contribute to both national and regional development.

The Republic of the Congo's higher education system has been influenced by socio-political changes and has comparable difficulties as other CEMAC countries. Efforts to improve the system have included expenditures on infrastructure and educational opportunities. Nevertheless, the integration of higher education policy with Agenda 2063's aims is impeded by ongoing problems, including inadequate resources, restricted access, and the need for quality assurance.

Ultimately, while each CEMAC nation has distinct historical, cultural and socio-political factors that shape its higher education system, there are shared patterns that may be identified. These factors include the historical impact of colonial education systems, difficulties in ensuring high standards, the requirement to comply with labour market demands, and the incorporation of higher education programmes within Agenda 2063. The comparative research highlights the need for achieving harmonisation and regional coordination in order to tackle these difficulties. To improve the coordination of national higher education systems with Agenda 2063, it is necessary to make collaborative efforts in policy reform, investment, and capacity development. A commitment to regional integration and the sharing of effective strategies should support these initiatives. The way ahead requires not just dealing with the remaining effects of colonial legacies but also adopting creative educational methods that adapt to the different needs and ambitions of the continent. The table below provides a concise summary of the comparative examination of higher education systems in CEMAC countries.

Table 1. Comparison of CEMAC higher education systems: challenges and Agenda 2063 alignment

Country	System Complexity	Reform and structure	Main Challenges	Alignment with Agenda 2063
Cameroon	High	Adopted LMD system, bilingual challenges	Language barrier, quality assurance	Ongoing challenges
Chad	Modest	Modest developments, low enrolment	Low enrolment, language disparity	Significant gap
Central African Republic	Underdeveloped	Mainly University of Bangui, instability issues	Political instability and resource limitations	Considerable gap
Equatorial Guinea	Evolving	UNGE establishment, ongoing changes	Quality assurance and relevance to national goals	Ongoing challenges
Gabon	Diverse	Increased investment, evolving institutions	Adequate funding and curriculum relevance	Need for greater alignment
Republic of the Congo	Impacted by socio-political developments	Investment in infrastructure and ongoing challenges	Insufficient resources, limited access	Need for greater alignment

Source: author

Kigotho (2020) argues that higher education systems in the CEMAC subregion are facing challenges in transitioning from the humanities to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and are also lacking in research output and innovation. The skills required in the labour market are not being adequately fulfilled by the skills possessed by graduates of universities and other higher education institutions in CEMAC member states. However, it is important to note that meeting market demands should not be seen as the primary and only goal of higher education. Education, first and foremost, has as objective the acquisition of knowledge and improving human faculties and capabilities. While Africa is making progress in improving human faculties, there is still a significant concern over the gap between graduation rates and employability in the region (Masters 2021). The presence of a discrepancy between the number of skilled individuals seeking work and the availability of suitable formal positions highlights

the ineffectiveness of education systems that do not align with the skills demanded by the labour market. Besides, even in cases where attempts at innovation are made, they often fail to align with the needs of the economy and society at large. The predicament in the case of the CEMAC subregion is that, although the community has expanded access to primary education, with a surge in the enrolment of students in secondary schools, quality issues in post-secondary schools remain a principal concern.

Higher education institutions in the CEMAC subregion also have a poor worldwide and continental ranking in terms of research output and the quality of education they provide to students. According to the SCImago Journal & Country Rank from 1996 to 2022, CEMAC countries exhibit a limited research output in terms of the quantity of journal articles and other scientific indicators. Equatorial Guinea, for example, ranks 53rd out of 59 African states and nation-states mentioned, with 305 publications. Chad is second from the bottom at number 47, with 903, followed by CAR at number 3 with 1062, Gabon at number 30 with 3772, and Congo at number 23 with 6727 documents. Only Cameroon is in the top 20 at number 12, with 25994. While they may not seem to be bad when compared to other African nations, they are very low when compared to other regions of the globe, such as the Middle East and Eastern Europe, where the last from the bottom has 9827 and 6707, respectively (SCImago 2024).

The correlation between low ranks and the inadequate quality of education is evident in the case of CEMAC. The quality of higher education in CEMAC countries is declining, despite the opportunity of other CEMAC countries to follow in the footsteps of Cameroon, which has the greatest student enrolment and research productivity in the subregion (Kigotho 2020). Underperformance in mathematics and science continues to adversely affect the calibre and diversity of abilities that individuals bring to the job market. The education system in Chad, for example, has a very low gross enrolment rate of 2%, with six years of basic school, four years of lower secondary education, three years of upper secondary education, and higher education (The World Bank 2019, 4). Antonio Pedro asserts that the humanities, rather than the engineering sciences, are responsible for producing the most highly skilled university personnel in Central African countries. In Cameroon, almost 70% of students are pursuing academic disciplines unrelated to science, while just 25% are enrolled in STEM subjects (Kigotho 2020). Although Cameroon and the surrounding area have recognised agriculture as a top priority, the agricultural industry constitutes just a minuscule fraction of one percent of all graduates.

Countries in the CEMAC subregion are, therefore, lagging behind South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Kenya, and Tunisia in terms of science, technology and innovation, according to a study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2020). The analysis indicates that the allocation of funds for research and development remains below 0.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in all of the CEMAC countries. Alarmingly, none of the countries in the subregion meet the AU's established aim of allocating 1% of their GDP for research and development. The ICE-Central Africa summit's conclusions indicate that gender bias in higher education, namely in the STEM fields, is a significant issue of concern. In the Central African Republic, 41.5 percent of researchers are female. However, in Chad, the percentage drops significantly to just 4 percent. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the percentage is 9 percent, and in the Congo, it is 13 percent. Agenda 2063's effectiveness in tackling the challenges in these countries, which were first caused by factors like colonisation, is uncertain due to its seeming disregard for the specific historical circumstances.

2.8 Agenda 2063 and its higher education aspirations

In 2013, the AU decided to establish a new long-term blueprint for the development of Africa known as Agenda 2063 (Addaney 2017; Vedaste and Hannah 2018; Ufomba 2020; African Union Commission 2015). Agenda 2063 is a collection of aspirations for the continent that cover a broad spectrum of domains, like peace and security, government, economic growth, and education (Ifoh 2016). Ensuring universal access to education and training of a satisfactory quality is a key goal of Agenda 2063 for the entire population of Africa. As noted by African Union Commission (2015, 2), the educational imperative aspires for a continent with "well educated and skilled citizens, underpinned by science, technology and innovation for a knowledge society is the norm and no child misses school due to poverty or any form of discrimination." To achieve this objective, the blueprint proposes the enlargement and enhancement of education systems throughout the continent to overcome the challenge of "low-quality teaching and learning, as well as inequality and exclusion at all levels" (Mlambo, Thusi, and Gift Ndlovuand 2022, 68). For higher education, the focus is on augmenting the quantity of competent educators, allocating resources to research and development, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. According to Addaney (2017, 188) "this will create an avenue for the Agenda to be aligned with other existing regional, subregional and national-level frameworks and aspirations as well as strengthen ownership and domestication of the Agenda

by member states." The following are some of the particular goals that Agenda 2063 has for higher education:

- Boosting the number of students from Africa who study in other countries, especially in the STEM professions, by offering scholarships and participating in exchange programmes.

- Encouraging the growth of high-quality institutions of higher education, such as universities, research institutes, and centres for technical and vocational education and training.

- Fostering the growth of international ties and collaborations between African institutions and institutions located in other regions, notably in the fields of research and innovation.

- Assisting in the creation of educational programmes and materials that are pertinent to the requirements of the continent and that take into account the myriad of cultural traditions found throughout Africa.

- Expanding access to educational opportunities and training programmes by encouraging the use of technology for educational purposes, such as online learning and remote education.

Agenda 2063 primarily seeks to revolutionise higher education in Africa and secure its pivotal role in propelling economic growth and social advancement throughout the continent. During the 24th regular session of the assembly of the African Union (AU) in January 2015, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African heads of state and government officially endorsed the implementation of Agenda 2063 (Amupanda 2018, 64). Had Africa been provided with timely and thorough evaluation of the Agenda, it may have perhaps avoided the frustration of wasting the next four decades without accomplishing any significant goals in regard to the Agenda. Two out of the twelve main projects mentioned in the background note aim to speed up the implementation of the Agenda are the Pan-African E-university and the Pan-African virtual university (Vedaste and Hannah 2018; Addaney 2017a; African Union Commission 2015). The subsequent statement is an exact quotation extracted from the background note (African Union 2015, 2):

> By expanding access to postsecondary and continuing education, as well as by capitalising on the digital revolution and global knowledge, these two flagship programmes hope to advance human capital, science and technology, as well as

innovation in Africa. This is further supported by the announcement of ambition 1 in the final version of agenda 2063, which occurred in April of 2015. Aspiration 1 places a strong emphasis on the need of constructing a "prosperous Arica based on equitable growth and sustainable development", with a particular emphasis placed on education, especially postsecondary or higher education.

The implementation of higher education programmes plays a crucial role in promoting the development of human capital, which is essential for Africa's economic and social progress (Gyimah-Brempong, Paddison, and Mitiku 2006). However, Addaney argues in Onuora-Oguno, Egbewole, and Kleven (2017) that Africa's lack of involvement in capacity building, namely in providing higher-quality education, might hinder the continent's progress in achieving the objectives of Agenda 2063. Limited training, inadequate scholarly incentives for students and teaching staff, and social marginalisation of the majority of individuals due to economic challenges associated with higher enrolment and poor infrastructure in African universities are some of the obstacles impeding the advancement of human capital in Africa's higher education sector. Additional obstacles arise from the unwillingness or incapacity of African governments to provide financial support for research in higher education (Waghid and Davids 2019; Divala 2019). Sadly, Africa's political history and its continued dependence on foreign aid from organisations like the World Bank, which enforce conditions and promote neoliberal tendencies, restricts access to education, raises concerns about the quality of education, hampers institutional capabilities, and fosters overwhelmed university governance and accountability. All of these factors contribute to the current challenges faced by higher education on the continent (Bulfin 2009; Mohamedbhai 2011; Otara 2012). Consequently, CESA is a direct response to overcome most, if not, all of these challenges by providing assistance to the AU's 2063 Agenda, which aims to create well-educated and highly skilled people that can effectively contribute to Africa's progress and growth. CESA addresses structural issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, low female science enrolment, and high rates of illiteracy. CESA has the dual objective of transforming the educational environment and enabling Africa to successfully control and maintain its own growth (Okalany and Adipala 2016).

CESA also aspires to improve educational systems across Africa by implementing a comprehensive strategy based on its guiding principles and core pillars (African Union 2017). The guiding principles encompass the promotion of knowledge societies led by highly skilled

individuals, the advancement of inclusive and fair education that embraces lifelong learning for sustainable development, the establishment of effective governance with strong leadership and accountability in education management, the alignment of education systems to facilitate mobility and integration within Africa, the emphasis on quality and relevance for scientific and technological innovation, and the support of physically and psychologically healthy learners who are well-nourished to participate in education (Addaney 2017a).

CESA strategy is based on various key elements: a robust determination from the political sphere to drive reform and strengthen the education sector; the establishment of a peaceful and secure environment that promotes education; the guarantee of gender equality and awareness within educational frameworks; a focus on mobilising domestic resources; the enhancement of institutional capacity through good governance, transparency, and accountability; and the creation of supportive and constantly improving learning environments and research spaces (Juma Shabani, Okebukola, and Oyewole 2014).

CESA goals for reform include revitalising the teaching profession to guarantee high standards and relevance across all educational levels, constructing and renovating infrastructure to enhance learning environments, utilising information and communication technology to enhance access and administration of educational systems, ensuring the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills through coordinated education, expediting gender equality and fairness, initiating literacy campaigns to address high illiteracy rates, strengthening science and maths curricula to foster innovation, expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as well as tertiary education to enhance job readiness and competitiveness, promoting peace education for conflict resolution, and enhancing education management through improved data practices. Therefore, CESA plays a vital role in achieving the broader objectives of Agenda 2063.

2.8.1   History of Agenda 2063

African integration is a topic that, regardless of its age, is still relevant today. It all started in the 1960s with the Pan African movement, and as a direct consequence of that, the OAU was founded in 1963 (Vedaste and Hannah 2018, 142). With the establishment of the OAU on May 25th, 1963, one of its key objectives was to free Africa from the shackles of colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination (Cervenka 1977, 13). In fact, member states committed at the time to coordinating their policies in the following areas in order to achieve the goals outlined in Article II (1) of the OAU Charter: politics and diplomacy; economics, including

transport and communications; education and culture; health, sanitation, and nutrition; science and technology; and defence and security.

In the 1980s, as economic, social, and political quagmires in Africa became critical, African leaders were compelled to reassess the impacts stemming from corrupt practices and deficiencies in governance systems, rather than attributing the blame solely to external forces and factors such as colonialism and unfair international relations (Vedaste and Hannah 2018, 143). The OAU and UNECA formulated the Monrovia Statement in 1979 as a response to the economic stagnation, political instability, and environmental crises of the 1970s. This remark exerted a substantial influence on the formulation of the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and Lagos Final Act, which sought to foster economic autonomy and political steadiness across Africa (D'SA 1983). The Lagos Plan of Action included a plan for enhancing the progress of the African continent, outlined the trajectory of African advancement in the next few years, and received backing from political measures designed to promote economic integration and unity (United Nations Economic and Social Council and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 1991). It also offered proof of Africa's significant endeavours to build comprehensive visions and action methods to address their current economic, social, and political challenges (Molefe 2020). In addition, it projected potential courses of action for the future of the continent by tackling issues such as structural reform, integration, collaboration, industry, agriculture, research, and technology. Collaboration remained the primary emphasis of all of these endeavours (Soudien and Houston 2021). Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors, such as a deficiency in the value of money, an absence of political will, and reservations over ability, they were only partly carried out. In light of the fact that prior strategies were mostly technocratic in nature and insufficiently democratic, Agenda 2063 aims to rectify this state of affairs, yet the issue remains as to how it is distinct from its predecessors (Soudien and Houston 2021).

According to Akani (2019, 1373), Agenda 2063 was conceived out of the need and requirement to position the continent on the cusp of the Sirte Declaration of 1999, the African Parliament, and other programmes bolstering the inevitability of African political unification. As previously stated, the contemporary origin of *the Agenda* can be traced all the way back to the OAU/AU Golden Jubilee celebration that took place in Addis Ababa in 2013 (Achieng, 2014, p. 49). African leaders used the occasion to recommit themselves to achieving the goals set out by the organisation's forefathers and to refocus the work that had been done by the organisation over the preceding half century. Aniche (2020, 4f.) writes:

Although the Assembly of the Union at the AU Golden Jubilee Summit in June 2012 charged the AUC with the responsibility of developing Agenda 2063, it was in its 21st Ordinary Session at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 26 May 2013, that it formerly mandated AUC to develop a continental agenda for 50-year growth trajectory drawing hugely and substantially from the lessons of the previous 50 years. Subsequently, the draft Agenda 2063 was presented to the Summit for discussion at the 22nd Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government in January 2014 for deliberation and consideration by the AU member states.

By evaluating Africa's development in accordance with Article II, Section 2, of the OAU Charter, it is evident that the continent has made significant strides in facilitating decolonization and fostering "educational and cultural collaboration" (Organisation of African Unity 1963, 3). The AU assumed responsibility from the OAU in coordinating efforts to continue with the upgrade of "education, culture, health and human resources development" of Africa, outlined in the functions of the Executive Council, Article 13(h) of the AU's Constitutive Act (African Union 2000, 11). Thus, the shift from the OAU to the AU might be characterised as a renewed dedication to the principles of a unified and prosperous Africa, wherein education remains an integral component (Abrahamsen, Chimhandamba, and Chipato 2023). With the coming of the AU, substantial progress has been made in repositioning the continent in global affairs through the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECAs). Given this situation, the member states of the AU decided to envision and reshape Africa's future for the next fifty years through what became known as Agenda 2063. The objective of this vision is to highlight the continent's shared aspiration to actively pursue and achieve the long-awaited economic, political and socio-cultural revival of Africa. The AU assigned the AUC the responsibility of formulating Agenda 2063, a comprehensive long-term strategy that delineates the desired future of Africa. Africans actively participated in this process, with support from several organisations including the NEPAD Managing Coordinating Agency, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). While serving as a rallying call for all segments of African society to collaborate towards the objective of a prosperous and cohesive Africa, Agenda 2063 was founded on common principles and a collective future, Addaney (2017b, 189) has advanced the following argument:

Realising Agenda 2063, the African Union must ensure that Africa's education systems are churning out useful citizens who are educated sufficiently to be aware of their environment in terms of development aspirations, and are capable of dominating and realising the same.

The concept of a well-educated Africa is rooted in the principles of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, which form the core of CESA and the broader Agenda 2063 (Akani 2019; Njie 2019; Tarik 2018). Its goal of laying the basis for redressing past injustices and making the twenty-first century the "African century" has prompted Bunting (2019, 139) to define the African pedagogue as a "guerilla intellectual" or "an education freedom fighter."

With Africa having the highest percentage of educational exclusion in the world, Agenda 2063 centres on "increasing access to education and youth development opportunities" (Mlambo, Thusi, and Ndlovuand 2022, 68). That is why Agenda focuses on getting people involved in continental projects and encouraging them to be self-sufficient. It also stresses the need for competent, inclusive, and responsible governments and institutions at all levels and in all areas. It recognises the importance of RECs as key parts of maintaining continental unity, while also acknowledging the challenges they face. Furthermore, the African Union Commission (2015, 3) asserts that Africa must undertake purposeful and conscious endeavours to cultivate transformational leadership in order to achieve the Agenda's objectives and protect African interests.

Prior to Agenda 2063, the AU launched a number of other initiatives. Some of these initiatives included the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty, NEPAD, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Accelerated Industrial Development (AIDA), the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP), and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the AU/NEPAD Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. Agenda 2063 stands out for its creative approach, enhanced communications strategy, clear plan for resource mobilisation, integrated policies, and results-oriented mentality (African Union 2015; Addaney 2017b; 2017a; Vedaste and Hannah 2018; African Union Commission 2015; Ufomba 2020; DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu 2016; Onuora-Oguno, Egbewole, and Kleven 2017; Aniche 2020; Amupanda 2018; Garfias Royo et al. 2022; Njie 2019; Molefe 2020; Tshiyoyo 2017).

As previously stated, although African countries embrace Agenda 2063's transformative potential, competing interests still prevail at the national and subregional levels. The question

is whether Agenda 2063 can be considered as the foundation for Africa's continuous aspirations towards political unification, economic emancipation, and socio-cultural unity. Where does education fit into this equation? This study argues that education, culture, science, and technology are not just separate policy areas, but rather the foundational pillars that have allowed Africa to break free from colonialism, resist neocolonialism, and foster the resources and elements required for the growth of knowledge-driven economies across the continent.

2.8.2 Higher education dimensions of *the Agenda*

The quality of higher education that is made available on the African continent has a direct bearing on both the region's future and the success of Agenda 2063 (Okebukola and Land 2015, 16). This makes it imperative that steps be taken that encourage a change in people's mindsets and that Africa's human resource be strengthened through education, research, and the acquisition of new information, skills, and competencies (Onuora-Oguno, Egbewole, and Kleven 2017; Addaney 2017b, 187). Unfortunately, it appears that higher education systems in Africa are currently unable to respond fully to the immediate skill needs in the medium term as a result the lack of a critical mass of quality lecturers; insufficient sustainable financing; inappropriate governance and leadership disconnect with the demands of the economy (Okebukola and Land 2015). According Materu's (2007), less than 20% of faculty members at public postsecondary institutions in Africa hold a PhD degree. Most departments typically have either one or two senior professors on staff. Consequently, this hinders the ability of departments and institutions to foster conducive research environments. Low salaries, insufficient research allowances and equipment, and limited autonomy at African universities discourage professors from staying, thereby limiting their control over their work (Evans, Yuan, and Filmer 2022). Prof. Peter Materu stated in an interview with Prof. Sharlene Swartz on November 16, 2021, that the "disconnect between the mandate to serve the community and the other two mandates which are to undertake teaching and learning and produce research" is partially to blame for the limited number of qualified faculty at universities in Africa (The Imprint of Education 2021, 1). Additionally, an examination of the distribution of graduates in 23 African countries reveals a significant prevalence of soft disciplines, such as social sciences and humanities (47 percent) and education (23 percent) (Allais 2022; Mncayi et al. 2022). Shabani, Okebukola, and Oyewole's (2014) study of quality assurance reveals the top 10 obstacles facing higher education in Africa in 2013.

Table 2. Ranking of challenges to quality higher education in Africa

1	Depreciating quality of higher education teachers
2	Research capacity deficit
3	Infrastructural/facilities inadequacies
4	Lack of a regional quality assurance framework and accreditation system
5	Slow adoption of ICT for delivering quality higher education including distance education
6	Capacity deficit of quality assurance agencies
7	Weak internationalisation of higher education
8	Management inefficiencies
9	Slow adoption of LMD reforms
10	Poor quality of entrants into higher education from the secondary level

Source: Shabani (2013)

Education, in its many manifestations, including higher education, plays a critical role in fostering a robust and thriving economy. It has the capacity to alter an individual's perspective and contributes to the development of society. Agenda 2063 recognises that the development of highly skilled human capital is non-negotiable in driving Africa's progress (Vedaste and Hannah 2018). The initial ten-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 proposes the creation of an African Virtual and E-University, expanding the availability of higher education and lifelong learning opportunities in Africa by simultaneously reaching a large number of students and professionals across multiple locations. Additionally, it aims to develop comprehensive and top-notch Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL) resources to ensure that prospective students can access the University from anywhere in the world and at any given time. Furthermore, the plan includes provisions for enhanced availability of postsecondary and continuing education (African Union Commission 2015; African Union 2015). The line from Fomunyam (2020, 1606) accurately represents the essence of Agenda 2063.

> […] The quality of education possessed by the human capital of an economy determines the pace of its progress. Thus, a knowledge-based economy is key to economic progress,

and a well-trained workforce will ensure its sustenance. This exposes the important role that education has to play in the actualisation of the goals of Agenda 2063.

Africa's engagement in the global economy is hindered by its insufficient levels of research and human capital development. In support of the preceding statement, Mugimu (2021) suggests that higher education institutions in Africa have to undergo rapid transformation to acknowledge emerging prospects and equip students with the skills to be innovative, morally upright, and flexible. This will enable them to assume leadership roles in universities and schools, establish enterprises, generate new knowledge, and contribute to the development of Africa. Universities ought to engage in collaboration with all sectors of society, including the business sector, farmers, entrepreneurs, civic society, and government agencies, to provide timely and locally relevant information. If Africa wants to fully capitalise on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and achieve the goals of Agenda 2063, universities must assume a central role in driving the continent's fast progress. This paper discusses the complexity of the Agenda and its feasibility, which provides a difficulty. Furthermore, analysing the CEMAC case study is vital for understanding the practicality of the Agenda, as it takes into account the distinct policy agendas and higher education-related specifics of both individual member states and the whole Community. This coincides with the goals of the research, which aims to assess whether or not it meets the criteria established by CESA and Agenda 2063, namely in relation to policy creation and implementation.

2.8.3 Strategies and level of implementation

Implementing the AU's 2063 Agenda, which outlines a comprehensive and sustainable plan for pan-African growth, required the establishment of CESA in 2016. While shifting reliance on "development frameworks that were not continent-specific to achieve the developments for its higher education," (Awaah, Okebukola, and Shabani 2022, 144), CESA has the goal of reorganising education systems all throughout the African continent so that they are in line with the pan-African vision of Agenda 2063 (Tikly 2019, 223). This Pan-African vision of Agenda 2063 within the African Higher Education Space (AHES) is one driven by the following (Awaah, Okebukola, and Shabani 2022, 145):

> Skilled human capital; holistic, inclusive and equitable education with good conditions for lifelong learning as the *sine qua non* for sustainable development; good governance, leadership, and accountability in education management; harmonised education and training systems essential for the realisation of intra-Africa mobility and academic

integration through regional cooperation; quality and relevant education, training and research necessary for scientific and technological innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship as well as a healthy mind in a healthy body – referring to physically and socio-psychologically – fit and well-fed learners.

The Draft Agenda 2063 Technical Document and Popular Version, as well as the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, are given to the AU Policy Organs for consideration and approval in a 2015 progress report (African Union 2015, 1). The implementation strategy includes the linked components listed below:

- Member States will undertake national consultations on both the technical paper and the popular version of Agenda 2063 and offer comments to the Commission by the 31st of October 2014;
- The Commission shall continue to collaborate with the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), AfDB) and UNECA to finalise the Agenda 2063 Documents, the First 10-Year Plan, and the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation framework for submission to the January 2015 meetings of the AU Policy Organs;
- The Commission will continue to investigate and plan specific steps for the execution of key programmes and projects highlighted in Agenda 2063; and
- The Commission, in partnership with NEPAD, UNECA, and AfDB, must conduct the appropriate discussions with Island States in order to build a framework to guarantee that their unique characteristics, priorities, and concerns are included into Agenda 2063 and associated initiatives

Another education-focused report from the AUC, published in 2015, asserts the following:

From early childhood education to primary, secondary, technical, vocational and higher education, Africa would have witnessed a true renaissance, through investments made by governments and the private sector in education and in technology, science, research and innovation. By 2063, at least 70% of all high school graduates will go on to have tertiary education with 70% of them graduating in the sciences, technology and innovation programmes, thus laying the basis for competitive economies built upon human capital to complement its rich endowments in natural resources.

Therefore, the vision for Africa's education by 2063 is one that would require sustained education investment, political and economic stability, and infrastructure capable of

accommodating such a significant educational transformation, and fair access to education across geographic and socioeconomic contexts.

2.9   Critical reflection

Tikly's (2019, p. 235) deduction *vis-à-vis* sustainable development (SD) and education for sustainable development (ESD) visions in regional transformational agendas throughout Africa is refurbished in this work. While Tikly (2019) maintains that the Pan-African vision of transformational change should be in response to colonial and postcolonial economic, cultural, and political arrangements, the fixation of this study is on the same challenges albeit their emergence from historical circumstances often resulting from uncoordinated policy agendas with consequential deficiencies in human capital development. As Tikly (2019, p. 235) puts it, although it is necessary to avoid a new kind of afropessimism when considering "what ought to be" as opposed to "what is" when it comes to the orientation of higher education policy in Africa, it is equally as critical to be realistic about the potential for change and to echo and re-echo in new policy directions and in fusing them with practise.

To use his own words:

> It is argued that although education has enjoyed contradictory relations with the domains of the economy, culture and the policy, for the most part education systems have been implicated in processes of unsustainable development in relation to each. In economic terms, education has been implicated in the reproduction of extractive economic policies that have favoured global interests and those of indigenous elites and have had destructive effects on the natural environment.

Regional initiatives such as Agenda 2063 adequately recognise but often struggle to effectively address the fundamental reasons for unsustainable growth, which stem from the historical colonial encounter and the characteristics of modern globalisation. These agendas often neglect to recognise the degree to which past and present higher education policies and structures have contributed to unsustainable development processes in Africa. In other words, the international system's inherent capitalist nature implies that if the financial resources allocated to support Agenda 2063 come from the very same colonial powers and their affiliated financial institutions that advocated for structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) three decades ago, then Africa remains reliant on them. Despite its stated intentions, the complete ineffectiveness of SAPs and the deliberate creation of harmful situations by these financial institutions clearly show that

they often prioritise their own interests over those of the impoverished and marginalised people of the continent and make insufficient contributions to human capital development. This has resulted in the unregulated growth of a private higher education sector in the region, which, despite its positive impact on human resource development, lacks a legislative structure that ensures good standards. Hence, in order for higher education to effectively revolutionise human capital development in Africa, it is imperative to critically reassess the prevailing viewpoint and policy that now govern it so as to liberate it from its existing reliance on established patterns. The persistence of this route dependency may be traced back to the colonial age, and the current entanglements of neocolonialism are presenting significant obstacles to overcome. Understanding the issues and contradictions in Agenda 2063 in the context of a bigger look at how things change might help in figuring out the challenges and opportunities that come with putting the Agenda into action in the CEMAC subregion. One can argue that although dominant theories, such as human capital and modernisation theory, and concepts like the knowledge economy often assume that education can solve development issues, the results of their application frequently suggest a more intricate relationship. Higher education must closely connect to the ongoing processes of structural change in the economy, society, and government to have a significant and impactful role in a subregion like CEMAC. According to Addaney (2017, 182) "current educational institutions, methodology, and curricula on the continent are not responsive to the Agenda's eight-point aims." In order to support the successful and effective implementation of the Agenda, it may be necessary to modify the present educational system(s) in Africa to be rights-respecting, context-specific, and compelling. One way to adequately address this topic is to compare Agenda 2063 with national higher education agendas that focus on policy reforms and adjustments within the CEMAC subregion.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the complex higher education system(s) in Africa from historical and theoretical perspectives. With reference to CEMAC member states, the chapter discusses how higher education has evolved over time across the subregion and the continent as a whole. It also explores the different intellectual debates and theoretical perspectives that have shaped its current state, such as the long-lasting effects of colonial legacies and the role of the AU in transforming the systems through CESA and Agenda 2063.

3.1   A historical review

The aim of this historical review is threefold: firstly, to analyse the period before Europe took over Africa and explore the political, economic, and sociocultural aspects of higher education policies and systems during that time; secondly, to evaluate the potential harm inflicted on African higher education policies and systems due to European colonialism, which is particularly relevant in the context of this study; and finally, to illustrate how postcolonial African higher education systems are still a reflection of policies and systems that were designed to serve the interests of former European colonial powers.

To begin with, let us define public policies in a broad sense, as well as higher education policies specifically. Knill and Tosun (2012, 4) provide one of the most comprehensive definitions of public policy. The two scholars state that public policies are concerned with the outputs of a political system. These outputs include the policies, programmes, strategies, and courses of action (or inaction) that are approved and enacted by legislatures or governments. In the same way, one may characterise education policy as preconditions that make the transition from secondary to postsecondary education easier. Admissions standards, examination requirements, costs and financial regulations, conditions for recruitment of teachers, and conditions for the design of university curricula could all be mirrored in higher education policies at local, national, and international levels (Clancy and Goastellec 2007). In general, it can also be argued that the degree to which policies regarding higher education can be successfully implemented is proportional to the degree to which those policies are formulated appropriately (taking exception of the fact that what constitutes appropriate formulation versus what does not constitute appropriate formulation is subjective).

Policies and reforms in higher education are commonly geared on reinvesting in human capital, which is critical for economic and social growth of states. Therefore, it is sufficient to shoulder that the success of key Agenda 2063 flagship projects, such as the Pan-African E-University and the Pan-African Virtual University, intra-African student mobility, and authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance processes, is definitely going to be dependent on the type(s) of higher education policies and systems in place. The above preceding assertion is essential to consider for CEMAC countries to have any chance of effectively implementing CESA and Agenda 2063; failing to do so would render the initiative a farce or much of an educational pretence (Nyabola 2018). As it stands, the higher education systems and policy direction of the majority of CEMAC countries appear to be in striking contrast with the aims of CESA and Agenda 2063 since they are not up to the standards expected by the market in the twenty-first century (Teixeira and Shin 2020). To put it another way, the majority of the member states that make up the CEMAC subregion seem to be lacking in the   higher education policy approaches that encourage research and innovation. This is detrimental to the development of the subregion's human capital, and actually impedes the subregion's economic, political, and sociocultural advancement. The fact that Nsamenang (2005) maintains that restrictions that are both internal and external to Africa clout on the continent's potential to develop, own, and distribute knowledge appropriately defines the situation across CEMAC. In view of the findings of this study, it is, therefore, right to argue that historical circumstances continue to shape relations between Africa and the outside world, and may constitute a significant barrier to the implementation of CESA and Agenda 2063 in the CEMAC subregion and Africa.

In order to advance human capital development as outlined in Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 and in the CESA protocol, the countries of the CEMAC subregion need to put their historical evolution into context, do an in-depth assessment of their current state of affairs and reorient their existing higher education policies to meet the expectations of the future. In addition, the realisation that Africa's existing higher education systems and policies are manifestly geared towards cultivating mediocrity have a significant impact on the success of the flagship projects that are part of Agenda 2063. This is exactly what has to change about CESA and Agenda 2063. In a more specific sense, vexations such as the issue of the skills gap in higher education in Africa in general, and in CEMAC countries in particular, where acquired educational levels do not match to the necessities of society, need to be redressed. This study also touches extensively on this skills gap, exploring the singularity, analysing its corporeality, and engaging in a

discourse aimed at reversing the phenomenon in CEMAC countries in accordance with the prescriptions provided by Agenda 2063. While the scope of Agenda 2063 is more continental in nature, it addresses a variety of educational concerns and outlines ways for CEMAC countries to escape this predicament.

Before moving on to the educational policies and systems that were in place in precolonial Africa, let us first examine the significance of the evolution of educational systems, theories, practices, and institutions within the context of the larger historical, political, social, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural shifts that different societies have experienced over the course of time as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Historical development of educational systems across societies

Improving the quality of educated	Past educational experience can be used to improve current theory and practice in education. Africa can learn from others' successes to steer clear of common pitfalls in attempting to improve its education.
Understanding our own educational systems better	The term "history of education" refers to the study of the origins, development, and progression of educational institutions, methods, concepts, goals, curriculum, theoretical frameworks, and practical applications. It provides an explanation of what education is, where it originates, why it exists, and what it will develop into in the future.
Making comparisons within a historical perspective	History of education allows one to compare the beginnings and development of various educational ideas, methods, and philosophies in other nations. This comparison enables one to construct more effective concepts, patterns, and principles and extend their vision. Also, it enables one to take inspiration from a wider range of people and to collaborate creatively with them.
Developing powers of thinking	Learning about education's past is crucial for fostering intellectual engagement, curiosity, inquiry, and reason as well as one's own sense of self-expression. Moreover, it assists in shaping, developing, organising, sequencing, and interrelating ideas. It assists in the development of mental habits such as scepticism, criticism, and objectivity, all of which are essential components of an educated person.
Strengthening the professional competence of teachers	Teachers are encouraged to research, evaluate, accept, or modify cultural heritage when they have a strong understanding of the history of education. Moreover, teachers are inspired to become educational critics and agents for the intelligent transmission and transformation of culture. It is possible for teachers, by

	understanding the historical background of educational concepts and procedures, to have a critical perspective on contemporary beliefs.

As observed in the table above, the objectives of various educational systems and institutions have changed significantly throughout the course of human history ('The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education 2019). Today, education is more about enhancing the quality of education in and of itself, gaining a deeper knowledge of various educational systems across time, comparing these systems with one another, expanding critical thinking skills, and enhancing the professional competencies of educators (Westberg and Primus 2023). In each given epoch, one, two, or more of the factors that contributed to the historical evolution of educational systems in different civilisations have stood out as the most important. For example, in the 21st century, many believe that having a college degree is a necessary prerequisite for having knowledge (Florence Nakayiwa et al. 2016; F Nakayiwa et al. 2016; Cloete, Bunting, and van Schalkwyk 2018a). As a consequence of this, knowledge, science, technology, and innovation are rapidly becoming the preeminent factors of production. As a result, economies all over the world are competing with one another to be the first to produce knowledge by making investments, establishing regulatory frameworks, and enacting macroeconomic policies that encourage research and innovation. Within the context of this study, such an endeavour would represent the higher education benchmarks of CESA and Agenda 2063. This would be done with the intention of preparing the next generation of young Africans with the skills and competences necessary to satisfy the market demands of the 21st century. The primary concern at hand is the fact that, in addition to CESA and Agenda 2063, each country that is a member of CEMAC has its own expansive vision that has certain components for higher education. This study is particularly interested in how these similar visions and agendas may not only contradict CESA and Agenda 2063 but also leaves Africa and the CEMAC countries with a higher education policy gap. In addition, the objective of this study is to build on existing and emerging approaches around the circumstances in which higher education policy orientation in Africa developed and the objective that it was designed to serve.

3.1.1 Higher education in Africa before 1501

The precolonial era in Africa often begins with the vast interval between the first evidence of human existence and the first signs of civilisation in Africa (Fálolá and Fleming 2011; Arowolo 2010; Adenusi 2014). Contrary to these three scholar's claim that precolonial Africa only

stretches until the (in) formal establishment of European colonies on the continent, this study is grounded on the basis that precolonial Africa extended until the 16th century, when the outside world first came into contact the Africa, namely its former colonial masters with the introduction of the Trans-Saharan Trade and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. On the topic of higher education in precolonial Africa, Lulat (2005, 42), who happens to be one of the most authoritative sources on the subject, sets off with the following salient inquiry: "did higher education exist in precolonial Africa at all?" He goes further to crediting Ashby (1965, 147) for writing one of the timeliest and outstanding works on the history of higher education in Africa, averring that higher education "is not new to the continent of Africa." Lulat (2005) insists that it is still necessary to study higher education in precolonial Africa, if for no other reason than to firmly register the point that African history does not begin with the arrival of European colonialists. Ashby (1965), on her part, suggests that the existence of higher education in precolonial Africa, however, has little bearing on present day higher education across the continent because of the discontinuity between the two periods as a result of interventionism in the form of European colonialism. This study introduces a new line of thought, contending that while there may be little or no continuity between precolonial and colonial African higher education systems and policy dimensions, there is the possibility of revitalisation, and contemporary African higher education has a great deal to learn from precolonial higher education, particularly aspects that are still relevant to its present-day innovation, originality, and endogeneity. It would be, therefore, a complete waste of time to study it just for the sake of achieving historical accuracy but for maintenance, preservation, and expansion in a globalised context. Consequently, and emphatically, there were, therefore, systems that could not only be accurately described as higher education systems, but also elaborating on the tendencies that contemporary African higher education institutions can appropriate from a time period that seem to have been repudiated (Adenusi 2014).

As mentioned in chapter one, prior to the foray and colonisation of Africa by Europeans, the African continent was home to gigantic kingdoms (Falola and Fleming 2011) that were equipped with wide-ranging educational institutions including levels ranging from elementary to postsecondary. It is concurrently imperative to note that precolonial African education systems had a significant societal impact despite the fact that they simultaneously educated religious and secular leaders without distinguishing between the two. This was one of the systems' defining characteristics (Yamada 2019, 246). The *Per Ankh*, which was located in

Egyptian temples and served as a scriptorium, training centre and research institution, is an exemplar that is widely referenced and considered in academic literature when discussing higher education in precolonial Africa. It offered higher education to both religious and secular scholars, drawing a large following that included scholars from the Mediterranean and Arabic worlds. This fact has prompted Lulat (2005) and Adenusi (2014) to cast doubt on the Eurocentric perspective, which claims that Europeans brought higher education to Africa along with modernisation. Other educational systems that existed in Africa at the time comprised those that were associated with the Ethiopian Orthodox churches and protracted all the way from basic literacy to advanced academic thought and the Islamic education system, which grew in tandem with the expansion of the Islamic faith (Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck 2013b, 35).

The *Per Ankh* education system in Pharaonic Egypt, the Ethiopian Orthodox education system, and the Islamic education system were certainly all essential to the growth of the African continent up until the fall of African kingdoms and the beginning of European colonialism. The only possible explanation that makes sense is that African higher education systems were built on strong policies, institutions and principles that promoted science, medicine and innovation, and that were easily translated into practise (Adenusi 2014). This is probably one of the few reasons why these systems were able to last for centuries and continue to exist in some form to this day. Starting with the *Per Ankh*, the various systems are explored in detail in the proceeding sections, paying close attention to the diagnostic aspects of each one of them.

i.The *Per Ankh*

Students of African descent in the United States of America (USA) have the opportunity today to improve their educational and cultural experiences about Africa through the *Per Ankh* Academy, which is hosted on the campus of Contra Costa College (CCC). This Academy carries on the legacy of an ancient Egyptian educational institution. Although many people believe that this is simply an Academy dedicated to actively supporting and nurturing student accomplishment through a curriculum and teaching style that is reminiscent of the history of the African diaspora, the truth is that it actually brings us back to the very foundations of higher education on the African continent. According to the Per Ankh Academy (2023), the 'House of Life,' for instance, was a momentous institution in ancient Egypt, dating back thousands upon thousands of years. Once more, Lulat's (2005) work, titled "A History of African Higher Education from Antiquity to the Present: A Critical Synthesis," provides a historical backdrop

that situates this period, starting sometime around the year 2000 BCE (Before the Common Era) and continues to the present-day.

It is worthy to note that the Perimeter of *Per Ankh* was perceived as an important centre for both the acquisition and storage of knowledge. It had scribes who were not only responsible for producing handwritten copies of documents as part of their profession, but were also responsible for modifying the documents by removing the original text and adding new ideas (Per Ankh Academy 2023; Erskine 1995). These high-ranking scribes also served as priests and were knowledgeable in areas like medicine, magic, theology, ritual, and dream interpretation (El-Gammal 1993). The majority of graduates at *Per Ankh* went onto careers as public scribes, priests, or administrators. Only a select few were allowed to join the *Per Ankh* and went on to achieve prestigious positions within the organisation. The *Per Ankh* had a hierarchy of learned officials with titles such as "overseer of writing in the House of Life", "keeper of House of Life secrets" and "Director of the House of Life masters of *heka* (words of power)", but only a few were ever accepted into the organisation (Per Ankh Academy 2023). Indeed, the *Per Ankh* is among the most important and oldest recognised educational institutions around the world. Hence, it is impossible to fully separate the past from the present, since it helps in going beyond conventional wisdom in order to attempt the question of which higher education policy direction is ideal for CEMAC countries in particular and Africa as a whole.

Apart from *Per Ankh*, the ancient Egyptian institution for learning, other names such as the University of Onu, the University of Ptah, the University of Tahuty, and the University of Waset in the cities of Heliopolis, Memphis, Hermopolis, and Thebes, respectively, are often used in literary or imaginative contexts rather than as historical references. In a nutshell, those seeking a higher education or a professional degree attended either one of these colleges, universities, or temples. This education was imparted to family relatives, co-workers and social equals in a manner that was closely guarded, clandestine, and casual. Today, higher education systems all over Africa and the African diaspora are incorporating values that date all the way back to the House of Life. This offers credibility to the argument that higher education in Africa is as old as the people who inhabit the continent and further dismantles the illusion that higher education in Africa is a product of European colonialism. Although it was, to an extent, restricted to those who were recognised as heirs by virtue of birth, particularly in regard to priesthood and medicine (Wilds and Lottich 1970; Sifuna and Otiende 2006), the Egyptian education in general

and its higher and professional education in particular contributed a great deal to human civilisation, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 4. Contribution of Egyptian education to human civilisation

Discipline	Contribution
Art	Egyptian art served as a significant inspiration for much of contemporary painting and sculpture.
Architecture	The Egyptians were the first people to effectively employ mass with stone in order to mimic the immense desert cliffs and mountains in order to create the pyramids, which are one of the marvels of the world that has stood the test of time.
Literature	Methods that are still widely used in education today, like proverbs , similes, and aphorisms, were used by the Egyptians to instruct students on proper ethical behaviour.
Mathematics	The Egyptian technique of multiplication was until very recently employed throughout Eastern Europe and Asia.
Medicine	Egyptians had knowledge of physiology, surgery and blood circulation,and arethe originators of the Hippocratic oath
Writing	Egyptians developed hieroglyphics and invented theearliest known writing material.Paper is an abbreviation of *papyrus*,which was a plant cultivated in Egypt and used for writing

Source: Wilds and Lottich, 1961; Rinehart and Wiston, 1961; Mayers, 1969; Power, 1970;
Sifuna and Otiende,1994

In spite of the evidence presented above, there are critics of Egyptian civilisation who argue that these accomplishments were not further developed as a consequence of the stagnation and degeneration that ensued after the end of the Old Kingdom. That notwithstanding, it is certain that ancient Egyptian civilisation played a significant role in the formation of the scientific and technological foundations upon which the present western world is built. In light of this, it is not a kind of bias to state that, contrary to Meredith (2006), precolonial African cultures were not largely composed of individuals who were illiterate or unable to read or write.

In agreement with Bryan (1930), the educational principles of ancient Egypt were written down on *papyrus* and were composed in a collection that became known as the Books of Instruction. The Books of Instruction can be regarded as a policy document in its contemporary sense, as it

suggests a structured collection of educational guidelines or principles that were systematically recorded, similar to modern policy documents that delineate standardised procedures or protocols for educational sectors and diverse academic disciplines in Africa and globally. A similar argument could also be made about the Islamic faith and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's educational systems, both of which were grounded on policy (Robso 2021).

Another school of thought, led by scholars such as Bunson and Margaret (2002) and Zinn (2012), asserts that the origins of higher education in Africa can be traced back to one of three distinct institutional traditions: the Alexandria Museum and Library, early Christian monasteries, or Islamic Mosque universities. Both the Museum (also known as the *Mouseion*) and its accompanying Library, the Great Library of Alexandria, are famous for the significant contributions they made to the development of academic knowledge since its founding in Egypt in the third century BCE (Erskine 1995, 38). It is estimated that the Library had more than 200,000 books and provided services to as many as 5,000 students and scholars (Zinn 2012; Nevárez 2021; Houghton and Monier 2020). According to Erskine (1995, 40), the Library may have had as many as 500,000 volumes in its collection at one point. It is abundantly clear that this establishment served as a massive research centre, and a significant number of the most eminent Egyptian, African, Greek, Roman and Jewish intellectuals from the ancient world studied or worked there at some point in their lives.

The establishment of the initial monastic communities in Egypt occurred during the third century A.D., a period when Egypt was already home to some of the earliest Christian groups in existence. There are other examples of churches in Egypt, including The Hanging Church, The Church of Saint George, Abu Serga Church, Abu Mena, The Red Monastery, and Saint Catherine Monastery (ETP Team 2020). The desert served as the originating location for Coptic monasticism, which first embodied the austere philosophical and intellectual concept of celibacy and dedication (Romel, Sherif, and Ashour 2020). The establishment of monastic orders and monasteries provided several Christians with significant prospects for reflection, scholarly pursuits, and intellectual development. The concept of monasteries and their establishment extended throughout Africa and Asia, including Britain, Georgia, Persia, and India, where several institutions eventually emerged. This takes us to Ethiopia, perhaps, the only African country that was able to repel European colonisation, as well as the issue of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

ii. Education during the time of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The second of these traditions originates in Ethiopia, a country that converted to Christianity in the fourth century A.D. and promptly instituted a system of monastic instruction. Higher education was made available to members of the nobility and clergy during the Zagwe dynasty, which ruled in the 12th and 13th centuries. At the very bottom was the *Qine Bet* (School of Hymns), followed by the *Zema Bet* (School of Poetry), and at the very top was the *Metsahift Bet* (School of the Holy Books), which taught a variety of subjects including religious studies, philosophy, history, and the calculation of time and calendars, among other things (Negash 2006).

At various points in time throughout her history, educational policies of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had the goals of perusing the current world order, modernising Ethiopia, and producing interpreters for international and public relations (Bishaw and Lasser 2012; Robso 2021; Negash 2006; Alemayehu Bishaw and Lasser 2012; Alemayehu Bishaw, Bahir, and Lasser 2012; Larebo 1987). The year 330 A.D. is often regarded as the year when the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was successfully established. The church served as the foundation for the development of early Ethiopian education. The ancient language of *Geez* formed the basis for a teaching methodology that was developed and promoted by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This methodology was then appropriated by the *Amharic* language (Robso 2021, 4144). A number of researchers (Alemayehu Bishaw and Lasser 2012; Robso 2021; Negash 2006; Larebo 1987) who have studied the origins of education in Ethiopia use the term traditional when denoting the educational system that existed prior to attempts made by Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) to introduce modern education. This research intentionally avoids using the word "traditional" to describe Ethiopia's educational system before Emperor Menelik II's modernising attempts. The reasoning behind this choice is based on the acknowledgement that the term "traditional" sometimes has an unintentional negative meaning, namely suggesting primitiveness or obsolescence, which would mean inadequately acknowledging the historical and cultural importance of Ethiopia's educational tradition. It is essential to recognise that this system, deeply rooted in a long and important past, is not just a basic type of education but an intricate and developed system that greatly contributed to the intellectual and cultural foundation of the country.

iii. Islamic Education

Islam is responsible for founding some of Africa's earliest and most lasting educational institutions. In point of fact, Africa is the birthplace of some of the world's oldest still-

functioning colleges as well as some of the world's oldest Islamic institutions. These are the 732 Ez-Zitouna madrassa in Tunisia (Zeleza 2006, 31), followed by the al-Qarawiyyin mosque university, which was built in Fez in 859 A.D. by Fatima Al-Fihri, a young immigrant princess from Qairawan. Both of these institutions are located in North Africa (Tunisia). The colleges were attractive to intellectuals from West Africa as well as students from Andalusia in Spain (Paul Tiyambe Zeleza 2021a; Zeleza 2009). In continuation, Zeleza (2006, 31) offers the historical evidence that is listed below:

> […] In 969 AD Al-Azhar Mosque university was established in Cairo, the same year that the city was founded by the Fatimid dynasty from the Maghreb. It came to be regarded as the most prestigious centre of Islamic education and scholarship and attracted the greatest intellectuals of the Muslim world, including Ibn Khaldun the renowned historian who taught there.

During the seventh century, Islamic education was disseminated in Ethiopia and over the entire continent of Africa. It had affiliations with and received sponsorship from numerous Islamic religious organisations around the continent. The institution had a dual function in promoting the learning and practice of the Arabic language, as well as the exploration of Islamic philosophy and law, and, naturally, the teachings of the *Qur'an*, the holy scripture of Islam (Hanny and Rizal 2020; Harad, Arriola, and Harad 2022). Another major early Islamic university was Sankore mosque university in Timbuktu founded in the twelfth century where a wide range of courses were taught from theology, logic, astronomy, and astrology, to grammar, rhetoric, history, and geography.

The enduring presence of the old Islamic universities in contemporary Africa is marked by their ability to adapt to significant historical changes, such as the incorporation of more secular, technical, and professional disciplines. This is a long-standing tradition that has been transmitted from one generation to the next (Zeleza 2009; Zeleza 2006; Zeleza 2009; 2021a). Furthermore, it serves as evidence of the current trend of privatising higher education throughout the continent. Its significant impact is also seen in the European higher education system, which was inherited from Africa during the colonial era. It might be argued that the precolonial higher education systems share very little with modern African higher education policies and systems. Nevertheless, they also have considerable capacity to improve the revitalisation of indigenous knowledge, provide direction, develop structure, implement efficiency, and promote innovation in modern African higher education. Given that Agenda

2063 and CESA are built upon some of these preexisting principles, it may as well integrate useful components from these systems into the current higher education landscape in countries such as those in the CEMAC subregion.

3.1.2   1415-1960: At the mercy of colonialism

This section adopts the year 1415 as the inception of European colonisation in Africa, in contrast to the commonly used late eighteenth century timeframe employed by most authors of African history. The year 1415 coincides with the Spanish occupation of Ceuta (Newitt 2010), followed by Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World (Feldmann 2016). Designating the year 1415 as the starting point of European colonisation in Africa equally emphasises the initial Portuguese explorations and settlements on the African continent, which occurred before the intense competition for African territories in the late eighteenth century. This perspective offers a more detailed historical account of the extent and obscurity of European impact on the continent. The colonial domination of Spain over the Americas came to an end in 1833 after succeeding wars of independence. Nevertheless, that over Africa continued for a little while longer, with Equatorial Guinea becoming the last Spanish colony to gain independence in 1968. The discussion on higher education in Africa saw a profound transformation with the onset of European colonialism. This change prioritised a narrative that focused on the substitution of precolonial African higher education policies and systems with mainly policies and systems that attempted to further the colonial drive of economic, political, and sociocultural subjugation, as well as the exploitation of the colonies. In his work, Mawere (2015, 57) presents a pessimistic portrayal of the events and puts up the following argument:

> In Africa, especially in the sub-Saharan region, while the so-called indigenous communities have always found value in their own local forms of knowledge, the colonial administration and its associates viewed indigenous knowledge as unscientific, illogical, anti-development, and/or ungodly.

It is important to point out that the purpose of this study is not to argue for the significance of African traditional knowledge. Nonetheless, the history of colonialism in Africa has left substantial scars on many elements of African culture and society, one of which is the continent's higher education system (Ocholla 2020, 289; Ukoh 1985). It is important to examine how the evolution of colonial higher education through a series of decrees, ordinances, texts, laws, constitutions, press releases, official memoranda/communiques, and practical decisions made by colonial administrators in the colonies defined the purpose of colonial education in

general and colonial higher education in particular (Ngang 2020). This allows for a better understanding of how European colonialism transformed African higher education systems and policies (Sattarzadeh 2015; Pearcey 2016). All of these factors had simultaneous repercussions for the different kinds of educational institutions, the medium of instruction, the curriculum design, academic freedom, research and innovation, staffing, funding, quality assurance (accreditation and certification), student mobility, educational infrastructure, overall size of the system (for example, student enrolment), access, affordability, regionalisation, continentalisation and internationalisation.

3.1.2.1   Colonial higher education objective

The relationship between the dominant and the dominated is usually influenced by the design of institutions and the implementation of policies that prioritise the interests of the dominant. This is quite metaphorical of how colonial administrators in Africa used education to manipulate the population in order to promote the political and economic objectives of European colonisation (Cogneau 2003). In the case of the British, the resolution to establish university colleges in colonial Africa resulted from the exigencies of World War II and the resultant Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. The act was a gesture for the loyalty displayed by Africans during the interwar years. In addition, the act was influenced by the fact that the United States introduced its own higher education to Africans (Pearce 2023; Lee and Schultz 2012; Nwauwa 1993). For the French, and under the guise of what came to be known as a civilising mission (Mosweunyane 2013), mental control was exercised through education. The French colonial educational strategy rested on four fundamental tenets: (i) uniformity of language; (ii) free of charge; (iii) secularity; and (iv) the connection with the demand for staff for colonial administration (Gifford and Weiskel 1971). According to Mart and Toker (2010), the educational objective of the colonisers was to bring Africans into a new world, school them to the colonisers' ostensibly better culture. Put differently, the colonists   wanted Africans to attain a higher degree of civilisation. In fact, "colonial education was a deliberate policy to continue colonial rule" (Mart and Toker 2010, 363).

Colonial governments in Africa were aware that they could amass power not necessarily through physical control, but rather mental control that was attained through the establishment of a central intellectual faculty in the form of the educational system. The basic element of this programme was the paternalist belief that the "primitive" people who live in the lands that had been conquered should be given an education. It should go without saying, especially in the

case of the British, that the need for skilled African labour at the lower echelons of the colonial administration and the eagerness to spread Christianity through missionary activities were both dependent on the use of education as a tool to achieve social control over African people. However, it is important to note that the use of education as a tool to achieve social control over African people was not always successful (Mart 2011; Jeremiah 2018; Malisa and Missedja 2019). The connection between the educational policies of colonial governments and their goals is shown in FIGURE 4, which may be seen below.

Figure 6. Colonial education policy and its objective
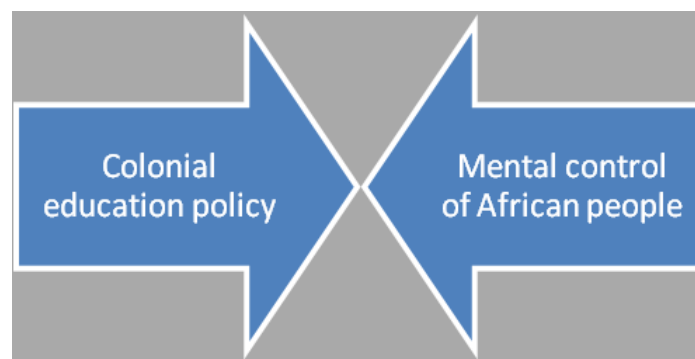
Source: author's contribution

Figure 4 above depicts direct and deliberate use of colonial education policy as a form of ideological and psychological colonialism in Africa. the correlation between colonial education policy and its objective of advancing colonial rule through the social control of Africans. Education policy was not just an instrument of cultural influence but a strategic form of dominance. It implied an aggressive, calculated effort to reshape and control the minds of African people, to instil a sense of inferiority, and to suppress indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. It was nothing less than a system designed to indoctrinate African people with the beliefs, values, and ideologies of the colonisers, effectively erasing pre-existing traditions and social structures and replacing them with those that would perpetuate colonial rule and exploitation. The double-sided arrow signifies a comprehensive and systemic approach, where education is both a symbol and a mechanism of control, deeply entwined with the colonial agenda.

Colonial education policies and systems were based on the premise that only a small number of universities should exist in a small number of colonies, and that the majority of Africans who wished to pursue university studies had to do so in the countries of their colonial masters until the late 1920s, in the case of the British. In addition, "British universities could admit only a handful of Africans depending on the estimated number of vacancies in the colonial service of

their territories of origin", further hammering on the fact that education was designed to satisfy the needs of the colonial system (Nwauwa 1993, 248).

In 1907, the Germans in the then German Kamerun organised a meeting that would mark what could be described as the official start of their colonial educational plan. This conference took place when Theodore Seitz was serving as the country's colonial Governor (Gwanfogbe 1995, 51). The 1910 Education Ordinance was the product of this conference. Discussions centred on the structure of curricula, the language of instruction, the harmonisation of educational standards across all schools, the working relationship between the government and missions, as well as finances, school age, school attendance, school discipline and vocational education. Resolutions of the conference not only restricted education to a select group of affluent individuals, but also confined it to a primary education, which emphasised the educational goal of the colonial system. When Britain and France took control of Cameroon after World War I, they followed in the footsteps of the Germans, and education was designed to recuperate the exploitation of human and material resources of the colonies for the benefit of cities like London and Paris. This also held true throughout the whole of French Equatorial Africa (Gardinier 1984; 1974), where there was an almost complete lack of access to higher education, confirming the purpose of colonial education meant to bolster the authority of colonial rulers.

Another important piece of evidence was the divergent approaches that different colonial governments took towards the provision of education. For example, the British allowed missionaries more latitude and liberty because they saw it as a more cost-effective alternative and not because the wanted they wanted more people to have access, whereas the French and the Spanish maintained a tight grip on education despite the fact that it was provided by missionaries (Cogneau and Moradi 2014).

Coquery-Vidrovitch (2021, 6-7) reveals the extent to which colonial higher education was abysmal with a lack of skills at almost all levels while visiting French Equatorial Africa in 1965, just five years after independence. This systemic lack of qualified workers was made abundantly clear by the presence of French *coopérants* in every conceivable industry, including education, administration, and research. The territory had remained under French tutelage owing to a shortage of skilled staff; the certificate of elementary studies was the highest certification that most young Africans received. The situation did not start to improve until the 1990s, when a new generation that was already more educated than their parents started their educational careers. To this day, Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and

Republic of the Congo have not completely recovered from this damage that was done and continue to struggle with reforms that limits their educational systems and sectors from fully developing. Even after about two decades of gaining their independence, new policies and reforms introduced in the form of SAPs that saw the massive privatisation of universities still profited Africa's former colonial rulers more. Today, a significant portion of the AU budget, which is in charge of Agenda 2063 and CESA, comes from the European Union (EU). This raises questions about the complete independence of African heads of states in deciding the direction of the higher education policies and reforms of their various countries and in determining what is best for the continent.

3.1.2.2 Structure of higher education institutions

Undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels of education are all possible, and the sorts of credentials include bachelors, masters, doctorate, and postdoctoral degrees in addition to various forms of professional qualifications. In contrast to the current state of affairs, Matasci et al. (2019, 3) argue as follows:

> Paradigms such as "adapted," "vocational," "mass," or "fundamental" education, elaborated within long-standing and enduring racialised frameworks, had a significant role in the ways in which European colonial administrations strove to improve the living standards of local populations, so as to legitimise imperial rule or even enable some forms of controlled self-government.

Some of the higher education institutions, ranging from universities to vocational and technical schools that were built in Africa throughout the colonial era and upon independence are detailed in the following Table 2 below. They are a symbol of European colonialism that has been shoved into the present without any dramatic reforms, thereby slowing the growth of Africa's higher education sector, with corresponding ramifications for knowledge production, research, innovation, and skill creation. They have been around for a very long time, and they are still in use today.

Table 5. List of universities in colonial Africa

N0.	Name of university	Country	Year
1	Fourah Bay College – University of Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	1827
2	Historic College of West Africa	Liberia	1839
4	University of Cape Town	South Africa	1829

5	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	1903
6	Cairo University	Egypt	1908
7	University of Algiers	Algeria	1909
8	University of Fort Hare	South Africa	1916
9	American University in Cairo	Egypt	1919
10	Makerere University	Uganda	1922
13	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	1952
14	Prince of Wales' College at Achimota	Gold Coast	1923
15	Yaba Higher College	Nigeria	1934
16	Federal University of Yaoundé	Cameroon	1962
17	Gordon Memorial College, Khartoum	The Sudan	1899
18	Kitchener School of Medicine	The Sudan	1924
19	University of Chad	Chad	1974
20	University of Bangui	Central African Republic	1969
21	Indigenous Colonial Institute	Equatorial Guinea	1935
22	University of Lubumbashi	Republic of the Congo	1955
23	Omar Bongo University (UOB)	Gabon	1970

Source: (Nwauwa 1993)

The Historic College of West Africa, for instance, was founded in 1839 in Liberia during the Commonwealth period. It was first known as The Liberia Conference Seminary or The Monrovia Seminary, and Mr. Jabez A. Burton served as the head of the institution when it was first established. It was not until 1898 that it was remodelled into what would later become the College of West Africa (CWA). It was established by the United Methodist Church seventeen years after it arrived in the colony of the African territory of Liberia. Liberia is still Africa's oldest independent state, a tangible reminder of the most heinous atrocity ever recorded on planet earth (the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade), and the World's second oldest Black independent state after Haiti, which gained independence in 1804. The following statement, which comes from the Office of the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (2012), provides more evidence of the colonial nature of the College:

> Old Fourah Bay College bears an exceptional testimony to the appearance and spread of Western civilisation in Africa. For a century, Old Fourah Bay College was the laboratory for experimenting with the transfer of Western governance ideas, religion, political organisation, and public service bureaucracy. It produced the earliest set of

Christian clergymen who took Christianity to other parts of West Africa […] Fourah Bay College produced the earliest generations of Western type professionals and public administrators.

Since almost no progress has been made in institutional adjustments, the circumstances surrounding numbers 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 in the table above are even more disturbing. You can find yet another piece of evidence to support the claim that these university colleges were primarily founded to fulfil the mission of the colonial government in their geographical and demographic distribution. When looking at the list of university colleges in the table, the majority of them happened to have been located in settler colonies such as South Africa, Algeria and Zimbabwe. This indicates that these university colleges, in most cases, were not intended for Africans but rather for Europeans who had relocated to Africa as a result of colonisation or for only a select-few Africans who were willing to yield to the influence of the colonial masters. It is noteworthy that originally, Africans were only granted access to university colleges, which primarily functioned as recruitment centres into the junior cadres of the colonial service in contrast to the desires of Africans, who sought the establishment of full-fledged universities that could award degrees (Nwauwa 1993).

3.1.2.3 Enrolment

One of the leading challenges that African higher education faces today is its continuing expansion in terms of enrolment without a corresponding increase in quality (Gudo, Olel, and Oanda 2011; Varghese 2013; Tamrat 2018). Unlike today when education has become a subject of priority, national as well as global development, throughout the colonial era, education was not only limited to the absolute minimum, i.e., basic and, at most, secondary school, but only a few Africans in the colonies had access to higher education (Joel and Liberty 2019). One of the primary reasons for this was that education in general, and higher education in particular, was later seen as a threat to the colonial system, and the goal of the colonial system was to provide just enough knowledge to prevent "educated" Africans from considering resisting colonial control (Uetela 2017; Wilson 2021). The table below presents an overview of the aggregate number of students enrolled in higher education institutions throughout Africa during the period of colonial authority.

Table 6. Partial statistics of higher education enrolment in colonial Africa

Year	Name of college	Region	Number of students
1944	Fourah Bay College	West Africa	16
1943	Prince of Wales' College at Achimota	West Africa	98
-	Higher College at Yaba	West Africa	100
1943	Makerere College	East Africa	138
	South African Native College at Fort Hare	Union of South Africa	220

Source: Asquith Commission Report 1945

The above statistics highlight the stringent educational regulations during the colonial period, which were designed to provide just basic education in order to avoid any potential threat to colonial power. As compared to the total number of students attending elementary and secondary schools, the number of students enrolled in university institutions was a very small percentage (Teixeira and Shin 2020). The figure below shows the enrolment rates of primary school students in 42 African countries in 1950, separated by the British administration and other countries. The data indicates that the British African colonies had a higher average enrolment rate of 24.2, compared to the averages of the French (9.4) and Portuguese (8.5) (Frankema 2012, 336).

Figure 7. Gross primary-school enrolment rates (age 5–14) subdivided by British (black) and non-British (grey) African colonies, 1950
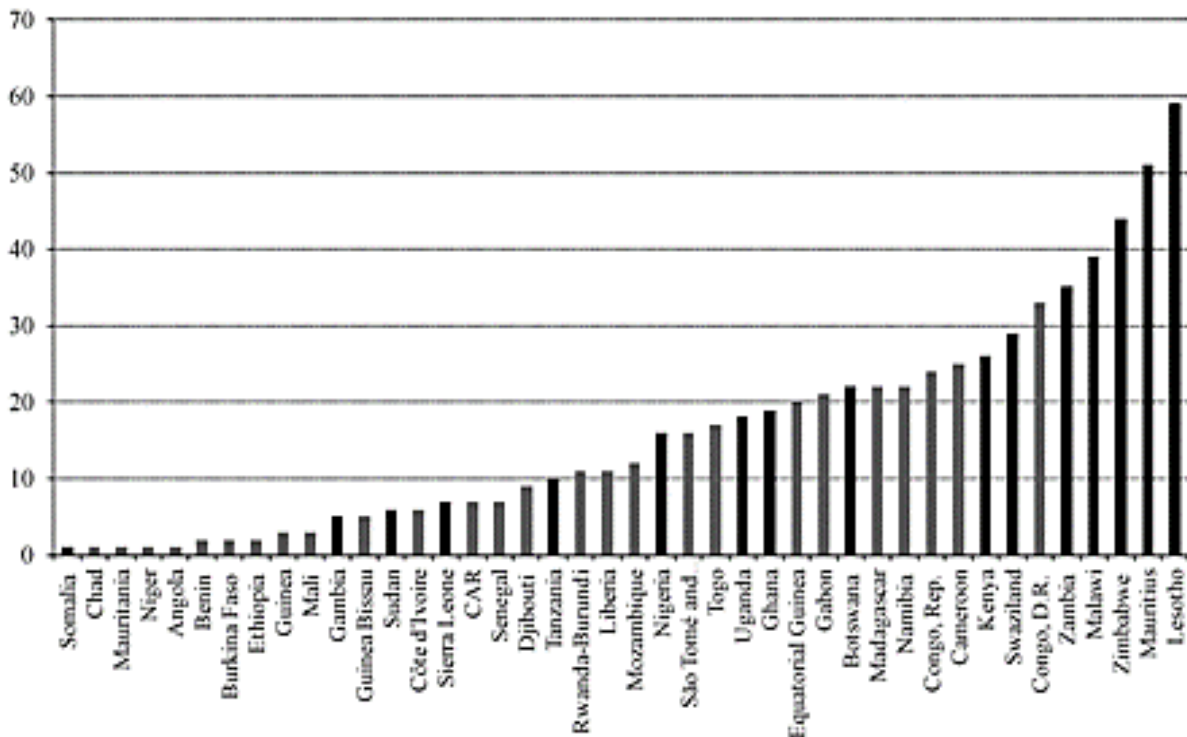
Source: Frankema 2012, 337

Although the data suggests that the British performed relatively better in education compared to other colonial powers like the French, the main point to consider is that all colonial powers aimed to minimise enrolment figures in their education policies. The limited number of students enrolling at the primary level has had a cascading effect on secondary and tertiary education, which still reflects the outdated practices from the colonial era. The standardised structure of colonial administration mostly caused the low enrolment rates; however, other factors, such as financial concerns on the part of Africans, may have also played a role. Hussey, the Nigerian director of education at the time, presented an ultra-conservative strategy for the gradual establishment of universities in Africa, which he thought to be the most appropriate educational method. As per this proposal, African institutions like Yaba, Achimota, Makerere and Fourah Bay would undergo three stages before achieving the rank of a university college (Nwauwa, 1993, 157). The purpose of this strategy was either to facilitate the colonial governments' ability to limit the pool of college graduates eligible for important positions in the colonial service or to maximise the effectiveness of the indirect rule system, which relied on uneducated chiefs and was inherently unstable.

3.1.2.4   Language of instruction

It remains to be seen that many primary and official languages in use in schools and everyday administration in Africa today are European. One argument may be that governments in Africa do this to compensate for the 1200 to 3000 languages and dialects spoken by different ethnic groups that share comparable diversity throughout the continent. But the truth is that this started during the colonial days, when European officials made it a point to ensure that they made use of their military power to wage inland wars and impose their beliefs and values on the people living in the colonies. This happened after they met in Berlin in 1884 to divide Africa like it was a piece of cake. One of the most important things that they did in order to accomplish their goals was to impose linguistic by-laws that encouraged the use of only colonial languages, including English, French, Spanish, and German. Since the use of native languages was either limited to the sphere of elementary education or was out rightly prohibited, instruction in European languages became one of the most important aspects of education in colonial Africa. In the case of the French, Eizlini (2013) writes:

> Above all else, education proposes to expand the influence of the French language, in order to establish the [French] nationality or culture in Africa (*Bulletin de l'Enseignement en AOF,* No. 45, 1921); Colonial duty and political necessity impose a double task on our education work: on the one hand it is a matter of training an indigenous staff destined to become our assistants throughout the domains, and to assure the ascension of a carefully chosen elite, and on the other hand it is a matter of educating the masses, to bring them nearer to us and to change their way of life. (From *Bulletin de l'Enseignment en AOF,* No. 74, 1931).

For instance, the purpose of the Brazzaville Conference, which was held in 1944 and was sponsored by France, was to *reconnoiter* the state of colonial education in Africa as it existed at the time. The following was one of the conclusions that was reached: classes need to be taught in French (White 1996, 12). According to Malisa and Missedja (2019, 8), the British also ensured that all subjects, with the exception of African languages, were taught from a colonial point of view; English was the primary language of instruction; and passing or achieving success in English language was regarded as an essential component of test accomplishment. The proceeding table is a snapshot of the profound   linguistic influence of colonial powers in Africa. It shows the distribution of German, British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian and Italian languages, used as medium of instruction in different subregions. This reflects the historical impact of colonisation on Africa's education and culture. Notably, English and French

emerged as dominant languages after World War I, replacing German in several subregions, highlighting the diverse colonial interests and their enduring impact on the linguistic diversity of the continent.

Table 7. Language structure and distribution in colonial Africa

Colonial Power	Subregions in Africa	Language of Instruction
German	Namibia (German South-West Africa), Tanzania (German East Africa), Cameroon, and Togo	German
Britain	East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, and former German colonies after WWI	English
France	West Africa, Central Africa, and North Africa, parts of former German colonies after WWI	French
Spain	Equatorial Guinea	Spanish
Portugal	Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau	Portuguese
Belgium	Central Africa (Congo)	French, Dutch
Italy	Horn of Africa (Somalia, Eritrea)	Italian

Source: author's contribution

The imposition of colonial languages over Africa has skewed several areas of human development, including education (Meighan 2023; Kamwangamalu 2016; Duncan 2022; Laitin, Ramachandran, and Walter 2019). It is no longer an issue of debate that when people are educated in languages other than their mother tongues, it significantly diminishes their ability to reach their full potential, be it for personal growth or development (Bromham et al. 2021; Schmitz 2013). Although English has become a global language and is taught to children in most European countries, for instance, this has not resulted in the neglect of their native languages. In fact, their mother tongues remain the sole medium of instruction in schools, which is why their educational systems continue to flourish with unique attributes. Therefore, teaching in native languages in African and CEMAC countries would not only promote a stronger cultural identity and solidarity, but would also improve students' cognitive capacities and retention rates. This culturally based approach would enable individuals to make more effective

contributions to local economies and government, thereby driving sustainable development from within the community.

3.1.2.5 Curriculum design

Another relevant apprehension about colonial higher education policy was the nature of the curriculum offered to African students. To promote Lord Lugard's doctrine of indirect rule, the British, for example, placed a significant focus on "adapted education," and a "progressivist" agenda of rural community education that had previously been trialled in the postbellum South of the United States was also implemented (Kallaway 2020, 36; Matasci et al. 2019). Even though "educational curricula were to focus on environmental awareness - plants, animals, agriculture, hygiene, nutrition, economic environment - and the role of women and children in society" (Kallaway 2020, 37), vocational and technical study programmes, for example, remained very limited and were sometimes circumscribed to white populations such as in the case of settler colonies (Matasci et al. 2019, 9). It was a reflection of contemporaneous political and economic concerns in Britain and Europe in the 1930s for the League of Nations to relate the politics and policy of education to broader problems of welfare and society. Curricula, therefore, had a central role in the formulation of policies within the framework of colonialism (Kallaway 2020, 37). While adapted education was not entirely abandoned, and the culturalist vision of the German linguists and anthropologists was not forsaken, formal curriculum models based on international norms for formal mass education retained their popularity with African educators, parents, and students (Kallaway 2020, 47). Colonial governments placed a strong emphasis on vocational education, with agriculture, poultry, vegetables, orchards, cleanliness, first aid, handicrafts, carpentry, home economics, cooking and dressmaking serving as the primary disciplines that African pupils were educated in (Booth 2003; Bude 1983). Access to vocational and/or industrial education was not intended to help Africans achieve who exceeded whites in terms of talent. Rather, it was supposed to assist Africans escape poverty (Maylam 2001). As a matter of fact, "the underlying premise, as far as academic accomplishment was concerned, was that blacks could not obtain mastery in "bookish topics," and this assumption was based on the belief that Africans could neither read nor write" (Malisa and Missedja 2019, 8). African students did, on occasion, participate in intellectual instruction in spite of the predominant emphasis placed on vocational education. A number of subjects, including English, History, Religious Knowledge, Latin, Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Geography, Physics, and Chemistry, were included in the curriculum (Omolewa 2006). The tendency was

to portray Africans in a manner that was archaic and backward, with the goal of drawing attention to the educational systems of Europe and North America, which were seen as being modern and progressive at the time. Agenda 2063 and CESA are motivated, in part, by these historical factors, and their impact may still be observed in the educational systems of CEMAC countries in Africa, where social sciences are given greater importance in the curriculum compared to other subjects.

3.1.2.6 Staffing and funding

The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 allocated finances for educational institutions and scientific research in African territories under British colonial administration (Nwauwa 1993). However, in 1938, Great Britain spent £113,205,000 on education from central and local authority funds, while the total net revenues available to the governments of all the colonies and the Sudan to cover administrative charges, material development, and the full range of social services was only £79,552,000 (Asquith 1945, 20). Due to inadequate financial backing for colonial education, some existing schools suffered from a shortage of faculty personnel. Although the British government acknowledged the need for personnel for education, the British Treasury did not foresee providing financial assistance for such initiatives. Conversely, the British government advocated for a system that incentivised all colonial governments to achieve financial independence (Nwauwa 1993).

The Asquith Commission Report of 1945 (Asquith 1945, 5ff.) provides data indicating that throughout the 1940s, several educational institutions in Africa received substantial financial assistance mainly from colonial administrations, mostly designated for capital expenditures, including the construction of buildings and the acquisition of equipment, as shown below.

Table 8. Financial support for educational institutions in Africa (1940s)

Institution	Location	Financial Support	Year	Source of Funding
Makerere College	Uganda	£105,000	Not Specified	Ugandan Government
Gordon College	Khartoum	£73,896	1943	Sudanese Government
		£2,500	1943	Gordon College Executive Committee

Prince of Wales College	Achimota	£617,000	Not Specified	Gold Coast Government
Fourah Bay College	Sierra Leone	£3,755	1942-1943	Not Specified
Higher College	Yaba, Nigeria	£17,444	1944	Not Specified
Yaba Medical School	Yaba, Nigeria	£12,855	1943-1944	Not Specified

Source: Asquith Commission, 1945, 5ff.

The financial data, however edifying, raises critical questions about the characteristics and consequences of British colonial administration in Africa. The finances, derived from colonial administrations rather than directly from the British government, exemplify a subtle facet of colonial economic strategies. These educational finances might be seen as efforts to promote an appearance of kindness and advancement within the context of colonial governance. Nevertheless, they also emphasise the independence and capacity to generate income of these administrations, potentially obtained through the use of local resources and labour. The discrepancy in the distribution of funds, shown by the significant allocation for Prince of Wales College in contrast to the meagre amount for Fourah Bay College, points to the differing priorities or degrees of economic exploitation in the colonies. This highlights the intricate relationship between education, colonial policy, and economic interests, indicating that educational expenditures were not only substantial but also intertwined with the wider goals of upholding colonial dominance and capitalising on African resources.

It is important to point out that while this was far more noticeable with the British, it was not something that was unique to them. The education of colonial people was an important investment for a number of other colonial rulers, including France, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. These countries all had the same ultimate objective in mind. Despite the fact that several African countries have gained their independence, virtually nothing has changed.

Discussions on the quality of the education provided during the colonial era, as well as the expenditures made in educational infrastructure, are also important aspects of the debate. Yaba, Achimota, Makerere and Fourah Bay colleges provided a kind of education that the African intelligentsia considered to be inferior to the sort of education that was offered at universities in Europe. Just as the colonial authorities were hostile in genuinely investing in universities in

76

Africa, so too were the African intelligentsia in attending those universities (Nwauwa 1993, 158). Despite the fact that there were significant variations in geographic location, the overall enrolment rates in schools were dismally low as a direct result of this. Notwithstanding the rhetoric surrounding the *mise en valeur* in French colonies, education continued to be a largely neglected area of state investment for both economic and political reasons (Matasci et al. 2019, 12).

European and African missionaries who converted to Christianity had a significant impact on the growth of higher education in Africa by introducing Western-style education to the entire continent (Meier zu Selhausen 2019). Notably, the British concentrated their efforts in South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Liberia (Hargreaves 1956; Scanlan 2016; Galli and Rönnbäck 2020). In 1826, Fourah Bay College opened in Sierra Leone, and Liberia College followed in 1862 (Paracka 2003). South Africa's first independent college, later evolving into the University of Cape Town, was established in Cape Town in 1829 (Kitagawa and Kikianty 2021). Other university colleges in South Africa included Stellenbosch Gymnasium founded in 1881, later renamed Stellenbosch University in 1918 and the University of the Cape of Good Hope, established in 1873 and later renamed the University of South Africa in 1916 (South African History Online 2023).

In Algeria, French Algerian immigrants predominantly occupied academic positions. The Algerian Medical School was established in 1857, followed by four specialist schools in 1879, which became part of the faculties of Algiers in 1909 (Obaka 1983). In 1909 in Madagascar, the Antananarivo Medical Training Academy was founded in 1896 (Zeleza 2006).

In Liberia, American educational principles led to the founding of Cuttington University College in 1949 and the transformation of Liberia College into the University of Liberia in 1951. Ethiopia's educational system benefited from the Italian occupation (1935–1941), with Trinity College becoming Haile Selassie University in 1949.

In Sudan, Gordon Memorial College, founded in 1902, evolved into Khartoum University by 1956. Cairo University, established in 1908 in Egypt, is one of Africa's largest universities, with over 155,000 undergraduate students. Alexandria University in Egypt began in 1942. The South African Inter-State Native College, now known as the University College of Fort Hare, was established in 1916 and counted Nelson Mandela among its alumni. Colonial authorities restricted access to higher education in Africa until World War II, limiting the aspirations of

the educated African elite. Africans often travelled to their colonial rulers' countries for further education.

Post-World War II saw a systematic effort to build higher education institutions in British territories, including Nigeria (Ibadan in 1947), Ghana (Legon in 1948), Sudan (Khartoum in 1949) and Uganda. The University College of Nairobi was formed in 1955, evolving from the Royal Technical College of Nairobi, established in 1951. Most new or renovated institutions were in rural areas, offering degrees affiliated with the University of London.

The French colonial strategy favoured urban higher education, but missionary education faced constraints, hindering the progress of education at all levels. Before the conflict, institutions like the French Western Africa Medical Training Institution in Dakar and schools in Goree and Bamako provided higher education (Moradi and Cogneau 2014; Clayton 1995). Post-war, French institutions expanded in their territories, with the University of Paris establishing Institutes of Higher Studies in Dakar and Antananarivo in 1945. By 1952, only 1,000 Algerians had graduated from Algiers University (Clayton 1995).

The Official University of Lubumbashi was founded in 1956 to serve not only Congolese students but also those from Burundi and Rwanda. People often discuss the history of this institution in the context of educational developments in the Belgian Congo (Depaepe and Mawanzo 2022).

Up until the 1960s, Portuguese colonies lacked significant higher education opportunities. Universities began to be established in Luanda and Huambo in 1958, followed by those in Angola and Mozambique in 1962. Langa (2014), Cerdeira et al. (2019) and Havik (2018) review of educational policies in Portuguese colonies, highlighting the late development of higher education in these countries.

Apartheid began to segregate higher education in South Africa in 1948, creating distinct universities for different racial groups. By 1994, South Africa had 21 universities and 15 technical schools, primarily catering to white students. Chiramba and Ndofirepi (2023) extensively analyse the evolution of higher education during and after apartheid. Namibia, under South African control, established the Academy for Tertiary Education in 1980, as well as two other institutions in 1985. These developments are discussed in the context of the broader educational policies implemented during South Africa's administration of Namibia (Chiramba and Ndofirepi 2023).

The establishment of university colleges in Africa during the colonial era, as described by authors such as Meier zu Selhausen (2019), Hargreaves (1956), and others, demonstrates a distinct influence of European colonial aspirations. These institutions functioned as both symbols of Western education and tools of cultural and political dominance, reinforcing colonial ideals and restricting native ambitions. Despite achieving independence, numerous African nations still face the challenge of dealing with educational institutions that were strongly rooted in colonial ideas and practices. This challenge is one of the things that Agenda 2063 and CESA aim to tackle. Agenda 2063 and CESA are, therefore, pertinent for CEMAC countries, since the impact of colonialism on educational systems is still significant. Agenda 2063 and CESA has as objective to convert these antiquities into dynamic educational hubs that are deeply connected to African principles, adaptable to African requirements, and influential in propelling the advancement of the continent.

3.1.2.7   Situation in French Equatorial Africa

For the most part, Europeans were afraid of education that would produce a class of disgruntled, unemployed elite who could become a tool for anti-colonial activities. After World War I, France passed a law that made it illegal to teach in local languages, therefore eliminating the need for missionary schools. In the year 1929, French Equatorial Africa (FEA) had a total population of 400,000 persons who were of school age; however, only 4,000 children attended public schools. The only country that counted better was Cameroon, which has had an *École Supérieure in Yaoundé* since 1937, providing scholarships to two hundred students so they could study in France (Bernault 2021, 12). After the end of World War II, the Funds for Investment for Economic and Social Development (FIDES) made it possible for additional investments to be made, which abetted public education by allowing the state to construct technical colleges. Indeed, those who acquired an educational level that allowed them to go to university did so late since there were only a few hundred FEA and FWA students in French institutions in the 1930s – a relative boom that did not occur until after 1945 (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2021, 2). By the middle of the 1950s, the percentage of children attending school had risen to 70% in Gabon and Congo, but it remained relatively low in Ubangi (27%), as well as in Chad (8%).

This provision, like all colonial higher education policies introduced by European colonial masters throughout Africa, was part of the German colonial educational Act of 1910 (Monteh 2018, 222). The linguistic strategy that was supported by the German colonial authority marked

the beginning of a problem that is still ongoing to this day in regard to the language that was used for teaching in Cameroon's educational institutions (Doh 2007). It is also important to keep in mind that the educational programme of the German colonial government comprised components such as the topics taught, accessibility, cost, and enrolment. According to Unangst and Martínez Alemán (2021), the goal of colonial educational policy did not significantly change despite differences in the incentives established by the British and French for missions to provide formal education in Cameroon when they took over from the Germans. It is clear that there was no postsecondary education in Cameroon when the British and French eventually departed the country in the 1960s, since those who wished to continue their education beyond secondary school had to fly to Nigeria, the United Kingdom or France. As a consequence of this, the Federal Republic of Cameroon did not own any establishments that offered higher education at the time of its independence and reunification. The Federal University of Yaoundé did not open its doors until 1962. Cameroon did not modify its educational system at the university level for another 31 years. The University of Yaoundé was split into two distinct institutions as a result of this procedure. These new universities are known as University of Yaoundé I and University of Yaoundé II.

While the preceding sections examined higher education in Africa throughout the colonial period and discussed the impact of transitioning from the precolonial era, the next section gives attention to post-independence Africa. It is crucial to acknowledge that the aforementioned issues regarding the organisation of higher education systems, curriculum development, student admission, accessibility and affordability, infrastructure investment, research and innovation, and student mobility, among others, are discussed in relation to the changes and continuity in the formation and implementation of higher education policies in Africa today.

In order to fully understand the present situation in many CEMAC countries, it was requisite to acknowledge the policy changes that have taken place in the past. This is particularly important since many countries still heavily depend on systems that were established during the colonial period. The findings highlight the need for reconciliation between Agenda 2063 and the distinctive characteristics of higher education policy in Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of the Congo. This is essential to avoid unnecessary repetitions that are impeding and obstructing the effective implementation of the higher education components of Agenda 2063.

3.1.3   Post-independent Africa

To this day, discourses on African higher education have not escaped Afro pessimism, the belief that Africa is irredeemably condemned to backwardness and pandemonium despite the fact that the continent has made great strides in recent decades (Hyden 1996; Momoh 2003; Nothias 2015). Afropessimism is characterised by two distinct tendencies: the denigration of African experiences and the exaltation of Euro-American engagements with Africa. These tendencies stem from the belief that Africa is incapable of achieving historical progress on its own and that any progress that is visible in Africa is the result of interventions by Euro-Americans (Zeleza 2006). The discourses on higher education in Africa have not been able to transcend this narrative. There are two beliefs that are widely held about higher education in Africa: the first is that it was initially implemented by the Europeans, as was discussed previously, and the second is that it has seen a fall after Africa gained its freedom.

On a continent-wide scale, the above claims can easily be dismissed when we think about the fact that more universities were being created on the eve of independence in a majority of African countries with the following listed as some critical examples:

Table 9. List of selected universities in African on the eve of independence

Country	University (s)	year
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University, (as *Estudos Gerais Universitários de Moçambique*)	1962
Nigeria	University of Lagos (UNILAG)	1962
Nigeria	Ahmadu Bello University (ABU)	1962
Angola	Agostinho Neto University (*Estudos Gerais Universitários de Angola*)	1962
Ghana	University of Ghana	1948
Nigeria	University of Ibadan	1948

Source: author's contribution

The process of decolonisation was a slow one since African countries won their independence at different times, but the bulk of them did so in the 1950s and 1960s (Motsaathebe 2019; Young 2018). As a result of the relatively few institutions that were left behind by colonial masters and the fact that the majority of countries did not even have a single university, one of the most

significant challenges that newly independent African countries were confronted with was the establishment or expansion of their higher education systems (Grosz-Ngaté 2020). It was also required to make the few existing institutions more accessible to students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds in order to make them more relevant to the needs for Africa's growth as well as the sociocultural contexts on the continent. Sadly, the limited institutions that were already in place were based on European patterns, were somewhat elitist, and were colonialist first and foremost; this colonialism would eventually be maintained in the form of neocolonialism.

After a majority of the continent's countries gained independence in the 1950s and 60s, there was a phenomenal increase in the number of institutions of higher learning throughout Africa (Cloete, Bunting, and van Schalkwyk 2018b). Universities were regarded to be an imperative need in order to educate a highly trained labour force, construct and perpetuate a national elite, and promote national prestige within the framework of the aspirational economic goals of the new republics. The designs and models of the brand-new national institutions were highly adaptable and were available in a large number of different configurations. In general, they were much larger than their forebears from the colonial period, had broader goals, and expanded the fields of study and programmes they offered beyond the arts and social sciences to include fields such as business, medicine, and engineering, in addition to graduate programmes. In other words, they were much more advanced than their predecessors. Yet, growth had very little to do with completely reforming, since the policies that inspired and drove these new higher education institutions were not all that different   from the ones that colonial governments had in place for higher education.

There were around 120,000 students enrolled in African colleges in the year 1960 (Westcott 2021; Fisher and Wilen 2022). This number reached a high of 782,503 in 1975, 3,461,949 in 1995, and is most likely getting closer and closer to 5 million right now. More or less in the same fashion, the number of institutions increased from less than three dozen in 1960 to more than four hundred in 1995, and as a result of the rise of private colleges, maybe several hundred more have been formed since then. Today, postsecondary education is available in all African countries; yet, educational systems throughout the continent differ significantly in terms of size, level of development, and quality of education they provide. While postsecondary education is available in all African countries, in 1995, the country with the highest number of students enrolled in higher education institutions was Egypt with 850,051 students (Altbach 2007;

Teferra and Altbach 2004b). This was followed by South Africa with 617,897 students, Nigeria with 404,969 students, Algeria with 347,410 students, and Morocco with 347,410 students (294,022) (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). On the other hand, the number of students enrolled in higher education was lower than 10,000 in 23 different countries during the same year (Teixeira and Shin 2020).

In addition, there were significant disparities between the sexes in terms of the opportunities to pursue higher education (Middleton, 2007). Even though some countries had achieved gender equality in primary and secondary education by the year 2000, this success was still restricted to a very small number of countries (Uetela 2017). Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and South Africa were the countries that departed significantly from the norm in this regard. In addition to this, the gender gap was reflected in the study areas as well as in the distribution of faculty members (Elu 2018). Women were greatly overrepresented in the subjects of the humanities and social sciences, but women continued to be chronically underrepresented in the fields of the sciences as well as the vast majority of professional specialisations (Bradley 2000; Teixeira and Shin 2020). Entrance to higher education in African countries was further varied not only on the basis of ethnicity, colour and class, but also, in some cases, on the basis of religious and cultural ties. These countries were usually stratified civilisations that consisted of people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds. When a majority of African countries gained independence in the 1960s, the middle classes quickly expanded throughout the continent (in many cases as a result of the establishment of new universities or the extension of existing ones) and began to have children (Assié-Lumumba 2005; Takyi-Amoako and Assié-Lumumba 2018). Not only has the meteoric rise of higher education across Africa led to massive increases in the continent's stock of human capital, but it has also laid the institutional basis for the social establishment of intellectual communities and talents (Darley and Luethge 2019). Despite this, Africa is still the least educated continent in the world. The continent's tertiary gross enrolment ratio is less than 3% of all student enrolments in the region, and it only accounts for 4% of all tertiary education students enrolled internationally (Yamada 2019). This is in contrast to the percentage of people who live in poverty, which is 10% for low- and middle-income countries and 58% for high-income countries (Middleton 2007).

In the 1980s and 1990s, WB, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) implemented oppressive SAPs. These SAPs resulted in substantial decreases in government spending on social initiatives, particularly in the field of

education, namely higher education, which proponents of neoliberalism believed had lower social returns compared to elementary education (Sawyerr 2004; Middleton 2016; 2007). The impact of SAPs on the CEMAC countries is far from positive, as it has resulted in a situation where the growth of private higher education institutions coincide with a decline in the quality of education. This decline may be attributed to the survival-driven character of these institutions.

Furthermore, although there was a rise in the number of higher education institutions in Africa during the 1980s and 1990s (Zavale and Schneijderberg 2022), it became evident that the higher education systems in several countries, including Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of the Congo, were underdeveloped and facing significant challenges. This was evident via the reduction in state support, the decline in educational standards, the inadequately equipped libraries and labs, the decrease in compensation, and the poor morale among academic members. UNESCO and CAMES, consisting of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad, entered into a Partnership Agreement on Higher Education on March 8, 2016. The purpose of this agreement is to enhance collaboration and capacity-building in the field of higher education quality assurance. The focus is on developing effective practices and establishing partnerships with similar organisations in other parts of Africa (Agbor and Taiwo 2014).

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African leaders, educators, researchers and external donors have become increasingly aware of the challenges facing African higher education and the need for renewal in order for the continent to achieve higher rates of growth and development and compete in a global economy that is becoming increasingly knowledge-intensive (Middleton 2007; 2016). This greater awareness has led to an increase in the total amount of money provided to finance higher education in Africa, which is a positive development. The objective of the reform has been centred on five primary categories of issues, despite the fact that these concerns have not yet been fully addressed with sufficient resources.

Firstly, it is widely acknowledged that there is an urgent need for a thorough investigation of the philosophical underpinnings that form the basis of African institutions. This context prompts inquiries regarding the principles that underpin public higher education in an era of privatisation, the structure, content, and consequences of the ongoing reforms throughout the

continent, and the dynamics between public and private entities in African higher education institutions, which have encountered opposition.

Secondly, concerns with management, and more specifically, how African universities are addressing issues with quality control, and funding in light of the implementation of new regulatory frameworks, increasing pressure to find alternative sources of funding, changing demographics and massification, rising calls for access and equity for underrepresented groups, including women, and the emergence of new forms of management (Middleton 2007). Summarily, these issues focus on how African universities are implementing new regulatory frameworks (Mohamedbhai 2014; Marchetta and Dilly 2019; Nabaho et al. 2020).

Thirdly, there are pedagogical and paradigmatic issues, such as the languages used for instruction in African universities and educational systems in general, as well as the dynamics of knowledge production, which refers to the societal relevance of knowledges produced in African higher education systems, as well as how they are disseminated and consumed by students, scholarly communities, and the general public. Other examples of pedagogical and paradigmatic issues include the following: (1) the languages used for instruction in African universities and educational systems in general; (2) the (Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014; Zeleza 2009). As will be shown in the following discussion, these problems originate from gaps that have existed in Africa's higher education policy direction up to this point.

The next section explores the theoretical contribution of higher education institutions in the CEMAC region towards decolonisation, development, democratisation, nation-building, and regional integration. These efforts align with the historical objectives of African nationalism captured in CESA and Agenda 2063. This includes inquiries on the asymmetrical and fluctuating dynamics between universities and the government, civic society, and business. In addition, this includes issues about the involvement of the AU, Association of African Universities (AAU), and universities in addressing and resolving the many challenges relating to higher education in Africa. CEMAC governments are resuming their efforts to achieve greater integration within the subregion and across Africa, and between Africa and its Diasporas through the AU. The role of universities in the past and their potential role in the future in either supporting or obstructing the Pan-African agenda will be significant.

Some of the last issues that need to be considered here are globalisation, the effects of emerging trends in ICTs, the growth of cross-border or cross-national higher education provision, and trade in educational services under the regime of the General Agreement on Trade in Services

(GATS) (Sauvé 2022; Knight 2002; Marginson and Van Der Wende 2007). These reforms have had a significant impact on higher education in Africa, and they have been crucial in paving the way for fruitful cooperation between academics from Africa and other parts of the globe during the last two decades. Even though the points made by the aforementioned authors are still relevant in modern times, it is vitally important for Africa that international donors like the World Bank and other international financial organisations shift their focus away from philanthropic foundations and aid towards the establishment of multilateral and bilateral relationships that benefit all parties involved. In addition, and as a result of the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2018, African countries have a responsibility to pay special attention to the benefits of student and staff mobility at the continental level, without diminishing the value of collaboration with academics from other parts of the world.

Africa's higher education sector has a significant and distinguished past, and it is poised to progress and flourish in the future, despite the formidable and alarming obstacles now confronting African institutions. African leaders, educators, and academics, who do not indulge in the negative outlook of Afro-pessimism, have the primary responsibility of guaranteeing a prosperous and thriving future (Zeleza 2006). Under the framework of the CEMAC subregion, several factors of policy continuity and change have either a positive or negative impact on their higher education systems. The subregion has shown three unfavourable characteristics (Bokamba 2018; 1991): Firstly, it has the most elevated mean Illiteracy rate among all similar subregions on the continent. Secondly, the rates of school drop-outs and class repeaters are the most elevated on the whole continent. Thirdly, the languages often spoken in this subregion are spoken on a microscopic level.

In contrast to the contention that expressed preferences of African intellectuals for a French-based education system influenced the decision to continue using French instead of African languages in the 1950s, it was actually the colonial suppression of African languages that forced these intellectuals to adopt French (White 1996; Ki-Zerbo 1976; Gifford and Weiskel 1971; Touati 2007; Gardinier 1984). Higher education policies in CEMAC countries have evolved through a series of decrees, ordinances, official memoranda/communiques, and practical decisions made by colonial administrators in the colonies (Bokamba 1991, 3). Although the situation was directly linked to the severe shortage of Africans who were qualified to acquire French rights during colonial rule, the current state of higher education in French-speaking

Africa is incredibly appalling and difficult to comprehend (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2021, 2). This is because acquiring French citizenship (based on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity) was their only means of accessing school, and this was an exceptionally uncommon situation. French-style education in Africa has had a significant impact on the social, cultural, and political structure. These disruptions are largely a result of persistent colonial higher education policies.

3.2 Theoretical review

This study's general introduction included a number of crucial theoretical viewpoints that various academics have used to describe higher education in Africa. Some of these theoretical perspectives include postcolonial, decolonial, economic, critical, conflict, sustainability, and digital perspectives. Presented here is an exhaustive and evaluative analysis of these ideas using a two-step methodology. Initially, an effort is undertaken to reveal the fundamental philosophical concepts relevant to this study (Staines, Hoffstaedter, and Binnie 2023). The next step is carefully considering their strengths and weaknesses. A primary limitation in this context is the inability to cover all theories mentioned in the introduction due to space and time. Before exploring the theories per se, an effort is made to hammer on their meaning in the broader social science context and specific relevance to the disciplines of political science and public administration.

3.2.1 Theory in social science

Numerous social scientists have proposed various definitions of theory. To Chijioke et al. (2021, 157), a theory is "used basically in research and learning for the purpose of giving meaning to abstractions and/or concepts in order to explain and aid understanding of phenomenon by making generalisation of proven facts." Cibangu and Cibangu (2012, 97-98) posit that "theory lies at the core of research practice and human existence. Humans have a tendency to theorise their experience into patterns. For example, we see things, love people, and make decisions based on the implicit or explicit theories we hold." Yet another definition in the introduction to the book titled "Challenging Ideas: Theory and Empirical Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities", Lytje et al. (2015, 1) describe theory as a "looking glass through which the academic can engage with empirical material and relate this to the world in which he or she lives." Another social science definition (short but captivating) of theory is that offered by Fried (2020, 336) as "bodies of knowledge that are broad in scope and aim to explain

robust phenomena." Last but not least, Rengasamy (2016, 121) defines theory as "a body of interrelated propositions, statements and concepts subjected to empirical verification." As seen with the definitions above and as argued by van der Waldt (2021, 1), "the use of the term 'theory' in popular parlance has added to the confusion of just why, how, and where in the research process theory should be applied."

The one thing about all the definitions above is their agreement that theory plays a crucial role in organising, interpreting and understanding various aspects of human experience or phenomena. The definitions equally emphasise the explanatory nature of theory, pointing out its capacity to explicate and facilitate understanding of many facets of the universe through the formulation of generalisations based on established facts. Also, the authors put an emphasis on the link between theory and research, placing theory as the central element of research practice and human life. The recognition of the innate human inclination to formulate theories and conceptualise experiences highlights the influence of both implicit and explicit theories on how social scientists interpret the world around us. Fried's (2020) focus on the extensive range of theories and Rengasamy's (2016) use of empirical verification further highlight the inclusive and verifiable character of theoretical frameworks. In addition, the descriptions provided by Lytje et al. (2015) show that theories serve as a "looking glass" that enables scholars to interact with empirical data, connecting theoretical ideas to the actual setting in which they are present. Essentially, these definitions together depict theory as a multifaceted instrument that not only elucidates phenomena but also directs research, impacts human cognition, and establishes connections between abstract notions and the actual realities of the world.

While the type of phenomena under observation may change from discipline to discipline, the basal idea of empirical verification remains at the heart of the definition of theory in social sciences. Thus, theory may refer to systematic and coherent frameworks of concepts, principles, and propositions that aim to examine and clarify various political phenomena in the discipline of political science. Political science encompasses a wide variety of ideas, including normative viewpoints that prescribe superlative governance models, analyses of political behaviour, institutional surveys of governing entities, and international relations frameworks. Public administration theory covers classical administrative principles that prioritise organisational efficiency, behavioural perspectives within bureaucratic settings, public choice theories that integrate economic principles, and newer paradigms such as New Public Management and governance theories that promote collaborative and networked approaches. The intricate nature

of political science and public administration theories enables researchers and practitioners to elucidate observable patterns, forecast political events or administrative results, and provide normative counsel for ideal governance arrangements. It is essential to acknowledge that these theories are dynamic, always growing with new research and empirical findings. They serve as critical instruments for analysis, discussion, and the development of knowledge in their respective domains.

Theory is also critical in the field of educational research, especially when it comes to educational policy, which is at the core of this study. Using Kivunja's (2018, 45) metaphor of theories having the ability to make researchers ``see the forest instead of just a single tree'' shows how theories expound the complex principles and processes that impact different educational phenomena, providing a conceptual foundation for understanding how elements like instructional approaches, student enrolment, and socioeconomic variables that interplay to mould educational systems. Neuman (1997) spoke of micro, meso and macro levels of generalisations, each characterised by increased breadth and depth. An analysis of PAUGHSS scholarships may therefore be conducted at the micro-level by evaluating their effect on individual student performance. At the meso level, one may examine the effect of the PAUGHSS on the institutional framework of higher education in CEMAC countries. At the macro level, assessing PAUGHSS within the wider context of CESA and Agenda 2063 may be used to picture its impact on African society. Educational theories, generally speaking, provide direction in the development of policies, allowing for policymakers to create interventions based on evidence-based principles to tackle particular challenges or improve areas of the education system. Theories similarly provide policymakers with predictive insights that help them anticipate the probable effects of policy changes. This enables them to make informed-decisions about how to allocate resources, design and implement policies. Theoretical frameworks serve as a foundation for assessing the efficacy of policies, ensuring that they are in line with educational aims and contribute to larger social goals. Moreover, theories assist policymakers in effectively managing social interactions inside educational environments, fostering fairness, variety, and inclusivity. The succeeding sections is dedicated to, amongst others, theoretical analyses of postcolonialism, decolonisation, globalisation, feminism, neoliberalism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism, and conflict theory, specifically in relation to higher education in Africa with Agenda 2063, CESA, and the CEMAC subregion as the main points of reference.

3.2.2   Postcolonial and decolonial perspectives

Post-colonialism and de-colonisation have not repeatedly featured in this study for no good reason. In fact, for Africa and for many others beyond Africa, the two terms originate in their histories. However, the attention here is not in their historical dimensions but their etymology, epistemology and axiology and how these relate to educational policies for the CEMAC countries, CESA and Agenda 2063. Literally speaking, postcolonialism would mean events after colonialism or after the colonial era. Colonialism, as observed in the historical review, is the period when Africa was still under external domination. Therefore, "post" is usually added to the word to denote the period when a majority, if not all, African countries gained independence from their colonial masters. This period, which extends to this day, has no clear cut boundary from its predecessor as proven by critics of the neoliberal order. Postcolonialism may also arguably be synonymous with political freedom. Decolonisation on the other hand denotes the process of restoring systems that were uprooted as a consequence of colonialism, be they political, economic, sociocultural, or educational. De-colonisation is not unique to a specific period but is predominantly relevant to the colonial and postcolonial periods (Thondhlana and Garwe 2021b). For example, the decolonial project in Africa started during the colonial era in the form of African nationalism and has continued to this day in the form of replacing and/or integrating colonial educational structures that were designed to serve colonial interests with indigenous knowledge systems. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni puts it in the foreword to "Decolonisation of Higher Education in Africa: Perspectives from Hybrid Knowledge Production" by (Woldegiorgis, Turner, and Brahima 2021):

> While the decolonisation of the 20th Century was characterised by political demands for self-determination and the storm-troopers were modern educated elites emerging from colonised societies aiming to take over state power from white colonial elites, the decolonisation of the 21st Century is expansive and its key trope is epistemic freedom.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, 884) has also simplified the meaning of decolonisation into what he calls "the 'Ten-Ds' of the decolonial turn." The Ten-Ds include decolonisation, demineralisation, patriarchisation, deracialisation, dedisciplining, deprovincialisation, debourgeoisement, decorporatisation, democratisation, and dehierarchisation. The Ten-Ds promote a radical and justifiable change in knowledge paradigms by advocating for the freedom of diverse and often marginalised perspectives. They challenge the dominance of Eurocentric views and strive for inclusivity by incorporating African, feminist, and womanist voices, as

well as other intellectual perspectives (Ata Aidoo 1995; Mignolo 2007; Sivasasipoorani 2017; Mampane, Omidire, and Aluko 2018; Dalleo 2012; Wa Thiong' 1981; Nazareth 1985). The significance of a value system that promotes transformation in the context of postcolonialism and decolonisation underscores the need of opposing Eurocentric perspectives and market-oriented influences that sustain hierarchical patterns of thinking.

By appreciating the origins, knowledge-related aspects, and value-related characteristics of postcolonialism and decolonisation in relation to educational policies of the CEMAC countries, CESA and Agenda 2063, this study does two things; reemphasising the continuing impact of colonial tendencies and the fight against it. The ever-changing character of these ideas, for example, postcolonialism beyond its chronological designation, including the ongoing endeavour to challenge many manifestations of neocolonialism that endure beyond the formally acknowledged era of achieving autonomy helps to contradict oversimplified conceptions of a clearly delineated postcolonial period, recognising the continuing imbalances of worldwide power relations.

As echoed and re-echoed in the works of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2023), the decolonial trend in the 21st century, represents a significant transition from only advocating for political self-determination to a more comprehensive focus on intellectual liberation. This shift acknowledges that decolonisation is not limited to a particular historical era but is a continuous and wide-ranging process that entails questioning and reshaping systems of knowledge. The assertion (Thondhlana and Garwe 2021, 2) that "Africa lacks indigenous theories, forcing it to uncritically adopt and apply scholarly resources of Western origin largely inapplicable to the real-life challenges in the African context" is, therefore, somewhat contradictory and unsettling for a continent that has both suffered neglect and exploitation throughout history. The data analysis chapter, with evidence from the field, attempts to provide viewpoints that either support the decolonial project or weaken some of its fundamental claims about the decolonisation movement in education within CEMAC countries.

3.2.3 Modernisation, globalisation and the neoliberal agenda

Apologists of colonialism and neocolonialism often and typically disregard colonialism and neocolonialism as means to modernise and globalise Africa. However, it is important to acknowledge that modernisation and globalisation in Africa are both outcomes of colonialism and neocolonialism. These processes are closely linked to the previous colonial and now neoliberal agendas, designed to establish institutions intended to prioritise freedom, fairness,

equity, and inclusivity yet do exactly the opposite. It is not strange that Amina Mama's 2004 declaration of the brutal nature of the neoliberal agenda manifested through SAPs is still very much alive today and killing the higher education sector in Africa especially in countries like those in CEMAC. To borrow her own words (Mama, 2004, 7):

> […] Increasingly stringent global economic dogma that has displaced more ambitious and holistic visions of development since the 'Lost Decade' of the 1980s. Structural adjustment and neoliberal reforms have required massive cuts in all services to the people, but specifically constrained public spending on higher education in ways that have undermined the early progress.

International financial institutions in the 1980s even suggested that Africa does not need universities just to satisfy their neoliberal agenda (World Bank 1986). This insult was cloaked in the subtleties of modernisation and promoting the basic assumption that Africa is yet to emerge from a traditional society, establish preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity to eventually arrive at the age of high mass consumption (Rostow 1991a). Consequently, and beyond the core assumptions of modernisation, globalisation, and neoliberalism, what we see in Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, CAR, and the Republic of the Congo, today is contestably a continuation of colonialism and neocolonialism through a disregard of African in favour of Western epistemologies instead of fusing them together in the interest of both. These modernising, globalising, and liberalising philosophies have seen incapacitated and sometimes complicit governments adopt policies that promote a culture of capitalism disguised as development efforts intended to provide education for the majority who cannot afford it. An example is the rapidly expanding private higher education sector in these countries that remains largely unregulated, charging hundreds of thousands of FCFA in tuition, which is way above the quality of education they provide. Even the idea of mentorship of private universities by public universities in CEMAC countries and provision of financial support to the AU by the EU is hardly a matter of genuineness, often perched on the pedestal of the neoliberalism agenda, to go by the saying that he who has the pipe plays the tune. Another example is the support of military and authoritarian regimes in these countries, so long as these regimes are able to guarantee Western interests. This phenomenon not only leads to brain drain with academics and students leaving in large numbers, but also causes frustration among students and academics who face criminalisation, censorship, or disappearance when they try to express their concerns about the deteriorating and corrupt state

of higher education, as seen in countries like Cameroon and Chad. These are only a handful of the numerous obstacles that prevent higher education policies and reforms in these countries from becoming reality. The goal is that CESA and Agenda 2063 will have to address them.

3.2.4   Feminism in higher education

For the greater part of human history, women have remained disenfranchised, objectified, and often kept on the fringes, with men assuming the central role in making decisions that affect our everyday political, economic, sociocultural lives (Donert 2023). This has led to the emergence of the feminist movement, which seeks to fight for the rights of women to actively participate in the development and progress of humanity. The history of discrimination against women has not been different for African women, who continue to be told that their place is in the kitchen and not fighting for bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees with men. Even those who have succeeded in reaching higher levels of education sometimes do so at the cost of sexualising themselves, either willingly or unwillingly. That is why the number of female graduates is still strikingly low in CEMAC countries when compared to men (Kinge et al. 2020). The same goes for the number of female staff in universities, where until recently it was quite difficult to see a woman in senior leadership positions such as vice chancellor, rector, dean, head of department, registrar, and so on, or when the number of women in these positions is disproportionately low. An exception may be the University of Buea in Cameroon, where a good number of women have been on par with men when it comes to university governance and leadership, perhaps owing to the university's Anglo-Saxon culture, but that is still nothing to write home about given the situation in the country and other CEMAC countries as a whole. Therefore, feminist ideologies in African higher education have been advocated and lobbied, sometimes compromisingly through external influence, to see more and more higher education policies that acknowledge the right to education for women and their right to equal opportunities in both the academic milieu and elsewhere (Hailu et al. 2023; Muhanguzi 2019). While conceding that women need to have access to educational opportunities just like men, the problem with feminism in higher education in Africa is the attraction of outside support, which usually ends up doing more harm than good. Just like their cousins modernisation, globalisation and neoliberalism, feminism in higher education in Africa today is no longer like the one during the heyday of colonialism (Mama 2004; 2003), but an assemblage of women who would go any length to get what they want, which is usually damaging to the very society they profess to be fighting for. A typical example is the explosion of women activism groups and institutes of

93

gender studies within universities in Africa that are often affiliated with or a direct offshoot of their counterparts in the West promoting the rights of women in higher education in Africa, without which they cannot secure the much-needed funding for their activism (Allen and Cova 2023; Beaumont 2020; Swank and Fahs 2017). Some of these women activism groups and academic institutes CEMAC countries includes the South West and North West Women's Task Force (SNWOT), Women in Alternative Action (WAA Cameroon), and the Gender and Development Research Group based at the University of Yaoundé I. In CAR, there is the Central African Republic includes the Women's Association for the Defence of Rights and the Environment (AFDDE). Chad's endeavours are advocated by *Association pour la Promotion des Libertés Fondamentales au Tchad*. The Action for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights (APDF) operates in the Republic of Congo, while Marien Ngouabi University hosts a research centre dedicated to gender studies. *Asociación Guineo-Ecuatoriana de Mujeres Jefas de Empresas (AGEMJE)* and *Femmes Actives Du Gabon* in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Within the context of this research, women's activist groups and gender studies institutions are seen as some of the pillars of CESA and Agenda 2063 (African Union Commission 2015, 8). They promote gender equality in education, improve capacities, and encourage social transformation. These institutions do extensive research on gender dynamics, providing useful acumens for policy and educational practices that align with CESA's objectives of fostering inclusive education and social change. However, their efforts usually face challenges such as limited resources, cultural resistance to gender equality, insufficient institutional support, and problems in integrating gender-focused research into national education programmes. In order to address these issues and strengthen support from various sectors, it is, therefore, essential to optimise the effectiveness of these groups and institutions in achieving broader educational and developmental goals in the CEMAC subregion and beyond.

3.2.5   Conflict theory

Another emerging and dynamic premise on the scene of higher education in Africa are conflict theories. Going by the philosophy of Marx, this is a theory that can be understood on many levels, some of which have already been extensively captured in the preceding sections on postcolonialism, decoloniality, modernisation, globalisation, neoliberalism, and feminism. For each and every one of these other theoretical perspectives, we can see a struggle between past and present, Africa and the West, men and women, epistemologies against epistemologies, cultures against cultures, rich against poor, educational systems against educational systems,

and educational policies against educational policies. Understanding armed conflict in its literal sense is also a novel concept. As Ngenge (2022) demonstrates in his research on the effects of armed conflict on higher education in the Anglophone region of Cameroon, CEMAC countries are all rife with armed conflicts, with little sign of recovery, and it has become a threat to education and advancement. Conflicts should therefore not only be understood as the clash of one group or ideology with another, but also how armed conflicts can influence activities relating to higher education policy and reforms, either positively or negatively. As stated in the methodology and research design chapter, the hostile, conflict-prone nature of the environments in CEMAC countries, for that reason, deters people from participating in research efforts like this one that are often designed to provide solutions to the problems that are faced by these very countries. For fear of the consequences they do not even know, scepticism is the order of the day when it comes to accepting to participate in research endeavours even when they are guaranteed confidentiality of their data. That is what conflict has done to these countries, placing their whole educational sectors in jeopardy and forcing governments to design policies that would have to also provide solutions to resolving these conflicts besides those that are meant to improve educational quality, thereby further complicating the whole process of policy making and implementation within the context of CESA and Agenda 2063.

3.3 Critical reflection

This chapter examined the progression of higher education in Africa, with a special emphasis on the eras before, during, and after colonisation, with a particular focus on the CEMAC subregion. The chapter also examined many educational settings that existed before European conquest, highlighting the significant influences originating from Egypt, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and Islam. Despite the limitations imposed by society, these first systems demonstrated their efficacy and successfully attracted students from Europe and the Mediterranean area. The advent of European colonisation disrupted these systems, and led to the introduction of educational policies and institutions with the main aim of promoting colonial objectives rather than fostering indigenous knowledge and development. In this period, the adoption of European languages and educational frameworks often disregarded the local systems and needs. After gaining independence, CEMAC countries, just like their other African brethren, had the task of addressing the impact of colonialism on their education systems. They made endeavours to revamp institutions in order to align them with their developmental goals.

Nevertheless, the impact of colonial education institutions has endured, despite the efforts made to tackle it. The chapter also examined the impact of policies imposed by foreign financial institutions, such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), on contemporary African higher education. The chapter highlighted the need of implementing reforms that explicitly tailor research, innovation, and knowledge creation to African realities and ambitions. The main objective is to connect higher education policy with the Agenda 2063 plan. The chapter ended by discussing theories that determine the direction of higher education policy in Africa. It emphasised the significance of higher education in promoting economic, social, and political progress, particularly in the CEMAC subregion.

4   Research design and methodology

The strategy adopted by a researcher and the techniques employed to implement that strategy are critical to research as they provide answers to the questions of generalisability, reliability and validity. Indeed, there cannot be any scientific research without a research design and methodology. This chapter documents the strategy that was used in steering this research and the step-by-step process that was employed in collecting and analysing data. In so doing, the chapter provides answers to design questions about how the research questions were formulated, type of research design, why the particular type of design, how interviewees were selected, how interviews were conducted, how data was transcribed and analysed, how ethical considerations were addressed, and challenges encountered in the process of data collection and analysis were managed. Answers are also provided to methodology questions that include the process of designing, conducting, and analysing research in a rigorous and meaningful way, navigating through ontological and epistemological questions. The relationship between the research design and the research methodology in this study is pictured in the flowchart below, exploring the progression from philosophical principles to methods, acknowledging that this progression is not always implemented in a strictly chronological order as presented. The stages were repeatedly developed and refined to create a systematic, structured, coherent, credible, and verifiable understanding of the subject matter.

Figure 8. Research design and methodology flow chart
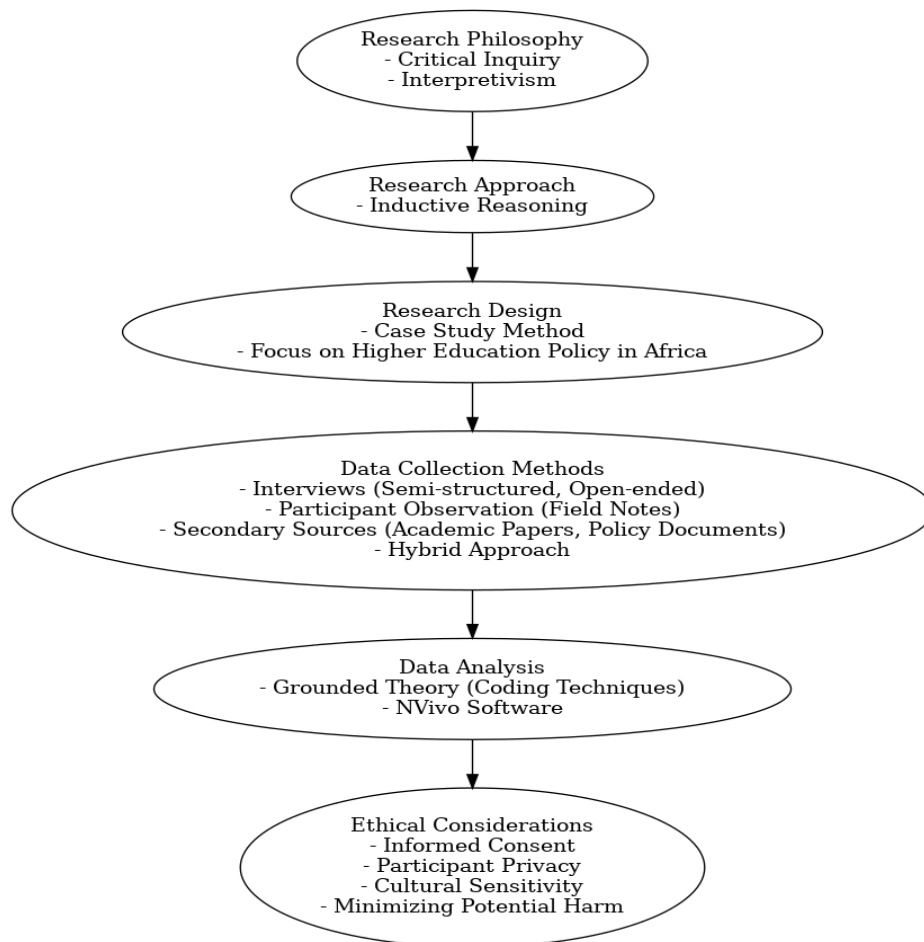
Source: author's contribution

The study design and research methodology are crucial in resolving the research problem (Kiyala 2019). In fact, research design and methodology serve as a strategy and technique that outlines the complete research process, providing a systematic framework to assist researchers in organising their thoughts while considering practical limitations (Sileyew 2020). Study design also facilitates a systematic and methodical approach by mitigating frustration and ensuring the coherent functioning of all research components from introduction to conclusion. The relevance of this rests in its ability to define standards and criteria for research, requiring clarity in the formulation of research objectives, questions, and assumptions (Kiyala 2019). Furthermore, the research design and methodology stimulate introspection, helping the researcher to critically reflect on their knowledge and biases, effectively address challenges in choosing suitable methodologies and procedures, and ensuring they are in harmony with the entire research process. The study design and research methodology, therefore, enhanced the validity, reliability, and quality of research outputs, enabling the development of significant

acumens and the progress of knowledge on the educational policy framing in CEMAC countries reflective of CESA and Agenda 2063.

4.1   Research design

Given the focus on evaluating the alignment of higher education policies of CEMAC countries with a broad strategic framework (CESA and Agenda 2063), identifying key factors influencing this alignment, and assessing impacts on socio economic progress, this study exhibited characteristics of case study research. As stated by Yin (2018, 39), case study research is well-suited for in depth, contextual analyses of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships that provide answers to "how" and "why" questions. The type of case study design adopted is the multiple case study design, where the overarching case study focuses higher education policy orientation in the CEMAC subregion within the context of CESA and Agenda 2063. Within this broader case study framework, additional, more specific case studies were conducted to explore different perspectives on educational policy, student mobility, authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance processes within the CEMAC subregion. This nested case study design enabled a meticulous analysis of the research questions from multiple angles, providing depth and context to the examination of how higher education policies in CEMAC countries align with the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063. This type of multiple-case study design is valuable for understanding complex phenomena within their real-life context, facilitating the exploration of variations within and across cases to provide more reliable answers to the research problem (Hamilton 2011; Yin 2018). Such a design is particularly suited to studies aiming to investigate intricate issues in educational policy and practice, allowing for the integration of various data sources and perspectives to form a holistic view of the phenomena under study. This approach aligns well with the study's objectives to assess the synchronisation of higher education institutions and policies in CEMAC countries with the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063.

The type of case study design the study uses as described above is a holistic multiple-case study design. This type design is intended for studies where the researcher has identified a number of cases to illuminate a particular issue or phenomenon, with each case contributing its own insight to the subject matter (Stake 1995). As part of this study, the holistic multiple case study design made it possible to look into how higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion fit with the CESA and AU's Agenda 2063 in more depth. The study specifically examined the

implementation of PAUGHSS as a standard for higher education institutions in Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo, the movement of students within Africa rather than internationally, and the processes of authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance in higher education. Each case study offered a distinct viewpoint on the main research questions.

The holistic multiple-case study design is particularly effective for complex studies aiming to cover various dimensions of a single phenomenon (Yin 2018), in this case, the synchronisation of higher education policies with a broad developmental agenda. The case studies in the study were chosen through a deliberate and strategic process aimed at addressing the overarching research objectives. Here's how and why the case studies were selected:

- The case studies were selected based on their direct relevance to the study's primary goal of exploring higher education policies within the CEMAC subregion in relation to the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063. This included examining areas such as authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance procedures in higher education, the potential of intra-African mobility, and the role of institutions like PAUGHSS in setting education standards.

- The choice of CEMAC as the geographic focus was strategic, given its status as one of the least developed regions in Africa in terms of education and its lack of coverage in educational policy research related to Agenda 2063 and CESA. This allowed for an in depth examination of a subregion where the impact of policy alignment with CESA and Agenda 2063 could be most profound and where there is a clear need for policy evaluation and development.

- PAUGHSS was specifically chosen for its representation of Agenda 2063 and CESA's vision within the CEMAC subregion both in terms of strategic location and in drawing students not only from CEMAC countries but from Africa as a whole. Located in Cameroon, PAUGHSS embodies the educational aspirations of the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063, making it a critical case for understanding the practical application of these continental educational policies at the institutional and subregional level.

- The selection of educational stakeholders for interviews and case studies was based on their knowledge of the subject matter and their institutional affiliations. This ensured that the data collected were rich in insights and perspectives relevant to the study's focus

areas, including student mobility, quality education processes, and the impact of higher education policies on regional and subregional development.

- The study employed a mix of primary and secondary data sources, including interviews with students, lecturers, and other educational stakeholders, as well as desk reviews of policy documents and existing literature. This comprehensive approach to data collection was aimed at capturing a nuanced understanding of the higher education landscape within the CEMAC region and its alignment with CESA and Agenda 2063.

The rationale behind the selection of case studies and participants underscored the study's commitment to a thorough examination of the complex relationship between higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion and the broader developmental goals of CESA and Agenda 2063.

4.2 Unit of analysis

This study's primary units of analysis include the CEMAC countries, as well as other areas of educational policy formulation, CESA, and Agenda 2063. The case studies were selected based on their relevance to the primary purpose of the research, which was to examine higher education policy orientation in the CEMAC subregion in connection to CESA and Agenda 2063. They examine topics such as authorisation, accreditation, quality assurance systems in higher education, the potential for movement within Africa, and the influence of organisations like PAUGHSS in establishing educational standards. This strategic choice prioritises CEMAC countries and their educational policies as primary subjects of study, aiming to comprehend how these policies align with the broader developmental objectives indicated in CESA and Agenda 2063. Moreover, the study explores the significance of examining educational policies using different theoretical frameworks, including postcolonialism, decolonisation, globalisation, feminism, neoliberalism, Pan-Africanism, and Afrocentrism. This indicates that the research uses these theories and policy frameworks as essential elements of analysis to examine and assess current educational practices in CEMAC countries within the framework of these broader objectives. This comprehensive approach allowed for an exhaustive analysis of how the overall aims of the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063 impact, correspond to, or deviate from higher education policy in these countries.

4.3 Research philosophy

Research cannot exist outside of philosophy. How we make sense of the world around us is beneficial to research and as Ryan (2018, 1) states, our underlying philosophical assumptions helps us to decide which is appropriate for our type of research, informs, or design methodology and perform data analysis. So far, the major philosophical research paradigms used to guide research methods and analysis include positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (Turyahikayo 2021; Ryan 2018). Positivism asserts the existence of an external reality that can be seen *via* measurement and investigation (Sol and Heng 2022). Pragmatism, on the other hand, prioritises practical solutions that are suitable for current circumstances or conditions (Sol and Heng 2022). The quantitative nature of positivist research comes with the advantages of representativeness, generalisability, and objectivity relative to its constant use of random sampling technique and dependence on statistics and large numbers of research participants. In other words and for positivism, research must be done in a way that is free from the researcher's own values and thus achieve objectivity, meaning that the researcher's position must be separate from and not influence the research outcomes (Pham 2018). Despite the argument by positivist researchers that both natural and social sciences can and should apply empirical inquiry to collect and analyse data, the principles of positivism are not suitable for all research issues, especially for social science research (Sol and Heng 2022; Turyahikayo 2021). This explains why positivism was not an option for this study as it was not possible to disassociate the historical and cultural experiences of Africans from their current educational realities. It would make little sense to attempt an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the adoption of Agenda 2063, CESA, educational policies and reforms in CEMAC on a subregional and national basis that address issues of authorisation, accreditation, quality assurance, student mobility, and educational quality while ignoring the internal and external, historical, and current institutional, political, economic, and sociocultural forces that first led them to where they are. Pragmatism also offered little guidance irrespective of its emphasis on symbolic interactions and change (Goldkuhl 2012).

Instead, this study employed fragments of critical inquiry, despite its drawbacks, for the following reasons cited in Lan (2018): its interdisciplinary nature establishes connections between economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of contemporary societies, resulting in novel social theories and global perspectives that are beneficial to education scholars seeking to comprehend the ever-changing landscape of learning and teaching challenges in conjunction with other societal factors. In addition to helping in the identification

and confrontation of educational disparities in African society, critical theory advanced access, equality, and justice. By consistently fostering self-awareness, accepting social reality, and cultivating a flexible and visionary mindset towards understanding educational policy framing, the majority of the limitations associated with critical inquiry were effectively mitigated.

A significant portion of this study was also based on interpretivism, which is originally rooted in the idea that knowledge can be understood through a relativist ontology approach. This approach acknowledges that a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations, rather than a singular truth that can be determined through measurement (Goldkuhl 2012; Ryan 2018; Pham 2018). According to Turyahikayo (2021), a phenomenon can have multiple interpretations instead of a definitive truth that can be determined through measurement. Adopting an interpretivist perspective, therefore, provided latitude and flexibility in observing and interpreting the data from different perspectives. From an interpretivist standpoint, it was easier to obtain a deeper understanding of how higher education policy is framed in CEMAC countries and its harmony with CESA and Agenda 2063 through a number of theoretical propositions. It was also simpler to understand established policy initiatives, reason with Agenda 2063 and CESA, and clearly grasp them in the context of various CEMAC countries, as well as at the subregional and comparative levels, due to its flexibility and diverse perspectives on phenomena. It allowed for the integration of major approaches such as grounded theory, case studies, and history used to gain insight into how and why Agenda 2063 and CESA are vital to Africa, as well as why and how CEMAC is best suited to understanding their implementation and problems. Connecting with and discussions with relevant educational stakeholders also enabled the researcher to study and elicit facts, beliefs, conceptions, thoughts, values, biases, perceptions, attitudes, and sentiments that cannot be seen under randomised settings. While acknowledging that generalising results to other people and contexts is difficult when approaching research from an interpretivist perspective, and that its ontological view tends to be subjective rather than objective, it goes without saying that social science researchers cannot exclude themselves from what they consider to be true or false about the environment that surrounds us, because they are part and parcel of that environment. There was no greater philosophical foundation than interpretivism with a hint of critical inquiry, if not for the mere reason that "qualitative research is often associated with interpretivism" (Goldkuhl, 2012, 1)but for its multidisciplinary, which traversed educational sciences, political sciences, history, and social sciences in general.

4.4   Methodological approach

Social scientists often use the phrases "inductive" and "deductive" to describe different approaches to theorising (Okoli 2021). Inductive theorising involves beginning with empirical facts and then constructing a theory derived from that evidence. Conversely, in deductive theorising, the researcher begins with a theory and then deduces the predicted data outcomes based on the conclusions drawn from that theory. Soiferman (2010, 3) posits that "arguments based on experience or observation are best expressed inductively, while arguments based on laws, rules, or other widely accepted principles are best expressed deductively." Going by Soiferman's (2010) position and the definition of qualitative research as research conducted in a natural setting with the researcher actively involved in the research process, putting together and analysing words of interviewees by exploring emerging themes, models and paradigms, it speaks to why this study used the inductive research approach. Apart from the fact that the study is "largely" qualitative, its interpretivist perspective with heavy reliance on the subjective views of interviewees, broad questions, long interviews of one hour on average, inductive approach added flavour to the rigourosity of the research, complementing the extensive amount of time spent on data collection and processing, working in complex environments, time consuming process of data analysis, writing long passages, and participating in a form of social and human science research. This "hill climbing" approach starts with observation that involves a certain degree of uncertainty, develops a pattern which often connects conclusions with premises, moves to tentative hypothesis and by so doing emphasising its bottom up approach and ends with themes as inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to broader generalisations and perspectives (Azungah 2018; Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018; Burney and Saleem 2008).

The decision to use an inductive research methodology in this work was based on various factors that aligned with the characteristics and goals of the study. To begin with, the empirical emphasis of inductive reasoning, which starts with specific observations and tangible facts, perfectly matched the objective of understanding and assessing the direction of higher education policy orientation in Africa, particularly within the CEMAC subregion and the Agenda 2063 and CESA framework. Since the study entailed gathering primary data through interviews with educational stakeholders, it was imperative to start by focusing on the particular experiences and viewpoints of these individuals. Furthermore, the qualitative research strategy used in the study emphasises a preference for knowing the intricacies, perspectives, and encounters of the

participants. Correspondingly, inductive research is very suitable for qualitative studies because it enables a flexible and open-ended examination of themes, models, and paradigms that may arise throughout the research process. The inductive research approach and the qualitative research strategy employed tie with the interpretivist research philosophy of the work. This necessitated a concentration on understanding the subjective meanings and interpretations of the interviewees. The use of the inductive reasoning technique enabled getting hold of participants' perspectives without imposing predetermined ideas or preconceptions. The intricacy of the study, which involved exploring the authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance procedures in higher education in CEMAC subregion, making comparisons with the United States, analysing PAUGHSS as a representative institution, and assessing intra-African mobility, was enhanced by using an inductive technique. This technique simplified the identification of patterns and themes from the data, accommodating the many aspects of the higher education landscape in the CEMAC subregion. The use of the inductive technique also enhanced the rigour of the study by recognising the complexities involved in the process of data collection and analysis. Adopting a "hill climbing" methodology by moving from particular observations to more general hypotheses was suitable for the study, which needed significant time investment due to the intensive data collection, processing, and analysis involved. Finally, the bottom-up strategy of inductive reasoning, which starts with particular observations and progresses towards generalisations and theories, aligns with the goal of understanding the actualities on the ground prior to formulating wider conclusions about higher education policy orientation in CEMAC countries in view of Agenda 2063 and CESA. To sum up, the reason for using the inductive research technique in this work was based on its compatibility with the qualitative, interpretivist, and empirical aspects of the study. This methodology enabled a thorough examination of the many viewpoints and encounters of individuals involved in higher education policy in Africa, with specific reference to Agenda 2063, CESA and the CEMAC subregion.

4.5   Research strategy

To (Sileyew, 2020, 2) "research design is intended to provide an appropriate framework for a study." The original intention, as suggested by the title, was to base this study of higher education policy orientation in Africa on theoretical grounds. The purpose of the introduction, historical and theoretical review was to critically analysis existing paradigms and at the same

time identify emerging trends, in addition to postcolonialism and decolonisation, and examine their relationship to the higher education aspirations of Agenda 2063 and CESA within the context of the CEMAC subregion. The researcher anticipated that CESA and Agenda 2063 would conflict with the higher education policy objectives of CEMAC countries, both at the subregional and national levels. This apparent incompatibility between CESA, the Agenda, and higher education policies of CEMAC countries might be attributed to their historical association with colonialism and neocolonialism, as well as the relative underdevelopment of the education sector in the subregion. This led to carrying out a literature review on the comparative analysis of the processes of authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance in higher education within the CEMAC subregion compared to the US, exploration of the potential of intra-Africa mobility as an alternative to studying abroad for CEMAC students, and finally examination of PAUGHSS as a leading institution in providing the necessary standard of education in Africa. After completing an analysis of historical and theoretical perspectives in the field, it was determined that the postcolonial and decolonial theories are inadequate in providing enough support for the aforementioned case studies, given the establishment of Agenda 2063 and CESA. Consequently, interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the sector and policy documents were analysed to assess whether there are additional perspectives that can elucidate these phenomena or even enhance the existing theories. This led to the adoption of a distinctive research design consisting of case studies above nested within a larger case study. The overarching case study focuses on Agenda 2063 in the CEMAC subregion, specifically in relation to higher education policy orientation. The choice of this design helped to explore different perspectives on educational policy framing, student mobility, and quality education processes within CEMAC. Table 10 displays the design categories that are linked to the case studies addressed in this research.

Table 10. Research design of the study

Conducted interviews	To thoroughly investigate the participants' interpretations as a crucial aspect of the research inquiries, it is necessary to have access to informants who are prepared to engage in individual discussions on the topics that contribute to addressing the research questions and developing new hypotheses.
participant observation	Basic observation led to active involvement, which in turn aided in comprehending the social and political processes that revolve around the formation of education policies. Additionally,

	it facilitated the exploration and analysis of the cause-and-effect relationships between related factors within specific settings.
Examined secondary sources	Utilised existing data to corroborate information obtained via interviews, used policy texts such as Agenda 2063 and CESA as subjects of analysis, facilitated comprehension of historical context to more accurately evaluate the current situation and forecast future

Source: Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez 2020; Jamshed 2014

A synthesis of the above-mentioned design resulted in a hybrid, also known as "combine designs" according to Vogt et al. (2012, 14). This approach involved validating findings using different methods and striving to provide the whole narrative within the higher education policy domain for the CEMAC subregion in the context of CESA and Agenda 2063. This entailed employing an inductive methodology that commenced with meticulous observations of the events surrounding the orientation of higher education policy in Africa, specifically focusing on Agenda 2063 and its aspirations for higher education as outlined by CESA.

To develop the study design mentioned above, it was necessary to consider specific elements such as the sampling strategy, methods for collecting data, and procedures for analysing data. These components were carefully addressed in order to include elements from descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory studies. The sample technique included the deliberate selection of stakeholders, including students, lecturers, policymakers, and other individuals engaged in higher education. These stakeholders were chosen because they had the knowledge and insights necessary to answer questions that were relevant to all three case studies. In addition to conducting interviews with these stakeholders, ongoing attempts were made to gather downloaded key policy papers by visiting several websites, including those of the AU, PAU, (PAUGHSS, and CEMAC, particularly those related to education ministries. The data analysis approach required the use of Nvivo after transcription utilising Otter software, as well as manual cleaning. This combination contributed to the study's coherence.

4.6   Study area and setting

The study area falls within the broader context of the study setting. While the study setting refers to the comprehensive backdrop of a research, including many aspects such as geographical, cultural, and organisational contexts (Majid 2018), the study area is a more precise designation within that setting, indicating the particular geographic or physical place where the research is predominantly carried out. This study has both characteristics of study

setting and study area. Features that define the setting of this study included history of higher education in Africa from precolonial to colonial and to the postcolonial times understood from the perspective of policies and reforms. While Agenda 2063 and CESA were of critical importance at the policy level, CEMAC and its member states constituted the geographic area within which the study was situated as outlined the scope of the study. CEMAC was chosen for the simple reason that it is the least developed subregion in Africa with regards to education and arguably the least covered with regards to educational policy research within the framework of Agenda 2063 and CESA. Apart from the evolution of higher education policy in Africa over time, interest was basically in educational institutions such as PAUGHSS that represents the Agenda 2063 and CESA vision. The reason for choosing PAUGHSS of five reference institutions established by the AU under the PAU within this framework was because of its location in Cameroon which is a CEMAC member state. Educational stakeholders from students, lecturers, policy makers, civil society experts, professional services in both public and private institutions, in concerned countries and policy levels were selected based on knowledge of the subject and institutional affiliation.

4.7   Data sources

Data sources included both primary and secondary sources. While the table above provided an idea of the research strategy and data collection process that was used in this study, more knowledge on data sources is provided in the methodology and approach section for each study.

4.7.1   Primary data sources

Primary data was obtained from interviews. A survey was also designed and administered through Qualtrics but the results were not incorporated into the data analysis due to the low response rate. The interviews were conducted with PAUGHSS students and lecturers for case study number one. Students, lecturers and other relevant educational stakeholders within CEMAC were also interviewed for case study number two on intra-African mobility. Case study number three also benefited from data collected for case study number one as PAUGHSS students were also asked questions related to student mobility.

4.7.2   Secondary data sources

Desk review was done to collect data from various secondary sources. While case study number one and two benefited from secondary data, case study number three relied exclusively on

secondary data. Secondary sources included laws, constitutions, policy papers, statutes, reports, cases, hearings, conference proceedings, memos related to Agenda 2063 and CESA obtained from AU, PAU, and government websites. While considered secondary sources, they were essential for comprehending the legal and regulatory framework pertaining to higher education authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance processes in the CEMAC subregion compared to the United States. Besides, both current and historical yet reputable journals, books, different articles, periodicals, proceedings, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, websites, and other sources were considered in the educational policy sector. The University of the National Education Commission, Krakow and the University of Pittsburgh online libraries and electronic databases were particularly useful in this regard. The data also obtained from the existing working documents, manuals, procedures, reports, enrolment numbers, number of universities, policies, regulations, and standards were taken into account for the review. In general, for this research, the desk review was completed to this end, and polished in the course data collection and analysis to achieve coherence.

4.8 Case study selection process

The selection process for the case studies of PAUGSS, intra-Africa mobility, and authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance procedures in the CEMAC subregion was meticulously carried out, with the objective of providing an understanding of some of the salient aspects of higher educational dynamics in the subregion. Each case was chosen for its ability to provide vital insights into key characteristics of higher education that either deviate or align with the educational objectives outlined in CESA and Agenda 2063. PAUGSS was selected to examine the governance mechanisms that impact regional educational policy. The focus on intra-Africa mobility was chosen to examine the facilitators and barriers to student and academic staff exchanges, which are crucial for fostering regional educational and cultural integration. The evaluation of authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance processes aims to assess the systems that ensure the quality and compliance with international education standards in CEMAC. Enhancing the region's educational results is crucial for improving its global competitiveness.

4.8.1   Rationale for the selection of case studies

The case studies were chosen for the reason that they directly relate to the key aspirations of the CEMAC educational framework and constitute a good measure with the broader objective

of strengthening socio-economic integration in the subregion. The PAUGSS initiative offered a method to understand how educational policies and governance may be improved in order to effectively meet subregional educational goals. The case study on intra-Africa movement was essential in identifying operational barriers and benefits, which are vital for improving educational accessibility and subregional cohesion. To assess the robustness of the frameworks that maintain educational excellence at CEMAC institutions, a meticulous analysis of authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance was necessary. Each case study was selected based on its distinct contribution to scholarly discourse and its interrelated impact on enhancing the educational framework necessary for sustainable development in the subregion relative to CESA and Agenda 2063.

4.8.2 Relevance to objectives of the study

Each case study was intricately linked to the research's objectives, providing unique perspectives that together expand understanding of the educational challenges and opportunities in the subregion. The PAUGSS example allowed an analysis of governance systems and their efficacy in executing policies within CEMAC. This investigation carefully examined the distinct features of educational governance in an area that is marked by diverse political and economic circumstances. The study on intra-Africa mobility played a crucial role in assessing the efficacy of educational systems in CEMAC in facilitating or impeding the mobility of students and staff, therefore directly impacting the objective of fostering a more integrated educational network inside Africa. Ultimately, the examination of authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance systems provided crucial insights into the consistency of educational quality across the subregion, a vital component in achieving the CESA and Agenda 2063 goal of developing a globally competitive African education sector. The study carried out in these case studies not only highlighted significant shortcomings, but also proffered solutions that are specific to the subregion and aligned with both national and continental educational objectives.

4.8.3 Implications for research design

The selection of the case studies and the corresponding theoretical frameworks was made based on their capacity to provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics of higher education throughout CEMAC. Every case study contributes to the theoretical framework by providing concrete data that may either support, challenge, or expand the existing research on the subject matter. PAUGSS demonstrates the tangible application of governance in higher education,

providing data that can be used to evaluate the validity of theoretical assertions on governance efficacy. Intra-Africa mobility explores the practical challenges and potential of implementing mobility schemes, serving as a forum for exploring concepts of subregional integration. The authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance procedures provide an opportunity to analyse the use of quality control concepts in maintaining educational standards. Integrating these theoretical frameworks into the case studies not only improves the academic rigour of the research but also ensures that the study's design systematically addresses the research goals. The alignment between theoretical framework and empirical investigation in this study enhances its legitimacy and scholarly impact. It offers a robust basis for understanding and enhancing higher education policy in the CEMAC subregion.

4.9   Population

The study population was comprised of higher education institutions, policy frameworks, and various educational stakeholders, including students, lecturers, and those working in professional services, entrepreneurs, civil society experts, and policymakers within the higher education sector. These individuals possessed significant knowledge of Agenda 2063, CESA, and CEMAC. Given that the study was a multi-layered case study and primary data was obtained through interviews, the selection process was conducted using a snowball sampling method. As a result of concerns over security, many potential interviewees are reluctant to take part in research conducted in Africa. At first, an effort was made to contact academics and university administrators, such as those at PAUGHSS, via email, but no one replied to the correspondence. Instead, a call was initiated on Facebook and disseminated through WhatsApp to ascertain the identities of lecturers and students who had enrolled or are now studying at PAUGHSS. There were no specific requirements for the number of students, lecturers, professors, or administrators needed. Instead, the focus was on interviewing individuals who were easily accessible and had expert knowledge on the subject.

4.10   Data collection methods

The data collection methods were primarily focused on utilising both primary and secondary methodologies. The methodologies, protocols, and sequential actions employed in the data collection process underwent refinement as the study progressed.

4.10.1 Primary data collection methods

The original plan for primary data collection was to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Nevertheless, once the study ultimately adopted a qualitative research methodology, the quantitative data that had been gathered was disregarded. The data collection methods and methodology were modified due to difficulties in acquiring the necessary data caused by logistical concerns stemming from the broad nature of the topic. Although the study included numeric data, it cannot be qualified as primary as the majority of the data was obtained from secondary sources. The study utilised qualitative data sources such as observation, interviews, and informal discussions. The following sections provide detailed explanations of the acquisition of data from the primary sources.

4.10.1.1 Personal observation

Observation is a key element of the scientific process. Observation is intricately linked to the assembly of data, which can be obtained from various sources such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and participant observations. Observational research findings are very valid due to the researcher's ability to gather in depth information about a certain behaviour. The study employed firsthand observation as the researcher is a native of Cameroon, a member state of CEMAC. The research consistently monitored advancements relating to higher education in the CEMAC subregion, as well as matters concerning CESA and Agenda 2063 in Africa. All of these observations were regarded as personal. The researcher gained a profound understanding of the influences that shape higher education policy in Africa by growing up and studying in Cameroon up to the bachelor's degree level, while also keeping track of the progress made on Agenda 2063 and CESA.

4.10.1.2 Data collection through interview

An interview is a structured *tête-à-tête* with individuals who possess significant expertise on the subject matter being discussed. Interviews can be conducted either in person, with direct physical interaction, or online, depending on the availability of interviewees, the need to optimise financial resources when the researcher must travel long distances to meet the interviewees, and the convenience for both parties involved(Gill and Baillie 2018). Interviews are an effective method for gathering qualitative data due to their inherent flexibility (Fan et al. 2023). This allowed the researcher to pose additional questions based on the responses given by the interviewees, while also enabling the interviewees to offer valuable perspectives on

pertinent matters that the researcher may have overlooked during the interview guide preparation. Interviews have significant importance, particularly in cases where the researcher encounters constraints with written records or public documents or seeks to validate the material gathered from other primary and secondary sources (Krouwel, Jolly, and Greenfield 2019). The interviews conducted were in an online format. The researcher conducted all 16 interviews with the shortest lasting 30 minutes and the longest a little more than an hour. In cases where the interviewees were unable to participate in online discussions, the researcher supplied them with an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions to be answered and returned. The interviews were initially scheduled to take place via Microsoft Teams. However, due to network connectivity problems on the side of the majority of the interviewees, the researcher opted to use Zoom and WhatsApp calls as alternatives. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced himself, provided a concise overview of the topic, and obtained the interviewee's consent regarding their willingness to participate in the interview and their approval for the researcher to record the conversations. After obtaining consent from the interviewees to conduct the interview and record it, the researcher proceeded to ask the interview questions. The interview questions were categorised into two main parts. The initial section mostly consisted of demographic questions pertaining to the individual's name, age, country of residence, ethnicity, educational attainment, institutional affiliation, professional background, experience with student mobility, and linguistic proficiency. When interview questions were provided to the interviewees as open-ended questions, the same demographic questions were included. These served to emphasise the researcher's objective and clarify how the collected data would be utilised. The questions were subsequently dispatched to the research participants as a Word document over WhatsApp, in the form of text messages, with the expectation that they would respond and return them promptly. Ultimately, the interviews conducted through phone calls were more thorough and comprehensive compared to those conducted using open-ended questions, as the researcher lacked the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. All interviews were transcribed using digital assistance (Otter). The researcher thereafter listened to the audio recordings multiple times in order to correct any mistakes made by the software during the transcription process, such as incorrect spelling, omissions, and language inaccuracies.

4.10.1.3 Informal discussions

The researcher additionally used informal discussions as a method for data collection. The discussions mostly occurred through collaborative dialogues among colleagues and interactive sessions conducted by his social enterprise, Africa Online & Publications Library (AOPL), as well as through social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The researcher participated in informal discussions during study travels to Cameroon and the United States. These discussions involved colleagues, researchers, and co-workers and focused on the issues of higher education in Cameroon, other CEMAC countries and Africa as whole.

4.10.2   Secondary data collection methods

Secondary data is information collected by a third party, not the person using it (Martins, Cunha, and Serra 2018). This data source offers useful insights in the study domain through the utilisation of cutting-edge and current techniques (Unachukwu, Kalu, and Ibiam 2018). The collecting of secondary data began even before the student was admitted into the PUK Doctoral School. The commencement of this process took place during the application phase, where the student had to provide a research proposal relating to the topic they plan to explore in their PhD thesis as part of the application materials. In order to formulate a research proposal, the student conducted a comprehensive search of the existing literature on the subject to pinpoint of the issue of higher education policy orientation in Africa and the potential incompatibility of CESA, Agenda 2063 and the higher education policy reforms in the CEMAC subregion. To craft a compelling proposal, the student consulted a number of internet platforms, such as University World News, particularly the Africa Edition, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and African Union websites. These platforms were exploited to gather data from several sources, including books, scholarly publications, blog posts, articles, policy papers, briefings, and research contributions, all pertaining to higher education policy in Africa. After being admitted to the PhD programme and receiving clearance for their thesis topic, the student employed several approaches to collect secondary data throughout their four-year academic journey.

The initial phase entailed completing exhaustive literature research making use of online sources, specifically focusing on the University of Pittsburgh and University of the National Education Commission, Krakow libraries which has a large reservoir of research on the subject. The library provided access to a variety of significant electronic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, and Cambridge University Press. The majority of the literature obtained through these portals consisted of books, eBooks, and journal articles. In addition to ResearchGate and Google Scholar, other online databases such as Academic, JStor, Springer,

and Science Direct were often accessed through University of Pittsburgh affiliation. The searches focused on Agenda 2063, higher education in Africa, CESA, and higher education reforms in CEMAC countries. The University of Pittsburgh Library in particular provided access to an extensive selection of literature on the subject and granted institutional access to Springer, Sage, Francis and Taylor. This library provided access to previously inaccessible resources such as books, book chapters, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and materials related to education in the United States of America (USA) and in the CEMAC region. It also offered resources on social science methods, research design and methodology, and Agenda 2063.

In addition to academic literature, the research also extensively used policy documents as secondary data. The approach employed involved accessing the websites of relevant organisations. The initial source that was consistently referred to during the study was the websites of the AU, PAU, and CEMAC. Resolutions, frameworks, flagship project documents, policy papers, op-eds, briefings, cooperation agreements, protocols, and procedures linked to Agenda 2063 and CESA were specifically obtained from webpages such as those of the AU Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI) department. The majority of these materials were readily available, facilitating effortless downloading. The same methodology was employed to collect data from the PAU website, which was accessed through the AU website, as well as the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon, the *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de la Formation Professionnelle* (Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation) in Chad, the *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique* (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research) in Gabon, the *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (Ministry of Higher Education) in the Central African Republic, the Ministry of Education, Higher Education, and Sports of Equatorial Guinea, and the *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de l'Innovation Technologique - MESRSIT* (Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Technological Innovation) of the Republic of the Congo.

Other important websites, such as the websites of the Presidencies of the Republic and Parliaments in each CEMAC country, were regularly visited to gather data on reforms, policies, legislation, rules, publications, decrees, and press releases related to higher education. Frequently accessed websites included the Pennsylvania Department of Education, US Department of Education, World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, and EU websites, particularly

those pertaining to the Youth Action Plan in the EU external action scheme. These websites were relevant to the flagship initiative of the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package, known as Youth Mobility for Africa, as well as the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme (2022–2027). While verifying the credibility of data from specific online sources can be challenging, secondary data was also obtained from reputable news websites, blogs and online platforms such as uniRank, EduRank, QS World University Rankings, RocApply, Scimago, and TIMES Higher Education Ranking.

University websites, particularly those of universities in CEMAC, were frequently accessed to gather data on their year of establishment, student enrolment, and other relevant information. Some examples of university websites are Université de N'Djamena, Université de Bangui, Université Omar Bongo, Université de Yaoundé I, University of Buea, UNGE, and Denis Sassou Nguesso University. The study additionally used data acquired from the websites of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) and HAQAA (Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation). It is important to mention that these platforms were frequently accessed during the study period to gather new data and verify previously gathered data. The entirety of the obtained data was stored on the computer within a file titled "literature review." The data was additionally uploaded to Google Drive for archival purposes and imported into Mendeley for citation purposes.

Although tiring, these secondary data methods proved highly beneficial in granting access to data that offset the constraints and difficulties encountered in gathering primary data while also contributing additional value and complementing the primary data. The diverse range of data sources utilised is evident from the inclusion of over 300 sources in the citations and references. PRISMA, which stands for "Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses" was quite useful as a method for secondary data collection (Abelha et al. 2020). Adhering to PRISMA not only ensured transparent reporting but also facilitated the assessment and understanding of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The study highlighted essential elements, including title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion, to promote transparency and reproducibility. Articles that were not relevant to the study methodology and objectives were eliminated based on screening. Before conducting the screening process, the researcher examined a subset of over 1000 scientific works, websites, reports, and guidelines to assess their suitability for further assessment or rejection. Following the exclusion of

publications based on their title, keywords, and abstract, a thorough examination was conducted on the remaining articles especially for the literature review chapters.

4.11 Data collection and analysis tools

The study used a variety of data collection tools to obtain a thorough understanding of higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion from the lens of CESA and Agenda 2063. Initially, interviews were carried out with essential individuals involved in the matter, such as PAUGHSS students, instructors, policymakers, civil society specialists, and professionals in both public and private institutions. The online structured interviews included open-ended questions that encompassed demographic information and specific subjects pertinent to the study. A survey was created and conducted using Qualtrics; however, the findings were not included in the analysis because of a low response rate. In addition, the researcher, who is a native of Cameroon, closely observed improvements in higher education and tracked work on Agenda 2063 and CESA. The study additionally included informal exchanges facilitated by collaborative dialogues, interactive sessions conducted by the researcher's social enterprise, and engagement in debates on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The collected data was transcribed using Otter and analysed using Nvivo. The many data collection technologies provided valuable insights on the higher education landscape in the CEMAC region, including the broader context of Agenda 2063 and CESA, resulting in holistic knowledge.

4.12 Methods of data analysis

Grounded theory was chosen for this study due to its emergent nature, characterised as inductive, indeterminate, and open-ended (Michel N. Maboh, Martin, and Stallabrass 2021; Puddephatt 2006). As defined by Noble and Mitchell (2016, 34), "grounded theory (GT) is a research method concerned with the generation of theory, which is 'grounded' in data that has been systematically collected and analysed." This study used GT to analyse qualitative data obtained from interviews. The main aim was to examine new strategies for shaping higher education policies in Africa, particularly in relation to the AU's CESA and 2063 Agenda, with a specific emphasis on CEMAC. NVivo was employed as a potent instrument for the organisation and analysis of the gathered data. The study commenced by delineating the domain

of interest, deliberately refraining from theoretical biases to facilitate the emergence of thematic patterns. The research utilised theoretical sampling as the data collection method progressed. At first, interviews were carried out with educational stakeholders involved in higher education in CEMAC countries, Agenda 2063 and CESA. As certain patterns and ideas were apparent, additional interview questions were deliberately asked to further explore and confirm these emergent concepts. The analysis necessitated a comprehensive grasp of the cultural, economic, and political intricacies that shape higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion, highlighting the significance of theoretical sensitivity. The insight was obtained through a thorough examination of relevant material as well as through professional and personal experiences. This was followed by a methodical and repetitive analytical procedure.

4.12.1   Using NVivo for GT data analysis

4.12.1.1 Open coding

The initial steps involved systematically coding the interview transcripts line by line. The identification, highlighting, and organisation of concepts and key phrases were carried out, followed by their categorisation into subcategories and further into broader groups. This method facilitated the decomposition of the data into conceptual elements. Axial coding followed and involved the identification of relationships between categories and the establishment of links. This level entailed understanding the interaction among many notions and their correlation to the overall themes.

4.12.1.2 Selective coding

The central category, which represents the main phenomena upon which other categories were constructed, was identified. This process entailed methodically establishing connections between the central category and other categories, refining these connections, and merging categories to refine existing theories and uncover new theoretical perspectives through which the topic can be understood. Analytical notes and the final perspectives were recorded and stored in NVivo, capturing thought processes and valuable insights. The ultimate grounded theoretical perspectives were derived from the amalgamation of these analytical notes, with the central category explaining the diversity observed in the data. The application of GT analysis, with the assistance of NVivo, facilitated a thorough examination of existing and emerging paradigms for higher education policy in Africa, namely in the CEMAC subregion, in line with the AU's CESA and 2063 Agenda.

4.12.1.3 Data analysis software

The data were inputted using NVivo version 14 on a Windows 10 operating system and subsequently analysed. The use of NVivo software greatly enhanced the analysis and significantly contributed to the findings. The software conducted an analysis and successfully refined and laid bare emergent theories, perspectives, paradigms, themes and subthemes, which were subsequently organised and discussed in the context of higher education policy orientation in the CEMAC subregion, CESA, and Agenda 2063.

4.13   Limitations of the study

Although success is ultimately attainable, doing research is not without its challenges and limitations. Like every other research, this study encountered challenges, as it was inhibited by weaknesses stemming from various aspects such as the study's broad nature, data collection and analysis, structure, research design and methodology, literature review, theoretical and historical analysis, scope, organisation, analysis, and presentation of findings in order to guarantee coherence.

Adaptability in the context of a continuous process of development was one of the very first obstacles encountered throughout the course of this research, and it was possibly the most difficult of all of them. From the very beginning, it was almost impossible to ascertain the path that the work would take. Although the subject seemed appealing and relevant, it was too wide, and unorganised. The only thing that was certain from the onset was the concept of inductivism and working towards new approaches to understanding the direction of higher education policy in the CEMAC countries in the context of CESA and Agenda 2063. The lack of capacity to first establish the level of accuracy of the subject matter resulted in the research being disorganised and lacking in structure. This limitation, however, was surmounted through open-mindedness, receptiveness to objective scientific criticism, and continuous integration of new ideas and feedback from supervisors. This involved narrowing down the scope of the work, prioritising the most relevant issues, and introducing three mini-case studies within the main case study. These measures were taken to achieve the desired structure and coherence in this final outcome.

The second most challenging issue was primary data collecting. As indicated in the section on primary data collection methods, gathering research data in Africa is a daunting task for a variety of reasons. First, potential participants, such as in the case of CEMAC, demand financial recompense. This affects the quality of the data acquired since the major reason for involvement

might have been nothing more than financial compensation. The second reason is cultural and circumstantial; Cameroonians, Chadians, CAR people, Gabonese, Congolese, and Equatorial Guineans live in politically unfriendly and conflict-laden environments where freedom of speech is under threat. Consequently, they have developed a culture of fear and suspicion, with many preferring not to participate in any activity that risks their personal data. Even when people are assured the protection of their personal data, such as in academic research, many choose not to participate since confidence has eroded. The third issue is power corruption, which occurs when people occupy high positions and become their own bosses. This might also be tied to the choice of means of contact, as seen with the AU, PAUGHSS, and universities throughout CEMAC, where tons of emails were sent but never replied to. The researcher, therefore, had to consider alternate approaches and be persistent in contacting potential interviewees. This was accomplished by using a variety of other avenues, including social media. Interesting, and as indicated in the PAUGHSS case study, a shift in data collecting culture was noted, as all PAUGHSS students and a good number from other higher education institutions contacted offered to participate for free and even assisted in linking the researcher to other faculty and students who served as potential interviewee. Secondary data, such as policy, white and working papers, reports, decrees, laws, constitutions, press releases, memoranda, and research contributions from AU, PAU, PAUGHSS, government, ministry, and university websites and webpages, proved to be extremely useful in situations where primary data was practically impossible to access.

The study's results may lack transferability and generalisability to other African countries due to distinct contextual differences, notwithstanding their relevance to the CEMAC setting. Nevertheless, this level of specificity implies that the study's findings might be particularly relevant and practical to CEMAC countries and the subregion as a whole. On a positive note, this and other limitations highlighted above enhance the comprehensiveness and precision of the research, making it an important addition to the understanding of higher education in the CEMAC subregion in relation to CESA and Agenda 2063. Acknowledging these constraints, therefore, does not lessen the study's worth, but rather emphasises the meticulous deliberations and context-specific emphasis that form the basis of its contributions to scholarly discussion on education policy orientation in Africa.

4.14   **Ethical considerations**

Researchers have a duty to furnish participants with exhaustive information regarding the research, encompassing its objectives, procedures, and any benefits and drawbacks. Furthermore, research participants are required to give their consent to participate voluntarily and with complete consciousness. This was achieved by presenting a thorough synopsis of the study's objective and substance at the outset of each interview. Researchers must give utmost importance to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants, using procedures to ensure the anonymity of their data in order to prevent any potential harm to individuals or organisations. During the data analysis, all identifiable information, including names, phone numbers, and dates of birth, was anonymised. Researchers must also employ appropriate study designs and methodologies that exhibit sensitivity towards cultural, linguistic, and social factors while also minimising any potential harm to participants. This explains the reasoning behind choosing qualitative research, inductive theorising, and an interpretivist method for this study. These approaches allowed for the active participation of interviewees and a better understanding of their various cultural and political inclinations. Researchers must equally guarantee that participants have the freedom to end their participation at any time and that they possess and retain control over the collected data. Prior to commencing the interview, each interviewee was duly informed in accordance with the regulations stipulated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that the interview would be recorded, and their agreement was requested. Furthermore, the participants were requested to indicate their level of ease in carrying out the interview using the chosen method of communication. The participants were also notified of their right to decline or discontinue the interview at any point if they chose to do so. Conflicts of interest in research arise when a researcher's personal or financial affiliations undermine the neutrality of the study. Researchers are, therefore, required to openly declare any potential conflicts of interest that could influence the fairness or reliability of their findings. There were no known occurrences of conflicts of interest arising from financial matters, personal relationships, undisclosed collaborations, or biases that could jeopardise professional responsibilities, academic progress, or intellectual property considerations. However, the researcher's personal viewpoints on the formulation of educational policies in Africa, specifically the critique of external influence from entities such as the European Union (EU), WB, IMF and other financial institutions, could have impacted the objectivity of the findings. These organisations offer financial assistance for educational initiatives; however, the reasons and advantages derived from these collaborations are frequently unknown. Last but not least,

researchers must receive thorough training in research ethics to ensure their understanding and adherence to ethical norms in their work. The researcher not only attended research ethics seminars but also successfully finished courses on intellectual property rights and the philosophy of science. Despite facing hurdles, the researcher's extensive scientific research experience enabled them to successfully conduct the study.

4.15   Conclusion

This chapter explored the research design and methodology used in the study. Relying on an interpretivist approach, the research used inductive reasoning to investigate the complexities of educational policy in CEMAC countries in relation to CESA and Agenda 2063. An extensive dataset was generated by amalgamating interviews, participant observations, and the study of secondary sources. Utilising NVivo for thematic analysis ensured meticulousness in the identification of patterns and topics. Despite facing challenges in data collection, the approach maintained its adaptability and effectiveness. The ethical considerations were paramount, since participant consent and data confidentiality were rigorously maintained. In conclusion, this method has laid a solid foundation for significant breakthroughs, greatly enhancing the understanding of the subject matter. Nevertheless, it was crucial to acknowledge that there were some limitations regarding practicality and scope of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 **Findings of the study**

In order to provide evidence for the study's conclusions, this chapter presents three case studies. The chapter delves into various aspects of higher education in the CEMAC subregion. It examines the significant role of PAUGHSS in shaping the future of higher education institutions, not only in the subregion but also in Africa as a whole. It also analyses intra-African student mobility as an alternative to international mobility. Additionally, it discusses the processes of authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance in higher education in the subregion, drawing parallels with the United States. All of these discussions are situated within the framework of CESA and Agenda 2063. After the three case studies, there is a discussion section that examines different ways of looking at existing and emerging theories, paradigms, perspectives, and points of views about how higher education policy should be oriented in the CEMAC subregion and how it relates to CESA and Agenda 2063. The analyses are performed in a manner that seeks to address the three primary research questions and achieve objectives outlined in Chapter one of the study. This chapter is, therefore, significant because it offers a well-rounded narrative and theoretically informed analysis of how the case studies reflect on higher education policy orientation in the CEMAC subregion and their alignment with the broader goals, pillars and strategies of CESA and Agenda 2063 in the African context.

5.1 **Demographics**

The demographic data in the table below was cleaned and anonymised to protect respondents' confidentiality while highlighting aggregated conclusions. The data represents a group of 16 respondents, 7 females and 9 men, who are largely linked with institutions such as PAUGHSS, the University of Buea, and others. The educational background is mostly master's level, particularly in governance and regional integration, with a significant percentage having PhDs or being PhD candidates. Governance and regional integration, as well as English law, development studies, biomedical sciences, and biotechnology, are among the disciplines covered. While the majority of research participants lack mobility experience, indicating limited international or significant subregional movement for education or work, their professional experiences range from unrelated (suggesting current students or recent graduates) to specific roles such as lecturers, research scientists, and public relations in the university.

Linguistically, all respondents spoke English, with some being multilingual, demonstrating competence in both their native languages and foreign languages such as English and French, emphasising the group's linguistic variety and ability.

Table 11. Demographics of interviewees

Interviewee_ID	Age	Gender	Nationality	Ethnicity	Educational_Level	Field_of_Study	Institutional_Affiliation	Student_Status	Year_of_Completion	Professional_Experience	Mobility_Experience	Languages
A1	30	F	Cameroonian	N/A	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Current	N/A	N/A	No	English
A2	26	F	Nigerian	Yoruba	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Former	2022	N/A	Yes	English, French, and Yoruba
A3	27	M	Malawian	N/A	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Former	N/A	Junior Associate in Management and Organizational Development	No	Chichewa, English
A4	25	M	Cameroonian	Bamileke	Master's	Governance and regional	PAUGHSS	Current	N/A	N/A	No	French, English

						integratio n						
A5	30	M	Nigerian	Igbo	Master's	Governan ce and regional integratio n	PAUGHSS	Former	N/A	Instructor/Philos ophy/2+ years	No	English, Igbo, German , and French
A6	29	F	Camero onian	Wimb um	PhD	English Law	University of Buea	Former	N/A	Lecturer	No	English, Limbu m
A7	N/ A	M	South Sudan	Dinka	Master's	Governan ce and regional integratio n	PAUGHSS	Current	N/A	Journalist and humanitarian advocate	No	English, Kiswah ili, Dinka
A8	24	F	Camero onian	Banso	Master's	Developm ent studies	PAID-WA	Former	2023	N/A	No	Lamso, English
A9	N/ A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

A10	31	M	Gambian	Fulani	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Current	N/A	Ministry of Education	No	English, Fulbe
A11	29	F	Namibian	Owambo	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Former	2022	African Development Bank	No	Oshiwambo, English, and French
A12	26	F	Kenyan	N/A	Master's	Governance and regional integration	PAUGHSS	Current	N/A	N/A	No	English, Kiswahili, French, and Chinese
A13	29	M	Cameroonian	Bafut	Master's	Biomedical sciences	University of Buea	Former	N/A	Part-time lecturer and statistician	Yes	English, French
A14	29	F	Cameroonian	Bakossi	Master's	Business administra	University of Buea	Former	2020	Public relations at the university	No	English, French

					tion and linguistics							
A15	32	M	Former British Southern Cameroon	N/A	PhD candidate	International relations	Anadolu University, Eskisehir	Current	N/A	N/A	Yes	English
A16	33	M	Cameroonian	Meta	PhD	Biotechnology and biosafety	Eskisehir Osman Gazi University	Former	2023	Research scientist in the fields of biotechnology and computational biology	No	English, French, and Meta

5.2　　PAUGHSS: Pioneering the future of higher education in Africa

PAUGHSS is one of the PAU's five university centres. PAUGHSS was selected as a case study for this research owing to its location in Cameroon as well as the strategic placement of the PAU Rectorate in Cameroon (Pan African University 2024). PAUGHSS, as a PAU university centre, embodies the principles of Pan-Africanism and is helping to redefine the structure and goals of higher education in Africa to align with the continent's 2063 aspirations, opportunities, and challenges, as described in CESA (African Union Commission 2015; African Union 2017). PAUGHSS is at the forefront of this transformation, serving as a notable higher education institution that represents a new age of academic excellence and innovation in Africa. This case study investigates PAUGHSS as a catalyst for accessible, equal, quality, and innovative higher education in a subregional context, as well as its alignment with the objectives of CESA and the 2063 Agenda. It provides a thorough account of PAUGHSS's history, accomplishments, obstacles, and potential for transforming higher education in Africa. The study also considers the significance of PAUGHSS's model for African educational policies, particularly in relation to the CESA AU's 2063 Agenda.

PAUGHSS has become a desideratum of higher education in Africa, providing a distinctive combination of programmes and projects that connect governance, humanities, and social sciences with the intricate nature of African sociopolitical dynamics (PAUGHSS 2022). The university centre fulfils both the educational requirements of CESA and Agenda 2063 and functions as a think tank, exerting influence on policy-making and fostering the development of a new cohort of leaders and intellectuals. On March 30, 2016, during the graduation ceremony of 51 PAUGSS master's degree students at the *Palais des Congrès* in Yaoundé, Professor Tolly S. A. Mbwette, President of the PAU Council, expressed gratitude to the Government of Cameroon on behalf of the African Union (AU), "the two host institutions of PAUGHSS, the University of Yaoundé II (Soa) and the University of Buea as well as other Cameroonian and African universities, for their unparalleled collaboration and cooperation" with the AUC in the PAU project (Pan African University 2016, 1-2). Given the focus on sustainable development, regional integration, and improved governance in Africa, PAUGHSS's role in shaping the academic and policy environments is becoming more important (African Union Commission 2015).

5.2.1　　　Historical progression and formation

The PAU, established as a key component of the AU's agenda to revitalise higher education across the continent, was initially conceptualised in 2008 under the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa. This initiative aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of higher education to support the AU's vision. By November 2009, the AU's Conference of Ministers of Education had endorsed the operational instruments developed with the assistance of a high-level panel of eminent African professors, leading to the formal establishment of PAU by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2010. The university was launched on December 14, 2011, and its statute was adopted in January 2013, with a revision in January 2016.

PAU, inspired by significant AU policy frameworks including the Vision of the African Union and the Consolidated Plan of Action for Science and Technology, aims to exemplify academic excellence and enhance the global competitiveness of African higher education and research. The university encompasses five institutes distributed across the continent, each focusing on strategic themes critical to Africa's development:

i.　　Water and Energy Sciences, including Climate Change (PAUWES, Algeria),

ii.　　Basic Science, Technology, and Innovation (PAUSTI, Kenya),

iii.　　Life and Earth Sciences (PAULESI, Nigeria),

iv.　　Governance, Humanities, and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS, Cameroon),

v.　　Space Sciences (PAUSS, South Africa).

Managed under the AU's Department of Human Resources, Science, and Technology, PAU operates as a unified entity with a central rectorate and a Senate supervised by a Council. Each institute is led by a director and supported by academic and administrative staff engaged in teaching, research, and administrative functions. These institutes are governed by boards responsible for their academic, administrative, and financial management.

Therefore, Agenda 2063 deeply connects the histories of PAUGHSS of the PAU. Given its potential benefits for both the continent and the CEMAC subregion—where many countries have underdeveloped educational systems—PAUGHSS plays a critical role. It instils national consciousness, regional integration, Pan-Africanism, and Afrocentrism in its students, who are then equipped to spread positive insights about their education and contribute to regional development. During its early stages, PAUGHSS encountered various obstacles such as obtaining financial support, creating a comprehensive curriculum, and establishing a strong

reputation in a highly competitive educational environment (Johnson 2019). Notwithstanding these obstacles, the institute has established a specialised position for itself, bolstered by collaborations with other international universities and organisations as noted by Interviewee 1:

> Despite the challenges the institute faces, I believe that through innovation, there can be great evolution in the years ahead. With the students received every year, there is a shift in mindset regarding regional integration because most now see it as the next step towards building the Africa we want because of the enormous opportunities integration has for Africans. However, this can only become a reality if we truly give integration a chance. But I honestly see PAUGHSS producing the best of policymakers who deeply understand and have the willingness to make an integrated Africa a dream come true.

5.2.2 Summary of programmes

PAUGHSS provides a variety of programmes at both the master's and PhD levels. The programmes are meticulously crafted to combine academic rigour with practical applicability, guaranteeing that students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to apply it in real-life situations. The primary objective of PAUGHSS is to make a significant contribution towards the advancement of a prosperous, cohesive, and harmonious Africa, as outlined in the AU's 2063 Agenda (African Union 2015). The institute's goals are focused on enhancing comprehension of governance and societal dynamics in Africa, advancing regional integration, and cultivating a cohort of dedicated leaders and intellectuals who are devoted to the development of the continent. The convergence of PAUGHSS with the 2063 Agenda is clearly demonstrated through its curriculum, research projects, and focus on pan-African ideals (African Union Commission 2015). The institute actively fosters a strong African identity and solidarity among its students, providing them with the essential skills and knowledge to make meaningful contributions to the development of the continent.

5.2.3 PAU Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Communication programmes

The Pan African University Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Communication programmes (PAUTRAIN) is hosted by the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) on the campus of the University of Buea in Cameroon, established in 1985 by a presidential order (PAUGHSS 2022; Ngenge 2020). Known for its rigorous training in translation and interpretation, ASTI has produced around 900 professionals now working

globally. The efforts of ASTI to promote translation, interpreting, and intercultural communication, currently supports only French and English. While there are plans to introduce Kiswahili, Arabic, Portuguese, and Spanish, which are all AU languages, the preference for these colonial languages over native languages in education continues to water down on the quality of education on the continent. It might, therefore, be stated that PAUGHSS is failing in this aspect to provide a favourable precedence for CEMAC and other African countries.

5.2.3.1 PAU Master of Arts in Translation

The Pan African University Master of Arts in Translation (PMAT) is another structured two-year programme that prepares students to excel in professional translation across various sectors. The curriculum includes core courses such as General and Specialised Translation across multiple levels, Terminology, Advanced Written Communication Skills, Translation Theory and History, Translation Research Methods, Computer-Assisted Translation, Introduction to Interpreting, and specific courses on the AU and international organisations. Additionally, it offers practical experience through practicum, sight translation, advanced translation practice and entrepreneurship, translation research seminars, and courses on editing and revision. Electives such as Community Translation and Interpreting and Translation involving a third language (C) enrich the curriculum further. Foundational courses on the history of Africa, human rights, and gender provide critical contextual knowledge supporting the studies. The programme is designed to produce highly skilled translators equipped to handle the demands of a global professional environment, enhancing intercultural communication and cooperation.

5.2.3.2 PAU Master of Arts in Transborder Languages and Intercultural Communication

The Pan African University Master of Arts in Transborder Languages and Intercultural Communication is a two-year, 24-month programme structured across four semesters aimed at training high-level professionals proficient in specific endogenous transborder languages of Africa (PAUGHSS 2022). The programme's objectives include enhancing quality social communication across the continent, promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence amidst Africa's linguistic diversity, and fostering research and innovation in the study, technology, and use of transborder languages. Graduates are expected to serve as innovative professionals in language studies, contribute to the enhancement of intercultural

communication, and engage in advanced research to improve translation and interpretation practices.

The programme's core curriculum includes courses in Language, Society, and Culture; Spoken Language Proficiency and Study Skills; Language and Technology; Intercultural Communication and Pedagogy; Written Language Proficiency and Study Skills; and Language and Culture in Translation and Interpretation, each with multiple levels. Additionally, it encompasses comprehensive research training and seminars, an internship, and a dissertation component. Electives offer further specialisation in French and English Language Studies, Advanced Translation and Interpreting Practice, and Terminology and Lexicography, alongside language teaching. Students must also attend seminars on the history of Africa and gender and human rights to contextualise their learning within broader socio-cultural and political frameworks. The programme is designed to prepare graduates for diverse roles such as media communicators, educators, translators, interpreters, public relations officers, intercultural communication brokers, and more, equipped to address multilingual challenges and opportunities in Africa and beyond.

5.2.3.3 PAU Master of Arts in Conference Interpreting

The Pan African University Master of Arts in Conference Interpreting (PMCI) is a comprehensive two-year, 24-month programme designed to train professional interpreters for both the African market and global contexts. It seeks to enhance mutual understanding and facilitate regional integration in Africa by addressing the continent's cross-linguistic and cultural diversity through professional training in conference interpreting and spoken language translation. Students of the programme are expected to become high-level, innovative professionals capable of interpreting in multilingual and multicultural settings and contributing to research and development in the field.

The core curriculum includes a series of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting courses, such as PMCI 601-602 and PMCI 651-654, which cover basic to advanced skills with and without note-taking. Courses in sight translation (PMCI 605-606, 675), advanced spoken communication skills (PMCI 607-608, 659), and introduction to translation (PMCI 611-612) further enhance the linguistic abilities of the students. The programme also incorporates extensive training in history, theory, and research methods of interpreting (PMCI 603, 616, 663), ensuring that students are well-versed in both practical and theoretical aspects of the field.

Additionally, the programme addresses professional practice and entrepreneurship in interpreting (PMCI 609) and offers specific courses on the role of interpreters in international organisations (PMCI 613-614, 661). A comprehensive examination (PMCI 692) and a dissertation (PMCI 698) are also integral parts of the curriculum, culminating in a demonstration of the students' research capabilities and practical proficiency. Elective courses provide further specialisation opportunities in community interpreting and translation, interpretation between specific language pairs, and advanced interpreting studies.

This programme not only prepares students for diverse roles such as media communicators, public relations officers, and professional interpreters but also aims to significantly improve the teaching and pedagogical capacity in interpreting across Africa. Through rigorous training and comprehensive coursework, graduates are expected to lead research projects, improve interpretative practice, and contribute innovatively to the development of social communication through language interpreting.

5.2.3.4   PAU PhD in Translation Studies

The Pan African University PhD in Translation Studies programme is a rigorously structured three-year curriculum designed to deepen understanding and foster innovation within the field of translation studies, particularly focusing on Africa's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. The core courses include PTRA 701: History and Theory of Translation, PTRA 702: The Pedagogy of Translation, PTRA 703: Cross-Cultural Pragmatics in Translation Studies, PTRA 704: Psychological and Sociological Aspects of Translation, PTRA 705: Research Methods in Translation Studies, PTRA 706: Corpus Translation Studies, and PTRA 707–708: Seminars in Translation Studies I and II, which collectively provide a comprehensive grounding in both theoretical and practical aspects of translation. The programme also includes a comprehensive examination (PTRA 710) to assess students' mastery of the subject, leading to a thesis project (PTRA 798) that requires candidates to contribute original research to the field. Additionally, foundational courses such as PURC 103: The History of Africa and PURC 104: Human Rights and Gender are included to enhance students' contextual understanding of the regions they will study and work within, ensuring a well-rounded doctoral education

5.2.3.5   PAU Master of Arts in Governance and Regional Integration

The Pan African University offers a Master of Arts in Governance and Regional Integration, hosted at the University of Yaoundé II-SOA, Cameroon. This comprehensive two-year

programme, delivered over four semesters, is structured to train professionals in the nuances of governance and regional integration within the African context and beyond. The curriculum spans various key areas, including the history of Africa, gender issues, human rights, globalisation, regional integration, and governance of regional institutions in Africa, with each course designed to foster a deep understanding of these critical topics.

In the first semester, students engage with compulsory courses such as the history of Africa, gender studies, human rights, and the dynamics of globalisation and regional integration, each carrying four credits. The second semester offers two options: governance and regional integration. Under Governance, courses include theories and principles of governance, political governance, peace and security, and the democratisation process in Africa. The Regional Integration option focuses on the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of regional integration, legal frameworks, economic policies, and comparative regionalism. Each course in these options also carries four credits.

The programme also includes advanced seminars on entrepreneurship, key issues in African integration, and monitoring regional integration. Students must choose two elective courses such as climate change management, trade and regional integration, and industrialisation policies, among others. The third semester is dedicated to developing practical skills through courses in diplomacy and negotiation and a significant internship period. The final semester culminates in the defence of a thesis, reflecting the comprehensive and practical knowledge acquired throughout the programme.

This master's programme not only equips students with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills and insights necessary for addressing the challenges and opportunities in governance and regional integration across Africa. Through a blend of coursework, seminars, and an internship, graduates are prepared to take on roles in governance, policy-making, and regional development initiatives, contributing significantly to the continent's socio-economic development and integration efforts.

5.2.3.6   PAU PhD Programme in Governance and Regional Integration

The Pan African University PhD Programme in Governance and Regional Integration is a meticulously structured course housed at the University of Yaoundé II-SOA in Cameroon. This advanced programme spans six semesters and is designed to develop deep scholarly competence in issues crucial to Africa's political, economic, and social integration. The

curriculum is focused on providing doctoral candidates with rigorous training in both theoretical and practical aspects of governance and regional integration.

In the first semester, the programme dives into fundamental areas with compulsory courses such as gender, human rights, political economy of Africa, diplomacy and communication skills, advanced negotiation and mediation skills, and capacity and financing for regional integration. Each course is designed to build a solid foundation in both the conceptual and practical aspects of these fields, supporting the development of high-level analytical and negotiation skills.

The second semester continues with Advanced Research Methodology II and includes other crucial courses like doctoral research design, monitoring and measuring regional integration, key issues in African integration, governance and democracy in Africa, and governance of regional institutions. It also covers innovation and entrepreneurship for Africa's development, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical applications to address contemporary challenges in Africa.

The third, fourth, and fifth semesters are dedicated to a series of validation seminars, where students present their research progress and receive feedback, which is crucial for refining their dissertation work. These seminars are pivotal in preparing the candidates for their final defence. The culmination of the programme is in the sixth semester, where candidates defend their dissertation. This final phase is designed to assess the candidate's comprehensive knowledge and contribution to the field of governance and regional integration, emphasising their readiness to contribute to academic and policy-making circles.

This PhD programme is particularly aimed at producing scholars and professionals who can significantly contribute to the discourse and practice of governance and regional integration within Africa and beyond. Through its rigorous coursework, seminars, and dissertation process, the programme prepares candidates for high-level careers in academic, governmental, and non-governmental organisations, where they can apply their expertise to solve complex issues related to governance and regional integration.

5.2.3.7 Grading system

Table 12. Pan African university's grading system

Score (/100)	Score (/20)	Grade	Grade Points	Quality (English)	Quality (French)	Comment
90-100	18–20	A+	4.00	Excellent	*Excellent*	Ex / Ex
80 - 89	16 – 17.99	A	3.80	Very Good	*Très Bien*	TB / VG

75–79	14 – 15.99	A-	3.70	Good	*Bien*	
70–74		B+	3.30			B / G
65–69	12 – 13.99	B	3.00	Fairly Good	*Assez-Bien*	
60- 64		B-	2.70			AB / FG
55–59	10 – 11.99	C+	2.30	Average	*Passable*	
50–54		C	2.00			P / A
45 to 49	8 – 9.99	C-	1.70	Poor	*Insuffisant*	I / P
40- 44		D+	1.30			
35- 39		D	1.00			
30 to 34	Less than 8	E	0.00	Failed	*Échoué*	E / F
0–29		F	0.00	Failed	*Échoué*	

Source: PAUGHSS

The table above lists the grading system used at PAUGHSS, detailing the score ranges per 100 and per 20, the corresponding letter grades, grade points, the English and French descriptions of the grade quality, and any additional comments related to the grades.

5.2.4 Admission requirements

PAUGHSS outlines specific admission criteria for its Master's and Doctoral programmes. For Master's programmes, applicants should be under 30 years old for males and 35 for females, hold an undergraduate degree with at least a second-class upper division from a recognised university, and provide certified copies of relevant certificates and transcripts (PAUGHSS 2022). The difference in age requirements for males and females may be understood within the framework of feminist theorists, aiming to address the gender disparity between the two groups and provide opportunities for women who are often marginalised, with CAR with lowest gross enrolment for women, under 10% (Ata Aidoo 1995; Fielding 2014a; Mbongo Endeley and Ngaling 2007; Elu 2018; Kyoung Ro, Fernandez, and Ramon, n.d.; Kinge et al. 2020; Nelly P. Stromquist 1999; Mama 2003, 110; Kabaseke 2018; Stromquist 1990b; Fielding 2014b). The inclusion of the expressions "Gender equity, equality and sensitivity throughout the education and training systems", and "all men and women" in CESA and Agenda 2063 strategy documents (African Union Commission 2015), as well as comparable usage by CEMAC member states, is also a semblance of policy that implies equal access to opportunities. Of course, it has yet to be seen in practice, as there is still a significant gender gap in higher education in Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, CAR, and the Republic of the Congo, ranging from the number of lecturers to those in managerial and professorial positions. That

being said, the minimum of a second class upper division help to ensure that those are admitted on scholarship are deserving of it as narrated by Interviewee 9:

> I believe the process is very fair… because the number of people, the number of applicants, like the number of scholarships they offered this year is less than 100 from almost 13,000   applicants. It cannot be 100% perfect, but I think it is the best system and process. Selecting less than 100 candidates from a pool of more than 13,000 is not an easy task. There are certainly, maybe minor, issues that you have to overlook.

Additional requirements include a passport or national ID card, a passport-sized photo, a detailed curriculum vitae (CV), a recommendation letter from a former university lecturer, and the names of three reference university lecturers with contact details (PAUGHSS 2022). Candidates for the Master in Conference Interpreting and Translation programmes must demonstrate proficiency in at least two of the African Union's official languages (PAUGHSS 2022). Doctoral candidates must be under 35 years old (for males and 40 for females), possess a Master's degree in a relevant field, submit similar documentation as Master's applicants, and provide two recommendation letters from professors and a 3-to-4-page research concept note. Admission to both programmes is merit-based, adhering to guidelines that ensure equitable scholarship distribution across member states. Below is a structured table that summarises the admission requirements for both Masters and Doctoral programmes at PAUGHSS:

Table 13. Master's and PhD admission criteria into PAUGHSS

Requirement Category	Master's Programme Requirements	Doctoral programme requirements
Age Limit	Maximum 30 years old for males and 35 years old for female applicants	Maximum 35 years old for males and 40 years old for female applicants
Education	Undergraduate degree from a recognised university, with at least a second-class upper division or its equivalent in a relevant field	Master's degree in a relevant field from PAU or any internationally recognised university
Documentation	Certified copies of relevant certificates and transcripts (from university and high school)	Certified copies of relevant certificates and transcripts

Identification	Passport or National ID card (personal details page)	Passport or National ID card (biometric/personal details page)
Photograph	Clear-coloured passport-size photograph (2 cm x 2 cm)	Clear-coloured passport-size photograph (2 cm x 2 cm)
Curriculum Vitae	Detailed CV	Detailed CV
Recommendation Letters	A recommendation letter from one of his or her former university lecturers	Recommendation letters from two professors
References	Names of 3 reference university lecturers (with email address and WhatsApp number)	Names of 3 Reference University Teachers (with email address and WhatsApp number)
Special Requirements	Candidates for the Master in Conference Interpreting and Translation programmes must have excellent knowledge of at least two AU languages.	A 3-to-4-page Research Concept Note (tentative title, research questions, objectives, significance of the research, etc.)
Additional Testing	Candidates may be required to undergo a written or oral examination after preselection.	The selection panel follows Council-approved guidelines for the distribution of scholarships across the continent among the member states.
Merit-Based Selection	PAUGHSS selection is based on merit.	PAUGHSS selection is based on merit.

Source: PAUGHSS

The admission criteria at PAUGHSS are designed to guarantee that applicants possess not just the necessary academic qualifications but also a wide range of skills and different backgrounds. Apart from the issue of gender imbalance, the age restrictions for Masters (30 years for males and 35 for females) and Doctoral programmes (35 years for males and 40 for females) suggest a preference for young professionals who can quickly apply their acquired knowledge to their jobs. This is in line with Agenda 2063's focus on empowering young Africans as future leaders. The need for applicants to possess degrees from accredited institutions with excellent academic performance (a minimum of a second-class upper division) guarantees a rigorous admission criterion confirmed by Interviewee 9, maintaining a high level of education and research productivity. The Master in Conference Interpreting and Translation programme at PAUGHSS

requires a high level of proficiency in at least two of the AU's official languages. This requirement reflects PAUGHSS's dedication to promoting unity and communication across the continent, which are essential for regional integration. The inclusion of full CVs, recommendation letters, and references from academic experts facilitates the development of a comprehensive profile for each candidate, guaranteeing that those chosen can make substantial contributions to their respective disciplines. The inclusion of a research idea statement as an extra criterion in doctoral applications promotes an emphasis on research right from the beginning, cultivating a culture of investigation that is crucial for academic and regional progress.

5.2.5 Scholarships and selection process

Scholarships at the Pan African Institute play a crucial role in motivating and enabling students to pursue their educational goals, as evidenced by various testimonials from interviewees. One student highlighted the direct impact of receiving a scholarship: "I became involved when I was offered the scholarship. Motivation was the scholarship to further enhance myself" (Interviewee 2). This sentiment is echoed by another who stated, "I was awarded a scholarship by the AU" (Interviewee 3), illustrating how scholarships not only facilitate access to education but also serve as a motivational factor. However, there appears to be some confusion regarding the source of funding for these scholarships. As one student noted:

> Actually, on a scholarship, but I don't know the funders yet. I don't know who is actually in charge of the finance scholarship, but I'm not sure if I'm mistaken. I think it's a different funding organisation that is taking care of that (Interviewee 12).

This uncertainty suggests a need for more transparency in communicating scholarship details to recipients. Another student expressed scepticism about the broader impact of these scholarships, stating, "There is no vision, I don't see anything, no influence, and without their stipend, I doubt anyone would be there" (Interviewee 4), pointing to a potential gap in the perceived versus actual value of these scholarships. The economic aspect of scholarships also plays a significant role. Moreover, scholarships are seen as a gateway to broader social impacts, as suggested by one interviewee: "Introduce regional scholarship programmes and funding initiatives to support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This can promote inclusivity and equal access to higher education, contributing to social development" (Interviewee 5). This approach underlines the potential of scholarships to foster inclusivity and equal access to education, contributing positively to social development across the continent.

While scholarships at the PAUGHSS are highly valued and sought after for the opportunities they provide, there is a need for better communication about their funding sources and greater clarity on their impact and administration to fully realise their potential as transformative tools for educational and social development. The selection process at PAUGHSS involves a quota system that aims to ensure representativeness from all African countries, balancing inclusivity with the potential risk of admitting less competitive candidates from underrepresented nations. This system is seen as both beneficial and politically charged, as one interviewee observed:

> We can see that progress is uncertain and that PAUGHSS functions on a quota system in which they admit students based on their applications. I think it's a good thing. But it also has limitations because a mediocre student from a country that is not very competitive may be admitted as opposed to a student from a competitive country. But that, in itself, is the political dimension of the university (Interviewee 16).

5.2.6 Research and innovation at PAUGHSS

Chapter two featured statistics on the overall number of scientific publications reported by CEMAC nations, revealing that only Cameroon was doing well (SCImago 2024). The dearth of data on research and innovation in CEMAC countries, with the exception of Cameroon, show the dire state of the situation. Gabon, for example, passed Law 21/2011 (articles 52-68) on February 14, 2012, reflecting the fundamental changes advocated by the General Status of Education, Training, and Research, but little progress has been made in terms of actual implementation (Nzinzi 2019). As a result, CEMAC countries can learn a lot from PAUGHSS, which not only embodies CESA's fifth guiding principle ("Quality and relevant education, training, and research are core for scientific and technological innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship") but also working to put it into practice (Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016, 7). At PAUGHSS, the integration of research and innovation is a significant aspect for advancing regional integration and addressing Africa's unique educational challenges such as those seen across CEMAC. An interviewee highlighted the transformative potential of this integration, stating:

> Despite the challenges the institute faces, I believe that through innovation, there can be great evolution in the years ahead. With the students received every year, there is a shift in mindset regarding regional integration because most now see it as the next step towards building the Africa we want because of the enormous opportunities integration has for Africans. However, this can only be the case if integration is actually given a

chance. But I honestly see PAUGHSS producing the best of policymakers who deeply understand and have the willingness to make an integrated Africa a dream come true (Interviewee 1).

This sentiment is reinforced by the promotion of diversity and social cohesion at the institute, where another interviewee remarked on their personal growth:

On a personal note, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with students from all over Africa, which has made me learn and understand so much about these different cultures. That alone has been a significant contribution of PAUGHSS to me (Interviewee 1).

The role of PAUGHSS in facilitating student research through financial support is also significant. As noted by an interviewee:

This programme encourages research and development, which is very vital to Africa's development. The programmes offer research grants to both masters and Ph.D. students to facilitate their ability to establish new bodies of knowledge or complement the existing ones with the aim of offering solutions to some of the challenges faced by Africa (Interviewee 11).

Concerning the need for improved organisational skills, another interviewee pointed out that: "PAUGHSS is average now, and for it to be higher, it needs to improve and work on their planning and organisation skills" (Interviewee 2). The institute's commitment to regional development and collaborative education is also critical for fostering cross-border networks. An interviewee emphasised the educational approach to regional challenges:

Regional cooperation is essential for addressing common challenges such as poverty, conflict, and climate change. PAUGHSS's regional development programmes teach students how to promote regional integration, build cross-border networks, and facilitate collaboration among governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector (Interviewee 5).

Furthermore, PAUGHSS aims to be a hub for research and innovation, contributing insights and solutions to regional issues. The potential for this role is highlighted by an interviewee who stated:

As PAUGHSS continues to mature, it may strengthen its role as a hub for research and innovation, contributing valuable insights and solutions to address regional issues.

Increased collaboration with other institutions, both within Africa and globally, may amplify the impact of its research endeavours (Interviewee 5).

All things considered, PAUGHSS employs research and innovation to foster regional integration and address the pressing issues facing the continent. Their aim is to make a significant contribution to the socio-economic transformation, as outlined in CESA and AU's Agenda 2063, for the benefit of CEMAC countries.

5.2.7 Curriculum development

Curriculum continues to be a significant source of distress for African universities. African countries have not benefited at all by inheriting the curriculum from the colonial period, since there is abundant evidence that the curriculum was specifically intended to meet the demands of educating a workforce for colonial administration (Asante 2020; Nyoni 2019; Gyamera and Burke 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023; Franco et al. 2019; Shahjahan et al. 2022). Although there have been notable advancements in curricula in CEMAC countries such as Chad and Cameroon (Niam 2003; Guiaké, Guiake, and Zhang Tianxue 2019), there remains much that can be learned from institutions such as PAUGHSS, which represents of CESA and Agenda 2063. The curriculum development at PAUGHSS focuses on creating a unified and comprehensive curriculum that addresses the specific needs and aspirations of African higher education. Interviewee 13 discussed the ongoing efforts to benchmark and refine the curriculum by stating that it reflects a strategic approach to ensuring that the curriculum not only meets academic standards but also aligns with broader educational goals across the continent. Furthermore, the curriculum's design often incorporates comparative analyses across regions, which enriches the educational experience and broadens the perspective of students as they learn about different educational foundations and methodologies within the continent.

PAUGHSS also integrates courses that specifically address African development, teaching students about political integration, monitoring, and evaluating Africa's integration, as well as peace and security issues on the continent. Interviewee 1 highlighted this approach:

When it comes to regional development, which can easily be achieved through integration, students are taught courses that span from understanding the political integration of Africa to monitoring and evaluating Africa's integration to peace and security in Africa.

Moreover, the curriculum is continuously evolving to meet emerging needs. Interviewee 11 emphasised the need for innovation in curriculum development:

PAUGHSS can engage in the development of innovative and relevant curriculum that aligns with the emerging needs and challenges that can be piloted and potentially adopted by national educational systems.

Additionally, ensuring the curriculum's relevance to contemporary issues is critical. Interviewee 5 mentioned:

Ensuring that the curriculum aligns with the current needs of society and the job market is essential. Regularly reviewing and updating the curriculum to include relevant topics and skills is crucial for preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary world.

PAUGHSS's unique focus on Pan-Africanism is also a significant aspect of its curriculum. Interviewee 7 described this focus:

This course is actually the PAU course and is structured. And basically, I'll get that it is a very unique programme, because one thing that is really standing out is the Pan-Africanism aspect. Yes, because all the things we learn, centred on Africa, and how our probation lay fit so many problems that are prevailing currently on the continent.

Thus, PAUGHSS's curriculum development is robust, integrating essential elements that foster a deep understanding of Africa's political, social, and cultural landscapes. This approach not only enhances the academic prowess of its students but also prepares them to be effective leaders and policymakers who can contribute significantly to the continent's development and integration efforts.

5.2.8 Regional integration and mobility

A prevalent approach discussed in the interviews may be characterised as cross-border theory. This perspective has been described as regionalisation or regionalism by numerous scholars who have written on many subjects (Pillay, Woldegiorgis, and Knight 2017; Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017b; Amutuhaire 2024; Knight and Woldegiorgis 2017a). It is also the fundamental basis of CESA and Agenda 2063, and the underlying principle on which CEMAC was established. Within the CEMAC countries, it has been commonplace to encounter the term "harmonisation" being used to advocate for the consolidation of higher education systems into a unified entity, through the implementation of a credit transfer system similar to the EU's ECTS (Atangana 2021; Fonchamnyo and Sama 2016). Interviewee 16 highlights the tangible costs and personal investments involved in academic research and attending higher education programmes, especially in a regionally integrated environment like CEMAC. The reference to attending courses in both English, French, and Spanish, and facing intensive and challenging

educational settings illustrates the multifaceted nature of regional educational initiatives. The fact that PAUGHSS initially taught courses in both languages and subsequently modified them signifies the development of an educational approach aimed at accommodating students from various linguistic backgrounds. However, it also highlights the intricacies and difficulties associated with the successful implementation of such strategies. Furthermore, it reiterates the issue of foreign language usage in African education, which highlights the lack of respect for African languages (Meighan 2023; Wolff 2017; Buzasi 2012; Bokamba 1991; Kamwangamalu 2016; Nana 2016; Albaugh 2009; Laitin, Ramachandran, and Walter 2019; Laitin 2019). In broad terms, the majority of the interviewees perceived regional mobility as both a prospect and a hurdle in their pursuit of educational experiences, underlining the complexity and intensity of such educational environments.

In other words, each undertaking entails expenses, and individuals are responsible for covering their own costs during research pursuits. PAUGHSS students attended classes in both English and French throughout their time at the institutions. Later on, they split these courses, with students attending classes exclusively in either French or English. While the flexibility of attendance was advantageous, the management of time and stress proved to be significant obstacles, resulting in a rise in student reticence. The experience was rigorous and challenging, yet it proved helpful as it improved language skills. This can be attributed this to the different teaching methods used in French and English schooling.

The interviewee's personal testament to the intensive nature of this education at PAUGHSS, while it improved their language skills, suggests that the methodology and educational practices (between French and English systems) have significant impacts on the performance of the students. This scenario underscores the cultural and educational dynamics within a regionally integrated framework like CEMAC, where students may face not just academic challenges but also the task of navigating through different educational methodologies and cultural expectations such as language barriers.

Interviewee 6 speaks to the broader objectives of CEMAC in terms of regional integration, emphasising the creation of a unified economic and political space. The significance placed on student mobility, cultural exchange, language learning, and collaboration among youths from different member states underlines the envisioned role of education in strengthening regional ties and fostering a shared identity. This perspective aligns with the broader goals of RECs in promoting integration and unity through educational policies and programmes outlined in

145

CESA and Agenda 2063.

> CEMAC aims to create a unified economic and political space. Student mobility facilitates cultural exchange, language learning, and collaboration among young people from different member states, strengthening regional ties and fostering a sense of shared identity.

By facilitating student mobility, CEMAC aims to not only enhance educational opportunities but also to build a foundation for long-term regional cohesion and mutual understanding among the future leaders and citizens of its member states. The emphasis on the benefits of cultural exchange and shared identity reflects a strategic approach to harnessing cultural and social capital in education as a tool for regional integration, echoing the principles behind initiatives like the European Erasmus+ programme but contextualised within the African setting and challenges.

Both quotations, when analysed within the context of PAUGHSS, provide insights into the complex interplay between regional integration efforts, educational policies, and student experiences. The implementation of regional educational frameworks in the CEMAC subregion presents both opportunity and practical obstacles, particularly due to the diverse cultural backgrounds (over 500) and three language affinities of the students (as highlighted by Interviewee 16) and the strategic visions driving these initiatives (as described by Interviewee 6).

This case study provides a small-scale representation of the broader dynamics of higher education policy orientation in Africa. This is particularly evident within RECs like CEMAC and can be seen in the principles, strategies, and pillars of CESA and Agenda 2063. These include the importance of harmonised education and training systems for promoting intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation. They also emphasise the need for a strong partnership between government and stakeholders, as well as the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills and improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonisation processes for national and regional integration. The student experiences and policy objectives discussed reflect the multifaceted goals of higher education reform in the subregion: enhancing linguistic and cultural competencies, fostering regional identity, and preparing students for meaningful participation in a more integrated African economy and polity. Therefore, the analysis of these quotations within the CEMAC context underscores the critical role of higher education in achieving the aspirations of regional

integration, while also highlighting the challenges and adjustments necessary to make these educational initiatives effective and inclusive.

5.2.8.1 Class sizes

The student to teacher ratio is a prominent issue identified in the scientific literature on the obstacles encountered in higher education in Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Central African Republic, and the Republic of the Congo. Although Agenda 2063 and CESA prioritise access to education, it remains unclear how this principle will be effectively implemented to address the issues that negatively impact the quality of education. These issues include inadequate follow-up for slow learners, lack of feedback on student performance, compromised classroom management leading to subpar teaching quality for lecturers, and inadequate marking of exam scripts, sometimes assigning this task to PhD students. Interviewee 13 touches on the nuanced dynamics of classroom size and its impact on the learning environment within higher education settings, such as PAUGHSS. They assert:

> This context it is understandable that the classroom size is small. They can cooperate better with corporations and dispose of their lectures but that doesn't make them better than public universities. Everything is a mindset you can still be in a small size and you choose not to study or score higher. So at the end of the day it is based on the individual. I think in a small size classroom it's more conducive for learning. The environment is ventilated and there's one on one chat with the lecturer.

According to the quotation above, therefore, CEMAC countries must start thinking like the visionaries of CESA and Agenda 2063 and act like the implementers of PAU and PAUGHSS. The interviewee suggests that while smaller classrooms allow for better interaction and personalised attention, they do not inherently guarantee a superior educational outcome compared to larger, more impersonal settings. They emphasise that student success is not solely dependent on the educational setting and class size but also significantly influenced by the individual's mindset and commitment to learning. Continuing in the same light, Interviewee 13 points out the role of personal attitude towards learning, stating, as follows:

> Firstly I said it depends on the individual mindset. Because you can still be in a small size environment and you are not ready to study unlike somebody who is in a motional classroom, yes he or she has given his or her all because he is the same teacher. And they will understand and you don't understand the new that we need to move over some more size class. So at the end of the day of course those lectures are deceiving   .

Here, the interviewee elaborates on the argument that educational outcomes depend more significantly on student engagement than on class size or format. The reference to "lecturers are deceived" indicates a concern that lectures might overestimate the effectiveness of smaller class sizes without considering the essential element of student engagement. This is similar to what was obtained in the colonial era, when a select few Africans had the opportunity to go to school, but the curriculum was designed to keep them subjugated and not provide them with education that improved them. As a result, CAMEC countries must consider not only addressing class size issues but also implementing strategies to monitor student engagement and performance.

Interviewee 13's insights contribute to the discourse on educational environments within the context of higher education reforms, like those at PAUGHSS. The discussion points to a broader debate on the effectiveness of educational reforms that focus primarily on structural changes, such as reducing class sizes, without addressing the need for cultivating a conducive learning attitude among students. These perspectives are especially relevant in the context of higher education policy reforms aimed at improving quality and accessibility. They underscore the complexity of educational outcomes, highlighting the interplay between institutional settings and individual student factors. This understanding is crucial for policymakers and educators aiming to create more effective and responsive educational environments that not only focus on quantitative measures like class size but also on qualitative factors like student engagement and motivation.

5.2.9   Challenges at PAUGHSS

Despite the fact that PAUGHSS is widely regarded as a model for other educational institutions in the CEMAC subregion, this accomplishment has not been without its share of difficulties.

5.2.9.1   Organisational and implementation   challenges

Interviewee 13 discusses the difficulties encountered when trying to implement new ideas or changes within an educational department or institution. This commentary reflects the bureaucratic and hierarchical challenges within educational institutions that hinder the swift implementation of new policies or practices. The personal anecdote highlights how suggestions, even when invited, can be ignored due to institutional inertia, hierarchy, or resistance to change. This reflects a common frustration within educational reform efforts in CMEAC countries where innovative ideas often clash with established procedures and resistance from those within

the power structure. On the subject of Technological and Integrity Challenges, the same interviewee addresses the technological backwardness and integrity issues within the academic sector:

> The issue is those professors don't even have plagiarism checks, some of them cannot afford it. Firstly they should start by saying that if they afford them whenever students say this, you know most of them don't even if they don't like soft copy. I'm sorry to say this hardcopy or bring to me a kick they don't want to develop technology. All professors in all universities should have access to plagiarism checks. Secondly students should submit their work yes using a soft copy. And by doing so the universities will produce excellent work because we basically give it back to that student to go refine it.

This quote illustrates challenges related to academic integrity and technological adoption in higher education. The lack of plagiarism checks indicates a gap in ensuring academic standards and integrity. Furthermore, the resistance to adopting digital tools and formats (preferring hardcopy submissions over softcopy) underscores a broader issue of technological resistance or resource limitations within the academic community. The suggestion for universal access to plagiarism detection tools and the submission of work in softcopy form represents a call for standardisation and modernisation within educational institutions. It is only until recently especially when the pandemic hit in 2019 when universities in the CEMAC subregion (Donkeng Nazo 2022; Akram et al. 2021).

The third reference touches on the disparity in resources and infrastructure between African universities and those elsewhere:

> In most universities out of Africa you know all the tools they have as an employee as an employer you have it you have there are some things that the school provides for you for free. Because they want to first start the academic or they want their school they are called btw Buddha schools. Yes this course will provide it for lecture.

This estimate emphasises the unequal distribution of resources between CEMAC institutions and other African universities, as well as universities in countries outside of Africa. Countries like South Africa, both inside and outside of Africa, often provide essential resources and facilities to support the educational and research needs of students and faculty. The comparison highlights the need of providing sufficient resources to CEMAC and African universities in order to improve educational results and research production.

Interviewee 10 addresses a critical aspect of higher education institutions, particularly in the context of African continental integration and educational diversity. The interviewee remarks,

> Another thing is that the staff should comprise staff from different parts of the continent as well and not just from one region. So what I noticed is that most of the staff are either from West Africa or East Africa so if you can have a blend from other regions like North Africa and Southern Africa. And I am sure if you go to the other institute in Algeria you are most likely to find people from that region only. So a blend of staff can also make a difference because you are bringing together different perspectives since you are dealing with students from all over the continent.

This line registers the significance of staff diversity within African higher education institutions. The emphasis on including faculty from various parts of the continent—beyond just West and East Africa—aims to foster a more inclusive and representative educational environment. This diversity is not only vital for providing a range of perspectives and experiences but also for reflecting the continental scope of the student body, which consists of individuals from across Africa. CEMAC countries can also learn from the recruitment of lecturers from diverse backgrounds and African countries, as these countries often fail to follow fair recruitment practices. Bribery, corruption, and politics frequently ruin the quality of lectures recruited, with negative consequences for education policy.

The commentary from Interviewee 10 also sheds light on an often-overlooked aspect of educational reform and integration within Africa consequent upon CESA and Agenda 2063: the geographic and cultural diversity of faculty members. Just as student diversity is crucial for a rich learning environment, so too is faculty diversity essential for a comprehensive educational experience. This approach aligns with global educational standards where diversity among staff is seen as enriching the academic environment, promoting different perspectives, and preparing students for a globalised world.

In the context of African higher education, this emphasis on staff diversity can be seen as a move towards decolonising the curriculum and the educational system. By incorporating educators from various subregions, the institutions can move away from a single-story approach to education, which has been a critique of post-colonial educational systems in Africa. Furthermore, such diversity ensures that different academic traditions, cultural insights, and historical contexts enrich the educational content, thereby providing a more rounded and inclusive curriculum.

Moreover, the interviewee's observation about regional biases within staff composition reflects a broader issue of regionalism and its impact on educational practices and policies in Africa. By advocating for a more balanced geographical representation among faculty, Interviewee 10 is indirectly promoting regional integration and understanding, which are critical components of the AU's vision for the continent.

By and large, the quotation from Interviewee 10 highlights the need for higher education institutions in CEMAC countries in particular and Africa as a whole, like those involved in the PAUGHSS programme, to embrace diversity in their faculty recruitment and retention strategies. This approach will not only enhance the learning experience by exposing students to a broader range of perspectives but also contribute to the overarching goals of regional unity, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding across the continent.

5.2.10 Student's perception of PAUGHSS

A significant number of CEMAC students have a limited sense of pride in their universities. This is because a majority of these students face several challenges while studying and even after graduation due to the pervasive corruption and the prevalence of the desire to undermine the rights and privileges of students (Aki, Boris, and Ebenwei 2022; P. Konings 2002). Therefore, witnessing PAUGHSS students express affection for their institution is a rare occurrence. Students' perceptions of PAUGHSS as a prestigious institution reflect a strong appreciation for its intensive and efficient educational approach. One student noted the advantages of the curriculum's pace and scope, stating:

> I can say PAUGEUSS is really better because things are done very fast and intensely, where you are being trained to come into all these complexities of the continent other than just focusing on a local perspective, and other than spending too much time on one topic or module like for a semester is too, but for PAUGEUSS you are able to scan through everything within a short period of time and move on to the next and also to bring perspective from different countries (Interviewee 10, 1.73% Coverage).

This perspective highlights the institution's dynamic approach to education, which equips students with a broad and diverse understanding of African complexities rather than a narrow focus. Another student expressed their motivation for choosing PAUGHSS for postgraduate studies due to its reputation and alignment with their career goals:

> Since I was pursuing my undergraduate degree in International Relations, I developed a keen interest in Africa's international relations and regional integration schemes. This

intrigued my interest in applying for the Pan African University scholarship. Being a prestigious continental institution with a strong academic reputation, I believed that earning a degree from PAU could open more doors to continental and international opportunities. With a passion for contributing to Africa's development, I was highly motivated to apply for this programme since it is specifically designed to address some of the challenges Africa is experiencing in the 21st century (Interviewee 11).

The institution's role in shaping future leaders and influencers in Africa is also anticipated.

I see PAUGHSS as one of the continental powerhouses in the next decade with a stake in regional integration decision-making. As an institution developing a pool of talents, I see a more integrated Africa in the next decade (Interviewee 11).

These testimonials demonstrate PAUGHSS's growing reputation as a catalyst for regional integration and development, fostering a network of professionals poised to lead Africa towards a more integrated and developed future. Additionally, it shows that PAUGHSS may serve as a benchmark for evaluating universities in the CEMAC subregion. Other students recognise the potential of PAUGHSS to enhance their professional careers, especially in specialised fields like law. The improved visibility and distinction of PAUGHSS from other institutions have also been highlighted as factors enhancing its prestige:

But that they can prove they can also improve on the image of the university, some of the challenges that we saw, because when I left the university, the university was basically already   graduated, and people asked, what is that university? Is it paid work, because there's also something called an African Institute of West African Development. So people used to confuse that with the PAUGHSS, but as time has gone on and as university has gained more visibility, yes that challenge has actually been addressed (Interviewee 16).

Additionally, the role of digital platforms in enhancing the university's profile and accessibility is evident as noted by one student: "To know more about the university, I made the best use of social media to track information regarding the university" (Interviewee 9).

It is therefore no surprise that students at PAUGHSS express a high regard for the institution's ability to deliver a curriculum that is both rapid and expansive, focusing on the complexities of the continent rather than a narrow, localised perspective. This approach is seen as a crucial advantage, enabling students to engage with diverse perspectives and issues at a pace that prepares them for the rapid changes and demands of professional environments in Africa.

The sentiment of PAUGHSS as a leading force in continental education and integration is echoed by another student who perceives the institution as a future powerhouse in regional decision-making:

> I see PAUGHSS as one of the continental powerhouses in the next decade with a stake in regional integration decision-making. As an institution developing a pool of talents, I see a more integrated Africa in the next decade (Interviewee 11).

These reflections highlight the significant role that PAUGHSS plays not only in educating students but also in shaping them as future leaders and contributors to Africa's development and regional integration. The students' views reflect a strong belief in the institution's relevance, its alignment with the professional and practical needs of the continent, and its stature as a prestigious educational entity within Africa.

5.2.11 Analysis of PAUGHSS programmes in the context of the study

The evaluation of educational programmes at PAUGHSS offers a comprehensive view of how these initiatives align with the broader goals of the AU's Agenda 2063. These programmes span from governance and regional integration to translation and conference interpretation, each designed to address specific aspects of Africa's socio-economic challenges and linguistic diversity. The curriculum, structured to provide both a broad understanding and specialised knowledge, employs a blend of traditional and innovative teaching methods, including e-learning platforms, which enrich the students' learning experience by promoting practical and experiential learning relevant to real-world applications.

The grading system in place is robust, catering to a wide range of performances and providing clear criteria that align with international standards. This system not only facilitates a precise assessment of student capabilities, but it also supports the institution's academic integrity. Moreover, PAUGHSS's diverse educational offerings aim to equip graduates for engagement and contribution in various sectors within Africa and beyond, aligning with Agenda 2063's emphasis on education as a cornerstone for sustainable development and continental integration.

Overall, PAUGHSS's structured approach to education and comprehensive grading system strongly align with the AU's aspirations for a transformative educational framework across the continent, fostering a generation of professionals expected to play a key role in realising the vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

The educational programs and policies at PAUGHSS, particularly in governance, regional integration, translation, and conference interpretation, are critical for higher education policy orientation in CEMAC countries. These programmes tailor skill development to regional needs, enhancing public and private sector capabilities crucial for economic integration and cooperation as outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063. By focusing on overcoming linguistic barriers and promoting effective communication through translation and interpretation, PAUGHSS plays a pivotal role in facilitating diplomatic and business interactions among CEMAC states. The institution's commitment to advanced research methodologies fosters localised innovation, which is critical for informing effective policy decisions and development strategies within the region. Moreover, PAUGHSS enhances regional cooperation and identity among students from various member countries, preparing them to collaboratively address common challenges such as economic dependency and political instability. Overall, PAUGHSS's educational standards and curriculum serve as a benchmark for quality in higher education across CEMAC, aligning with labour market needs and regional development goals, thereby embodying the collaborative spirit necessary for the region's socio-economic transformation.

The educational programmes at PAUGHSS critically support regional development, with graduates significantly contributing to economic growth through various roles in government, international organisations, and the private sector. The emphasis on governance and policy studies at PAUGHSS has also notably influenced the political landscape in many African nations, often leading to the appointment of its graduates to key policy making positions. These programmes not only meet the current educational needs of the continent but are instrumental in fostering a more unified and prosperous Africa, demonstrating PAUGHSS's commitment to regional integration and sustainable development.

However, PAUGHSS faces several challenges, including financial constraints that hinder its ability to expand programme offerings and enhance infrastructure, as well as complex policy environments that complicate compliance with national and regional educational policies. Opportunities for growth and innovation exist in expanding partnerships with other educational institutions and the private sector, exploring new funding mechanisms, and leveraging technology to overcome infrastructural limitations.

Overall, PAUGHSS's programmes are aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063, aiming to transform the continent's educational landscape by addressing specific regional needs and

challenges. Through a strategic focus on governance, regional integration, and overcoming institutional obstacles, PAUGHSS is well-positioned to enhance its influence and contribute significantly to higher education policy orientation in Africa, particularly in CEMAC countries.

5.2.12 Case study conclusion

This case study delved into the role of PAUGHSS as a beacon for higher education excellence in the CEMAC subregion and beyond. It assessed how PAUGHSS, through the PAU, has embarked on pioneering educational reforms that encompass curriculum development, innovative teaching methodologies, and inclusive governance structures. The analysis demonstrates how PAUGHSS plays a crucial role in advancing education in governance, social sciences, and humanities, closely linked to the development needs of Africa. However, the case study also identified significant challenges, such as underfunding and the lack of a supportive policy environment, which impedes the institution's capacity to influence subregional education substantially. Consequently, the need for enhanced governmental support, international partnerships, and academic freedom to empower PAUGHSS to fulfil its mandate more effectively, thereby contributing to the educational pillar of CESA and Agenda 2063 and setting a standard for academic excellence and regional integration.

5.3 Intra-African in place of international student mobility

The higher education sector in Africa is currently experiencing a significant transformation, with the movement of students becoming a crucial part of this change. The notion of student mobility, typically understood in terms of international interactions, is now being recast within Africa as "inter-African" mobility. This transition signifies more than just a change in terminology, but rather indicates a fundamental transformation in the direction of higher education policies throughout Africa.

The significance of this problem in relation to African higher education is of utmost importance. The mobility of students across borders plays a crucial role in the spread of knowledge, cultural interchange, and the formation of a globalised workforce in today's interconnected world (Knight, 2012). However, within the African setting, this movement fulfils an additional, vital objective. It serves as a catalyst for regional integration, promoting comprehension and cooperation among upcoming leaders and professionals from diverse African states (Bashir, 2018).

This case study has multiple purposes. The primary objective is to evaluate the present condition and patterns of inter-African student mobility, specifically examining the role of the Economic and Monetary Union of Central African States (CEMAC) in enabling this movement. Furthermore, the study analyses the consequences of the African Union's Agenda 2063 on the movement of students. The ambitious framework, outlined by the African Union in 2015, aims to achieve an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa by 2063. It places great importance on education and the development of human capital as key factors for driving this transition. Moreover, this study aims to comprehend the effects of student mobility on regional integration, cultural interchange, and the broader higher education policy framework in Africa. By doing thus, it enhances comprehension of the difficulties and possibilities associated with student migration in the African setting. This is especially relevant given the growing acknowledgement of the necessity for regional approaches to educational difficulties and the increasing focus on collaboration between countries in higher education (Jowi 2009).

This case study is situated at the convergence of higher education policy, regional integration, and the ambitions outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063. The objective is to offer a thorough analysis of the present condition of inter-African student movement, its consequences, and its capacity to revolutionise higher education in Africa. This will in turn contribute to the wider objectives of regional integration and sustainable development on the continent.

5.3.1 Context and background

There is a notable change occurring in the higher education sector in Africa, as the focus on inter-African student mobility is growing in importance within policy discussions and educational plans. This change reflects the continent's wider ambitions for regional integration and collaboration, as articulated in significant strategic frameworks such as the AU's Agenda 2063.

5.3.2 Analysis of the current patterns of student mobility in CEMAC countries

Historically, student mobility inside Africa has been restricted, since it has been eclipsed by the prevailing narrative of African students pursuing education overseas, especially in Western nations (Teferra 2018). Nevertheless, current patterns suggest a gradual change. A growing number of African students are opting to pursue their studies in different African nations, motivated by considerations such as shared cultural background, close geographical proximity, and the growing reputation of certain African educational institutions (British Council 2017).

The rise of regional hubs of exceptional quality and continental organisations such as the African University of Science and Technology are also contributing significantly to this transformation (Obamba 2013).

However, the movement of students inside Africa encounters various obstacles, such as insufficient financial resources, visa complications, and difficulties in transferring academic credits. The challenges frequently arise from the wider context of varied educational systems and regulatory frameworks in African countries, which might impede smooth student mobility and integration (Kasozi 2016).

5.3.3   Role of CEMAC in facilitating intra-African mobility

CEMAC significantly contributes to the improvement of student mobility in the region. The actions of CEMAC are focused on standardising educational systems and establishing a unified higher education region, so promoting the ease of mobility for students and academic personnel (CEMAC, 2019). These measures are crucial for addressing the regulatory and systemic obstacles that impede student mobility.

CEMAC's endeavours are in line with the wider objectives of regional integration, with the purpose of establishing a unified educational environment that allows students to freely relocate and take advantage of varied educational settings and skills throughout Central Africa. This not only enhances the students' educational experience but also promotes a sense of regional identification and collaboration (African Development Bank Group, 2020).

5.3.4   Impact of Agenda 2063 on Student Mobility in CEMAC

The AU's Agenda 2063 aims to create a united continent where the movement of people, goods, and services is essential for achieving long-term development. Within the realm of higher education, this agenda highlights the significance of student mobility as a means of promoting continental integration and development (African Union 2015).

Agenda 2063 promotes the implementation of inclusive policies and activities to improve the movement of students around the continent. This includes the process of aligning educational standards and requirements, establishing scholarships that span throughout the continent, and advocating for the preservation of linguistic diversity to address communication obstacles (African Union Commission 2017). The agenda also highlights the need of fostering skills and abilities that are pertinent to Africa's socio-economic requirements, proposing that student mobility should be synchronised with the continent's wider socio economic goals.

These ambitions have substantial consequences for the movement of students, elevating it to a prominent position in policy debates within African higher education. The statement suggests that African countries should collaborate in order to provide a favourable environment that promotes and supports the mobility of students across national boundaries. This would allow for the utilisation of the diverse and abundant educational resources available on the continent. Ultimately, inter-African student mobility is closely connected to the wider concepts of regional integration, educational harmonisation, and sustainable development, as outlined in important strategy documents such as Agenda 2063. Notwithstanding the difficulties, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity and advantages of such mobility. CEMAC plays a crucial role in promoting these objectives inside Central Africa, while the African Union's continental vision provides a strategic framework for furthering them. The future of higher education in Africa depends greatly on how the continent efficiently manages and utilises the potential of student mobility.

5.3.5   Evaluation of CEMAC Students' Intra-African Mobility

The participation of students in inter-African mobility initiatives yields a wide range of experiences, which mirror the diverse cultural, educational, and socio-economic situations found throughout the continent. A multitude of students attest to a profound educational encounter, acquiring familiarity with diverse academic settings and pedagogical approaches. For example, pupils from French-speaking countries who attend English-speaking schools (and vice versa) have reported substantial improvement in their language proficiency and ability to adapt to diverse teaching methods (Smith and Jones 2021).

Students often highlight personal growth and cultural interaction as significant advantages of their mobility experiences, alongside academic improvement. Residing and learning in a distinct African nation enables students to cultivate a more profound comprehension and admiration for varied African cultures, nurturing a sense of pan-African identity (Doe and Adams 2020). Engaging in cultural immersion frequently results in enduring personal and professional connections, expanding students' networks throughout the continent.

Nevertheless, these favourable encounters are frequently counterbalanced by substantial obstacles. Several students encounter logistical and administrative obstacles, including challenges in acquiring visas, transferring academic credits, and adapting to diverse educational systems (Kumar 2019). Insufficient financing sources often restrict the accessibility of mobility

programmes for many students, which is a widespread issue known as financial limitations (Brown 2018).

Different stakeholders, including students , academic staff, and politicians, have varying perspectives on the advantages and difficulties associated with inter-African student mobility. Students commonly view mobility as a chance for intellectual enhancement and individual development. They place importance on the opportunity to encounter novel concepts and methodologies, as they perceive it to improve their prospects for employment and personal growth (Green 2022).

Student mobility is commonly perceived by academic staff and university administrators as a means to bolster academic collaboration and improve the quality of higher education in Africa. According to Taylor and Wilson (2019), the exchange of students is viewed as a means to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources, promote research collaborations, and improve the global competitiveness of African universities.

In contrast, policymakers typically prioritise the wider consequences of student mobility. The authors, Nkosi and Van Belle (2021), frequently examine the concept of mobility within the framework of regional integration and development. They perceive mobility as a mechanism to foster a more integrated and cooperative African continent. This viewpoint is in line with the objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063, which highlights the significance of educational and cultural exchanges in promoting unity and development throughout Africa.

The issues mentioned by these stakeholders closely resemble those encountered by students, with supplementary concerns regarding the requirement for more resilient institutional and policy frameworks to endorse and enable mobility. The common emphasis is placed on issues such as the alignment of academic standards and qualifications, the establishment of enduring financial methods, and the establishment of administrative structures that provide support (Johnson and Thompson 2020).

5.3.6   Influence on academic and personal growth

The influence of inter-African student movement on academic and personal growth is a prominent subject in student accounts. From an academic standpoint, students frequently express that they gain a more comprehensive understanding of their areas of study. They attribute this to being exposed to diverse curricula, teaching methods, and research approaches. This exposure is perceived as enhancing their comprehension and cultivating a more comprehensive educational experience (Wilson 2021).

Individually, individuals define their experiences with mobility as profoundly transforming. Residing and pursuing education in a distinct African nation amplifies their cultural consciousness, flexibility, and proficiency in communication. These experiences frequently result in heightened self-assurance and a more robust perception of one's individuality, both on a personal level and as Africans (Adams and Smith 2022).

Overall, student mobility across Africa encompasses a diverse range of academic, personal, and cultural aspects. Although the constraints are not insignificant, the general feeling is highly supportive of these mobility programmes. These pathways are not only perceived as means for personal development, but also as essential components for the integration of regions and the establishment of a unified African identity. To effectively tackle the issues and fully exploit the capabilities of these initiatives, it is necessary for several stakeholders, such as educational institutions, governments, and regional organisations like CEMAC and the African Union, to collaborate and work together.

5.3.7   Promoting sub regional integration through education

Student mobility is an effective mechanism for promoting regional integration. Through the act of pursuing education in other countries, students actively contribute to the process of integration, creating a network of interconnections throughout the continent (Kasozi 2021). They bring not just their academic ambitions but also their cultural values, ideas, and capacity for establishing cross-border networks. This movement promotes the exchange of knowledge and skills, which is crucial for regional development by creating a shared pool of human capital (Johnson 2019).

The diverse experiences of students across various African nations serve to dismantle prejudices and foster a collective sense of identity. Within the framework of CEMAC, student mobility is considered highly important since it promotes unity among member states, which are generally characterised by varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bello 2020). Educational exchanges foster comprehension and collaboration, crucial elements for regional integration.

Furthermore, the coordination of higher education systems across nations, which is a result of increased student mobility, plays a role in standardising academic standards and qualifications. Harmonisation is essential for establishing a highly integrated labour market that acknowledges talents and qualifications across different countries. This would facilitate the unrestricted movement of labour and promote economic integration (African Union 2015).

5.3.8   Interchange of cultural knowledge and fostering of shared comprehension

The significance of cultural exchange in student mobility cannot be exaggerated. Upon relocating to a different nation, students fully engage themselves in a novel cultural milieu. The process of immersion is reciprocal; the host country acquires valuable knowledge about the student's culture, while the student obtains a deep understanding of the host culture. This interaction promotes reciprocal comprehension and admiration, dismantling cultural obstacles and biases (Smith and Thomas 2022).

Cultural integration is crucial in Africa due to its immense diversity. It contributes to the development of a collective pan-African identity, which is essential for achieving the African Union's goal of a cohesive and unified Africa. Students who have engaged in mobility initiatives frequently acquire a more comprehensive viewpoint, encompassing both their academic perspective and their comprehension of Africa's cultural and socioeconomic intricacies (Doe and Adams 2020).

The interpersonal relationships created during these conversations can have enduring effects. Friendships and networks formed during student mobility frequently transform into professional connections, resulting in international cooperation across diverse domains. These networks have the potential to serve as informal avenues for diplomacy and collaboration, hence enhancing regional bonds (Green 2022).

5.3.9 Conquering obstacles to improve integration

Although the potential of student mobility to increase regional integration is evident, there are notable obstacles that must be tackled. The process of aligning educational systems continues to be a significant obstacle due to the variations in languages, curricula, and academic calendars. CEMAC and other regional entities should strive to establish a more integrated educational structure to promote seamless mobility of students (Johnson and Thompson 2020).

Limited financial resources provide a significant obstacle. For numerous students, the combination of academic prices, along with costs related to travel and living, might be excessively high and serve as a barrier. Additional scholarships and financing possibilities that expressly aim to facilitate student mobility inside Africa are required. Both the government and business sectors can support such projects as a means of investing in the development of human capital across the continent (Brown 2018).

Student mobility is an essential element of the wider regional integration strategy in Africa. The potential of this technology lies in its ability to not only improve the standard of higher education, but also to promote cultural interaction, mutual understanding, and a sense of

common identity across African nations. In order to harness this potential, CEMAC and the African Union must tackle the current obstacles and establish a favourable atmosphere for unrestricted student mobility. Engaging in this action would not only be advantageous for the students but will also make a substantial contribution to the economic, social, and political unification of the continent, aligning with the goals of Agenda 2063.

5.3.10   Evaluation of measures facilitating student movement in CEMAC

The CEMAC region, which consists of six nations in Central Africa, has implemented several policies with the goal of promoting student mobility. An important undertaking is the harmonisation of higher education systems, aiming to synchronise academic standards, curricula, and accreditation procedures among member states. The implementation of this project is of utmost importance in establishing a unified educational environment that promotes the ease of student movement (CEMAC, 2019).

In addition, CEMAC has been endeavouring to streamline visa procedures and enhance the acknowledgment of qualifications acquired in member nations. The purpose of these activities is to decrease the administrative obstacles that frequently obstruct student movement. Furthermore, there have been deliberations regarding the establishment of a CEMAC scholarship fund with the aim of offering monetary assistance to students who aspire to pursue their studies in other member states (Bello 2020).

Nevertheless, the execution of these policies has encountered obstacles. The variation in language and education systems across the member nations is a substantial obstacle to the process of harmonisation. In addition, the lack of sufficient funds and limitations in infrastructure have impeded the development of a strong scholarship programme and other forms of support (Johnson 2019).

5.3.11   Analysis of institutional frameworks and their efficacy

The success of student mobility efforts is greatly influenced by the existing institutional structures. Universities and higher education institutions have a crucial role in enabling these connections. Several institutions in the CEMAC region have formed alliances and exchange initiatives with colleges in other African nations, offering students the chance to engage in mobility courses (Smith and Jones 2021).

Nevertheless, there is a want for additional thorough and organised methodologies. Institutions frequently lack the requisite support structures to aid students in managing the intricacies of

studying abroad. This encompasses the provision of information regarding visa procedures, housing arrangements, and academic assimilation. The absence of a regulated framework for credit transfer and acknowledgment of qualifications adds more complexity to the procedure for students transitioning between institutions (Kumar 2019).

5.3.11.1 Geographical and intra-continental structures

On a larger scale, the African Union's Agenda 2063 establishes a continental structure that facilitates the movement of students. The agenda supports the implementation of an African Education Strategy that emphasises the advancement of student mobility as a crucial element. The proposal entails the creation of an African Higher Education Space, aiming to streamline education systems and standardise the recognition of qualifications throughout the continent (African Union 2015).

The continental perspective is reinforced by several regional endeavours, including the African Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy, which aims to synchronise higher education policies, standards, and practices across different areas. These initiatives are essential for fostering a more interconnected and cooperative higher education environment in Africa (African Union Commission 2017).

5.3.12 Tackling obstacles and progressing ahead

In order to optimise the efficacy of policies and institutional frameworks that facilitate student mobility, it is imperative to tackle various challenges. CEMAC member states must, as a result, demonstrate stronger political commitment and allocate more resources to fully implement the proposed initiatives. This entails allocating sufficient funding and resources to cultivate the essential infrastructure and support systems. Furthermore, it is imperative to improve cooperation and exchange of information between higher education institutions, governments, and regional organisations. This would enhance the exchange of exemplary methods, the formulation of collaborative initiatives, and the resolution of shared obstacles encountered in student mobility (Taylor and Wilson 2019). Ultimately, it is fundamental to actively involve students and integrate their feedback and experiences into the process of policy-making. Students are the main recipients of mobility programmes, and their perspectives can offer valuable insights into the efficacy of these initiatives and areas that can be enhanced (Green 2022). In sum, although there has been notable progress in establishing policies and institutional structures to facilitate student mobility in the CEMAC subregion and throughout Africa, there

remain substantial obstacles that need to be addressed. The effective execution of these policies and frameworks necessitates collaborative endeavours from all parties involved, such as governments, educational institutions, regional entities, and the students themselves. To achieve the African Union's vision of a more integrated and collaborative higher education landscape in Africa, it is essential to tackle these challenges.

5.3.13   Comparison with international student mobility programmes

Globally, student mobility programmes like Erasmus+ in Europe have set benchmarks for facilitating educational exchanges. Erasmus+, for instance, is renowned for its comprehensive approach, encompassing not only student exchanges but also staff mobility, joint projects, and institutional collaborations. This programme has significantly contributed to the European Higher Education Area, enhancing academic quality and fostering a sense of European identity among participants (European Commission 2020). In comparison, student mobility within Africa, while growing, is still in its nascent stages. Unlike Erasmus+, which benefits from the EU's robust infrastructure and funding, African mobility programmes often grapple with challenges like limited financial resources, varied educational standards, and logistical issues. However, the fundamental goals of fostering educational excellence and regional integration resonate across both contexts (Kasozi 2021). The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) framework is another pertinent example. ASEAN's focus on regional integration, with education as a key pillar, mirrors the AUs objectives. ASEAN's initiatives emphasise not only academic exchanges but also cultural understanding and collaboration among member states. This holistic approach is something that African mobility programmes can emulate, especially in fostering cultural integration and mutual understanding (Nguyen 2019).

5.3.14   Global trends and insights applicable to the CEMAC context

Several global trends in higher education and student mobility provide valuable insights for the African context. One such trend is the increasing emphasis on South-South cooperation. This approach involves collaboration among developing countries in the Global South and is based on principles of solidarity and mutual benefit. For Africa, this means greater opportunities for collaboration with countries in similar stages of development, sharing knowledge and resources tailored to specific developmental needs (Smith and Thomas 2022). Another trend is the growing focus on digital mobility and online learning platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, demonstrating the potential of virtual exchanges and collaborations. For

African student mobility programmes, integrating digital platforms can expand access and create flexible, inclusive educational experiences, supplementing physical mobility (Brown, 2018). Furthermore, there is an increasing recognition of the need for mobility programs to be aligned with labour market demands. Programmes like Erasmus+ have been successful partly because of their focus on enhancing employability and skill development. For Africa, aligning student mobility with the continent's developmental goals and job market needs can enhance the programmes' relevance and impact (European Commission 2020).

5.3.15   Policy implications and strategic directions

The comparative analysis suggests several strategic directions for African student mobility programs. Firstly, there is a need for stronger institutional and policy frameworks, akin to those underpinning successful programmes like Erasmus+. This includes the establishment of a common African educational space with harmonised standards and recognition systems. Secondly, leveraging partnerships and collaborations, both within Africa and with other regions, can enhance the quality and scope of mobility programs. South-South cooperation, in particular, offers a framework for mutual learning and sharing of best practices suited to the African context. Lastly, integrating digital mobility and aligning programmes with market demands are critical for the contemporary relevance and sustainability of these programmes. This involves not only adapting to technological advancements but also ensuring that the skills and knowledge gained through mobility are aligned with the economic and social needs of the continent. While student mobility in Africa faces unique challenges, there are valuable lessons to be learned from global practices. The experiences of programmes like Erasmus+ and ASEAN provide a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of African student mobility initiatives. By adopting best practices from these programmes and adapting them to the African context, there is significant potential to advance the goals of educational excellence, regional integration, and sustainable development as envisioned in the African Union's Agenda 2063.

5.3.16   Summary of findings

The growing importance of inter-African mobility reveals a noticeable inclination towards heightened student mobility within Africa, propelled by a need for regional integration, cultural interchange, and intellectual cooperation. This move is a clear indication of a wider acknowledgment of the importance of educational exchanges within the same continent. Student mobility provides a multitude of advantages, such as intellectual enhancement,

individual growth, and a deeper comprehension of other cultures. Nevertheless, it also encounters obstacles such as logistical and budgetary limitations, varied educational systems, and a dearth of standardised rules. Consequently, both CEMA and the AU's Agenda 2063 have significant responsibilities in facilitating the movement of students. Their policies and frameworks play a critical role in establishing a favourable climate for such mobility, notwithstanding the presence of implementation difficulties. The movement of students is helping in promoting regional and subregional integration in Africa by cultivating a collective sense of identity and increasing mutual understanding across states. Furthermore, it is in accordance with the wider objectives of economic and social integration as specified in Agenda 2063. Other initiatives that may be adopted to facilitate these processes include:

- Learning from global examples like Erasmus+ and ASEAN, African student mobility programmes can benefit from enhanced policy frameworks, increased funding, and a focus on digital and market-aligned mobility.

- Recommendations

- African governments and regional bodies should prioritise the development of robust policy frameworks to support student mobility. This includes harmonising academic standards, simplifying visa processes, and recognising qualifications across borders.

- Establishing dedicated scholarship funds and financial support mechanisms is essential to increasing the accessibility of mobility programmes to a wider range of students

- Higher education institutions should be encouraged to establish partnerships and collaborative programs, facilitating academic exchanges and research collaborations.

- Embracing digital platforms and online learning can complement physical mobility, making educational exchanges more accessible and flexible.

- Mobility programs should be designed to align with the labour market needs of African countries, enhancing the employability and relevance of students' educational experiences.

- Leveraging partnerships within the Global South can provide valuable opportunities for shared learning and collaboration, tailored to the specific needs of developing countries.

5.3.17 Future prospects for student mobility in Africa

The future of student mobility in Africa has a lot of potential. Given the ongoing emphasis on regional integration across the continent, educational exchanges will assume a progressively crucial role. The effective execution of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement

(AfCFTA) has the potential to facilitate the movement of students and academics, promoting a more interconnected and affluent Africa. The continuous process of digitising education provides an additional opportunity for expansion. Virtual exchanges and online collaborative initiatives may increase in popularity, enhancing conventional mobility and broadening their scope. As African higher education institutions gain more recognition and improve in quality, they have the potential to attract not only students from within Africa but also students from other regions of the world. This would represent a shift in the usual pattern of academic mobility and signify a new phase in global higher education dynamics. Inter-African student mobility plays a crucial role in promoting educational, cultural, and economic integration throughout the continent. Although there are still obstacles to overcome, the potential advantages and rewards it provides are vast. By implementing well-planned strategies, advancing cooperation, and using creative methods, the movement of students may greatly assist in achieving the AU's goal of a united, wealthy, and peaceful Africa.

5.3.18 Cultural exchange and integration

Cultural interaction is a fundamental aspect of student mobility. When students have the opportunity to go to other countries for short, medium, and long-term visits, they also have the opportunity to immerse themselves in student life and get a broader understanding of life in general within other contexts, environments, and perspectives. They fully engage themselves in several aspects, ranging from language to eating. Interviewee 13 discusses the possibility of educational exchanges across the CEMAC subregion, highlighting the potential of higher education institutions in the subregion to provide language training for students. This case highlights the concept that educational mobility may result in the transmission of essential skills, which in turn promotes economic and cultural advancement. The goals of CESA and Agenda 2063, which aim for a prosperous Africa through inclusive growth and sustainable development, closely align with this. The CEMAC subregion offers exceptional students and professors the opportunity to train in other countries, demonstrating the clear benefits of information sharing and skill transfer at a subregional level.

5.3.18.1 Solutions for cultural and language barriers

While student mobility may offer CEMAC students the opportunity to learn new languages, it is also a challenge that might higher education to completely understand life from another context, say CAR students going to Equatorial Guinea where they do not only have to learn

French but also have find themselves in a multiethnic country with many languages that they may not have the time to learn. That notwithstanding, Interviewee 16 talks about the practical solution to language barriers encountered by students in intra-African mobility programmes, particularly within the context of diverse linguistic backgrounds in the CEMAC subregion. The direct intervention by the university, where students from English-speaking backgrounds were taught French and vice versa, showcases a concrete measure towards nurturing linguistic inclusivity and enhancing mutual understanding among students from different linguistic realms. They state:

> To overcome that, the university enrolled us in linguistics, and only those who came from an English background studied French; those who came from any French background studied English, and I think it helped a lot. It did not treble on my academic experiences; everything went well.

This strategy underscores the importance of language as a tool for integration and educational success in a multicultural setting. By incorporating such language training programmes, institutions can significantly ease the academic transition and social integration of mobile students, aligning with the broader goals of Agenda 2063 to foster unity and shared values across the continent. This practical approach to overcoming linguistic challenges serves as a model for addressing one of the key obstacles to intra-African student mobility and highlights the role of educational institutions in facilitating cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.

5.3.18.2   Social awareness

Interviewee 16 provides a nuanced view into the personal gains from educational mobility, emphasising not just the academic but also the social facets that contribute to a holistic educational journey. This insight, "We had a very nice and very, very impressive social work-life balance," underscores the significance of creating a balanced environment that fosters both personal and academic growth. In your analysis, you can discuss how this balance is essential for student well-being and how it aligns with Agenda 2063's emphasis on nurturing well-rounded and healthy African citizens.

Interviewee 2 underscores the transformative role of technology in modern education, as highlighted in the quote, "the internet is a great tool for untapped opportunities for PAUGHSS." This reflects the potential for digital tools to enhance educational experiences and broaden access, a key component of the educational strategies endorsed by Agenda 2063. In the context

of your study, this could lead to discussions on the importance of integrating digital literacy and internet access into the curriculum to empower students and broaden their perspectives.

Interviewee 9 speaks to the heart of intra-African mobility, emphasising the cross-cultural and pan-African benefits of such programmes:

> Like it is an endeavour where you get to meet Africans from all over Africa and socialise, meet, and then share your experiences and builds, and also ways forward to enhance the development of Africa.

This testimony should be central to your analysis, illustrating how student mobility acts as a catalyst for fostering understanding and unity among the continent's youth, which is instrumental in achieving the vision laid out in Agenda 2063 for a united and self-reliant Africa. Intertwining the concepts of holistic education, digital empowerment, and pan-African collaboration reveals a multifaceted approach to enhancing student mobility within the CEMAC region, resonant with Agenda 2063's broad objectives. Holistic education addresses the comprehensive development of students, promoting not just academic excellence but also socio-emotional health and cultural awareness, which are essential for fostering adaptable and empathetic leaders. Digital empowerment is pivotal, as it democratises access to information, connects diverse communities, and equips students with contemporary skills necessary in the global economy. Pan-African collaboration, by encouraging interactions and exchanges between students from different African nations, not only strengthens regional integration but also instils   a sense of shared identity and destiny. Together, these themes contribute to creating an educational ecosystem that is inclusive, innovative, and interconnected, laying a robust foundation for achieving sustainable development and unity across Africa as envisioned in Agenda 2063. This comprehensive educational strategy ensures that student mobility within the CEMAC region is not only a logistical endeavour but a transformative experience that aligns with the continent's broader developmental and unification goals.

5.3.18.3   Translation and interpretation

The importance of linguistic inclusivity in educational and regional integration efforts is highlighted by Interviewee 16, who stated:

> I also believe that Kiswahili, which is a very important language, as well as our Hausa and Arabic, should be given serious consideration. Progress has a pole on governance and regional integration. The pole of interpretation and transmission offers an option for

> Kiswahili Translation and Interpretation inside. Hosted by the University of Buea, we are the oldest Translation and Interpretation school in   Central Africa.

The mention of the University of Buea, which hosts the Centre for Translation and Interpretation of the Pan-African University, as a pivotal institution in translation and interpretation underlines the critical role of academic establishments in bridging linguistic gaps, supporting Agenda 2063's vision for a united and integrated Africa. This perspective should be analysed in your work as reflecting the essential need for linguistic diversity and expertise to foster effective communication and collaboration across the continent, aligning with the broader goals of educational policies and regional integration efforts in Africa.

5.3.19 Socio-Economic Development

The socio-economic development benefits of student mobility programmes are extensively highlighted through the experiences and insights of various interviewees, underscoring the importance of these programmes in enhancing cultural understanding, academic excellence, and professional networking.

Interviewee 14 discusses the broad exposure to diverse cultures and academic environments as key benefits of student mobility:

> So again, it was quite good to know. Because it exposed me to a wide variety of people coming from different countries with different mindsets and different ways of explaining or looking at things. So, which I think was absolutely great, getting to know you did not; you have not given me the specific names of these mobility programmes; you just said, European (Interviewee 14).

This sentiment is expanded upon with a focus on the comparative academic advantages and networking opportunities that such programmes can provide:

> What I speak about this mobility within Africa is very important, because the comparative analyses that we have to put into context, yes, the understanding of the differences in terms of the system, the structure, and the resources available in each university, are very important components. The issue of getting nurses to network-I don't know how that has been coding in your expertise, but I think some did 20 cooperation. Yes, cooperation is very important. I actually find that very few universities within Africa cooperate amongst themselves as universally. If they have cooperation, Thai universities in Gabon or universities in China, I'm not sure they can be able to concretely hop over to giving kind of a, you know, to where (Interviewee 14).

Interviewee 15 emphasises the academic and professional growth facilitated by student mobility, highlighting the learning and networking opportunities across different academic and research environments:

> Take, for example, a student who goes to another country to study, and say, for example, that in that country, you have professors and research institutions that do things, probably better than they have more resources than their school of origin. This student has the opportunity to learn and benefit from these resources, even though they are not available in his country of origin. He also profits; he also learns, you know, that there is a different system, a different way of thinking, a different way of approaching problems, and a completely new way of seeing things that they would otherwise not have access to in their home country. So this has shown to, you know, improve an individual academically and professionally. Obviously, by exposing yourself to individuals like this in other places, you create networks that will blossom into more professional networks with people with whom you could work. More people could develop a lot of really, really good projects and do a lot of good things together. So that also gives that extension to work with people that are not just in your country but out of the country as well (Interviewee 15).

Moreover, Interviewee 8 touches on the less formal but equally significant benefits of mobility, such as personal growth and cultural exchange. These narratives collectively highlight the transformative potential of student mobility programmes, not just in terms of educational attainment but also in fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and professional practices across the continent. This contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of the individual participants and the broader regions involved.

Interviewee 12 highlights the cultural and economic advantages of student mobility:

> Yeah, I think your benefits are beneficial, especially when it comes to, you know, maintaining our cultural and national heritage. I think it's important because the students tend to interact with almost the same language and in the same cultural environment, as well as networking and knowing, you know, professors who work in the same or related fields at different universities. And also, I think it can be beneficial, even in terms of finance, if a student can leave from a private institution and, you know, into a state university, then I think that will probably be so beneficial to the student in terms of cost (Interviewee 12).

Interviewee 13 discusses both the personal and professional growth opportunities provided by mobility, citing exposure to new technology and methodologies as key benefits:

> Student mobility has a lot of merit and merit. Let's begin with the fact that, you know, when students move from one country to another, or from one city or National University to another, they are exposed to new ways of doing things. For example, let's take technology, technology is advancing in Africa back in our country coming home, with the technology to all these things, that is, ages today cannot really do just two days in our country. When we travel to other countries, conferences, and seminars, we are exposed to new technologies, and we are exposed to new ideas of doing things in a new branded way. Instead of the way that we have been, mobility is really important." (Interviewee 13).

The educational enrichment through cultural immersion and language acquisition is also noted.

> Of course, basically, you benefit a lot of things: you benefit language; you learn a new language; you learn a new language; you like culture; and you learn how to identify your people of different nationalities; you learn how to belong; to accept them for who they are; you accept the issue; assume the identity; cultural ideas; food; you know, anything helps you as an individual; to know how to interact with people (Interviewee 13).

Furthermore, the practical aspects of economic exchanges through mobility programmes are considered significant.

> Like you said, we should have trade connections, trade connections, we should have connections, we have   importation and exportation of goods. And by the way, even some of the students who are travelling to such countries can be equally employed. Because we should also have exchange programmes (Interviewee 13).

Lastly, the potential for academic collaborations and the sharing of experiences and knowledge through exchange programmes is underscored:

"And to do exchange programmes, some of these today should be given to visit other universities in DC maximum, yes. And equally within this inbox zone, when they select a particular set of students to send them out of Africa, or let's say other African countries, maybe East Africa, You know, we see how things are done there too, to attend research and seminars, and when they go back home, they share their experiences with the yoga tradition; they have

Metis antioxidants; they should have these opportunities of mobility in terms of going out of Africa." (Interviewee 13, 1.64% Coverage)

These insights collectively highlight the significance of student mobility programmes as engines for socio-economic development, cultural understanding, and academic enrichment within the African higher education landscape.

5.3.20 Aspirations for higher education and challenges of student retention post-mobility

The motivations and subsequent challenges associated with student mobility shed light on the aspirations for higher education and the difficulties in ensuring students return to their home countries after their studies abroad.

Interviewee 1 articulates a straightforward motivation for participating in student mobility programmes: "As for my motivation, it was the desire to further my studies, and when the opportunity presented itself, I seized it." This desire for advancement through education is a common thread among students seeking opportunities abroad, emphasising the value placed on higher education as a pathway to personal and professional growth. Interviewee 4 expresses disillusionment with the reality of educational experiences abroad compared to expectations, highlighting the importance of institutional reputation and actual offerings:

> I was determined to attend an elite university in order to easily get integrated in the job market, and PAUGHSS gave the impression it was an elite institution; unfortunately, it remained an impression (Interviewee 4).

This sentiment underscores the potential disconnect between the perceived and actual value of education received through mobility programmes, which can influence future decisions and expectations of students. The discussion around students returning to their home countries post-study reveals significant challenges, as expressed by Interviewee 14:

> It is absolutely hard to draw a line on these, but the students have to probably make an undertaking that they will return if they don't meet the mobility program. So this is very important if I can put it that way. When are you going to Italy? Yeah, yeah, I think we took an undertaking that we're going to return to handle people who are going to take it but have not returned. So I got a young, younger friend of mine who was in his final year in the economics department; he went to York and even got a one-year visa to Portugal. And when I never came back, I said, Look, man, you're fulfilling, or you're giving away four years you have spent in university, close to what you have to complete . So this is the issue, man, this is the issue that we got. Again, it's tough, it is hard,

173

because of the disparity in terms of economic opportunities and the disparity in terms of education opportunities. So this has to be fixed. I wish I had a lot of information about how we could fix these. But again, this is what I can say about this issue.

The narrative provided by Interviewee 14 illustrates the complex socio-economic factors that influence whether students return home after studying abroad. The disparities in economic and educational opportunities are significant barriers, making it difficult for countries to retain their educated youth.

These insights collectively highlight the aspirations of students to leverage educational mobility for better opportunities, the realities of educational quality abroad, and the significant challenges related to retaining talent in their home countries. These factors are crucial for policymakers to consider when designing and implementing educational and economic policies.

5.3.21 Educational policy and regional integration: challenges for student mobility in CEMAC

The challenges of student mobility within the CEMAC region are multifaceted, affecting the potential for a harmonised educational system across various countries. According to Interviewee 12, the disparity in educational standards among universities significantly impacts the benefits that students can derive from mobility programs. They noted:

> And, of course, the fact that the city or the educational system is probably in CMR cannot be harmonised, therefore means some universities have higher standards than others to ensure that every student benefits from the semester in a university, which probably has the highest standard, and another is to definitely benefit from a lot of activities or infrastructure activities, as well as the standard of education.

This highlights the need for a more cohesive approach to education standards across the region to ensure that all students benefit equitably from mobility opportunities. Furthermore, Interviewee 13 elaborates on the inconsistencies within national mobility, suggesting that the variety in course offerings and academic departments complicates the mobility landscape. These insights highlight the need for a standardised approach within educational systems to support a more effective and inclusive student mobility framework that can truly benefit all participants across the region.

Interviewee 14 discusses the practical aspects and challenges of establishing effective mobility programmes within Africa. They highlighted an instance that reflects broader systemic issues that can hinder mobility:

174

Absolutely, there would be a good boost to offering mobility within Africa along with the universities again. In 2019, I encountered a mobility issue due to participating in a programme in Sweden. My university didn't offer an undergraduate degree in international relations, only postgraduate, which caused a decline due to university policies not having an undergraduate counterpart. These are the kinds of little compromises that affect mobility, which my university failed to address properly to establish a concrete agreement. When I went to Italy, the experiences there highlighted the importance of having such mobility in Africa. For instance, why don't we have students from the University of Boyer doing concrete internships in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, or Ghana? Those areas have strong medical and legal education, which could benefit our students.

They also emphasise the uneven commitment across regions to facilitate such programmes.

I think you've already highlighted that if we were to have more mobility within Africa, it would have a much better impact on education. Unfortunately, there has not been enough mobility. Mobility exists, but you are not quite informed about it. It's not as pronounced as many mobility programmes that we have in the West. For example, I am specifically looking at this context within a sub-region, which is St. Mark, and there's nothing like that; we got nothing. I am also saying that there is no, let me call it mobility, by the way, because this is a Pan-African Union.

The issue of mobility is not just about physical movement but encompasses broader educational and bureaucratic challenges that can impede such efforts. These challenges underscore the importance of robust agreements and infrastructure to support educational mobility effectively within the continent, as described by Interviewee 14.

Interviewee 15 reflects on the potential benefits of mobility programmes and the obstacles that might hinder their success:

Yeah, it could be one of the reasons, but amongst other reasons, definitely, because I think it'll be really open to the applicant. If the programme is designed, for example, to say, okay, somebody who comes to Buea could potentially learn English while on mobility. I think there are a couple of people who would be really encouraged to do it. But as a hindrance, I think we can only be sure that such a programme actually runs and fails for those reasons. But I don't; I'm not really sure, at least to my knowledge, that such a programme ever existed and failed.

Interviewee 6 outlines several practical challenges associated with mobility within Africa, emphasising financial and cultural integration barriers:

> Limited scholarship opportunities and high tuition fees in certain countries can make studying abroad within Africa financially challenging. Access to affordable and safe housing, especially in popular destinations, can be difficult for international students. Difficulty adapting to a new language of instruction and integrating into a different cultural context can affect academic performance and social life.

They also note language and funding obstacles specific to the CEMAC subregion:

> French remains the dominant language of instruction in many CEMAC countries, creating challenges for students from non-francophone member states. Available scholarship programmes often fall short of demand, leaving many students facing significant financial burdens for studying abroad within CEMAC.

Interviewee 8 discusses the strategic advantages of mobility within Africa, contrasted with external mobility:

> I think it'd be better for the remaining African countries to go to countries like Nigeria, because when you learn in those countries, you already started with people there. And then, if you are posted, that's going to bring development to Africa. Whereas if you want to go to Europe, you want to have a job in Europe, or wait to be developing in Africa. So I really think it's how we remain in Africa.

They briefly mention the ongoing issue of language barriers: "Okay, I mean, unless I was, and then yes. Language barrier." Interviewee 9 points to logistical support issues related to mobility:

> University doesn't take care of the expenses. No, no, they do the transportation; that is the vehicle that will be transporting students. Likewise, those coming from Boyer. Okay. Take care of the transport.

These perspectives collectively highlight the complexities of implementing effective student mobility programmes within Africa, considering financial, linguistic, and cultural integration challenges alongside logistical support issues.

5.3.21.1 Mobility programme around Africa

Interviewee 14 discusses the potential and direction of mobility programmes within Africa, comparing them to European models such as Erasmus:

> Apart from mobility, like I said, actually, the idea of mobility within Africa is that, you know, at least Africa is a big continent, a continent that is diverse; we've seen how other

continents, like in Europe, do their things, like, let's take, for example, Erasmus, and so on and so forth. That apart from the fact that, you know, we should promote intra-African mobility of students, which means that students should have the opportunity to, you know, go more to other African countries, because we always say we like, especially looking at the vision of the African Union, or Africa as a continent, the fact that we should come closer together, we should be, like, even like, you know, what, we always talk about African Unity, so that people can be able to, you know, move to other countries without having restrictions, and so on and so forth.

They further question the balance between intra-African and international mobility.

The mechanism is that before we go on a broader scale, to have that within the continent and move out of the continent, we have to have that with the rest of the world. But again, certain universities in Africa have partnerships kind of mobility partnerships, with universities out there, for example, there are certain universities in in in Djibouti that have partnership, I think, with Istanbul think university where the students that are in a pocket of engineering, most of them they, I think five of them are from Djibouti, the government has a kind of close establishment with the university and within the government of Turkey as well. So that could be an immobility from a broader perspective based on state-to-state-level laws.

These reflections illustrate a thoughtful approach to enhancing student mobility within the continent, fostering greater unity and cooperation, while considering the necessary balance with international experiences.

5.3.22 Mobility programme to support regional integration

Interviewee 16 emphasises the role of internships and student exchanges within Africa in promoting regional integration:

I think it is something that is being considered because some students, from time to time, will do internships; you know, they do internships in Africa, the Export Import Bank, yes, remote shift, and some of them will do it in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Some will do it, and some will do it in the African Union itself. Like the interpretation students, they always need a petition from the African Union. And sometimes the African Union is the one sponsoring such initiatives, particularly with those students who go to Addis Ababa.

They further suggest that sufficient funding could enhance these opportunities.

And if enough funding is provided, the African University as well as other universities, yes. And then we can really get to that position where we can meet in the human resources of Africa. Yes, within Africa, and stem the tide of this massive weapon dream that is the continent of Africa.

Interviewee 8 discusses how studying abroad within Africa can strengthen regional ties.

I think that because you studied in the country, and let's see, you live in your country, and the goods that actually made me study during the quarter, we can see England. Yes. So happy, like, will have a good relationship. Okay, so now I have mentioned inter-African mobility. And I already explained to you that this has to do with, you know, the ability or the opportunity for students to travel within Africa to go for student exchange programmes or internships in other African countries.

These insights highlight the potential of mobility programmes to enhance understanding and cooperation between African nations, ultimately supporting the goals of regional integration through educational exchanges and internships.

5.3.23 Students exchange programmes and mobility

Interviewee 12 discusses the limited but impactful participation of students in exchange programmes and mobility initiatives within and beyond Cameroon, highlighting both opportunities and constraints:

I have, though; it's not really something that is too common. There are a few programmes in the universe, like the Masters in Public Health, where we have confused students who are going to benefit from some scholarship opportunities, and some of them tend to attend some internships in some African countries like Zimbabwe. Yes. So, but it's not really something that is too common, because I think I know just a few students from that programme who have benefited from it. Okay, aside from that   , most students tend to do the internship, just within CEMAC.

Further elaborating on the rarity of such opportunities, they express scepticism about the broad applicability of these programmes:

I really doubt it because it's not something that has been done by all students. It's just a few selected students. So I really doubt the internship; I know that what is usually considered credit is most often done within the camera.

Expressing support for expanded opportunities, they note the advantages of such experiences:

I think you'd definitely be a good idea. And there'll probably be a lot of benefits for the students from my own point of view, one of which is the fact that they might be doing an internship or part of their studies at a university where they have maybe state-of-the-art laboratories where they can actually benefit. I think that was something that really helped the student, especially maybe doing an internship.

Lastly, they highlight the importance of networking and collaborative opportunities that can arise from such programmes:

And also you're cutting, you also have the students to be able to network, which is very important, pre-collaboration with all our lecturers, and be able to engage in research, you know, which can benefit both institutions.

Interviewee 13 discusses the structural differences in educational systems that impact student mobility, noting both the pacing and curricular integration in various institutions: "So incoming, more hectic, and it takes a long period of time, unlike in Istanbul, where their curriculum is really designed to meet the objectives within the timeframe set for it." They also mention specific instances of cross-university enrolment that facilitate mobility but are not widespread:

Yes, there are some people living in Sua. There are some people leaving, especially doctoral students. Yes. So they started a course in Sua. Yes. And they are required to take a particular course in UB, and vice   versa.

Interviewee 14 highlights the lack of structured mobility programmes, reflecting on missed opportunities for regional educational exchanges:

Unfortunately, there was nothing like student mobility—nothing of that sort. That could give you a chance to either go to Nigeria, which is very close, or go to Ghana or go to other English-speaking universities to have a kind of experience of what you're studying.

They further clarify the broader scope of what mobility can encompass, not just physical movement but also access to varied educational and professional environments:

Of course, you got the right to move it again. Mobility can be literally mobility in the sense that you can access resources. When a university gives you the fact that you would find yourself within this country, not sorry, not the same country in the same region or the same continent about mobility, or mobility, which you just mentioned, is the fact that I can absolutely come in as a boy and go do one year.

179

Finally, they touch on the academic flexibility that mobility should ideally offer, facilitating cross-disciplinary learning and enhancing educational depth.

> But mobility is again about living from one program. Let's say you're doing public administration. Then you find that there are some courses in international human rights or international law that you're so passionate about. And then you find that that university doesn't offer that. And you got the chance to finish this course by going to a university in Nigeria, or whatever university within that same geographical location, and you've got the chance, why not? So this is one of the three aspects I want to mention about mobility.

Interviewee 15 discusses their personal experience and observations regarding mobility programmes, highlighting various aspects of student exchanges and the structural supports that facilitate such movements: "There are mobility programmes like Erasmus and all that, but I decided to focus a lot on my studies. I did not really take the time to look at them and apply. Okay," expressing a personal choice to prioritise direct academics over participation in mobility programmes. They elaborate on the logistical aspects of mobility, such as credit transfer and cultural experiences:

> At least from what I understood from my classmates, their mobility occurs, you know, between universities where they have similar systems. I can use the word-grading system. The universities are able to match at this level, and you can transfer credits across universities, and you could take a course there, and the course is recognised in this other university as a requirement that you've completed. So it also gives people the opportunity to experience other cultures.

The potential benefits of successful mobility programmes are further discussed.

> Yeah, I think if they're able to do it, if they're able to do it, and, you know, the cooperation actually goes through in the case where the student is actually able to go to another country, learn under safe conditions, come back, and the country recognises whatever they learned and is able to also learn from what they learned, just as we know, exchange programmes to be, then that will be a good idea.

Interviewee 15 also provides examples of inter-country academic mobility within Africa, particularly involving students from Central Africa:

> Yeah. So, for example, I've seen many cases of students who leave, for example, Congo to study at ENAM. Or they come and study at various international relations institutes

or the police academy in Cameroon, even the universities. The students from Chad, leave Chad, they come and study in Cameroon.

Lastly, they note the limitations of their knowledge regarding the full scope of available mobility opportunities: "The ones I know were international students; they came by their means. Okay. There might have been some other programmes that I'm not aware of." Interviewee 2 shares details about a specific exchange programme that involved students from the University of Yaoundé II and the University of Buea, highlighting the blend of academic and social activities:

> The exchange programme between Pan Africa students at the University of Yaoundé II and the University of Buea. It was a 3-day trip, and it was packed with lots of activities such as debates on what was happening in Africa, sports (a match between both students, male and female), and tours of the beautiful city and its history.

Interviewee 3 reflects on the broader educational and social benefits of such mobility:

> Experiences range from personal to academic. I would say academically, I have learned how others do their schoolwork and what their focus really is. On a personal note, meeting new people has been more educational than what I have learned in the classroom.

Interviewee 5 discusses several structured mobility and exchange initiatives promoted by PAUGHSS:

> PAUGHSS four-month internship programme is an initiative aimed at promoting regional development. During this period, master's students are sent out to various regional institutions in Africa for hands-on experience.

They also emphasise the importance of creating supportive structures for mobility.

> Facilitate cross-border student mobility programmes, enabling students to study in different institutions within the region. This not only promotes cultural exchange but also enhances the development of a regional identity and network among future leaders.

Further, they advocate for academic collaboration across borders.

> Encourage the establishment of joint degree programmes between universities in different countries. Joint programmes can provide students with a diverse educational experience and promote collaboration among academic institutions.

And suggest practical steps to ensure seamless academic transitions:

Establish mechanisms for flexible recognition of academic credentials to facilitate the mobility of graduates across borders. This can include frameworks for the recognition of prior learning and experiences gained in different educational systems.

Lastly, they propose cultural integration measures:

Develop cultural exchange programmes that allow students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives within the region. This can foster a sense of unity and understanding among students from different countries.

These insights demonstrate the multi-faceted approach necessary to foster effective regional integration through student mobility, stressing both the structural and cultural dimensions of such programmes. Interviewee 6 elaborates on the benefits and significance of inter-African student mobility, particularly within the CEMAC subregion. They describe how such mobility enhances educational opportunities and contributes to regional development:

The movement of students across borders within the African continent for educational purposes is referred to as inter-African student mobility. For various reasons, it's become more significant, especially in the Central African Monetary Union (CEMAC) subregion.

Further emphasising the educational benefits, they note:

Intra-African mobility provides students with access to a wider range of high-quality educational opportunities, potentially exceeding what's available domestically. This can improve learning outcomes and contribute to a more educated and skilled population across the region.

Interviewee 9 discusses a student-led exchange programme that reflects grassroots initiative and collaboration, illustrating the active role students play in fostering inter-regional connectivity.

Previously, a few weeks ago, we were expecting students from Boyer to come on an exchange to have a week-long visit, and then we will also have gone to Boyer. But that is still Pan African universities, students, those who are in boy angles were asking.

They further clarify the nature and scope of the programme:

It is a student-led programme; the students are the ones who are leading the ram. So what the argument had been was that when the students from Welcome came here, or when they came here, they were going to be fostered by those who were residing here. Those of us who are the students who are here are going to host them. Likewise, when

we go to Boyer, we are going to be hosted there as well. Yes. So if I understand correctly, it's not an initiative of the university, but rather an initiative of the students. It's basically a collaborative effort, and the administration is backing the initiative. It is not a sponsored initiative. So students have to order that the administration will do is facilitate the transportation and is the way out, yes, because yeah, to provide a guide and also facilitate the movement, it is the people that will transport the pieces from here to where and from where to here, but now feeding an accommodation will be the responsibility of the students.

These insights highlight how student-driven initiatives complement formal education programmes by providing practical, real-world experience in logistics, hosting, and cross-cultural exchange, crucial for fostering unity and understanding across the continent.

5.3.24 Solutions for CEMAC students mobility challenges

Interviewee 6 outlines potential solutions for addressing the mobility challenges faced by students within the CEMAC region, emphasising the need for enhanced support systems:

Increasing funding for regional scholarship programmes and diversifying funding sources to reach a wider range of students facing financial barriers. Promoting the use of additional teaching languages, especially Portuguese and English, in CEMAC universities in order to serve a more diversified student base.

These solutions aim to reduce financial barriers and language limitations, which are significant hurdles to student mobility across the CEMAC subregion.

On the topic of intra-African mobility in the context of Agenda 2063, Interviewee 10 discusses the operational independence of universities from the African Union yet highlights their alignment with its goals:

It is independent from the African Union. They have their own structure in place. As a university, they do have staff that are running the whole university, but the African Union does not have a direct involvement. The time they get involved is only to say that the university leverages Agenda 2063 of the African Union in all their cost deliverables.

Furthermore, they express concerns about the lack of awareness at the grassroots level regarding key initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, a flagship project of Agenda 2063:

I can give you the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063, where Africans are expected to trade with each other, but if

you go to the grassroots, people are not aware. Even people that are working in ministerial governments are not aware, so when are they going to be thinking about these things?

Interviewee 16 discusses the approach to providing education from a uniquely African perspective and how this ties into student mobility across the continent: "It is indeed providing quality education from a pan-Africanist African-centric perspective to Africans in Africa. Okay, using African methodologies, you know," indicating a deep-rooted commitment to fostering an educational environment that is reflective of African values and perspectives. Further elaborating on the specifics of intra-African mobility, they add:

> So that is what, but coming back to your issue that you mentioned in terms of African and intra-African mobility, Yes. Because if we look at what is happening now, we may look at it in terms of; we may further break it down to analyse it to see that mobility is in terms of programme; a particular programme.

This indicates a strategic implementation of mobility programmes that are not just geographically inclusive but also diverse in their academic offerings, aligning with the broader goals of the African Union.

Interviewee 6 expands on the vision of the African Union for enhancing student mobility:

> The African Union's vision for a unified, independent, and peaceful Africa places a strong emphasis on education as a vital component of growth. This vision holds immense potential for inter-African student mobility in the coming years. A greater range of students, regardless of location, can receive a high-quality education thanks to highly technological online platforms and virtual exchange programmes that can break down geographical barriers.

This reference to the use of modern technology highlights a forward-thinking approach to overcoming traditional barriers to education and mobility, suggesting a future where physical distances are less of a hindrance to educational and cultural exchanges across Africa.

5.3.25 Digital Transformation and Access

In the context of digital mobility programmes, Interviewee 15 acknowledges the potential benefits while highlighting the practical challenges that hinder their implementation in Africa:

> Well, when it comes to digital mobility we already see in the Western world, that is possible, and it's helpful. I would think that the only reason why it's really not common in Africa would be things like slow internet or poor electricity, you know, probably even

just the lack of good technology and hardware like computers and all that. But obviously, from what we see in the Western world, it's something that, indeed, can be very beneficial to students, countries, and like all universities.

The reference to inadequate infrastructure such as slow internet and poor electricity supply paints a clear picture of the barriers to digital mobility in Africa, despite its recognised potential. Discussing the well-known Erasmus programme, Interviewee 14 raises questions about the balance between regional and global mobility:

I know that some European students also go to other parts of the world to study, because the fact that they have mobility within Europe doesn't mean that they're completely unable to travel to other parts of the world. But to what extent they go to other parts of the world is what I don't know.

This shows a curiosity about how programmes like Erasmus might be adapted to or inspire similar initiatives within Africa, emphasising the need for a strategy that accommodates both regional priorities and global engagement. On the issue of technology and digital innovation, Interviewee 1 points out the significant gaps within their educational institution:

Also, there is a lack of digital innovation in this institute, which is a key challenge not only to the students but to the administrators and lecturers as well. Embrace digitalisation and innovation.

This statement underscores the urgency for educational institutions in Africa to embrace digital transformation to enhance accessibility and educational delivery, reflecting a critical area for development in line with modern educational practices. Interviewee 5 discusses the necessity for educational institutions in Africa to adapt to technological advancements and digital trends:

The rapid pace of technological advancements requires educational institutions to continually update their curriculum, teaching methods, and infrastructure to keep pace with the evolving needs of students and industries.

This highlights the urgency for continuous improvement in educational frameworks to meet modern demands. Further emphasising the benefits of online education, they note:

Expanding online education programmes can increase accessibility, reach a broader audience across different regions, and provide flexible learning options. This can be particularly beneficial for professionals and individuals who may face geographical constraints.

This points to the potential of online programmes to democratise access to education across vast and varied geographic landscapes. On the investment in digital infrastructure, Interviewee 5 suggests:

> Invest in digital education infrastructure to facilitate online learning and collaboration. This can enhance access to education, particularly in remote areas, and support the development of a skilled workforce across the region.

This underscores the role of robust digital infrastructure in expanding educational reach and supporting regional development through skill enhancement. They conclude with recommendations for integrating technology into educational practices:

> In line with global trends, PAUGHSS may further integrate technology into its educational methods. This could include expanding online learning opportunities, leveraging digital platforms for research collaboration, and embracing innovative technologies for enhanced teaching and learning experiences.

This proposal aligns with global educational trends and stresses the importance of embracing technology to improve the quality and impact of education in Africa.

5.3.26 Individual experiences and choices

Interviewee 1 shares their experience as a student, emphasising the diversity and cultural richness encountered at their institution: "It's been an interesting experience to share the same space with students from over 20 African countries representing the different 5 regions of the continent." They further elaborate on how this exposure has contributed to their personal growth:

> The promotion of diversity and social cohesion. On a personal note, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with students from all over Africa, which has made me learn and understand so much about these different cultures. That alone has been a significant contribution of PAUGHSS to me.

Interviewee 11 discusses the impact of their educational experience on their personal and professional development:

> I believe that, as an individual, PAUGHSS has equipped me with the necessary skills that are essential to moving Africa forward. This programme has increased my career prospects and visibility. Through this programme, I have managed to be part of the 2023 Luanda Biennale Peace Conference on Promoting the Culture of Peace and Social Transformation, where I have contributed to policy discussions alongside other youths

on the continent, thus joining the Biennale network of youths working towards promoting the culture of peace. This contributes to the general peacefulness of Africa.

Interviewee 13 reflects on their more limited exposure to diverse educational settings:

Actually, I'll say no, in as much as courses upon saying I was not privileged or opportunity to visit other seats or other universities to do research or to do a particular course, the only thing I had was the opportunity to do what I had to do when I visited the language centre in Yahoo, which they call C, when I was doing undergraduate statistics just for us to understand how languages are meant to place in how we know that term languages.

Interviewee 16 reflects on the impact of their educational experiences and suggests that such insights should be shared with public officials for continuous improvement.

And I think it's very important because I also think that your study should be presented to the public officials; since you're working on them, at least a copy of your work should be given to them because for lessons learned and improvement, you know, I started like I said, literally, I went to progress in 2012, the first batch of the Pan African University.

They also share personal anecdotes from their student lives:

Yes, […], indeed, indeed. I can tell you that we find ourselves in a unique position for those of us who came from Korea, because that was wonderful, yes. You know, we have experienced that in our in, in our lives as we were students, you know.

Interviewee 2 discusses their role as students and the educational opportunities they had while studying abroad:

My role was to be a student, which I performed excellently at. It was nice experiencing a new country and learning about their culture. In conclusion, the experience wasn't bad. However, a lot can be done to improve.

They also mention specific training sessions that were particularly impactful: "During the Enactus and GIZ entrepreneurship training, I learned a lot. It was a very stimulating and thought-provoking session we had with the external teachers that came to teach us." These accounts highlight the diverse experiences of students in academic programmes, illustrating the personal and academic growth that occurs through international and intercultural exposures, as well as the ongoing need for improvements in educational offerings. Interviewee 4 shares a profound personal realisation from their educational journey, emphasising the importance of maintaining one's principles: "I learned that though I don't have 'money,' I should keep my

187

dignity and integrity to call a cat a cat and a dog a dog!" Interviewee 5 reflects on the comprehensive benefits of their educational experience at PAUGHSS: "Being a PAUGHSS student is a great experience that allowed me to explore my interests, develop skills, and connect with others." Interviewee 7 describes the enriching experience of learning from the diverse backgrounds of fellow students from across Africa, which contributed to a broader understanding of regional issues:

> Yes, actually, it has been a good experience, a great experience of learning, not just learning within the coursework but also learning through the experiences of other colleagues from various parts of Africa, because we come from all parts of Africa, and you know, sharing our background, you also come to learn. Okay, we are experiencing this; other countries are also experiencing this; other countries are good, and they are not good. And this has been more of a reflection of how you place yourself on the continent, how you see yourself performing, and what you seek to achieve later on. To me, I'm not really into the truck, and I feel like my two kids in   the court will come to play for him because I've come to understand what it takes to be a regional integration and how three New South Wales.

Interviewee 10 discusses the diverse motivations among students in educational programmes, highlighting how these motivations impact their academic engagement:

> Students also depend on the level of motivation, and some students really are interested in learning about these things, but some of the students there are there for the sake of getting a scholarship and making the two-year scholarship, so that reflects on the level of motivation they put into their assignments, or maybe in participating in discussions or bringing issues from their countries because, as a student at this institution, you are required to represent your countries in discussions, but some of them might not be participating; they will just be quiet.

Interviewee 13 briefly mentions their experience with a programme, emphasising its short duration: "It was just a one-week programme; we'll just do one week. Yeah." These insights provide a snapshot into the varying levels of engagement and commitment among students, influenced by their reasons for participating in educational programmes, and how such diversity can affect the dynamics within academic settings.

5.3.26.1   Students exchange programmes and mobility

Interviewee 12 discusses the limited occurrence and scope of student exchange programmes within the context of certain academic programmes at their university:

> I have, though; it's not really something that is too common. There are a few programmes in the universe, like the Masters in Public Health, where we have confused students who are going to benefit from some scholarship opportunities, and some of them tend to attend some internships in some African countries like Zimbabwe. Yes. So, but it's not really something that is too common, because I think I know just a few students from that programme who have benefited from it. Okay, aside from that , most students tend to do the internship, just within CEMAC.

The participant further doubts the widespread application of such programmes, suggesting they are reserved for a select few:

> I really doubt it because it's not something that has been done by all students. It's just a few selected students. So I really doubt the internship; I know that what is usually considered credit is most often done within the CEMAC.

Interviewee 12 believes that the potential benefits of participating in student mobility programmes are significant, particularly when students can access specialised resources. Further elaborating on the nature of these exchanges, Interviewee 9 describes the logistics and student responsibilities involved:

> It is students; it is a student-led programme; the students are the ones who are leading the ram. So what the argument had been was that when the students from Welcome came here, or when they came here, they were going to be fostered by those who were residing here. Those of us who are the students who are here are going to host them. Likewise, when we also go to Boyer, we are going to be hosted...the administration will do is facilitate the transportation and is the way out yes, because yeah, to provide a guide and also facilitate the movement that is the people that will transport the pieces from here to where and from where to here, but now feeding and accommodation will be the responsibility of the students.

This detailed description not only showcases the collaborative and self-managed nature of these programmes but also indicates the kind of support that institutions provide, focusing on logistical assistance while leaving the cultural and social engagement to the students themselves. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the participants, enhancing the learning and exchange experience.

5.3.27 Case study conclusion

This case study explored the transformative shift towards intra-African student mobility, a strategic move designed to strengthen ties and foster understanding among the continent's youth. It did so by highlighting the reforms and policies adopted and implemented by CEMAC countries to support student exchanges within the subregion such as the credit transfer system, which were integral to building a resilient and interconnected educational network. The case study also discussed the impact of such mobility on personal and academic growth, cultural exchange, and the development of a pan-African identity among students. The bottom line of the case study is the need for robust institutional frameworks and supportive policies that could overcome existing barriers to mobility, such as visa issues, educational standard discrepancies, and cultural differences with RECs in Africa. By enhancing intra-African mobility, CEMAC countries are by default contributing to the realisation of CESA's and Agenda 2063's vision for a united and prosperous Africa, fostering a new generation of leaders well-versed in regional challenges and opportunities.

5.4 Authorisation, accreditation and higher education quality assurance processes in the CEMAC subregion: lessons from the United States

Rising costs associated with higher education and increased scrutiny of the value of a degree (Clark et al. 2023) are being influenced by a decrease in public perception of its value (Caron and Muscanell 2022), financial constraints, declining enrolment rates and the complexities of marketing (Lynn 2023). Expectedly, these factors collectively highlight a noticeable absence of extensive research into the foundational principles that shape contemporary higher education, such as incorporating pre-existing knowledge systems, developing critical thinking skills, promoting metacognition and self-regulated learning, providing ample practice opportunities, recognising student diversity and fostering an environment conducive to learning, promotion of critical consciousness, dialogic teaching strategies, problem-posing education and individual empowerment (Ambrose et al. 2010; Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone 2011; Freire 1972). In this light, and based on its impact for establishing, accrediting and ensuring quality in higher education, this study spotlights the CEMAC subregion, which is at a critical stage, as it faces several obstacles and prospects for improving and restructuring its higher education system(s). The research examines the American higher education model in order to identify possible policy adjustments and strategic headways that may be adapted to the unique socioeconomic and

cultural setting of the CEMAC countries. This means a complete understanding of higher education regulations that promote quality via demanding authorisation and certification processes. Recognising the disparities in historical circumstances, timing and available resources that may exist between the US and CEMAC countries, the study invites the latter to selectively adopt successful US programmes to their setting. This should be done with caution to minimise possible setbacks, and preferably funded using local finances to avoid the dependence and limits often imposed by foreign borrowing. Accordingly, the study is not another effort to legitimise the Bretton Woods institutions' liberalisation practises, which has traditionally resulted in unfavourable outcomes, largely due to the attached conditions that fail to consider the unique circumstances of the recipient countries, a situation exacerbated when the policies are shaped by neocolonial interests and funded by external sources that restrict autonomy over the use of the funds. As we will see, the study argues in favour of policy transfer and adaptation, otherwise referred to as internationalisation at home, preferably using available local resources to meet targets.

This case study compares the higher education authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance systems in the CEMAC subregion to the system in the United States. Unlike the first two case studies, this case study methodology included a meticulous analysis of legal documents, policy papers, academic literature, and empirical data obtained from both CEMAC and the United States.

5.4.1   Case study methodology

The approach outlined in this case example can be described as the "Comparative Policy Analysis Methodology" due to its fundamental attributes. The objective was to ascertain optimal methodologies, areas requiring enhancement, and distinctive obstacles encountered by the systems being compared. During the data collection, document analysis was thoroughly examined legal texts, policy papers   and official reports that are relevant to higher education policies in both the CEMAC sub-region and the United States. Comparative policy analysis is a well-recognised approach in social science research, especially in disciplines such as public policy, education, political science, and sociology. The development of this has not been attributed to a single developer but rather has evolved through the contributions of multiple experts over time. Prominent individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of comparative techniques include trailblazers such as Talcott Parsons and Max

Weber in the realm of sociology. Similarly, in the domain of comparative education, scholars of great influence include George Bereday and Joseph Lauwerys.

In this case example, an extensive literature review was conducted, involving an array of sources such as materials from the websites of the U.S. Department of Education and the Pennsylvania State Department of Education, as well as documents obtained from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The review additionally incorporated data from constitutions, the Ministries of Higher Education and other relevant government websites in each CEMAC country, as well as other pertinent government websites. In addition, data and reports from international organisations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and Education Cannot Wait were employed. The empirical data analysis included authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance processes, enrolment statistics, graduation rates, financial frameworks and academic accomplishments in both ecosystems. Various sources, including policy-relevant documents from each country and constitutional materials accessed through electronic databases, government websites, and the University of Pittsburgh's online library, supported the analysis. An assessment was conducted to analyse the organisational structures and functioning processes of higher education institutions in both ecosystems. In addition, the researcher conducted an impact assessment to determine the socioeconomic impacts of these policies, with a specific focus on academic quality and research outputs. The study placed great importance on ethical considerations, mostly relying on publicly available data and published sources. The case example helped to uncover significant themes, trends and policy orientations, emphasising the distinctions and similarities between the higher education systems of CEMAC and the United States. The methodology aimed to offer policymakers in the CEMAC sub-region a thorough comprehension of higher education policies, along with practical insights. It acknowledges the constraints in data coverage, possible biases, and the difficulties in comparing systems with varying socio-economic and cultural contexts. The objective of this case example was to develop flexible methods that can be adjusted to the specific circumstances of CEMAC countries, relying on a diverse range of academic, governmental and international sources.

Comparative Policy Analysis Methodology provided a strong framework for studying higher education policies, characterised by its thorough approach to gathering data, nuanced comprehension of contextual variations, and meticulous multi-layered analysis encompassing policy, structural, and impact evaluations. This methodology guarantees thoroughness and dependability in the results while also tailoring the knowledge to the distinct socio-economic

and cultural circumstances of the CEMAC sub-region and the United States. Nevertheless, the methodology encounters obstacles such as the intricacy of handling varied data sets, the possibility of making broad generalisations across various educational systems, and potential biases in the selection and interpretation of data. Although there are obstacles, the methodology's meticulous design and ethical adherence greatly reduce these flaws, enhancing its overall efficacy and relevance in policy analysis.

The methodology effectively addresses the inherent limitations typically associated with comparative research. The study recognises and adjusts to the various socio-economic and cultural circumstances of the regions under examination, guaranteeing an analysis and suggestions that are relevant to the specific environment. The technique integrates a wide range of data sources, such as legal documents, policy papers, scholarly literature, and empirical data, in order to construct a thorough and dependable body of evidence. Furthermore, it mitigates the risks associated with generalisation by conducting a detailed study that acknowledges any biases and limitations in the data. The study employs a comprehensive analytical framework that consists of policy, structural, functional, and impact assessments. Furthermore, the study strictly adheres to ethical research norms, which helps to minimise complexity and bias issues. The comprehensive and morally upright methodology of this study improves its trustworthiness and significance, guaranteeing that the observations and suggestions are both accurate and suitable for the unique educational environments of the CEMAC sub-region and the United States.

5.4.2   U.S. Approval and accreditation

The process of granting licence to operate for higher education institutions to operate in the United States dates back to the establishment of the individual states (Paulsen 2018). Accreditation, on the other hand, has a history of just over a century, "emerging from concerns to protect public health and safety and to serve the public interest" (Eaton 2015, 1). According to CHEA (2023), it is evident that approval and accreditation are not only synonymous in the United States but also have shared obligations between states and federal governments. In essence, the process of approval is carried out by state entities, while accreditation involves the participation of various stakeholders including state governments, higher education institutions, accrediting organisations, recognition bodies, the federal government, students, families and even the general public. This process entails self and peer review, site visits, evaluation by accrediting organisations and periodic external assessments. CHEA (2023) further theories

that approval to operate indicates that educational institutions have met the minimal criteria set by the state. Equally, accreditation shows that an institution has achieved a particular degree of academic excellence. This implies that in the majority of states, permission may be granted independently of accreditation. In light of the enrolment figures provided by the National Centre for Education Statistics (2023), which indicate that enrolment stood at 15.4 million undergraduate students and 3.2 million postbaccalaureate (graduate) students at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in autumn 2021, it is vital to underscore the significance of establishing approval and accreditation standards to promote both quality assurance and quality improvement. Considering the complex approval and accreditation system in place in the United States, the focus of this study is limited to the concept of approval as it pertains specifically to the state of Pennsylvania. Accreditation, on the other hand, is discussed at both state and federal levels. This helps to streamline the extensive body of literature pertaining to the subject matter, facilitate the reader's grasp by providing straightforward and accessible comparisons to countries within the CEMAC subregion.

5.4.3   Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The process of approval, also known as authorisation, is a mandatory requirement for the establishment of any higher education institution within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The obligation in question is included under Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, which relates to matters concerning education. Therefore, the regulatory framework governing postsecondary institutions in Pennsylvania may be described as multifaceted, since it covers several aspects such as authorisation procedures, governance, and accreditation and student advocacy. This system is designed to guarantee that educational institutions maintain rigorous standards in both curriculum and governance, thereby enhancing the overall quality of higher education within the state. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) assumes a crucial role in the supervision and regulation of postsecondary educational institutions, which includes colleges, universities and seminaries. The job of the PDE equally includes regulatory oversight, establishment of governance frameworks, monitoring of academic records and implementation of protocols for handling student grievances. The process of obtaining licence to operate is subject to certain regulations that apply to all postsecondary institutions in Pennsylvania. Institutions are required to comply with reporting obligations and, depending on their characteristics, may be obligated to get clearance for the implementation of new programmes (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2023). Chapter 40 of the Pennsylvania Code

delineates a comprehensive and complex structure that governs the process of approval for higher education institutions within the state of Pennsylvania. The following table presents a systematic summary of the principal divisions under Chapter 40 of the Pennsylvania Code. It emphasises the extensive legislative structure governing the authorisation and supervision of higher education establishments in Pennsylvania.

Table 14. Comprehensive chapter 40 analysis: Pennsylvania higher education institutional approval criteria

Section	Title	Key points and description
Preliminary provisions		
§ 40.1	Scope	Sets the scope for the chapter, applicable to the approval of various types of institutions including independent colleges, state-related and state-aided institutions. Emphasises foundational criteria like mission and financial stability.
§ 40.2	Statement of Philosophy, Mission, and Need	Requires institutions to submit a detailed statement of philosophy and objectives, demonstrating their mission alignment with educational needs of the Commonwealth and avoiding program duplication.
§ 40.3	Financial Stability	Institutions must demonstrate financial viability, including a projection of income and expenditures, and a report on financial operations for existing institutions.
§ 40.4	Applicability	Clarifies the applicability of the chapter's provisions to different types of institutions, including foreign corporations and nonprofit institutions.
Eligibility for State System Status		
§ 40.11	Mission and Governance	Specifies requirements for an institution's mission and governance, aligning with the State System's Board of Governors' policies.

§ 40.12	Programmatic Information	Requires detailed descriptions of all offered programs and staff qualifications.
§ 40.13	Fiscal Information	Institutions must provide financial reports, including revenue and expenditure comparisons.
§ 40.14	[Reserved]	-
Eligibility for State-Related/State-Aided Status		
§ 40.21 - § 40.26	Various Requirements	Cover requirements for state-related and state-aided institutions, including mission statements, board composition, and programmatic information. Emphasizes the provision for Commonwealth residents and the development of articulation agreements.
Application and Evaluation		
§ 40.41 - § 40.46	Various Application and Evaluation Procedures	Describes application procedures and evaluation criteria for approval of different institution types. Involves committee review assessing various aspects like mission, financial resources, and program offerings.
Approval		
§ 40.51 - § 40.57	Approval Procedures for Various Institution Types	Details the approval process for independent colleges, universities, professional schools, and state system/status institutions. Focuses on compliance with academic standards, financial stability, and ongoing adherence to state educational policies and standards.

Source: Pennsylvania Code changes effective through 53 Pa.B. 5486 (August 26, 2023).

The first provisions (Sections 40.1-40.4) delineate the jurisdiction and extent of applicability, including a diverse array of educational institutions such as independent junior colleges, colleges, seminaries, universities and state-affiliated schools. The Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring alignment with the state's educational goals and demonstrating fiscal responsibility and long-term viability is evident through its emphasis on a clear mission

statement, financial stability and compliance with relevant statutes. These conditions are essential in guaranteeing that institutions have the capacity to provide high-quality education while maintaining financial viability.

The criteria for determining eligibility for State System Status, as outlined in sections 40.11 to 40.14include the alignment of the institution's purpose and governance with the principles set out by the Board of Governors of the State System, as well as the provision of comprehensive programmatic and budgetary information. This alignment guarantees that the institutions maintain the educational standards and governance principles that are considered crucial by the educational authorities of the state. Through the implementation of comprehensive programmatic and budgetary requirements, the state effectively guarantees that these institutions possess not only a strong educational foundation but also a solid financial standing, therefore enabling them to operate sustainably.

The criteria for determining eligibility for State-Related and State-Aided status, as outlined in sections 40.21 to 40.33 touches on several aspects such as the alignment of the institution's purpose, the membership of its board and the specifics of its programmes. One notable characteristic of this institution is its focus on catering to the needs of Commonwealth inhabitants, which demonstrates a public dedication to ensuring that higher education is both accessible and relevant to the state's populace. The presence of articulation agreements signifies a concerted effort to promote collaboration and facilitate the transfer of credits, bolstering   the interconnection and effectiveness of the educational environment.

The section of the text titled "Application and Evaluation" (sections 40.41-40.46) discusses the process of applying and assessing a particular subject matter. The application and evaluation procedures are characterised by a meticulous and thorough process, which includes a full assessment conducted by a specifically chosen committee. This examination goes beyond simple paperwork by including on-site assessments, therefore guaranteeing a comprehensive evaluation of the institution's capacities, resources, and compliance with academic criteria. The aforementioned procedure highlights the need of a comprehensive assessment in maintaining elevated educational standards.

Approval is a significant aspect that is discussed in sections 40.51 to 40.57. The approval sections place significant stress on adhering to academic conventions, complying with the standards set out by the Board, and abiding by relevant legislation. The comprehensive examination of permission, taking into account different kinds of institutions, illustrates the

state's adaptable but rigorous standards for guaranteeing educational excellence. The inclusion of measures for sustained adherence and the possibility of rescinding the authority to confer degrees underscore the state's commitment to upholding consistent excellence in the realm of higher education.

Hence, the framework presented in Chapter 40 of the Pennsylvania Code demonstrates a well-rounded strategy that accommodates many kinds of institutions while still enforcing rigorous criteria that are essential for preserving the integrity and quality of higher education within the state. Furthermore, it is essential for higher education institutions to regularly produce reports that adhere to established criteria and financial prerequisites in order to maintain their operational status.

Table 15. Synopsis of authorisation processes and fees for postsecondary institutions in Pennsylvania

Requirement/Process	Details	Fees
Reporting Requirements	Submit reports on English fluency of instructors, gifts, sexual violence awareness training, campus crime, graduation rates and program offerings.	N/A
Registration for Out-of-State Distance Education	Voluntary registration for out-of-state providers enrolling Pennsylvania residents. Non-SARA participants.	$5,000
Authorisation for Out-of-State Institutions	Required for those seeking to establish a location in Pennsylvania and must be approved as an Education Enterprise. Renewal every five years.	Initial: $10,000; Renewal: $2,000
Establishing a New Institution	Required for any institution offering programs for academic credit or a degree in Pennsylvania. No religious exemption.	$5,000
Minimum Requirements for Degree-Granting Institution	Must comply with 24 Pa. C.S.A. § 6502(b). Requirements include a minimum endowment, faculty specifications, and adherence to certain regulations (22 Pa. Code Chapters 31, 36, 40, 42).	-
Program Approval (Act 69 of 2012)	Accredited not-for-profit institutions operating in Pennsylvania for over 10 years are exempt. Others must obtain approval for new degree programs (22 Pa. Code Chapter 42).	$1,400 (if not exempted)

Requirement/Process	Details	Fees
Use of "College," "University," "Seminary" in Names	Approval required for using these words in corporate names or fictitious names.	$100
University Status Application	Approval required for changing status (e.g., from college to university) or establishing a new institution.	$1,000
Changes to Articles of Incorporation	Submit cover letter, evidence of Board of Trustees' approval, current and revised Articles of Incorporation. Must be published in the PA Bulletin for 30 days.	-

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2023

The table shown above offers a methodical summary of the essential procedures and corresponding expenses that schools must undertake in order to function as postsecondary education providers in Pennsylvania. Chapter 741a of the Pennsylvania Code refers to the State Authorisation Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which has considerable importance in the authorisation of higher education institutions in Pennsylvania, particularly those that provide distance education.

In accordance with Section 741a.1, the following are the provided definitions: The chapter starts by providing explicit definitions for key terminologies, including "remote education", "postsecondary institution" and "SARA". The definitions provided are fundamental in understanding the extent and implementation of the chapter. The concept of "distance education" is broad, including a range of remote instructional methods, while specifically excluding some kinds of synchronous video training conducted inside the same geographical area. The differentiation between various educational delivery techniques is crucial in order to clearly define the categories of instructional approaches that fall within the purview of SARA rules

The membership of the SARA in Pennsylvania is outlined in sections 741a.11 and 741a.12 of the relevant legislation. These sections provide specific information on Pennsylvania's involvement in both the regional compact and SARA. The state's association with the Southern Regional Education Board has considerable importance in allowing the interstate provision of remote education. The Department of Education functions as the designated agency for the SARA, highlighting the state's commitment to upholding national benchmarks in the area of remote education. Institutional involvement in the SARA is outlined in Section 741a.13. This

section mandates that institutions must submit yearly applications and ensure that their data aligns with the Federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. This method guarantees that institutions providing remote education conform to a standardised set of criteria, so easing the delivery of education beyond state boundaries.

The pricing structure for postsecondary schools to participate in SARA is detailed in Section 741a.21. This structure is determined by the money generated from distant education tuition at the university. The implementation of a tiered fee structure is a means by which an institution may align the financial contributions of its remote education operations with the volume of its offerings in this domain. This approach ensures that the fees paid by the institution are commensurate with the extent of its distance education programmes. The non-refundable nature of fees and the yearly renewal requirement are reiterated in Sections 741a.22 and 741a.23, emphasising the ongoing commitment that institutions must maintain in order to continue their participation in SARA. Section § 741a.24 stipulates the designated commencement date of these fees, providing a well-defined schedule for institutions to adhere to.

In brief, Chapter 741a provides evidence of Pennsylvania's adherence to national standards for distance education by virtue of its involvement in the SARA. This chapter provides a systematic approach for schools within a particular state to effectively provide distance education services to students residing in other states, while assuring compliance with established quality and regulatory benchmarks. The state's dedication to ensuring distant education is of high quality, easily accessible and standardised is evident via the incorporation of explicit definitions, well-defined membership criteria and a transparent cost structure.

5.4.4   Accreditation in the US

At the federal level, the United States Department of Education (USDE) and CHEA serve as prominent proponents for the practise of self-regulation in maintaining academic standards through the process of certification. CHEA, for instance, comprises a network of 3,000 higher education institutions that confer degrees, as well as acknowledges the accreditation of 60 organisations responsible for evaluating the quality of institutions and academic programmes. According to CHEA, the principal objective of accreditation is to establish a minimum standard of quality in higher education and to facilitate continuous improvement in educational institutions and programmes.

The 2013 CHEA Almanack of External Quality Review provides an in-depth analysis of the many roles and responsibilities that exist within the accrediting domain. The process of

accreditation involves a substantial number of higher education institutions and courses, over 7,800 in total. Among these institutions, around 63% are authorised to confer degrees, while almost half of them operate as non-profit entities.

Table 16. 2013 CHEA almanac of external quality review

Aspect	Details
Total Institutions	More than 7,800
Degree-Granting Institutions	63% (associate degree or above)
Non-Degree Institutions	37%
Non-profit Institutions	49%*
For-Profit Institutions	47%*
Total Programs	More than 22,000
Institutions with Unspecified Control	271 institutions not indicated
Review Process	Based on accrediting standards
Self-Study	Undertaken by institutions based on standards
Peer Review	Includes site visits and team reports
Decision Making Commissions	Affirm, reaffirm, or deny accreditation
Review Cycles	Ranging from a few years to every 10 years
Federal and State Funds Requirement	Necessary for access
Private Sector Support Basis	For decisions on tuition assistance, charitable giving, research
Credit Transfer	Eases transfer of credits among institutions
Quality Assurance for Public	Accreditation is the primary means
Federal Funds Eligibility	Must be accredited by a recognized organization

Aspect	Details
State Licensure Requirements	Graduation from accredited institutions often required
Quality Assurance and Improvement	About assuring and improving quality in education
Government Funding Relationship	Complex, especially regarding funding
Accreditation Value	Assures quality, aids government and private sector decisions
Recognition of Accrediting Organisations	Based on specific set of standards

Source: CHEA, 2013

Out of the total number of certified institutions, namely 271, it has not been specified or suggested whether institutional control is in place. The presented table provides a concise overview of accreditation, including the participating institutions and programmes, the certification procedures they undertake, and the ramifications of accreditation on financial accessibility and quality assurance.

There are a total of 85 accrediting organisations, which are independent nonprofit organisations that originated from the higher education industry rather than being government entities. These agencies have the responsibility of certifying a diverse array of institutions, including public and private colleges, institutions with religious affiliations, career-oriented institutions and specialised courses.

The primary sources of funding for these accrediting organisations are derived from yearly membership fees, costs associated with accreditation visits and sporadic financial assistance from sponsoring corporations, government bodies and private foundations. Accreditation serves various functions, surrounding the assurance of quality for students and the general public, the requirement for obtaining federal and state funds, the influence it exerts on decisions made by the private sector, the facilitation of credit transfer and the provision of information regarding the standing of U.S. institutions within both domestic and international contexts.

Recognition agencies, such as CHEA and USDE, play a vital role in the educational landscape. Academic institutions engage in a rigorous examination of accrediting bodies to verify their compliance with predetermined criteria, consequently safeguarding and augmenting the calibre of educational establishments and curricula. Accreditation serves as a crucial criterion used by the federal government to assess eligibility for financial resources, whilst state governments

often mandate accreditation for the purposes of licencing and financing. USDE (2023) states that "the goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality."

Table 17. Accreditor federal recognition process steps

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) relies on accrediting agencies (accreditors) to oversee higher education quality. Only institutions and programs accredited by a federally recognized accreditor can provide students with access to federal student aid, including Pell Grants and student loans. Periodically, a subset of the more than 60 federally recognized accreditors come up for review by ED and the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI).

Here is a snapshot of how the accreditor recognition process works.

Accreditor Federal Recognition Process

ED REQUESTS FEDERAL RECOGNITION APPLICATIONS
- Each accreditor must be reviewed at least every five years once recognized
- NACIQI currently meets twice per year to review agencies and advise ED

ACCREDITORS SUBMIT APPLICATIONS
- Accreditors must demonstrate compliance with the Secretary of Education's Criteria for Recognition
- Learn more about the criteria here

ED ANNOUNCES NACIQI MEETING & INVITES COMMENT
- NACIQI meetings and a notice inviting public comment are announced several months before the meeting
- Federal Register notices are available here

ED REVIEWS APPLICATIONS & DEVELOPS DRAFT STAFF REPORTS
- For each accreditor, ED staff review the accreeditor's application, public comments, and other info
- ED staff assess the accreditor's compliance and produce a preliminary (draft) report

ED SENDS DRAFT STAFF REPORTS TO ACCREDITORS FOR RESPONSE
- Accreditors have 30 days to respond to the draft report
- Accreditors may share additonal documentation to demonstrate compliance

ED SENDS FINAL STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS TO NACIQI, ACCREDITORS & PUBLIC
- ED reviews accreditors' responses and compiles final reports and recommendations
- Final staff reports for current and past meetings are here

7 DAYS before NACIQI meeting

NACIQI HOLDS MEETING & MAKES ITS OWN RECOMMENDATION
- ED, accreditors, and public commenters provide input to NACIQI members
- NACIQI makes separate recommendations for each accreditor up for review

ED SENIOR OFFICIAL MAKES RECOGNITION DECISION
- Both staff and NACIQI recommendations, as well as NACIQI proceedings, are considered
- Senior official's decision comes within 90 days of the meeting

90 DAYS after NACIQI meeting

ACCREDITOR MAY APPEAL DECISION TO SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
- Accreditors have until 10 days after decision to give notice of appeal, and 30 days to file appeal
- Secretary has no deadline by which to decide the appeal

10 & 30 DAYS after decision

Source: US Department of Education (USDE), 2023

The requirements for accreditation are comprehensive, including several aspects such as student performance, curriculum excellence, teacher credentials, facilities, financial capability and student support services. The significance of certification in maintaining elevated educational standards, guaranteeing financial support and enabling academic and professional mobility is emphasised by this all-encompassing assessment system.

Figure 1. Relationship between accrediting bodies, institutions, and recognition bodies
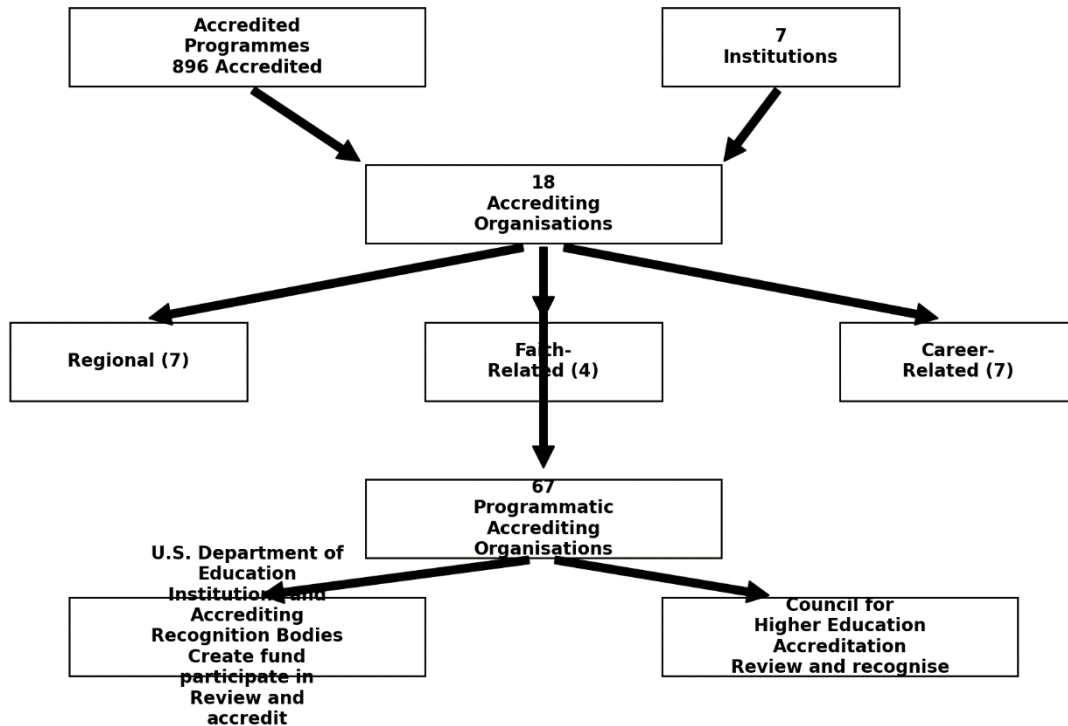
Source: CHEA, 2023

The table above presents a comprehensive list of 896 officially acknowledged programmes and 7 educational establishments, overseen by 18 accrediting organisations. These include regional bodies, faith-based authorities, and career-related bodies. There are also 67 programmatic-accrediting organisations involved. USDE and CHEA, ensuring their adherence to specified standards. This framework facilitates the process of accrediting, funding, and regulating educational institutions and programs. USDE supervises institutions and accrediting bodies, while CHEA conducts independent evaluations and grants recognition.

5.4.5 Accreditation in PA

As previously mentioned, the responsibility of accreditation in the United States is not limited only to state governments. Hence, it should be noted that PDE does not possess the authority to officially provide accreditation to public postsecondary schools. In contrast, the granting of accreditation is carried out by entities that have been duly acknowledged by the USDE (2023). Chapter 52 of the Pennsylvania Code delineates the laws and protocols governing the accreditation of organisations, as mandated by the State Board of Education. This chapter

assumes a vital role in comprehending the underlying structure to the accrediting process of privately-owned educational institutions within the state of Pennsylvania.

Table 18. Pennsylvania code chapter 52 accrediting organisation policies and procedures

Section	Title	Description
§ 52.1	Purpose	Outlines the chapter's objective to detail the State Board of Education's policies regarding applications by accrediting organisations under the Private Academic Schools Act.
§ 52.2	Process	Describes the Department's role in administering the application process for accrediting organisations and making recommendations to the State Board, with the final decision resting with the State Board.
§ 52.3	Application	Details the requirements for an application for approval as an accrediting organisation, including staffing, operations, accreditation criteria and other relevant information.
§ 52.4	Reporting	Mandates annual reporting by accrediting organisations on their activities and immediate reporting on changes in accreditation status of educational institutions, ensuring transparency and ongoing monitoring.
§ 52.5	Expiration and Renewal	Explains the accreditation authority's expiration every five years, with renewal requiring a self-study, evaluation, and plan of action, ensuring that accrediting organisations continue to meet required standards over time.

Source: Pennsylvania Code changes effective through 53 Pa.B. 5486 (August 26, 2023)

The challenges arising from accreditation within the education system in the United States mostly centre on the presence and activities of entities often referred to as "degree mills" and "accreditation mills". These entities pose a threat to the integrity of higher education by capitalising on deception and providing fraudulent academic credentials.

Degree mills basically denote institutions that provide academic degrees and certificates without respect for established educational processes. These credentials are often not acknowledged or accepted by reputable educational institutions and companies, leading to a situation where students allocate their time and money towards acquiring credentials that fail to provide the desired educational or professional benefits. Accreditation mills, in contrast, purport to provide certification for schools without a legitimate foundation, thereby deceiving students on the academic rigour of the courses they may be contemplating. Both degree mills

and accreditation mills have a role in diminishing the value of genuine academic accomplishments and may have wider social repercussions by decreasing confidence in the educational system.

In an effort to address these concerns, the educational landscape in the United States tries to provide tools that may mitigate these issues. One such resource is the databases maintained by CHEA and USDE, which compile comprehensive lists of properly accredited schools and programmes. The use of databases plays a crucial role in the process of validating the legitimacy of educational offers. However, it is still incumbent upon students and employers to actively pursue this information in order to safeguard themselves from deceptive organisations.

Despite the combined efforts of governmental and corporate entities to provide information to the general public, the burden of determining the authenticity of educational institutions and accrediting organisations often rests with the individual. The persistent difficulty is further exacerbated by the regular alterations in the functioning of mills and the corresponding knowledge accessible pertaining to them. CHEA and USDE provide recommendations and indicators to facilitate the identification of diploma mills. These indicators include the absence of legitimate accreditation, inadequate academic standards and the option to buy degrees.

Employers are confronted with the task of validating the authenticity of educational qualifications provided by their workers or prospective candidates. This issue is tackled by the use of services such as the National Student Clearing House, which provides degree verification, as well as the resources provided by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the U.S. Department of Labour, which are specifically intended to assist in the identification of counterfeit degrees.

At the state level, a distinction is made between state approval and accreditation, where the former does not always entail the latter. States such as California, Oregon and Minnesota provide comprehensive data about recognised degree mills and accreditation mills. Additionally, states like Oregon and Michigan maintain listings of non-accredited educational institutions and accrediting bodies that lack official approval. Furthermore, several states have implemented restrictions and legislation as a means to address the widespread existence of mills.

Globally, there exists a concern over the perception of educational standards in the United States, since the presence of unaccredited educational institutions may negatively impact the reputation of authentic U.S. degrees and accreditation on an international scale. USDE's

National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) and the United States Network for Education Information (USNEI) provide materials aimed at aiding foreign organisations in comprehending and evaluating the accreditation status of activities conducted inside the United States.

While the above mechanisms exist to detect and endorse valid certification, the enduring presence of degree and accreditation mills presents ongoing difficulties to higher education in the U.S. To safeguard the integrity of higher education and its societal worth, it is essential for students, educators, employers and government entities to engage in continuous education, remain vigilant and undertake verification processes.

5.4.6 Authorisation and accreditation in CEMAC subregion

Despite 78% literacy rates ("Adult literacy rate is the percentage of people ages 15 and above who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life") seen in Cameroon as of 2020, 81% in the Republic of the Congo as of 2021, 86 % in Gabon as of 2022 and 94% in Equatorial Guinea as far back 2010 (World Bank, 2023), it is remarkable that the CEMAC subregion still has a very low level of educational development compared to other parts of Africa and the world. The severity of the problem is such that several CEMAC countries, such as Chad, lack even an official website for their respective ministry of higher education. The ministry disseminates its information mostly via its official Facebook page. The limited availability of data on higher education in a majority of CEMAC countries underlines the need for this research. The available data on higher education policy is mostly structured according to individual countries, with a limited number of common regulations at the subregional level.

5.4.6.1 Cameroon

Cameroon, arguably, has the largest and most advanced higher education sector in the CEMAC subregion. The majority of the students from Chad, CAR, and even Gabon and the Republic of the Congo attend university in Cameroon. Legal advancements that have recently taken place in Cameroon represent a landmark in the historical evolution of the country's higher education system (Ngalame 2023). This has culminated in the formal acknowledgment of both the Anglo-Saxon and Francophone subsystems of public university education, signifying a paradigm shift that profoundly influences the approval, authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance processes of Cameroonian HEIs.

Public HEIs are created by Ministerial or Presidential decree and receive automatic accreditation for all their programmes directly under MINESUP, as per order N° 93/026 DU 19 JANVIER 1993. Private HEIs, on the other hand, must navigate a more complex accreditation process. They must receive authorisation from both the Commission *Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieur Privé* (CNESP) and MINESUP, as outlined in order N° 01/0096/MINESUP of December 7, 2001. Despite this authorisation, private HEIs cannot award their own degrees but must operate under the "*Tutelle académique*" or mentorship of a state university, which then awards the final degree, ensuring conformity and quality of studies. According to the new Law no. 2023/007 of July 25th, 2023, approval is defined as the "authorisation granted to higher education institution to function autonomously, with the exception of issuing certificates", and authorisation to open is defined as "approval granted by the Ministry in charge of higher education to a private higher education institution to provide training in specific fields" (Presidency of the Republic 2023, 4-5). On the contrary, quality assurance is a term that refers to the systematic approach including many tactics, behaviours and attitudes aimed at maintaining and enhancing the overall quality of a product or service. The legislation provides definitions for many applicable terminology, such as certification, quality assurance system, course accreditation, supervisory authority, university accreditation, validation of acquired experience (VAE), subsystem and credit as detailed below (Presidency of the Republic (2023, 5-7).

TABLE **19. Summary of laws on higher education in Cameroon**

Term	Definition
Approval	Authorisation granted to a higher education institution to function autonomously, except for issuing certificates.
Authorisation to open	Approval granted by the Minister of higher education to a private institution for specific field training.
Board member	Member of a university Board, participating in the institution's administration.
Certification	Official confirmation of training program completion, obtainable through various means.
Course accreditation	Recognition of a training programme's effective and regular functioning.

Term	Definition
Professionalisation	Set of rules and processes for training and awarding employment-oriented certifications.
Quality Assurance system	Process to ensure students attain an institution's standards.
Quality Assurance	Strategies and actions to maintain and improve quality.
Supervisory authority	State's power to define, guide, and assess policy in the higher education sector.
University accreditation	State's recognition of the quality, organisation, and social function of an educational institution.
University-business	Status of a higher education institution in the entrepreneurship sector.
Validation of acquired experience	Process to acquire university certification based on professional experience.
Validation of learning outcomes	Assessment of an individual's achievement of learning objectives without assuming participation in a training programme.

Source: Presidency of the Republic, 2023

A noticeable feature of the new law is the unrivalled position of the Cameroonian body politic as stated in Chapter 1, Section 4, and Article 3 that "the State shall organise the higher education system". This top-down approach to higher education management in Cameroon is further channelled through the Minister in charge of higher education, who is responsible for granting permission for higher education institutions to function. This emphasises the government's role in overseeing both public and private higher education, ensuring alignment with national educational standards and priorities. The new law also introduces a quality assurance system and a process for quality assurance, highlighting the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement in higher education institutions. This system is not just about meeting minimum standards but involves a continuous effort to enhance the quality of education across the sector in Cameroon. In effect, the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission is created and designated to assist the Minister in charge of higher education in accreditation and quality assurance processes. Despite the considerable advancements that have been achieved, it is important to point out that stakeholders still need to consistently work hard in order to

overcome challenges resulting from administrative bottlenecks and bureaucratic red tape that continue to beset higher education in Cameroon.

5.4.6.2 Republic of Chad

A significant change in Chad's post-secondary education system occurred in the 2006/07 academic year with the shift to the license-master-doctor (LMD) system. Admission to first-level university programmes in Chad requires a *Baccalauréat*, a reflection of the French influence on the country's education system (Bulder, 2007). These programmes typically span two years and lead to the *Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales* (DEUG) in arts, humanities, law, and management, or the *Diplôme Universitaire d'Études Scientifiques* (DUES) for science students. The DEUG and DUES programmes were replaced with a 4-year licence and a 4-year professional licence. This transition was a part of a broader movement in many African countries to harmonise their higher education systems with international norms (Bloom, 2014). Graduate education in Chad includes a one-year *Maîtrise* et *Maîtrise Professionelle*, followed by doctoral programmes requiring three years of research. While there is relatively little material on the subject of authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance, it is possible that the promotion of global educational benchmarks and the prioritisation of thorough assessment and analysis in Chad might potentially incentivise higher education institutions to implement more rigorous internal quality assurance measures, therefore conforming to globally recognised benchmarks, particularly those set by the Bologna Process in the European Higher Education Area (European Higher Education Area, 2020). In addition to academic routes, Chad also offers vocational and technical post-secondary education. These programmes are typically two years in length, leading to the *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* (BTS). Admission to these programmes also requires *a Baccalauréat*, either the *Baccalauréat de Technicien* or a general *Baccalauréat* (Global Education Cluster, 2018). The inclusion of these vocational tracks highlights the importance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in developing countries, as emphasised in global educational development discussions (World Bank 2016).

A classic example is the agreement that delineates the formation and functioning of the American International School of N'Djamena (AISN) in Chad (Government of the United States of America & Government of the Republic of Chad 2007). This educational institution is the result of a cooperative effort between the governments of the United States and Chad. This document, which has been in force since April 6, 2007, offers an analysis of the structure

of authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance in higher education in Chad. In relation to educational programming and accreditation, it should be noted that AISN was originally established with the primary objective of providing educational services for children in the pre-school and grades 1-8 age range. The management of the programme was required to comply with the regulations set by the educational accrediting agencies in the United States, as well as the guidelines established by the Department of State's Office of International Schools (Article 1). This demonstrates a dedication to upholding global educational standards, hence guaranteeing the provision of high-quality education at AISN. The legal and operational dimensions of AISN are equally crucial. The educational institution was bestowed with legal personality in accordance with the laws of Chad and was obligated to adhere to both domestic and global norms, as stated in Article 1. The simultaneous commitment to both local legal obligations and worldwide educational standards highlights the significance of incorporating local legal requirements into global educational standards, which is a crucial element of ensuring quality assurance in international schools. The management structure of AISN, as delineated in the agreement, is noteworthy due to its strong focus on principles of governance and integrity. The operations of AISN are overseen by a School Board, consisting of members chosen by the U.S. Ambassador and other members elected by the community. AISN functions as a non-profit organisation, as stated in Article 2. The implementation of this governance model plays a crucial role in upholding the educational standards and ensuring operational transparency inside the school. The personnel policies implemented by AISN are crucial in safeguarding the standard of education. The recruitment of teaching and administrative personnel at the school encompasses both foreign and local candidates, and their pay and benefits are funded by the school's budget, as stated in Article 4. The implementation of this staffing strategy is of utmost importance in order to effectively recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce, which plays a pivotal role in maintaining the educational superiority of the institution. The agreement further confers upon AISN a range of exemptions and advantages pertaining to taxes, customs charges, and imports, hence enhancing its operational efficiency and financial sustainability (Article 5). The aforementioned requirements are crucial for ensuring the continuous operation of the educational institution. Ultimately, the agreement has provisions pertaining to the cessation and perpetuation of benefits. According to Article 7, it is specified that AISN will retain the agreed exemptions until its full liquidation upon termination.

This provision serves to guarantee a certain level of operational stability and continuity for the educational institution.

5.4.6.3   Gabon

The 1991 Gabonese Constitution, with amendments in 2011, has a range of provisions addressing higher education, including matters such as authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance (Constitute 2017). The system exhibits notable features stemming from its French colonial heritage, including extensive government participation, considerable financial investment, well-defined educational trajectories and a willingness to engage in global academic collaboration. The increasing emphasis on specialised disciplines may be seen as a reaction to the changing global and national demands, therefore establishing the higher education sector in Gabon as a dynamic and flexible entity. Gabon hosts a variety of higher education institutions, including Omar Bongo University, the University of Sciences and Technologies of Masuku, the Health Sciences Medical School, the International Centre of Medical Research of Franceville, the Forestry National School in Libreville, the National School of Law, the Higher School of Education, the Secretary Learning National School, the Polytechnic Engineering School of Masuku, the African Institute of Computer Science, the Business National Institute, the Institute of Economics and Finance, and the National Administration School.

According to the Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation) initiative (HAQAA 2023), Gabon is actively participating in initiatives to synchronise accreditation and quality assurance procedures. The HAQAA Initiative, financed by the European Union and the African Union, aims to establish a unified system for ensuring quality and accreditation at various levels, including institutional, national, regional, and Pan-African levels. This initiative has involved numerous African regional and national organisations operating in the sector. The primary objective is to establish a unique, appealing, and internationally competitive African higher education sphere through strengthened intra-African cooperation. The Bologna Process has influenced efforts to ensure quality and accreditation in Europe. Stakeholders have identified challenges and pathways for quality and accreditation during conferences and workshops, including one in Libreville, Gabon. The African Union Commission has collaborated with UNESCO to streamline the process of endorsing the Addis Ababa Convention, which aims to acknowledge and validate academic credentials within the higher education sector in Africa. The African Union Commission has also supported the development

of a continental Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF). Nevertheless, absence of information on the precise procedures for accrediting higher education institutions and the systems in place to ensure their quality in Gabon and even within the wider CEMAC stresses the importance of this study.

5.4.6.4 CAR

Article 9 of the constitution of CAR discusses the topics of higher education authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance. The principle affirms that every person possesses the entitlement to avail themselves of knowledge resources, and the government ensures access to education, cultural experiences, and vocational training. Education and teaching can be offered by both public and private institutions. Private businesses are permitted to operate with state licence and must adhere to legally specified requirements. These enterprises are likewise subject to state oversight. Additionally, the document states that the state and other public institutions have a duty to establish and guarantee the effective operation of public institutions for the education and instruction of young people. It also specifies that education in these public institutions is provided free of charge at different educational levels. According to the text, Article 9 of the special statute states as shown below.

- Every person possesses the entitlement to avail themselves of sources of information.
- Every person is ensured by the state to have access to education, cultural experiences, and vocational training.
- Education and teaching can be offered by both public and private institutions.
- Private institutions can function with the state's authorisation, according to requirements specified by law, and are subject to official oversight.
- Parents have a legal obligation to ensure that their children get education and guidance until they reach the age of sixteen, at minimum.
- The state and other public institutions are responsible for establishing and ensuring the effective operation of public educational institutions for the teaching and development of young individuals.
- Public educational institutions offer tuition-free education at several levels.

In general, the aforementioned laws demonstrate a holistic perspective towards education in the Central African Republic, placing importance on factors such as accessibility, quality assurance and the collaborative functions of both public and private educational institutions. Lack of a

214

birth certificate significantly limits access to higher education. For secondary education and beyond, a birth certificate is essential for enrolment, sitting public exams, and obtaining diplomas and certificates, which are crucial for higher education, training, and employment opportunities.

5.4.6.5 Equatorial Guinea

The higher education system in Equatorial Guinea is relatively recent and primarily focuses on programmes offered by the UNGE. The national government and the Ministry of Education and Culture tend to prioritise higher education, with significant funding allocated to the sector. UNGE is the sole public institution of higher education in the country, with university autonomy and a defined organisational structure. The academic framework of UNGE consists of faculties offering four-year bachelor's degree programs and university schools offering three-year technical education certifications (Bassett et al. 2017). Equatorial Guinea's education system is organised according to the LMD system (*Licenciado, Master, and Doctorado*), which was implemented in 2007. Despite a five-fold increase in student enrolment from 2006 to 2015, there has been a decrease in enrolment in the education school. Interviews have revealed concerns about the disparity between the country's higher education objectives and the available resources. The university system faces obstacles such as insufficient educational resources, poor facilities and restricted scholarship funding, potentially leading to a bias towards students from more affluent backgrounds.

Table 20. Equatorial Guinea's higher education authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance

Aspect of higher education policy	Description
Right to establish HEIs	Private entities and religious institutions are authorised to establish higher education institutions, provided they adhere to the official pedagogical plan.
Accreditation and quality Assurance	While specific details on accreditation and quality assurance are not explicitly mentioned in Item 23, the requirement for alignment with the official pedagogical plan implies a level of quality assurance and standardisation for higher education institutions.

Aspect of higher education policy	Description
Prohibition of Ideological or Partisan Bias in Education	Higher education institutions must ensure that their programs do not promote ideological or partisan tendencies, indicating a focus on educational neutrality and integrity.

Source: 2023 constitution

The licencing process generally entails the evaluation and authorisation of educational institutions by governmental entities, such as the Ministry of Education, to function as providers of higher education. This may include the evaluation of several aspects such as the institutional infrastructure, credentials of the academic members, curriculum design and financial viability. In the specific context of Equatorial Guinea, the process of certification might potentially be associated with the ProFad project, namely within the realm of teacher training programmes. Quality assurance in higher education comprises a diverse array of actions and policies with the objective of guaranteeing the provision of education that meets rigorous standards. This encompasses periodic evaluations, comprehensive programme analyses, and ongoing enhancement procedures. In the context of technical and vocational education, quality assurance encompasses the implementation of measures aimed at ensuring the adherence to established training programme standards and conformity with the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), as seen in the figure.

5.4.6.6   Republic of the Congo

The higher education sector in Congo has seen substantial transformation over the course of many decades, boosting "only a single public university since 1962 and the private sector dates back to only 1991" with the Marien Ngouabi University leading the way (Menga-Mokombi 2020, 18). Initially, the educational system after gaining independence primarily depended on France, but there has been a steady transition towards improving indigenous institutions. In order for educational institutions to function, it is quite probable that they need to get state authorisation, in accordance with the French educational framework, to guarantee compliance with national educational goals and criteria. The authorisation methods in Congo, which are not elaborated upon in the text, presumably include assessments based on academic and operational criteria and may be inspired by the French model, which places a strong emphasis on academic rigour. Ensuring quality in the educational system is crucial, as it entails evaluating educational

material, techniques, faculty, and resources. These evaluations are essential for expanding the efficiency of education and elevating worldwide reputation. These policies are components of more extensive educational reforms in Congo. The education sector encounters obstacles in securing funds, developing infrastructure, and ensuring teacher credentials. Current initiatives are being implemented to enhance these areas via government policies and international collaborations, including partnerships with the World Bank (2004).

5.4.6.7 Subregional level

Authorisation, certification and quality assurance in higher education reforms within CEMAC has emerged as a significant subject of discussion within the last decade. The primary aim of CEMAC is to implement a comprehensive course credit transfer and accumulation system throughout its network of member educational institutions. The implementation of licencing and accreditation procedures is important in order to facilitate the smooth transfer of academic credits across institutions operating inside the member states. The ministries overseeing higher education and scientific research have achieved an agreement to adopt the Comprehensive Computerised Tracking and Assessment System (CCTAS), indicating official government support for its implementation. The significance of certified organisations in maintaining and enforcing quality standards inside institutions is highlighted by the implementation of a community quality assurance unit and an excellence label, managed by FERDI. The establishment of a community quality assurance unit exemplifies a dedication to ensuring and maintaining the quality of higher education within the CEMAC subregion. There is a growing recognition of the need to develop coherence in educational standards, align curriculum and set criteria for quality assessments across a range of countries. This is done to provide a consistent and uniform level of quality education. The primary aim of the modifications is to efficiently integrate resources and knowledge to provide superior higher education and vocational training that is in line with labour market demands and adheres to global standards. The overall focus on authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance underscores a collaborative effort within CEMAC to ensure the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of higher education reforms at a noteworthy standard throughout member countries (Ngalame 2023). These advancements are components of the primary integration initiatives of CEMAC and are in accordance with the Libreville Declaration of February 11, 2005.   The objective of these initiatives is to pool resources and expertise in order to provide high-quality higher education and vocational training that aligns with the demands of the job market and meets international

standards. The resolutions implemented at the August 2021 meeting are to be conveyed to higher authorities, such as the meeting of Heads of State and Government, for endorsement (Atangana 2021). Looking at how other systems such as the American system works at this early stage in the harmonisation process is crucial for the accreditation processes, quality assurance frameworks and the present degree of implementation of these measures across the CEMAC subregion.

5.4.7 Challenges in authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance

5.4.7.1 Legal frameworks

Most countries in the CEMAC subregion lack adequate legal frameworks that regulate higher education institutions, resulting in irregularities in the procedures for granting authorisation. Bureaucratic delays may occur due to long and bureaucratic authorisation procedures, which can hinder the development or extension of institutions. The American System refers to the economic policies and practises that were implemented in the United States during the early 19th century. These policies aimed to promote economic growth and development by supporting domestic industries, implementing protective tariffs. The United States has well established legal frameworks and regulations that provide clear and consistent authorisation processes. Authorisation procedures in the U.S. are often more efficient and uniform, notwithstanding their complexity.

5.4.7.2 Obstacles in obtaining accreditation

In the CEMAC sub-region, accreditation standards exhibit substantial variation across nations, resulting in disparate quality levels within the region. Resource limitations may impede the ability to undertake comprehensive accreditation reviews due to insufficient financial and human resources. Accreditation standards in the United States are consistently applied, assuring a minimum level of quality. Accrediting organisations often possess ample resources and are proficient in performing thorough evaluations.

5.4.7.3 Quality assurance

Quality assurance challenges refer to the difficulties or obstacles faced in ensuring the quality of a product or service. These challenges may arise due to several factors such as inadequate testing procedures, lack of skilled personnel, or insufficient resources. Overcoming these challenges requires the implementation of effective strategies and the In the CEMAC subregion,

the credibility of quality assurance methods may be undermined due to a lack of transparency. Inadequate supervision: A lack of continuous quality assurance and monitoring might result in a gradual deterioration of educational standards. Transparency is a prominent feature of quality assurance methods in the United States, since they are generally open and accessible to public examination. Continuous improvement is highly emphasised, with a focus on regularly reassessing and revising standards. The table below presents a comparison of the challenges faced in the CEMAC and American system.

Table 21. Comparison of challenges in CEMAC and US systems

Challenge type	CEMAC subregion	American system
Authorisation	Insufficient legal frameworks, bureaucratic delays	Well-established legal structures, streamlined processes
Accreditation	Varied standards, resource limitations	Consistent standards, robust resources
Quality Assurance	Lack of transparency, insufficient oversight	High transparency, emphasis on continuous improvement

Source: author's contribution

The CEMAC subregion, in summary, is still work in progress as it suffers from limited resources, uneven standards and a lack of openness at both the subregional and individual country levels. In contrast, the American system generally exhibits more robust, uniform and transparent procedures. The disparities highlight the significance of implementing optimal methods and gaining insights from well-established systems to improve the calibre of higher education in the CEMAC subregion.

5.4.8   Lessons from the US system

The American system of higher education is distinguished by well-defined legislative frameworks that regulate its operations. These frameworks provide lucidity and uniformity, guaranteeing that institutions comprehend the prerequisites for permission and accreditation. CEMAC countries have the potential to gain advantages by creating and executing thorough legislative frameworks that precisely define the procedures and criteria for higher education institutions. The authorisation and accreditation procedures in the United States are often efficient and easily understood. This method reduces bureaucratic delays and promotes trust among stakeholders. CEMAC countries may achieve consistency by implementing uniform

practises such as streamlining processes, enhancing accessibility of information and establishing effective communication channels between institutions and regulatory bodies.

Table 22. Comparative analysis of higher education strategies: US and CEMAC countries

Key point	Description in the U.S. context	Suggested implementation in CEMAC countries
Consistent and thorough assessment	Periodic, thorough examinations of higher education institutions to maintain accreditation and adherence to quality standards.	Implement consistent assessment periods and rigorous evaluation methodologies.
Financial stability and reporting	Requirement for institutions to demonstrate financial stability through detailed revenue and expenditure forecasts and financial operations reporting.	Introduce measures for financial transparency and stability to enhance trustworthiness and long-term viability of higher education institutions.
Elaborate programmatic details	Obligation for universities to provide detailed information about their programs and staff qualifications, ensuring adherence to educational standards.	Implement consistent regulations to ensure high standards in programs and sufficiently trained personnel.
Focus on mission and governance	Emphasis on aligning institutional missions with educational needs and establishing efficient governance frameworks.	Prioritize harmonization of institutional objectives with educational requirements and establish efficient governance frameworks.
Execution and modification	Considering unique circumstances for implementing practices, adapting American methods to local contexts, and collaborating among governments, institutions, and stakeholders. Fund capacity development, infrastructure, and resources.	Adapt American models to local contexts, evaluate current state of higher education, and address deficiencies. Collaborate among governments, educational institutions, and stakeholders. Fund capacity development and resources.

Source: author's contribution

The American higher education system provides useful insights for CEMAC member states in improving their authorisation, accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms. CEMAC countries can enhance the quality and credibility of their higher education systems by implementing measures such as robust legal frameworks, efficient processes, frequent evaluations, transparent financial practises, detailed programmatic information and a strong emphasis on mission and governance. The effectiveness of these modifications depends on their meticulous execution, taking into account the particular requirements and difficulties of the CEMAC subregion.

5.4.9   Policy recommendations

In order to guarantee the establishment of thorough and robust legislative frameworks for higher education in the CEMAC subregion, it is imperative to implement a number of essential methods.

- To govern educational practices and policies, CEMAC countries would have to implement robust legal frameworks similar to the Pennsylvania Education Code. These frameworks should include detailed guidelines for institution establishment, program approval, and student rights protection, thereby creating a solid legal foundation for higher education operations.

- Streamline authorisation processes by adopting simplified procedures modelled after U.S. federal regulatory standards for higher education. This approach should focus on transparency, efficiency, and accessibility, reducing administrative burdens.

- Create standardised accreditation guidelines inspired by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, ensuring consistent quality standards across CEMAC countries. This includes the use of periodic review reports, as practiced in Pennsylvania, to maintain high academic and institutional effectiveness standards.

- Develop robust quality assurance mechanisms, including both internal and external periodic assessments of academic programmes and institutional effectiveness, conducted every five years, similar to Pennsylvania's requirements.

- Invest in training programs and resources to improve accreditation bodies' capabilities, ensuring they are well-equipped to perform their duties effectively. This includes professional development initiatives similar to those available in the United States.

- Adopt financial stability criteria modelled after US federal standards, requiring institutions to provide regular, comprehensive financial reports to ensure economic sustainability and transparency in financial operations.

- Foster a culture of continuous improvement, drawing inspiration from the initiatives of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. These programs emphasise innovation and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- Implement public reporting requirements similar to US federal regulations, ensuring transparency regarding accreditation status, student outcomes, and quality assurance practices.

- Promote regional cooperation among CEMAC countries through interstate agreements, harmonising policies, comparing standards, and exchanging best practices in higher education.

- Embrace technology and data-driven approaches, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), to improve the efficiency of certification and quality assurance processes. These systems enable informed decision-making and policy development.

By adopting the above recommendations, based on methods used by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth and Federal standards, the CEMAC subregion can significantly enhance its higher education authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance systems, leading to higher standards and better outcomes for the subregion.

5.4.10   Relevance to the study

The case study is particularly relevant to the broader context of realigning higher education policy in the CEMAC subregion with CESA and the AU's Agenda 2062. The 2063 Agenda seeks to transform the continent by fostering equitable economic growth and sustainable development, with education playing a pivotal and vital role. Hence, the outcomes of this comparative research provide a basis for comprehending how to synchronise higher education policy with broader developmental objectives, as envisioned in the 2063 Agenda. An in-depth analysis of higher education policy in the CEMAC subregion, in comparison to the American system, offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities within African higher education institutions. This research highlights the importance of governance systems, financial models, and the balance between autonomy and responsibility. These factors are crucial in restructuring and readjusting higher education policy to synchronise with the 2063 Agenda.

The comparative technique used in the case example sheds light on the potential for transferring and adjusting policies. We may adapt the governance structures and quality assurance procedures of the American higher education system to better align with the specific socio-economic and political circumstances of African countries, namely within the CEMAC area. This aligns with the 2063 Agenda's emphasis on customised and locally generated strategies to address developmental challenges. The recommendations from this research may be promptly implemented to improve the quality, accessibility, and relevance of higher education in the CEMAC area, extending their impact to the broader African context. These concepts are in line with the 2063 Agenda's focus on education as a way to empower people and an important catalyst for achieving the continent's development goals. The insights gained from this comparative research is a significant resource for policymakers and stakeholders in African higher education. They provide a comprehensive comprehension of how to synchronise higher education policies with broader continental goals such as the 2063 Agenda, therefore aiding in the enduring and sustainable transformation of higher education in Africa.

5.4.11   Case study conclusion

This research examines and compares higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion with the American system. It identifies important insights and lessons that may be valuable in improving higher education in CEMAC. The American system, especially the practises in states like Pennsylvania and the federal standards, highlights the significance of strong legislative frameworks, clear and efficient authorisation procedures, uniform accreditation requirements, and extensive quality assurance mechanisms. In order to include certain practises in the CEMAC sub-region, it is necessary to not only develop explicit and thorough policies, but also demonstrate a dedication to effectively carrying them out. The actions include the implementation of uniform accrediting standards, allocation of resources to enhance the capabilities of educational institutions, and the incorporation of technology to facilitate data-based decision-making. Furthermore, the focus on fiscal transparency, ongoing enhancement, and interregional cooperation are crucial in raising the benchmarks of higher education. This research emphasises that while direct replication is not possible owing to contextual variations, the fundamental concepts and techniques of the American system may be modified to address the distinct difficulties and requirements of the CEMAC, both at the individual country level and as a subregion. The ultimate objective is to cultivate an educational setting that guarantees elevated educational benchmarks, stimulates innovation and research, and enhances results,

therefore making a significant contribution to the comprehensive advancement and prosperity of the subregion. The American higher education system provides excellent insights for the CEMAC subregion to improve its higher education sector. By adopting these teachings and customising them to fit specific country and subregional circumstances, CEMAC may make substantial progress in attaining a stronger, more transparent, and quality-oriented higher education system.

5.5   Discussion

The alignment of higher education policies and institutions of CEMAC member states with the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063 is pivotal for the development of human capital and the socioeconomic transformation of the subregion. This discussion looks at some of the existing and emerging perspectives on the various systemic and policy factors that either facilitate or impede this alignment, analysing how these elements contribute to or impede the larger goals of socioeconomic progress envisioned in Agenda 2063.

5.5.1   Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism

As observed in this study, the debate surrounding PAUGHSS, intra-African student mobility and authorisation, quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education in the CEMAC subregion in the context of Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism provide an understanding of how these philosophies influence higher education policy orientation in Africa. Pan-Africanism focus on unity and solidarity among African countries is clearly reflected in the educational strategies aimed at enhancing regional integration and cooperation (Ifoh 2016; Abrahamsen, Chimhandamba, and Chipato 2023). This ethos is evident in the enthusiasm of PAUGHSS and CEMAC for mobility programmes that not only facilitate academic and cultural exchanges but also embody the Pan-African vision of a unified continent, which is the cornerstone of AU's CESA and Agenda 2063.

Afrocentrism, which advocates for a central place of African values and perspectives in education, resonates through the emphasis on intra-African exchanges in case study two (Asante 1991). These programmes are not just about academic mobility; they are also conduits for sharing and valuing African cultures, languages, and histories (Page and Davis 2005; Bunting 2019; Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014; Grenoble 2021; Wolff 2017; Fonlon 1969; Bokamba 2018; Erling et al. 2021). The initiative to involve students in mobility programmes that allow them to experience and appreciate diverse African contexts firsthand is

a direct expression of Afrocentric principles. These principles are further expressed in the efforts to use African languages and methodologies in educational settings, as noted by some interviewees.

The data also suggests a shift or expansion in the traditional perspective of Pan-Africanism, from a focus on political and economic unity to include educational and cultural integration (Ifoh 2016; Tarik 2018). The concept of student mobility within Africa enhancing understanding and cooperation across the continent aligns with the modern interpretation of Pan-Africanism that embraces grassroots movements and educational exchanges. Additionally, the engagement of students in organising and leading these mobility initiatives reflects a new strand of Pan-Africanism that emphasises empowerment and active participation from the youth of the continent.

Furthermore, the discussion about digital mobility and the use of technology in education introduces a new dimension to Afrocentrism. The adaptation of modern technological tools to promote African-centred education and virtual exchanges can be seen as an evolution of Afrocentric principles, ensuring they remain relevant in a globalised world. This integration of technology addresses barriers to physical mobility and democratises access to quality education across the continent, reinforcing the Afrocentric goal of self-reliance and internal development. On the whole, these developments in educational mobility and technology within the framework of Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism highlight a proactive approach to overcoming historical challenges in African education systems. By focusing on regional integration, cultural exchange, and technological adaptation, higher education policies in the CEMAC subregion, as elsewhere in Africa, are not only aligning with these ideologies but are also actively contributing to their evolution. This approach not only supports the educational and cultural unification of the RECs and the continent but also prepares a generation of university students who are well-equipped to advocate for and contribute to the future of Africa.

 The discussions on student mobility programmes and exchange initiatives in African higher education also offer a unique lens through which to examine the impacts of neocolonialism and the neoliberal agenda. These frameworks traditionally emphasise economic liberalisation and market-driven policies and often result in the perpetuation of Western dominance in various sectors, including higher education (Maboh 2020). The analysis of intra-African mobility as it relates to higher education policy reveals both subtle and explicit influences of neocolonialism and neoliberalism. For instance, the dependency on Western educational models and funding

can be seen as a continuation of neocolonial structures, where African universities and students with examples from CEMAC countries rely on Western approval and standards to validate their educational systems and outputs. This dependency often manifests in the curriculum content, the medium of instruction, and the administrative structures that govern African educational institutions as demonstrated by case study three, echoing colonial legacies that prioritise Western paradigms over indigenous knowledge and practices.

However, the shift towards enhancing intra-African mobility presents a potential challenge to these neocolonial norms. By promoting student and academic exchanges within the continent, African countries are taking steps towards self-reliance in their educational systems. This initiative can be viewed as a rejection of neoliberal dictates that often favour individual competition over collective advancement. Instead, intra-African mobility fosters a collaborative spirit and strengthens regional networks, which are crucial for the socioeconomic independence and cultural sovereignty of African states.

Additionally, the focus on regional integration through education aligns with a counter-neoliberal approach by prioritising communal and societal needs over individualistic, market-driven outcomes. This approach not only enhances the educational experiences of CEMAC and African students but also serves as a foundation for a more unified and self-sustaining Africa that can resist external economic pressures. Emerging strands from the data suggest that while African educational policies are circumnavigating the complexities of neocolonial and neoliberal influences, there is a conscious effort to redefine and assert more autonomous, Africa-centric educational pathways. These efforts include the development of policies that leverage African languages, cultures, and contexts as central to the educational experience, thus promoting a form of decolonisation of the curriculum and pedagogy (Shahjahan et al. 2022; Wandela 2014). Therefore, while the shadows of neocolonialism and the neoliberal agenda loom over African higher education, the growing emphasis on intra-African mobility and the integration of regional and cultural contexts into educational frameworks represent significant strides towards educational policies that are not only reflective of but also instrumental in achieving genuine African autonomy and regional solidarity. These policies challenge the prevailing neoliberal norms by prioritising collective development and cultural relevance over competition and external validation.

5.5.2   Feminist theories

The analysis of student mobility in the context of higher education in Africa, when viewed through the lens of feminist theories, brings to light the significant intersections between gender, education, and empowerment. Feminist theories often emphasise the need for equitable access to education and challenge the systemic barriers that limit women's opportunities in society (Ata Aidoo 1990b; Mbongo Endeley and Ngaling 2007). From the data analysed, it is evident that student mobility programmes in Africa can play a crucial role in promoting gender equality in education. These programmes can provide women with access to a broader range of educational resources and networks, which are essential for challenging traditional gender roles and promoting women's independence and leadership in various sectors. Moreover, the emphasis on intra-African mobility can help dismantle some of the patriarchal structures entrenched within educational systems. By enabling women to study in different cultural contexts within the continent, these programmes foster an environment where female students can exchange ideas, learn from diverse African perspectives, and build networks that are supportive of women's advancement both academically and professionally.

However, the presence of feminist perspectives in the discussions around these mobility programmes also highlights the need for these initiatives to be deliberately inclusive of women. This includes addressing specific challenges that female students might face when participating in mobility programmes, such as safety concerns, familial obligations, and societal expectations that may discourage them from studying abroad or in distant locations. While student mobility programmes are seen as beneficial, there is a need for targeted strategies to ensure that they are accessible and equitable for all students, particularly women. These strategies could include providing scholarships specifically for female students, creating mentorship programmes that connect them with female leaders in academia and industry, and ensuring that the curriculum and learning environments are sensitive to gender dynamics.

In sum, applying feminist theories to the evaluation of student mobility programmes in Africa illuminates the potential of these programmes to contribute to gender equality in education. It also stresses the importance of intentional policies and practices that support the inclusion and empowerment of women within these educational exchanges. As African nations continue to develop and refine their higher education policies, incorporating feminist principles can lead to more robust and equitable educational outcomes that support the broader goals of social justice and gender parity on the continent.

5.5.3 Conflict theories

Analysing student mobility in African higher education through the lens of conflict theory provides a critical perspective on the power dynamics and systemic inequalities that may influence these programs. Conflict theory, which focuses on the struggles between different groups for power and resources, suggests that educational systems and programmes can both reflect and perpetuate social inequalities (Coser 1957; Ngenge 2022).

Student mobility programmes, particularly those within the CEMAC subregion, are often portrayed as opportunities for enhancing educational access and fostering regional integration. However, from a conflict theory perspective, these programmes might also replicate or even exacerbate existing disparities between wealthier and less affluent countries or between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, the ability to participate in mobility programmes often requires financial resources that may not be accessible to all students, thereby privileging those who are already advantaged.

Moreover, the discussions from the data highlight that while mobility is intended to unify and integrate students across diverse backgrounds, it could unintentionally create elitist tiers within the education system. Students who have the opportunity to study abroad or in prestigious institutions within the CEMAC subregion or across the continent might gain additional advantages in terms of social capital, networking opportunities, and exposure to varied educational styles and contents. This could widen the gap between them and their peers, who lack such opportunities.

Additionally, conflict theory would emphasise the role of international and intra-continental politics in shaping these mobility programmes. The influence of neocolonial interests, external funding sources, and international partnerships might also skew these programmes towards the interests of more powerful external actors rather than the needs of the students or the long-term developmental goals of African nations.

To address these concerns, mobility programmes need to be critically assessed and structured to ensure equitable access and prevent the reinforcement of existing inequalities. Policies should be implemented to democratise access to these opportunities, ensuring that students from less privileged backgrounds can also benefit. This might include financial support, targeted outreach, and admissions policies that consciously level the playing field. Consequently, applying conflict theory to student mobility programmes in African higher education not only critiques the potential reproduction of inequalities but also calls for a more nuanced and justice-oriented approach to how these programmes are designed and implemented. It pushes

stakeholders to consider how power and inequality are intertwined with educational opportunities and to seek ways to make these opportunities more just and inclusive.

From the provided data and its analysis within the context of higher education policy orientation in Africa, several nuanced theoretical perspectives can be discerned that extend beyond the established theories like neocolonialism, feminism, and conflict theory.

5.5.4 Regional integration theory

Regional integration is grounded on the premise that student mobility within Africa enhances movement from one country to the other fostering a sense of African identity and solidarity among students from diverse backgrounds (Woldegiorgis 2013). It emphasises the role of educational exchange programmes in breaking down national barriers and promoting understanding and cooperation across the continent. The theory suggests that increased inter-African mobility is a catalyst for achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 goals, which aim for a united and integrated Africa. Programmes that encourage students to study within different regions of Africa could lead to a more cohesive and collaborative African society, both politically and socio-economically.

5.5.5 Digital transformation theory

This perspective highlights the transformative potential of digital technologies in overcoming traditional barriers to education in Africa, such as geographical isolation, limited physical infrastructure, and resource constraints. It asserts that digital platforms can democratise access to quality education and facilitate inter-regional academic collaboration. The theory concludes that embracing digital mobility and online learning platforms can significantly enhance the educational landscape in Africa by providing widespread access to educational resources and collaborative opportunities. This could lead to an educational revolution in Africa, where digital infrastructure becomes a core component of educational strategy, aligning with global trends and the needs of a digitally fluent generation.

5.5.6 Sustainable educational development theory

Rooted in the principles of sustainability, this theory argues that educational policies and programmes in Africa should be designed to be sustainable and self-sufficient, reducing dependency on external funding and influence. It stresses the importance of developing educational systems that are responsive to local needs and capable of adapting to changes over time. The theory advocates for the creation of educational models that are both economically

viable and culturally relevant, ensuring that they contribute to long-term developmental goals. Policies should focus on building local capacity, promoting research and innovation within the continent, and preparing students to address local and regional challenges effectively.

These emerging theories underscore a shift towards more autonomous, integrated, and technologically enabled education systems in Africa. They reflect a growing recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities within African higher education and suggest a move towards more holistic and regionally focused educational strategies. These theories could serve as foundational concepts for rethinking how higher education is structured and delivered across the continent, aiming for a future where education is a key driver of socio-economic development and regional solidarity.

5.5.7 How do CEMAC countries' higher education policies and institutions align with Agenda 2063 to effectively contribute to the development of human capital?

The study analyses the alignment of higher education policies and institutions within CEMAC countries with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which aims to achieve an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa through the strategic development of the continent's human capital. The data highlights efforts towards enhancing regional and inter-African mobility, which can improve learning outcomes and contribute to a more educated and skilled population across the subregion.

Digital transformation in education is also emphasized, as it aligns with Agenda 2063's modernization goals and the need to overcome geographical and resource-based barriers in education within CEMAC countries. Investing in digital education infrastructure can facilitate online learning and collaboration, enhancing access to education, particularly in remote areas, and supporting the development of a skilled workforce across the subregion.

The data analysis reveals concerns regarding the mismatch between education provided and the skills demanded by the job market. Addressing this gap is crucial for the effective development of human capital. Promoting programs directly linked to industry needs and regional labour markets can enhance employability and productivity. Cross-border student mobility programs can promote cultural exchange and the development of a regional identity and network among future leaders.

Overcoming structural and systemic barriers, such as the harmonization of educational standards and recognition of qualifications across borders, is also addressed. Establishing mechanisms for flexible recognition of academic credentials can facilitate the mobility of

graduates across borders, including frameworks for the recognition of prior learning and experiences gained in different educational systems.

In conclusion, while there are promising developments and strategic alignments with Agenda 2063 within CEMAC countries' higher education policies, continuous effort is needed to overcome existing challenges and ensure that the education system supports the development of a skilled workforce and integrates seamlessly with the broader goals of regional and continental development.

5.5.8 Why are certain paradigms in higher education policy emerging within CEMAC countries that adhere to Agenda 2063, and how do these paradigms facilitate or hinder the development of human capital?

The analysis of the second research question focuses on the emergence of certain paradigms within the higher education policies of CEMAC countries and their alignment with Agenda 2063. These paradigms aim to enhance human capital development, regional integration, and sustainable development.

One notable paradigm shift is the emphasis on digital transformation and technological integration within higher education. This shift is in response to global trends and the specific goals of Agenda 2063, which advocate for an Africa that is innovative and technologically advanced. Investing in digital education infrastructure can facilitate online learning and collaboration, enhancing access to education, particularly in remote areas, and supporting the development of a skilled workforce across the region. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, and insufficient funding can hinder the effective implementation of digital education programmes.

Regional mobility and integration are another emerging paradigm designed to foster regional integration and mutual understanding among future professionals. This mobility is seen as a tool for cultural exchange, academic enrichment, and the creation of a pan-African identity. However, obstacles like visa restrictions, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of harmonised educational standards can impede the fluid movement of students and academics.

Furthermore, emerging paradigms focus on skills and employability, aligning educational outputs with market needs and addressing skills mismatch in the job market. This is facilitated through curriculum reforms, partnerships with industries, and enhanced practical training components within higher education programs.

Lastly, addressing structural and policy barriers is crucial for the successful implementation of these paradigms. However, disparities in educational quality, resistance from national educational authorities, and diverse political and economic landscapes of member countries can hinder these efforts. In conclusion, while CEMAC countries are making strides in aligning their higher education policies with Agenda 2063 through these emerging paradigms, they continue to face significant challenges.

5.5.9 How and why do systemic and policy factors in CEMAC member states' higher education systems either promote or impede their alignment with Agenda 2063, and what are the resulting implications for socio-economic progress?

The third research question explores the systemic and policy factors within CEMAC member states' higher education systems that either promote or impede their alignment with Agenda 2063's goals. Systemic factors that promote alignment include regional collaboration and mobility programmes, investment in digital infrastructure, and inadequate funding and resource allocation. These initiatives promote integration and knowledge sharing across borders, supporting Agenda 2063's vision for an integrated continent.

Policy factors that hinder alignment include inadequate funding and resource allocation, limited scholarship opportunities, high tuition fees in certain countries, and lack of harmonised educational standards. These disparities hinder the mutual recognition of qualifications and credits, which are crucial for fostering regional mobility and integration. Universities can match at this level, allowing students to transfer credits across universities and take courses there as required.

The systemic and policy factors discussed have direct implications for socio-economic progress within the CEMAC region. Effective regional collaboration and investment in digital education contribute to the development of a well-educated, technologically savvy workforce capable of driving economic growth and innovation across the region. However, without addressing these challenges, CEMAC member states risk stalling significant aspects of Agenda 2063, including goals related to regional integration and economic diversification.

Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts in policy reform, investment in education infrastructure, and greater regional cooperation. By tackling these issues, CEMAC member states can ensure that their higher education systems not only align with but actively promote the ambitious socio-economic goals of Agenda 2063, contributing to the transformative development of the continent.

5.5.10 Chapter conclusion

In this Chapter, the difficulties of coordinating higher education systems in the CEMAC subregion with the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063 were summed up in three case studies on PAUGHSS, intra-African student mobility and higher education quality assurance, accreditation and authorisation processes in the CEMAC subregion. This showed how important higher education is for promoting social and economic growth. The chapter critically evaluated the diverse educational policies and systems across CEMAC, which, despite their potential, continue to suffer from historical disparities, regulatory discrepancies, and resource constraints. Therefore, a thorough overhaul of existing educational frameworks, reforms, and policy direction is necessary for CEMAC countries to fully leverage the transformative potential of CESA and Agenda 2063. This includes strengthening policy coherence, improving infrastructural capacities, and fostering greater regional collaboration to promote knowledge exchange and innovation. A unified strategic approach to education reform will emerge, emphasising the urgency of implementing cohesive and forward-looking policies that align with the long-term developmental goals of CESA and Agenda 2063, thereby enhancing the quality of education and research across the subregion.

6 Summary and conclusion

6.1 Introduction to the conclusion

This study aimed at dissecting the alignment of higher education policy orientation in CEMAC countries to the AU's CESA and Agenda 2063. Through rigorous qualitative research, interviews, and policy analysis, the study delved into the integration of regional education policies and their pivotal role in propelling sustainable development across Africa with a focus on Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of the Congo. It was structured around three core questions: How do the higher education systems within the CEMAC subregion align with the aspirations of Agenda 2063? What challenges obstruct this harmonisation, and what opportunities can be leveraged to foster a more integrated educational policy landscape? These questions steered scrutiny towards finding discrepancies in educational standards, mobility issues, language barriers, and the lingering shadows of colonial and neocolonial practices in higher education. This chapter synthesises key findings, reflecting on the theoretical and practical implications of aligning higher education with CESA and Agenda 2063 for the socioeconomic development of the CEMAC subregion. The chapter also critically examines   the research process, acknowledging limitations and proposing avenues for future research. The chapter, therefore, not only encapsulates the essence of the research contributions but also paves the way for ongoing academic discourse and policy reform in higher education across Africa.

6.2 Summary of key findings

This research aimed to explore the dynamics of higher education policy orientation within the CEMAC subregion, in alignment with the African Union's Agenda 2063. The study used a qualitative research approach, including in-depth interviews, comprehensive policy analysis, and literature review, to unravel the complexities and challenges of integrating regional education policies. The methodological framework was designed to facilitate a robust investigation into the alignment processes, identifying barriers to harmonization and opportunities for fostering a cohesive educational policy landscape across the CEMAC subregion.

The findings offer profound insights into the multifaceted relationship between educational policy alignment and sustainable socio-economic development in Africa. By addressing pivotal research questions, the study illuminates the path toward leveraging education as a cornerstone for regional development and integration. The findings underscore the critical need for policy reforms, enhanced cross-border collaboration, and a unified approach to education, resonating deeply with the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive exploration of the postcolonial state of higher education in the CEMAC subregion, highlighting the evolution of higher education policies, reforms, and structural transformations. It delves into the disparities and commonalities within these countries' higher education systems, emphasising the principles of harmonisation and regionalisation aligned with Agenda 2063 and CESA's objectives.

The minimal incorporation of indigenous knowledge within higher education curricula highlights a significant research gap, suggesting a need for studies that explore pathways for integrating local epistemologies into the formal education system. The discrepancy between the ambitious educational goals of Agenda 2063 and the actual policies and practices within CEMAC countries suggests a gap in understanding how regional agendas can be effectively localised and implemented.

Chapter Three of this text examines the historical and theoretical evolution of higher education in Africa, focusing on the CEMAC region. It discusses the transformation of higher education from pre-colonial times to post-independence reforms, and reviews various theoretical perspectives related to education development in Africa. The chapter highlights the challenges of modernising education systems while maintaining relevance to local contexts and needs. The chapter also highlights a gap in the application of theoretical frameworks to practical education policy and reform in the CEMAC region. This suggests a need for research that bridges theoretical insights with practical policy-making and implementation strategies. The chapter also highlights a significant research gap in understanding the practical challenges and opportunities of implementing Agenda 2063 within the specific context of higher education in CEMAC countries.

Chapter Four uses a holistic multiple-case study design to evaluate the alignment of higher education policies within the CEMAC region with the African Union's Agenda 2063. This design allows for in-depth contextual analyses of a limited number of events or conditions and

their interrelationships, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena within their real-life context. Primary data was gathered through interviews with students, lecturers, and other educational stakeholders, along with desk reviews of policy documents and existing literature. Participant observation deepened the understanding of socio-political dynamics influencing higher education policies.

The grounded theory design was employed for data analysis, using NVivo for data organisation and analysis. This method allowed for systematic coding of interview transcripts and identification of key themes and patterns, contributing significantly to the understanding of higher education policy dynamics in the context of CESA and Agenda 2063. Overall, the chosen research design, data collection, and analysis methods were highly effective in addressing the research questions, providing a detailed and nuanced understanding of higher education policy alignment with the AU's Agenda 2063 within the CEMAC subregion.

In Chapter 5, the results of three case studies on higher education in the CEMAC subregion are discussed in detail. The focus is on the role of PAUGHSS in shaping future higher education, intra-African student mobility as an alternative to international student mobility, and how authorization, accreditation, and quality assurance work in higher education compared to US standards. The analysis situates these topics within the broader framework of the CESA and Agenda 2063, aiming to reflect on higher education policy orientation in the subregion. The chapter emphasizes the importance of addressing the primary research questions outlined in the first chapter, as well as the significance of these case studies in providing a comprehensive and theoretically informed narrative about the alignment of higher education policies with the goals of CESA and Agenda 2063.

6.2.1 Findings related to higher education development in the CEMAC subregion

The CEMAC subregion, despite high literacy rates, has a low level of educational development, highlighting the gap between basic literacy and the comprehensive development of higher education systems. Cameroon, with 78% literacy rates, is a leader in the region, with recent legal advancements recognizing both Anglo-Saxon and Francophone subsystems of public university education. Chad has made significant changes to its post-secondary education system, transitioning to the License-Master-Doctor (LMD) system, aligning with broader efforts to standardize higher education systems with international norms.

Quality assurance initiatives in Cameroon include the establishment of the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission and participation in the HAQAA Initiative

by Gabon. However, the subregion faces challenges in authorisation, accreditation, and quality assurance, including insufficient legal frameworks, varied standards, and a lack of transparency. These challenges underscore the need for a more unified approach to enhancing educational quality across CEMAC countries.

The findings address research questions by illustrating the gap between literacy rates and actual educational development, highlighting Cameroon's leadership role in advancing higher education policy and practice, demonstrating efforts towards standardisation and quality assurance, and identifying significant challenges that hinder the effective implementation of higher education reforms.

6.3   Synthesis of findings

This study is an eye-opener to understanding theory and practice of higher education within the CEMAC subregion from a policy standpoint, addressing its alignment with CESA's and Agenda 2063's aspirations. It gives a synopsis of the meaning behind higher education, how it has evolved over time, and where it stands at present. Some of the recurrent themes include historical circumstances, policy and reform misgivings, systemic disparities, governance issues, and quality enigmas that have held back or encumbered   educational progress in the subregion since independence. By combining empirical data with historical and critical policy analysis, the study not only identifies but also expansively examines the interludes in the literature on what happens in practice as opposed to theory. As a result, the study offers   evidence-based policy recommendations that offer a strategic roadmap for reforming higher education systems in the CEMAC subregion.

The findings of the study also attempt the research questions posed from the beginning and in so doing dive deep into the current state of higher education within the CEMAC subregion and its alignment with CESA and Agenda 2063. The study's methodological rigour, capitalising on the depth of qualitative analyses, allows for a nuanced understanding of education reform challenges, making a significant contribution to the field of educational policy and administration in Africa.

One of the three research questions was designed to find out the extent of disparities in higher education access across the CEMAC subregion through the three case study analysis. The findings reveal that socio-economic status, gender, and geographical location also play significant roles in determining access to higher education. These disparities are not merely

statistical but are underpinned by deeper structural issues within the education system and societal norms that perpetuate inequality. This insight directly contributes to the broader research aim by highlighting the need for targeted policy interventions that prioritise equity and inclusivity in higher education access.

Another research question focused on the governance structures of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their effectiveness in driving educational quality and relevance in the context of Agenda 2063. The findings indicate a notable gap between the governance frameworks in place and their practical implementation. Issues such as lack of autonomy, insufficient accountability mechanisms, and inadequate stakeholder engagement emerge as critical hindrances to enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education. These insights suggest that governance reforms are imperative to creating an enabling environment for HEIs to innovate and align more closely with the developmental goals of CESA and Agenda 2063.

Quality assurance mechanisms within the higher education sector were scrutinised. The research uncovers a mismatch between existing quality assurance policies and the dynamic needs of the labour market. This misalignment raises questions about the effectiveness of current approaches to ensuring that higher education outputs are in tune with the socioeconomic demands of the CEMAC subregion. The study proposes a more holistic and flexible quality assurance framework that incorporates continuous feedback loops with the labour market and society at large, ensuring that higher education remains relevant and responsive to changing economic and social contexts.

This study, therefore, significantly advances our understanding of higher education in the CEMAC subregion, particularly in relation to CESA and Agenda 2063. It addresses critical research questions by uncovering the complex interplay of factors that influence access, governance, and quality in higher education, and brings to light the importance of informal education networks. This research impacts theoretical frameworks in the field by challenging and expanding upon existing theories of educational governance, equity, and quality assurance.

6.4   Value and relevance

This research provides valuable insights for industry, policymaking, and educational practice in enhancing higher education within the CEMAC subregion. It highlights the need for collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders to co-develop curricula that incorporate practical skills and competencies, enhance students' employability,

and ensure education systems are responsive to evolving industry demands. Policymakers can use these findings to design policies that address systemic barriers to access, improve governance structures within higher education institutions, and implement flexible quality assurance frameworks. These policies should aim to create more inclusive, accountable, and high-quality education systems that contribute to the socio-economic development of the CEMAC subregion. Educational practice can innovate by integrating informal learning pathways with formal education systems, potentially through prior learning and community-based programmes. This integration could enhance access and equity in education, providing pathways for lifelong learning and skill development. Suggestions for practical application include industry collaboration, policy reforms, dynamic quality assurance systems, and recognition of informal education. Educational institutions should partner with industry players to co-create curricula and internship programs that align with market needs, ensuring graduates are well-equipped with the skills required by employers. Governments and educational authorities should prioritize policies aimed at bridging access disparities, such as scholarships for underrepresented groups and investment in educational infrastructure in underserved areas. Implementing these suggestions could significantly enhance the relevance, quality, and accessibility of higher education in the CEMAC subregion, contributing to CESA and Agenda 2063's goals and fostering socio-economic development.

6.4.1   Reflections and learning

This study emphasises the importance of flexibility and adaptability in research, especially when dealing with complex topics like higher education policy. It exemplifies the iterative nature of qualitative research, where findings emerge through engagement with the subject matter and participants. Future research should explore themes identified in this study, such as expanding the geographic scope, enhancing the methodological approach, and exploring specific policy interventions. The study also opens up new avenues for inquiry, such as learning from higher education policies in other African subregions, identifying effective policy interventions in enhancing access to quality higher education, and understanding how cultural and political contexts influence the implementation of higher education reforms in different African settings. This will help to better understand the challenges and successes of higher education policies in different regions.

6.5   Conclusion

This study examined the conformity of higher education systems in the CEMAC subregion with the ambitious CESA and Agenda 2063 of the AU. Going by the findings, higher education has the capacity to greatly facilitate socioeconomic and human capital development of CEMAC countries. However, there are certain obstacles that need to be overcome in order to fully exploit this potential. One of the main obstacles is the differences in educational standards across member states, together with language barriers and the lasting impact of colonial educational frameworks, which continue to strongly shape present policies and practices across the subregion in particular and the continent as a whole.

Across the chapters, we see the need for a complete reorienting of the higher education policy direction of CEMAC countries to align them more effectively with the goals of CESA and Agenda 2063. The significance of institutions such as PAUGHSS demonstrates the critical role of the PAU in leading educational changes that are in line with the development objectives of the AU. Nevertheless, the institution's efforts are often hindered by budgetary limitations and complex policy contexts, which restrict its wider subregional and regional influence.

Moreover, the argument in favour of transition towards intra-African student mobility can be understood as a revolutionary tactic that has the potential to improve subregional and integration and human capital development. This transition not only enables a more extensive transfer of cultural knowledge but also promotes a collective understanding among the future leaders of the continent. However, in order for such mobility to be successful, it is crucial for subregions like CEMAC to have strong institutional frameworks and supporting policies that can address the logistical and bureaucratic obstacles that now exist.

The study determines that in order for CEMAC to fully achieve the goals of CESA and Agenda 2063, member states must make a firm commitment to implementing comprehensive educational reforms and policies. The objective of these changes should be to establish a unified higher education system that fosters excellence, inclusiveness, and subregional as well as cohesion. Close collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and subregional and regional authorities is necessary to effectively execute policies that are both forward-thinking and responsive to the fast-paced changes in global education dynamics.

Essentially, the progress of higher education in the CEMAC subregion is not only a question of policy reform but also a timely investment in the future of Africa. By synchronising educational systems with Agenda 2063, CEMAC can guarantee that higher education becomes an authentic catalyst for socioeconomic progress and human capital development, with the ability to

revolutionise the subregion and, therefore, the whole African continent. This study makes a substantial contribution to the discussion on improving education in Africa. It provides a foundation for how subregional and regional policy goals align with the actual challenges faced by higher education institutions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide case study one

<div align="center">

PhD Research Interview

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Title of the Project: New Approaches to Higher Education Policy Orientation in Africa: An Assessment of the African Union's 2063 Agenda within the Context of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa

Researchers (PhD student): Ngenge Ransom Tanyu, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow

Thank you so much for accepting to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore various aspects of inter-African student mobility. The aim is to gather comprehensive data on their experiences, perceptions, and impacts related to student mobility within the context of the Economic and Monetary Union of Central African States (CEMAC) and Africa's Agenda 2063. Your participation and insights are invaluable in enhancing our understanding of this phenomenon and its implications for regional integration and higher education policies in Africa. Answer only the questions that are applicable to your specific situation. If you do not have an answer for any of the questions, leave blank.

Thank you so much!

1. **Age and Gender Inquiry**
   o Could you please share your age and gender?

2. **Nationality and ethnicity**
   o What is your nationality and ethnicity?

3. **Educational Background**
   o Could you describe your level of education, field of study, and the institution you attended?

4. **Professional Background**
   o For faculty, administrators, or professionals, could you detail your job role, area of expertise, and years of experience?

5. **Student Status**
   o If you are a student, please specify your level (undergraduate, graduate, or PhD), programme of study, and year.

6. **Experience with Student Mobility**

- o Could you share any experiences you've had with student exchange programmes, particularly inter-African and international ones?

7. **Language Proficiency**
   - o What languages are you fluent in, and to what degree?

Main interview questions

1. **Background and experience**
   - o Can you describe your role and experience at PAUGHSS?
   - o How did you become involved with PAUGHSS, and what motivated you to be a part of this institution?

2. **Programme evaluation**
   - o In your view, how do PAUGHSS's programmes in governance, regional development, translation, and interpretation align with the current needs of the African continent?
   - o Can you provide examples of how these programmes have directly impacted the region's development?

3. **Impact on Regional Integration and Development:**
   - o How does PAUGHSS contribute to the broader goals of regional integration and sustainable development in Africa?
   - o Can you discuss any specific projects or initiatives that illustrate PAUGHSS's role in promoting regional development?

4. **Challenges and Opportunities**
   - o What are some of the key challenges PAUGHSS faces in achieving its educational and developmental objectives?
   - o Are there untapped opportunities that PAUGHSS could explore to enhance its impact?

5. **Policy Implications**
   - o How do PAUGHSS's activities and programmes inform or influence higher education policy in Africa, particularly in the context of the African Union's 2063 agenda?
   - o What policy changes or developments would you recommend to better align higher education with the goals of regional integration and development?

6. **Comparative Perspectives**
   o How does PAUGHSS compare with other similar institutions within and outside Africa in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and outcomes?
   o What lessons from PAUGHSS might be applicable to other African universities?

7. **Future Outlook**
   o Where do you see PAUGHSS in the next decade, especially in terms of its contribution to African higher education and regional integration?
   o What are the strategic priorities or plans for PAUGHSS to enhance its role and impact in the future?

8. **Personal Insights**
   o Based on your experience, what do you think is the most significant contribution of PAUGHSS to individual students and the broader African community?
   o Do you have any personal stories or experiences that highlight the impact of PAUGHSS?

Appendix 2. Interview guide case study two

<p align="center">PhD Research Interview</p>

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Thank you so much!

Demographic Data Questions

1. **Age and gender**
   - Could you please share your age and gender?

2. **Nationality and Region of Origin**
   - What is your nationality, and which region of Africa do you originate from?

3. **Educational Level and Field of Study**
   - What is your current level of education (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, PhD) and what field are you studying in?

4. **Home and host institutions**
   - If applicable, what are the names and locations of your home and host institutions under student mobility programmes?

5. **Duration and Type of Mobility Programme**

o Can you provide details about the length and type of your student mobility programme (e.g., exchange, internship, research collaboration)?

6. **Language Skills**

   o What languages do you speak, and how proficient are you in them, particularly those used in your mobility programmes?

7. **Reasons for Choosing Inter-African Mobility**

   o Why did you choose to participate in inter-African mobility programmes instead of international options?

8. **Experience and Perceptions of Regional Integration**

   o How has your student mobility experience influenced your views on regional integration within Africa?

9. **Career Aspirations and Future Plans**

   o How has your student mobility experience shaped your career goals, and what are your future plans?

Main Interview Questions

1. **Understanding the Topic**

   o Can you describe your understanding of inter-African student mobility and its significance for the CEMAC region? How do you perceive the shift from international to inter-African student mobility in the context of higher education in Africa?

2. **Experiences with Student Mobility**

   o If you have participated in any inter-African student mobility programmes, can you share your experiences and the impact they had on your education and perspective? What differences, if any, do you perceive between inter-African and international student mobility?

3. **Impact on Regional Integration**

   o In your opinion, how does inter-African student mobility contribute to the goals of regional integration as outlined in Africa's Agenda 2063? Can you provide examples or experiences where student mobility has positively impacted regional understanding and cooperation?

4. **Challenges and Benefits**

o What challenges do students typically face in inter-African mobility programmes? What are the key benefits of inter-African student mobility?

5. **Policy and Institutional Framework**

   o How do current policies and institutional frameworks support or hinder inter-African student mobility within CEMAC? What policy changes would you recommend?

6. **Comparative Perspectives**

   o How does the CEMAC region's approach to student mobility compare with other regions in Africa or globally? Can other regions provide lessons for the CEMAC context?

7. **Future Outlook**

   o What future developments do you foresee for inter-African student mobility in the context of Agenda 2063? How can educational institutions, governments, and regional bodies facilitate and encourage student mobility?

8. **Personal insights and stories**

   o Do you have any personal stories or experiences that highlight the value or challenges of inter-African student mobility? How has it influenced your personal and professional development?

Appendix 3. NVivo Software interface

Appendix 4. Data collection support statement

UNIWERSYTET

PEDAGOGICZNY

im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej

10.   SZKOŁA DOKTORSKA

30-084 Kraków,

ul. Podchorążych 2

Director of the Doctoral School January 18, 2022 of the Pedagogical University of Krakow dr hab. Marek Kolasa, prof. UP wladyslaw.kolasa@up.krakow.pl

Doctoral Student

Supervisor, dr hab.

Joanna Bar, prof. UP

joanna.bar@up.krako.pl

Pedagogical University

of Krakow

To Whom It May Concern

This is to attest to the fact that Mr. Ngenge Ransom Tanyu, enrolled October 1, 2022, with student identity card number 751249, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Political Science and Administration at the Doctoral School, Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland. This letter is intended to help him collect data for his Ph.D. thesis on the topic "New Approaches to Higher Education Policy Orientation in Africa: An Assessment of the African Union's 2063 Agenda within the Context of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa." While the data gathered will assist him in completing his thesis, it should be stressed that it will be utilised only for academic reasons.

As the Director of the Doctoral School and Ph.D. thesis supervisor, we strongly approve the student's request and implore you to collaborate with him throughout the data collection process to ensure his comprehensive preparation and completion of the planned research.

SIGN:

Dyrektor
Szkoły Doktorskiej

hab. Władysław Kolasa, prof. UP

drhab.V14a

arek Kolasa
Marek

Kierownik Studi6w

Doktoranckich w dyscyplinie

nauki o polityce 1

administracji   dr

hab. Joanna Bar, prof UP

Joanna Bar

<center>**Appendix 5. Sample interview consent form**</center>

<center>Consent Letter</center>

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Researchers (PhD student): Ngenge Ransom Tanyu, University of the National Education Commission, Krakow

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a research study for a PhD thesis. This study is open to individuals who are actively involved in higher education policy, strategy Implementation, or related fields and are 18 years of age or older. Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary.

Purpose of the Study: This research aims to explore and assess the effectiveness and implementation of the African Umon's 2063 Agenda in the context of higher education policies within the Economic and Monetary Union of Central African States. It seeks to identify challenges, opportunities, and future directions for policy orientation.

Study Procedure: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview will be audio-recorded and may be conducted via Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, or other communication platforms, based on your convenience.

Potential Benefits: While there may not be direct personal benefits from participating in this study, your insights will significantly contribute to understanding and improving higher education policy in Africa. This can potentially influence future policy development and strategy implementation within the African Union and its member states.

Potential Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal and similar to those encountered in everyday life. The study involves standard interview procedures without any physical risks.
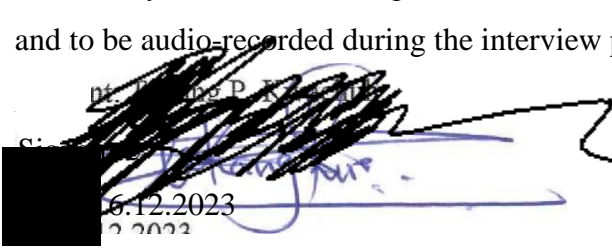
Confidentiality: The confidentiality of your participation will be strictly maintained- Your identity will not be disclosed in any report or publication. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. Research data will be securely stored and only accessible to the researcher. After a period of five years, all electronic records will be securely deleted.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. It will not impact your current or future relationships with any institutions or organizations. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, without any negative consequences,

<center>286</center>

Withdrawal Procedure: If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can contact the researcher at ransomtanyu.ngenge@doktorant.up.krakow.pl. Upon withdrawal, all data collected from you will be destroyed and not used in the study.

Contact Information: For any further questions or clarifications, feel free to contact Ngenge Ransom Tanyu at ransomtanyu.ngenge@doktorant.up.krakow.pl.

Consent: By signing this document, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided. You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. Your signature below indicates your consent to participate in this study and to be audio-recorded during the interview process.