



AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA: AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IN AGENDA

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Abstract

The paper examines African Continental Free Trade Area: Africa's Development in Focus. The curiosity for development and a self-reliant continent paves way for the negotiation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) which was launched in June, 2015 and signed into an Agreement by 44 member countries on 21st March, 2018. The development agenda was more for the economic development of Africa at large in the competitive world. The objective of this paper is to assess the impacts of AFCFTA on the development of the African continent. This paper relied on secondary data of analysis such as journals, magazines, texts, and newspapers in a descriptive and empirical analysis of methodology. The theory employs in this study is the development paradigm of human capital theory, which is important to the explosive discourse in this study. The findings of the paper revealed the weak manufacturing state of Africa and low technology know-how, which is more challenging to the industrialization development of Africa. One of the prime recommendations of this paper is the need for strategic human resources development to scientific and high technology base level.

Keywords: African, AFCFTA, Development, Free Trade Area, Manufacturing.

1.0 Introduction

The vision and plan of Africa States are to create a single continent for economic trade and services with free movement of

business, persons, and investment, to pave way for the establishment of an independent and self-reliant continent. The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) is an agreement that is critical

for growth and job creation for Africa and its one billion population (Kim, 2019). The African Business Council applauds the start of trading based on the AFCFTA to enhance business opportunities for the Pan Africa private sectors, small and medium enterprises, youth, and women, as the continent takes a giant move towards boosting Intra Africa Trade. The establishment of the trade activities on 5th December 2020 which was the basis of AFCFTA priority, in the 13th extra-ordinary session of the assembly of the union on AFCFTA, marked the beginning of the trade operation (African Union, 2020). The article on the trade embraced manufacturing, distribution, transportation, health, and eco-systems.

African governments signed the largest trade pact, AFCFTA in 2018 to boost intra trade thereby improving the economic standard of African people (Michael, 2019). In this regard, the African continental free trade area offers vital opportunities for the African private sectors to expand. This will go a long way in supporting greater trade within Africa for enabling greater economic growth that can project African development. An AFCFTA aim is to eradicate inferiority complex structure inheritance of counter

development strategy in Africa. The blueprint to actualize this agenda seems impossible on the surface of predominant odd situations in Africa. The predominant dead technology state of Africa speaks in large volumes against the objectives of AFCFTA. Africa is still heavily reliant on primary commodities, agricultural and raw material exports, while importing capital goods predominantly come from the outside continent, with a global trade share of less than 3% (African Union, 2019).

However, the coming together of African states to sign AFCFTA in particular the giant among them such as Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa may create ample opportunities for African development. The agreements establishing the AFCFTA were into two phases of which the members' states were keying into it. The third phase is not yet possible due to the problem of COVID-19. The fundamental objectives of the AFCFTA are expanding intra-trade among the member states, exploiting opportunities for production, continental market access, and better reallocation of resources among member states. Against the challenges of low infrastructural and industrialization in Africa, AFCFTA had set a priority for Africa's development in terms

of economic growth, employment generation for women and youth, and building a self-reliant continent.

The paper is to examine African Continental Free Trade Area: Africa's Development in Agenda to assess the impacts of AFCFTA on Africa's development. In this regard, the success and the weakness will be revealed, from the understanding of the chemistry behind the establishment of AFCFTA, whether is a myth or reality.

2.0 Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Free Trade Area

The concept of free trade pact is an important part of international trade and economic relations in the world, which promote unity and cooperation among the continent. It promotes friendly relationships and an independent continent. A free trade area is a form of a trade pact, that determines the tariffs and duties that countries impose on exports and imports to reduce or eliminate trade barriers. Free trade is a pact that set transparency in transactions among the agreed states at the continental level or voluntary level in line with international law standards. A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a multinational agreement or treaty according to international law to form a free trade area

among the cooperating states (Krueger, 1995). This agreement may be political but has economic considerations among the cooperating states. FTA meant the general agreement on tariffs and trades to include only trade in goods, an agreement with a similar purpose to enhance liberalization of service trade (GATT, 1994). However, the free trade pact strengthens the interdependency of states in international economic relations. Free trade agreements enhance the comparative advantage of Ricardo's theory among powerful donor countries, ideologically oriented countries, continental states, and countries with similar historical legacies. To promote economic interest at the international trade level for the mutual benefit of the membership in the pact.

2.2 Africa Continental Free Trade Area

AFCFTA is the largest free trade in the world toward the development of Africa States with the ambition to create a self-reliant African Continent. The goal of AFCFTA is to ensure the revival of the predominant dead technology in African states and to promote friendly economic relations among the member states. The objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area are to:

- Enlarge endogenous African trade through better organization and coordination of trade liberalization and facilitation among governments of Africa States and instruments across Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Africa States.
- Resolve the problem of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.
- Create a single continental for goods and services with free movement of business persons and investment, and thus paves the way for accelerating the establishment of the African Custom Union
- Enhance competitiveness at the industry and commercial level by exploiting opportunities for the scale of production, continental market access, and better reallocation of resources (Africa Union Commission, 2019)
The overall goal of AFCFTA is to achieve the economic viability of Africa and a self-reliant continent in all ramifications. To keep Africa among the competing developed continent of the world

2.2.1 The Evolution of AFCFTA

In 1991, the member states of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) agreed on the road map for the creation of a

common African market in Abuja (African Union Commission, 2019). In accelerating the implementation of the treaty and strengthening regional integration, the African Union (AU) Trade Ministers agreed to establish an African Continental Free Trade Area, the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of Africa Union, held in Adisabba, Ethiopia in January, 2012 (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). The flagship negotiation program of the AU and AFCFTA was launched in June 2015 (African Union, 2019). In 2017 African Union adopted a decision to establish a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

The Kigali summit kicked off the ratification process of the AFCFTA with 22 member states ratifying the agreement in their national parliament. Africa Union comes into force with the 22nd ratification deposited at the AU summit. The African Union Commission (AUC) has a specific Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in charge of coordinating Boosting Intra Africa Trade (BIAT) and AFCFTA-related activities. The ratification agreement provides for the establishment of an AFCFTA Secretariat, with a legal personality distinct from that of the African

Union, but governed by the political bodies of the Union, namely the Assembly of the African Union (composed of the Head of State and Government of Member States) and the executive council (composed of Africa Trade Ministers), supported by a committee of senior trade officials (De Gruyter, 2018).

In total, 44 of the 55 AU member States signed the consolidated text of the AFCFTA Agreement at the African Union Extraordinary Summit in Kigali, Rwanda. Notable absences were South Africa and other SACU members, Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Burundi, Namibia, Benin, Eritrea, and Nigeria. However, five additional signatures were adopted at the 31st Africa Union Summit on 1st July, 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania. These countries were South Africa, Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Burundi, and Namibia (Tralac, 2018). Only Benin, Eritrea, and Nigeria were yet to sign as of 2018. This was because Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari was particularly reluctant to join considering it may hurt Nigeria and its industry in 2018. On July 7, 2019, Nigeria and Benin finally committed to signing the Africa Free Trade at the extraordinary session of the assembly of the union, leaving only Eritrea as the only nation out of the 55 Africa Union member

States yet to sign up to the deal (Witschge, 2019).

2.2.2 Agreement Establishing the AFCFTA

The agreement of the AFCFTA is into two phases.

Phase One: was classified into three

Protocol on Trade in Goods

Protocol on Trade in Services

Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes

Protocol on trade in goods Annexescustom cooperation and Mutual administrative assistance trade Facilitation, transit trade and transit facilitation, technical barriers to trade, Sanitary, and Phytosanitary measures, Non-tariff barriers, Trade Remedies, Schedule of tariff Concessions and Rule of origin. This was enhanced by the endorsement of the action plan on boosting intra Africa Trade (BIATs) which identify seven clusters: trade policy, trade facilitation, Productive capacity, trade-related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and factor market integration (Africa Union WebMail, 2019).

Protocol on trade and service Annexes:

Most Favour Nation (MFN), Annex of Air Transport and Schedules of Specific Commitments in Services

Protocols for the Settlement of Disputes were also negotiated (Signe and Vanderven, 2019; African Union, 2019). These negotiations were signed in March 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda. However, several key phase one issues remain to be addressed, including schedules of tariff concessions, rules and origin, and schedules of service commitments.

Phase II of the AFCFTA negotiation cover regulatory trade issues that take place behind the border, which commenced in February 2019, but were discussed as of November 2018, focusing on three tissues, investment, competition policy, and intellectual property right (Signe and Vanderven, 2019). All phase II issues remain outstanding.

2.3 Manufacturing Sector in Africa

Manufacturing is an act of production. The conversion of inputs to desirable use at the factory level or consumer level. It is the transformation of raw materials into finished goods. Manufacturing has predominantly played a vital role in the economic growth of African countries (UNIDO, 2016). Manufacturing is a tool to support national

development objectives, it is a drive toward millennium goals and objectives in Africa. The manufacturing sector in Africa aims toward increased economic opportunities and improve the standard of living (Habtamu, 2020). However, the manufacturing sector in Africa has witnessed a series of challenges that has combat real development in the continent. The recent pandemic of COVID-19 had contributed to the setback of industrial technology in Africa. The effects of the pandemic retard the economic growth of the industrialization estate of Africa. Mark and Steven (2020) asserted that the effects of unfolded global recession remain harsh hardship for a long period. The first case of COVID-19 was revealed in Egypt in February 2020 (Shannon, 2020). This revealed starting threat to the African economy. The dead stage of technology was more disclosed to the challenges of livelihood security in Africa. The 54 countries of the continent are affected by the virus, given the percentage of most affected African countries; South Africa (471,123 or 52.80%), Egypt (93,356 or 10.46%), Nigeria (42, 208 or 4.73%), Ghana (35,142 or 3.92%), Algeria (29,229 or 3.27%) and the remaining 49 Africa countries representing the rate of 24.81% brings for the whole

continent to the total of 892,116 cases of 5.24% in the whole world (Shannon, 2020). The pandemic negatively affected the AFCFTA in realizing the objective of the two phase's operations. The result was stagnant technology, low production in Africa in terms of supply of inputs and outputs, increase in unemployment and poverty. The manufacturing sector in Africa is experiencing difficulty and more expensive to acquire the necessary imported industrial raw materials from the developed countries due to the experience of deadly COVID-19 (Binta, Hafsat & Firdausi, 2021). Therefore, the unforeseen situation of the pandemic worsens the death stage of the African economy. The controversial scenario of the corona virus and the stagnant technological state of the continent has triggered the question of whether AFCFTA is a myth or reality for the survival of economic security and economic self-reliance in Africa continent.

2.6 Human Capital theory

The human capital theory is relevant to this paperwork, in the sense that the future of every country depends on the quality of human resources. Torado (1993) asserted that the development process in low-industrialized countries cannot be

accelerated unless there were a store of scientific knowledge and human resources development. The human capital theory assumes that when human resources are well-trained and knowledgeable to the level of scientific development, such countries will be industrialized and will be able to maintain the standard of living of the people.

The limitation of the theory is that the traditional approach to human relations, historical documents, and the use of intuition and reasoning was substituted for scientific development and training which were the main emphasis of human capital theory. Total ignoring of the traditional approach to human existence may not be possible and even make development impossible.

The human capital theory is of importance to this paper because the scientific development of the people in all ramifications can make a continent. Countries that are scientifically oriented and have human resource development were able to be elevated in the area of industrial technology and international economic relation in the globe. This is an indication that human resource development in all ramifications is one of the variables to realize the objective of free trade areas

countries. The goals of AFCFTA lie in human capital development, which is one of the relevant development paradigms regarding human capital theory. The low level of technology and non-industrialized estate of the African continent is a challenge to human resources development. And one of the prime answers to the achieving of AFCFTA objectives is to key into human resource development, enhance manufacturing sectors, and boost intra-trade among the member states in Africa.

The human capital theory should be embraced by the political leaders who are members of AFCFTA, in this political dispensation toward youth and human resource development in the continent. The ultimate aim of AFCFTA should be to channel the energy of the people toward development and an independent continent. This theory will enable Africa to achieve scientific development and functional manufacturing sectors, and boost intra-trade development in the continent. Africa's development is to be achieved politically, socially, economically, and in all ramifications toward achieving the objectives of AFCFTA and the development agenda.

3.0 Prospects and Challenges of AFCFTA

African constituted free trade areas are important to ensure the enhancement of right promotion and trade liberation. AFCFTA will be the world's biggest free trade area after the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1994. The significance of the AFCFTA cannot be overstated for the achievement of economic security of the African continent. Signe (2018) has estimated that under a successfully implemented AFCFTA, Africa will have a combined consumer and business spending of \$ 16.7 trillion in 2030. He also confirmed that AFCFTA will have a significant impact on manufacturing and industrial development, tourism, intra-Africa cooperation, and economic transformation. United Nation Economic Community of Africa (UNECA) has predicted it will raise intra-African trade by 15 to 25%, of \$50 to \$70 billion by 2040 compared to Africa without the AFCFTA.

UNECA (2016) believed that implementation of the pact could increase intra-African trade by 52%, compared to the 2010 level, by 2022, thus reducing the gap with intra-regional trade quotas characterizing Asia (51%), North America (54%) and Europe (67%). The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2018) projected that under the AFCFTA, Africa will expand in

the area of efficient goods and labor market significantly in the continent's overall ranking Global Competitiveness Index. In short term, the main beneficiaries of AFCFTA would be small and medium-sized enterprises that today account for 80% of the continent's companies. However, in the medium to long term, the benefits will be extended to all African people, who will achieve a welfare gain estimated at 1.6 billion dollars, especially favoring women (who manage 70% of informal cross-border trade) and young people, who could benefit from new job opportunities.

As global trade rules are being eroded in other regions, with China and the United States spiraling into a trade war and protectionism tightening its grip in many countries. Africa has the opportunity to create a trade buffer for itself, with all countries in one giant bargaining unit; it will hold more sway than before (Kim, 2019). This opportunity can lead to increased market access, in turn, is expected to enhance the competitiveness of industries and enterprises, economies of scale, and the efficacy of resource allocation. Africa could stride on to the trade negotiation stage and one enormous market. This could lead to a new engine of growth in Africa.

However, African potentials are not revealing positive manifestations given the stagnant stage of manufacturing development and low production of inputs and outputs level. Intra-Africa trade remains below its potential, accounting for about 17% of the total African trade volume in 2017. In contrast, North American intra-continental trade accounts for 51% of exports, 49% in Asia, and 22% in Latin America, while among western European countries the intra trade accounts for 61% (African Union, 2019). AFCFTA's ratification left much to be desired as critical components of the agreement are yet to be completed, which includes countries' schedules of tariff, concessions and services commitments, rules of origin, investment, intellectual property, and competition. As long as phase 1 outstanding negotiations are pending, it remains uncertain which product will be subjected to tariff cuts and which services sectors will be liberalized among the focused ones: communication, transportation, tourism, financial, and business services. Those phase 2 negotiations were full of ambiguity at its commencement in 2020, even in the face of COVID-19.

3.1 AFCFTA Outstanding Phase 1 Issues and Business Service: Africa Development Agenda

The implication of non-traditional Most Favored Nation (MFN) in AFCFTA. The traditional requirement of the MFN free trade agreement opens the country to unconditionally extend concessions, privileges, or immunities granted to one member to all other members of the free trade. MFN aims to protect the interest of all the countries in the agreement by avoiding erosion that occurs by one country granting more liberalized concessions to the other countries (AFCFTA Agreement, Article 4 & 5).

However, AFCFTA operation is different from traditional MFN clause, it is of non-traditional MFN. Its application is not automatic and is reciprocal, countries that have signed on to the AFCFTA can only receive MFN on a reciprocal basis (Mark, 2018). This means that if Nigeria applied for 0% on cotton fabrics from Kenya on MFN free trade agreement, Kenya would have access to Nigeria's 0% tariff on cotton fabric only if it likewise agreed to apply its MFN tariff on cotton fabric in return. Thus AFCFTA MFN clause is misleading since

the operation is not automatically open to all members. This will go a long way in hindering intra-African trade and is more challenging to the African development agenda.

This objective has shown the unique strategy of the AFCFTA nontraditional MFN clause. It applied not only to trade with countries that are not a party to AFCFTA (third party) but also to the state party (Mark, 2018). In other words, while countries with the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) are trading most products with each on a duty-free basis, non-ECOWAS State parties that are importing products at a tariff rate higher than 0% would not entitle to receive that 0%.

3.2 Rule of Origin

Rule of origin (RoO) was a criterion that determines the origin of a product and establishes which products are eligible to receive tariffs (Newsday, 2018). A cloth made from U.S.A silk, designed and stitched in the U.S.A, but packaged in Ghana will it be eligible to receive preferential tariff rates? What if is made of imported U.S.A silk, but stitched together in Ghana? The answer depends on the RoO that is negotiated. Given the state of Africa,

development can AFCFTA survive under the rule of origin?

Likewise, if all the protocol in phase 2 is not obtainable such as investment, competition, and intellectual property protocols AFCFTA will not be able to achieve any developmental goals and objectives in the African continent. The vast economic disparity that exists among African countries is another key issue. African countries have disparities levels of GDP, with 50% of Africa's cumulative GDP contributed by just three states Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa (Rilwan, 2018). Another issue is the relationship between the African protocols and the existing agreement already negotiated between African countries and third parties. This situation, in turn, could recall discriminatory treatment. For instance, the absence of an MFN free trade pact between the third parties to States parties in AFCFTA, weaker investment protection provision in the AFCFTA investment protocols vis-à-vis existing bilateral investment treaties between states parties and third parties could mean that foreign investors in Africa would receive better treatment than Africa investors. Africa's worst area of technology and human resource development is a strong limitation to AFCFTA objectives.

3.3 Schedules in Tariff Concessions and Services Commitment in the AFCFTA

In June 2017 and December 2018 respectively AU member states agreed to liberalize 90% of their tariff lines on goods. The remaining 10% will be divided between sensitive products 7%, for which state parties are given a longer liberalization timeframe, and excluded products 3%, which will be exempt from liberalization altogether and remain under each member state's existing tariffs. This 10% of tariff lines which are still to be determined by the state parties on the ongoing negotiations, the absence of a traditional MFN could be challenging. This absence could result in situations where products from third parties imported to African countries are treated more favorably than the same products imported from African countries to other African countries. The problem of continuing lack of a level playing field for African products will hinder intra-African trade (AFCFTA, Article 4 & 5 on goods). AU member states agreed in December 2018 that the excluded products will represent no more than 3% of tariff lines, accounting for not more than 10% of the value of countries, while these conditions make it difficult for the states' parties to exclude key products that currently dominate intra-African trade

such as petroleum, cotton, live animals, maize and cocoa, state parties still have a significant lead way to determine the types of products they will liberalize under the AFCFTA.

While most of the ongoing AFCFTA debate on schedules focuses on tariffs, it is key not to forget services. Not only does service make a significant contribution to manufacturing value chains, but will also play a key role in intra-African integration and the future of continental trade. Globally, services have played an increasingly important role in economic growth and development, making a larger contribution to poverty reduction than agriculture or manufacturing from 1998-2015 (African Union, 2019). The emphasis is on the trading of goods with fewer goals on services; AFCFTA has not got it right on the services of focus that can project development in Africa.

3.4 Remaining Ambiguity on Structure of Negotiations

When thinking about the implications of tariff concessions and service schedules, it is also key to consider the structure of the negotiation. Who is negotiating what with whom? In the context of AFCFTA, the AFCFTA stipulates the principle of the

acquis. In protecting the acquis, the State parties seek to protect existing RECs from the extra-REC competition. The AFCFTA envisions that tariff concessions will be negotiated only between RECs of State parties that belong to different RECs. Second, four out of eight of the RECs are custom unions: ECOWAS, EAC, SACU, and CEMAC. State parties that belong to these customs unions will be conceding a bloc. However, in reality, it is challenging for these regional blocs to make common offers, as not all members of these customs unions have signed or ratified the AFCFTA (Mark, 2018). The Least Developed Countries (LDC) within custom unions are entitled to longer liberalization periods and pursuit of special and differential treatment (SDT) provisions that form a key principle of the AFCFTA (Mark, 2018). There is thus remaining ambiguity about how, and whether, custom unions will operationalize common tariff concessions.

Third, there is an open question regarding the recipient party of market access offers: will State Parties/RECS make offers bilaterally, which means there can be a different offer to individual State parties. On an MFN basis, this entails that State Parties/RECs submit a common offer to all State Parties together. While this remains an

open question, a template for goods tariff concessions adopted at the 7th African Union Minister of trade meeting suggests there will be a lead way for making different offers to different countries (Mark, 2018).

4.0 Assessment of AFCFTA toward Africa's Development Agenda, 2018-2021

The achievement of **AFCFTA** from 2018 till date was complimented with earnest trade operation on 1st January, 2021 following five and half year period since negotiation was launched on 15th June, 2015, which was followed by the signing of the agreement on 21st March, 2018, and entry into force on 30th May, 2019. After the commencement of free trade officially, four days later, two Ghanaian companies became pioneer exporters of products using the AFCFTA preferences, indicating a major milestone in the short but eventful history of the trade pact. Alcoholic product manufacturers Kasepenko and Ghanadour Cosmetics were embracing the opportunities from trading pacts, which make Africa's free trade area represents a decisive step toward the continent's long-held regional integration aspiration. The start of free trading rendered hope in Africa's post-pandemic recovery (Kingsley, 2021).

From an optimistic perspective, the AFCFTA trading operation is more of a perspective than an achievement. However, there are more challenges as the critical parts of the agreement are yet to be addressed. Out of 44 member states of AFCFTA only Ghana, South Africa, and Egypt have met the custom requirement on infrastructure for trading (Oluwatobi, 2021). This means these three countries are capable of trading effectively under AFCFTA. This scenario is darkling the hope of realizing AFCFTA objectives.

The level of intra-African trade speaks in large volume that the manufacturing and technology stage of the African continent is in poor condition, which is one of the problems of the African development agenda. In 2021, intra-African trade is numerically declining at 14.4% of African export compare to 17% of the total African trade volume in 2017(Rebecca, 2021). The latest report of economic development in Africa in 2021 indicated that Africa's unprecedented growth in the 2000s has not translated to any significant standard of living for most Africans, as the gap between the poor has widened. About 40% of the total wealth in Africa is owned by approximately 0.0001% of the continent's population, while 34% of African

households are living below the poverty line of 1.9 dollars per day (Rebecca, 2021).

The problems of AFCFTA intra-African trade are poor infrastructure, non-tariff measures, and marketing information gaps (William, 2021; Prince, 2021; & Rebecca, 2021). The rule of origin ambiguity has not justified its existence for the development of AFCFTA objectives. The investment and competition policies have not taken any significant dominance in AFCFTA (Rilwan, 2018). This is making AFCFTA sycophant flattery more of a myth than reality since 2018 to 2022, there is not been any significant improvement in investment and competition policies. The champion of few capitalists has dominated the African market which has resulted in structural and regulatory obstacles to market entry.

Human resource development challenges setback the African manufacturing industry and the production level. The training and development of human resource development in Africa are low in comparison to Europe, Asia, and Latin American continents. The level of technology and scientific development in the African continent is at a stagnant position during the hit of COVID-19 in 2020 till date (Ogundare, 2021). The impact of the

COVID-19 pandemic was negative to the achievement of AFCFTA and Africa development as a whole. The pandemic was a global phenomenon; the hit was lower in Africa but a detriment to the African economy. The 54 or 55 controversial states of Africa were affected by the virus, given the percentage of most affected African countries; South Africa (3, 677,686 or 31.9%), Morocco (1,161,290 or 10.1%), Tunisia (999,441 or 8.66%) Libya (496,778 or 4.30%) Egypt (486381 or 4.21%). The remaining 49 states represent 40. 83% brings the whole continent to a total of 11,549,076 cases of 5.24% (Saifuddin, 2022). This was a great challenge to AFCFTA and a threat to Africa's economic development, poverty, and unemployment. This shows a poor state of technology in Africa as the less affected COVID-19 continent felt the negative effect of the virus than other continents of the world in education, health, politics, economy, manufacturing, industry, infrastructural, and transportation. The deadly hit of the corona virus was more numerical strength in other continents than in Africa, but its effect negatively affected Africa continent in all ramifications than other continents of the world(Binta, Hafsat & Firdausi, 2021).

In reality, African industries are more of raw materials or primary productions in terms of mining and agriculture products. The homogenous nature of African products and low technology- know-how in the production of industrial goods and secondary productions pose more problems to African free trade activities. There must be answers to these questions of what to produce in the African context. How reliable are the goods and services? Do the goods and services have capacities to be competent with the survival goods and services in the international system? The death stage of African technology and human resource development may not be positive to address the issues in these questions, which is more detrimental to African development.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the genesis and development of AFCFTA, and the potential to achieve its objectives. However, there are more challenges as critical parts of the agreement are yet to be completed. The dead stage of technology, manufacturing capacity, and human resource development have not helped Africa's development agenda. To this extent, AFCFTA has not been able to enhance the commensurate level of intra-Africa trade, which is one of the challenges

to Africa's development. AFCFTA achievement is more of a prospect than success. Many ambiguities are lying in ongoing negotiations at the level of phase 1 and phase 2 that have not ascertained the level of imaginable phase 3. Based on the critical parts of the non-completed negotiations AFCFTA is appearing more of a myth than reality. There are lots of issues to be addressed if AFCFTA will achieve a set goal. The nature and character of African states must be well addressed and some ambiguities in AFCFTA pacts. The position of arrested technology and production utility capacity needs urgent attention in the African continent, for AFCFTA to achieve its goals.

Recommendations

AFCFTA member states should rise to the world technology order and manpower development. The need for strategic human resources development to scientific and high technology base level. There must be a cross in the flow of ideas that can enhance economic growth and development in terms of goods and services, to build a self-reliant continent.

AFCFTA member states and leaders must reflect the high level of political commitments toward intra-trade

liberalization and continental oneness. And there must be important supportive policies to prevent trade liberalization from potential damages of poorest within AFCFTA countries. Likewise, the application of the right implementation of AFCFTA's institutional policies to make the African continent attains its goals in the world political economy global system for critical growth and job creation for above 1.2 billion African populations. In this regard, investment and competition policies will important to conquer market dominance by a few actors, to prevent structural and regulatory barriers to market entry.

Concerning the rule of origin they must be sufficiently moderate to enable infant industries and markets in the least developed AFCFTA State parties to take advantage of AFCFTA preferential tariffs.

To maximize AFCFTA benefits, state parties must make commitments in line with their comparative advantage and specialization in the area of production for diversification and value chain development. While most of the focus in African trade center Around goods, it is imperative that AFCFTA do not ignore the importance of the services industry, as African services export grows faster than merchandise

export, a lively hope to continue given the sector tremendous business advantages.

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