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Economic Integration and Regional Trade in West Africa, 2010 – 2018

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ABSTRACT

The paper on Economic Integration and Regional Trade in West Africa sought primarily to examine the circumstances surrounding the implementation of economic integration strategy in West Africa. This was necessary because there has been no recorded trade growth and development across the sub-region from the time of signing of economic integration treaty to date. The study was an chore d on secondary sources of data collections. Content analysis was employed in analyzing the data collected. The theoretical framework employed was the Absolute Advantage theory propounded by Adam Smith in his 1776 book entitled; "*The Wealth of Nations*" in which he countered mercantilist ideas on trade. The theory seeks to show how countries can gain from trade by specialising in producing and exporting the goods that they can produce more efficiently than other countries.It was found that the strategy still existed in form till today as impediments to trade still loomed and are yet to be eradicated. The study recommended a clear commitment of leadership towards unrestricted movement, functional infrastructure and domination fear among member countries. It was concluded that member countries should not be complacent but thrive on cooperating and embracing economic integration strategy as a platform to common economic and trade liberalisation, growth and development in West Africa.

KEYWORDS: *Economic-integration, Regional-integration*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times because of uneven distribution of human and material resources in the face of obvious scarcity relative to the demand for them, it became a concern for every society be it developed or underdeveloped to evolve an appropriate strategy that will cater for and satisfy the demands of the teeming population of the growing society. Hence, the clam our for an integrated approach to development. By this approach, different sovereign states agreed within themselves to come together and reach a common understanding on cultural, social, political, economic and religious matters in order to foster an integrated concern, focus and interest for global, regional or sub-regional co-operation and development.

Mete (2006, p. 48) posits that, after World War II, integration and co-operation among the different sovereign states emerged as an option to meeting global collaborative development needs throughout the world. This practice replaced the aged-long practice of individual survival of sovereign states/countries. The advantage of integration is that when sovereign states/countries come together under a common platform, they got a comparative advantage over each other's strengths and weaknesses. This also opens the space and strengthens the states/countries to compete for development among each other across the world.

The study centred on the activities ECOWAS on economic integration & regional trade in West Africa, 2010 – 2018. According to Amponsah, (2001, p.98), before the creation of ECOWAS, the collective territories known as West Africa was made up of 15 countries that emerged from different colonial experiences and administrations. Three official languages are spoken in West Africa. These languages are English, French and Portuguese. Alongside the three main languages, there are well over a thousand existing local languages including cross-border native tongues such as Ogoni, Ewe, Fulfulde, Hausa, Mandingo, Wolof, Yoruba, Ga, etc. The territory constitutes over 300 million people tucked in a vast land of about 5.1 million square kilometres. West Africa is rich in agriculture, hunting and blacksmith. Worldometers (2019) declares that, the sub region has a population of 395 million people based on the latest united nations estimate of Wednesday, November 20, 2019. Economic Commission for Africa (2002, p.108) declares that, the countries of West Africa differ considerably in their colonial history, natural resource endowments and institutional and administrative systems because, at one end of the scale is Nigeria rich in human and natural resources and at the other end is Burkina Faso with poor human and natural resources. This remarkable differences further strengthen co-operation and interest among these countries to embrace and agree with the economic integration strategy in order to bridge existing economic gaps for even development throughout West Africa.

Regional integration arrangement, therefore, became imperative for the development of geographically contiguous areas. This agrees with the position of Tucker (1983, p.10) states that countries that are increasingly linked to each other by political or economic ties are more likely to be at peace with each other as against those separated by economic protection and restriction. This means that formation of integration/unions among different sovereign states or countries becomes imperative if the countries are fundamentally similar in the face of limited resources and are with a common understanding to shelve their sovereignty and come together to pursue a common purpose on areas of common interest. These integrating countries will therefore be seen to likely achieve relative peace, growth, prosperity and more excellent stability that will promote growth and development than when these countries were isolated. There are different dimensions of integration e.g., social, political and economic, etc. Different unions or groupings embrace these different dimensions of integration throughout the world based on the type of governments' interest and society. Thus, on the interest to resurrect faltered and battered economy and trade in Europe and America, a common understanding and agreement were reached to integrate European economies under a common platform.

Ajayi (2005, p.93) however states that the European Economic Community, and later European Union, was formed to reinvigorate European countries' battered economy. This was an economic agreement strategy. This integration and co-operation among the EU countries promoted common understanding, focus and interest towards driving a common purpose among the different integrating sovereign states/countries across the world. IMF(2007, p.106), submits that various countries reached several economic agreements in their respective zones e.g., European Coal and Steel Community founded in 1951; EEC common market in 1957 later metamorphosed into European Union; The Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA) formed in 1960 later succeeded by Latin American Integration Agreement (LAIA) in 1980. The above arrangements were made to meet global collective and all-round development gains of the individual countries.

ECA (2005, p.98) states that Organization of Latin American States founded the Central American Common Market (CACM) and Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) which both later metamorphosed into a Free Trade Area in 1967. There were also the Andean Pact of 1969 and the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) of 1973 formed to stimulate growth in the economy of member countries. African Union Commission (2007,p.206) also states that, the emergent of Union Donniere ET Economiquè de L'AfriquèCentralè (UDEAC), African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) gave new impetus to global African social, economic and political integration processes. In Africa, economic integration concept was conceived as an illustration of the vision and philosophy of 'Pan-Africanism'- a practical step towards the achievement of economic liberation and emancipation of the African continent.

In West Africa, Kolawole (1997, p.284), posits that ECOWAS was formed for the purpose of economic and trade interest because buoyant economy through large patronage and participation was considered central to the stability of the sub region's economy. ECOWAS thus employed economic integration strategy as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to drive large patronage and participation in regional trade in order to encourage the different sovereign countries to reduce and ultimately remove tariffs and non-tariff barriers in their national economies to stimulate trade and promote economic expansion and progress throughout the sub-region.

For many years now economic integration strategy has remained essentially a 'lame duck' having no direct bearing on trade. The scenario has further entangled the sub-region in excruciating poverty, dependency and underdevelopment. The challenges of restriction of movements of people and goods, people spending about three days or more at the borders where customs officials held their papers for months due to bribery and corruption are still being intensified and practised. There are also complaints of member countries losing tariffs for engaging in free trade arrangements. Accordingly, Asante (1986, p.81) states that actions and practices that connote restriction on movement negated Article 41, ECOWAS Revised Treaty, which emphasis on removal of all impediments to trade in West Africa. Asante, further states that, creation of illegal routes, inability to implement common currency to stabilise the region's macroeconomics variables, as well as the absence of common regional language (as most member countries speak English as against the others French), constituted threats to trade in the sub-region. This of course, has posed many problems and concerns to the government of the different member countries, the supranational body and the people as dependency and importation of foreign goods and services have contributed to capital flight, poverty, inequalities and underdevelopment. The scenario is that the purchasing powers and interest of the people in regional trade are reduced, thereby impeding the very essence of economic integration throughout the sub-region, hence, constituted a problem.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include to;

1. Ascertain the impact of economic integration on regional trade in West Africa.
2. Assess how economic integration has improved infrastructure in the sub-region
3. Determine how economic integration has reduced fear of dominance among member countries in West Africa
4. Examine how political governance has promoted economic integration in West Africa

Research Questions

The research questions were formulated to provide focus for the phenomenon under investigation. The questions are;

1. How has economic integration enhanced regional trade in West Africa?
2. In what ways does economic integration lead to improved infrastructure in the sub region?
3. How does economic integration reduce fear of domination among member countries in West Africa?
4. To what extent has political governance promoted economic integration in West Africa?

Significance of the Study

Every phenomenon which research is being carried out on starts as an idea. This idea will be tested and refined to critically determine if the circumstances surrounding it make it viable or not to add to an existing body of knowledge or create new knowledge. However, the circumstances surrounding the phenomenon under investigation-economic integration was not realistic initially, and therefore adjustment was proposed to increase its viability. Such adjustment was essential to the study and included; bringing to the fore the relevance of Adam Smith's Absolute Advantage theory in international trade. The theory emphasises mutual gains from trade which creates economies of scale, competition and comparative advantage over other products/countries. The study also exposes a strategy suitable for trade liberalisation for economic growth and development among different countries within same region. The significance of the study further adds to the existing body of knowledge on economic integration in West Africa, create new horizon in understanding the competitive landscape for economic integration concept among integrating countries. The study further serves as useful material for policymakers/ planners and researchers alike. Finally, the study becomes more relevant because it will serve as a roadmap describing the most optimal option to liberalise trade and enhance economic growth, livelihood and increase savings and investments of member countries in West Africa.

Literature Review

Review of literature was carried out in the following sub-themes;

Economic Integration

For the past decades, economic integration has grown in importance and magnitude because of the gains of socio-economic and political developments taking place around the globe. This is supported by growing integration initiatives in Europe, Asia and Africa. Aryeetey (2002, p.138) states that economic integration aimed to lower costs on consumers and producers' goods through a reduction in tariff in order to increase trade between the different sovereign countries involved in the integration agreement. Economic integration was agreed and supported as a driving force to achieve regional trade in West Africa. What then is economic integration? Aryeetey (2000, p.8)refers to economic integration as sacrificing and ceding sovereignty over specific economic functions, activities and policies to a union or regional authority to exercise economic power and control at the regional level over the different sovereign countries. Economic integration also includes all measures aimed at abolishing discriminations in economic, monetary and fiscal policies of member countries in order to achieve common economic and welfare objectives across the sub-region.

Rwegasira, (1996, p.115) defines economic integration as the design and implementation of a set of preferential policies within a regional grouping of countries aimed at encouragement of exchange of goods and factors of production among members of the group. Economic integration is a state or process that derives importance from the potential of member countries to participate in policy-decision that affects a common good. Common good with a common interest is easy to achieve than those of unilateral effort. This is because, when different countries unite and show co-operation to foster shared understanding and interest towards the achievement of a common good, it encourages quick result as opposed to those pursued with unilateral interest or effort.

Accordingly, Akims, (2014, p.15) states that economic integration could be seen as a process and as a state of affairs. As a process, it encompasses measures designed to abolish discriminations between economic units belonging to the different sovereign countries and as a state of affairs, it represents the absence of the various forms of discriminations between the different member countries' economies. This means that economic integration brings into play the concepts of co-operation and integration among the integrating countries while co-operation include actions aimed at lessening discriminations which comprise measures such as suppression of all forms of discriminations and removal of trade barriers. Asante, (1997, p.79) defines, economic integration as a state of affairs or a process involving the combination of separate economies into a larger economic region. Thus, economic integration would take several forms that represent varying degrees of integration in order to form larger economy.

Adebayo (2002, p.7) posits that economic integration is an economic strategy employed to coordinate and promote trade, economic co-operation and sustainable development within a given geographical area. Adebayo declares that economic integration is the process of exhibiting common understanding among the different sovereign countries in the same geographical region in order to reduce and ultimately remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to enhance free flow of goods or services and factors of production among member countries. Ezenwa (1984, p.22) posits that economic integration is the total unification of economic, monetary and fiscal policies of the different sovereign member countries in order to achieve co-operation, more significant together, possibilities and opportunities to leverage upon to enjoy the benefits of comparative advantage in trade over locally produced goods and services throughout West Africa.

Original Founding Fathers of ECOWAS

Daily Observers (2017, p.32) listed 15 countries as the founding fathers of ECOWAS. The countries are; Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Burkina-Faso, Guinee Bissau, Mauritania, and Sierra Leone. Ojo (1980, p.604) states that a treaty created ECOWAS in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 28, 1975, as a radical response to economic liberation and emancipation of West Africa. ECOWAS thus became the platform upon which economic growth and development of the sub-region will stand.

The Objectives of ECOWAS

The objectives of ECOWAS include to promote co-operation, economic development and raise the standard of living of the people through engaging in meaningful economic development programs in West Africa. De Roos et al. (2016) states that the ECOWAS community charter listed its objectives as follows:

1. Abolish all custom duties and levies of similar effect on imports and exports between member countries;
2. Eliminate all forms of quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade between member countries;
3. Formulate common tariff structure and commercial policy toward non-members;
4. Abolish any obstacles to free movement of peoples, services and capital between member countries;

5. Harmonise agricultural policies and promote joint projects particularly in marketing, research and industrial ventures between member countries;
6. Coordinate and implement joint development schemes in transport, communication, energy and other infrastructures;
7. Harmonise economic and industrial policies of member countries while eliminating major disparities in the level of development between them; and,
8. Institute a fund for co-operation, compensation and development.

Forms and Examples of Economic Integration Agreements

The different levels of economic integration that exist as summarised from the work of Balassa (1961, p.83)are listed as follows; preferential trade area, free trade area, customs union, common market, economic union and political union. These are briefly discussed as follows:

A. Preferential Trade Area (PTA)

A preferential trade area (PTA) is a form of economic integration arrangement or trading bloc that gives preferential access to certain products from the integrating countries. The existence of PTA lowers tariffs but did not abolish it completely. It can be established through a trade pack. It is the first stage of economic integration. Examples include the North American Free Trade Agreement and the ASEAN Free Trade Area.

B. Free Trade Area (FTA)

A free trade area (FTA) is a region in which a group of countries signed free trade agreement and maintain little or no barrier to trade in the form of tariff or quotas between member countries. FTA facilitates international trade and associated gains from trade along with the international division of labour and specialisation. An example is EFTA, the European Free Trade Association.

C. Customs Union (CU)

A customs union (CU) is a type of trade bloc which is composed of a Free Trade Area (FTA) with standard external tariff. CU is established through a trade pact where the participating countries set up a standard external trade policy (in case they use different import quotas. An example is the European Union, trade among member state of EU

D. Common Market (CM)

A typical market (CM) is a formal agreement where each member country adopts a standard external tariff. In a common market, countries also allow free trade and free movement of labour and capital among members of the group. This type of trade agreement is formed by countries within a geographical area to promote free trade and free movement of (labour and capital) factors of production. Examples are the West African Common Market and the East African Common Market.

Economic Union (EU)

An economic union (EU) is a type of trade bloc which is composed of a common market with a common union. The participating countries have both standard policies on product regulation, freedom of movement of goods, services and factors of production and a standard external trade policy. It is the last step in economic integration, and members of the union are required to adhere to rules on trade, monetary and fiscal policies. Examples are the Gulf Cooperation Council, CARICOM Single Market and Economy

The Concept of Regional Trade

Edwards (1993, p.1360) posits that regional trade differs from other forms of trade because, it is free, no restrictions of people, goods and services and there are also no creation of artificial prices as the forces of demand and supply determining prices. This means that price is a function of the market primarily as it has the potential to influence purchasing power and the total numbers or volumes of goods available for the market. There is a complete absence of sealing or fixed price on goods at the regional trade market. Regional trade guarantees competition and production of quality goods among member countries. It is interesting to state that for regional trade to be effective both government of the different sovereign member countries and the region's supranational body will cooperate, show political will, and commit required resources to promote comfortable trade regime among the integrating countries. Schiff and Winters, (1996, p.32) aver that regional trade is a kind of protectionist trade economy, where the government or supranational body intervene to remove all administrative bottlenecks, e.g., subsidies, taxes, tariffs and charges in order to lower prices of goods and increase consumption to stimulate trade. Regional trade was also driven to promote common currency, large single market size and unrestricted movements of goods and people in West Africa. The essence of a common currency was to erase all issues associated with the exchange rate, stabilise purchase and consumption, thereby enhancing trade within the region. Thus as a stable exchange rate and all forms of trade barriers are removed, it will attract more traders, promote unrestricted movement, mass participation of people and expand the size of the market. Finally, regional trade is a trade agreement between two or more governments which defines the rule of trade for all signatories. It is a treaty signed by two or more countries to encourage free movement of goods and services across the borders of member countries. Such a treaty comes with internal rules which are binding on member countries.

Economic Cooperation as a Step towards Economic Integration in West Africa

Ally (1994, p.345) defines the term "economic co-operation" as used in the study denotes a willingness on the part of the integrating countries to come together and work toward the achievement of common economic integration goals throughout West Africa. This was done with the assumption that, in the long run, it will enhance national economic interests, benefits and welfare among member countries. Thus, the national interest of the different sovereign member countries will automatically be lower or become subordinate, in a short while, for the sake of regional interests. George (2010, p.42) submits that economic co-operation was however pursued on three folds, namely: through coordination of national economic projects, harmonisation of economic policies and integration of economic activities respectively. The above motives through co-operation and mutual understanding will spur promotion of economic integration agenda among the integrating countries. Economic co-operation will also enhance economies of scale, competition and market expansion. Though, economic co-operation exists, there are varying degrees of rigor and intensity occasioned by numerous bilateral and multilateral treaties and counter treaties which have sent negative reception of economic integration among the integrating member countries of West Africa. Orji (2012, p.12) posit that bilateral and multilateral arrangements to promote economic co-operation have had setbacks tremendously on specific sectors, e.g., transport, agriculture, power, training, trade and investment which constitutes impediments to the ideals and fundamental philosophy of economic integration across the sub-region.

Economic Integration around the World

UN-ECLAC, (2014, p.310) state that, over the past decade significant changes in the world have taken place which has turned the economies of the world into regional blocs, namely, East Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and OECD, among others. The focus is on West African bloc based on the emergence of the European Monetary Union, which bears testimony to the success of economic integration to date. Other significant trade block formations that are quite powerful today are the Free Trade Area in North America and the establishment of Mercosur, both which fulfil the optimum currency area criteria.

Anyang' Nyong'O, Peter, &eds (1990: p.38) posit that, on the whole, Latin America and Mercosur have shown some progress towards full-fledged economic integration arrangements. In eastern and southern Asia, significant transformations have already come to the fore, and more is on the horizon. An attempt to intensify economic integration in some sense has primarily manifested itself within the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Also, the collapse of the former Soviet Union has created much more potential to various political and economic integration initiatives in the east of Eurasia. At the same time, Africa has to adapt to the dynamic political, and economic changes brought about by economic integration in order to cope with the pressures to adjust and promote economic growth and sustainable development in Africa and indeed around the world.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Adam Smith's Absolute Advantage Theory of Trade as its theoretical framework. Myint (1977, p.236) posits that the concept of absolute advantage was developed by Adam Smith in his 1776 book entitled; "The *Wealth of Nations*" in which he countered mercantilist ideas on trade and went ahead to show how countries can gain from trade by specialising in producing and exporting the goods that they can produce more efficiently than other countries. Countries with an absolute advantage can decide to specialise in producing and selling a specific good or service and use the funds that good or service generates to purchase goods and services from other countries.Myint, went further to asserts that, by Smith's argument (specialising in the products that they each have an absolute advantage in and then trading products) can make all countries better off as long as they each have at least one product for which they hold an absolute advantage over other countries.To put it in the correct perspective, Salvatore (2011) submits that;

> What is prudence in the conduct of every familycan scarcely be folly in that of a great kingdom. if a foreign country can supply goods to another country cheaper than what the country can produce, the country should buy them off in order for the country to have some advantages over the other countries that cannot produce or supply such goods (p.104)

Bloomfield (1975, p.460) defines absolute advantage as the ability of an individual, company, region, or country to produce a greater quantity of a good or service with the same quantity of inputs per unit of time, or to produce the same quantity of a good or service per unit of time using a lesser quantity of inputs, than another country that produces the same good or service. A country with an absolute advantage can produce a product or service at a reduced price or cost per unit using a smaller number of inputs than another country producing the same good or services. Consequently, Bloomfield further explains that:

A. Absolute advantage is when a producer can produce a good or service in greater quantity for the same cost, or the same quantity at a lower cost, than other producers.
B. Absolute advantage can be the basis for large gains from trade between producers of different goods with different absolute advantages.
C. By specialisation, division of labour, and trade, producers with different absolute advantages can always gain overproducing in isolation.
D. Absolute advantage is related to comparative advantage, which can open up even more widespread opportunities for the division of labour and gains from trade.

The above scenario, however, supports the ideals of economic integration as every country in West Africa was hoped will participate and compete with each to produce goods and services that will be bought and sold among the countries. The particular country will therefore become gleeful and continue in the production of the product she will so sell and will be bought by other countries in order to have mutual gains from trade and enjoy a meaningful return on investment, economic of scale, competition, and comparative advantage over other products/country. The relevance of the framework in the study enables mutual gain from international trade, e.g., increase in voluntary trading with each other, increase in consumer, producer surplus, lower tariffs, as well as trade liberalisation, will form the basis of Adam Smith's argument that specialisation, division of labour, and subsequent trade among different countries will leadto an overall increase of wealth, growth and development from which all countries in West Africa will benefit. Hence, the application of the theory in the study.

Relationship between Economic Integration and Regional Trade in West Africa

Economic integration aims at lowering costs on consumers and producers' goods through reduction in tariff in order to increase trade between the different sovereign countries that are involved in the integration agreement. Regional trade is a kind of protectionist trade economy, where government or supranational body intervene to remove all administrative bottlenecks e.g., subsidies, taxes, tariffs and charges in order to lower prices of goods and increase consumption to stimulate trade. Thus, several attempts at economic integration from the inception of ECOWAS has not translated into trade growth throughout West Africa. The question therefore is; is there any relationship between economic integration and regional trade in West Africa? The answer to the question is yes. There is a relationship between economic integration and regional trade in West Africa. There is a relationship for having a policy or signed treaty that make trade mandatory through the non-restricted movement, common language, common currency and large single market size agreement. The challenges of non-achievement of the mandate has exposed the relationship between the two concepts. Thus, restricted movement, no common language, currency and large single market size has become commonplace in the sub region. The continual non-implementation of the signed treaty on economic integration by relevant authorities further endangered trade growth in West Africa. Recall that the whole essence of economic integration involves the harmonisation of economic, monetary and fiscal policies of the different sovereign member countries in order to liberalise trade for common trade growth and development in West Africa. It is antithetical and irreconcilable reason to state that those who supposed to enhance the objective of trade have caused many heated up arguments against economic integration strategy. This was because, there are still discovered impediments to trade, e.g., poor infrastructure, fear of domination and poor political governance which tends to have accounted for trade backwardness in West Africa.

Certainly, nightmarish or consternating issues such as the ones stated above will continue to cause dis-enthusiasm and ill-stimulated feelings among people of member countries who feel deceived, cheated or short-changed by poor implementation of the strategy by leaders of the sub-region. Economic integration requires the co-operation and integration of sovereign countries to achieve mass participation of goods and people for useful international or multinational trade among the countries of West Africa. Hence, there is a positive relationship between economic integration and regional trade in West Africa.

Methodology
The methodology is the application of specific procedures or techniques used in identifying, selecting, processing and analysing information about a topic under investigation.
The methodology involves a critical evaluation of the overall validity and reliability of the method employed for the study. Thus, the method of research utilized for the study include the following:

Research Design: The study was designed to generate textual data through qualitative research approach where non-numerical data was gathered to know the words, meanings, concepts, and characteristics of the phenomenon under study. It utilizes the discourse analysis where existing sources of data was built on written materials from the literature.

Sources and Method of Data Collection: Data used for analysis was the secondary data which builds on books, journals, magazines, newspapers, emails, published and unpublished materials as well as the internet materials.

Method of Data Analysis: The method of data presentation and analysis was mainly qualitative which establishes the context, explore needed materials, collect and examine discursive statements through reviewing and drawing conclusions based on existing literature found on the subject under investigation.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sampling technique utilized for the study was to identify where to get information on the research topic, gather existing primary data, locate and compare collected data from different sources on the subject of study.

The validity of the Instrument: Though, it was sceptical to conclude because of several different qualitative views and opinions on the same phenomenon. However, the secondary data utilised were from classic authors with recent dates of publications. Internet materials were also current and available on the websites. Also, the instrument was given to an expert in the field to examine and was confirmed to be valid.

Data Presentation and Analysis
Economic Integration and Regional Trade in West Africa
The philosophy behind economic integration was to harmonise all economic, monetary and fiscal policies of member countries to liberalise trade and promote free movement of people, goods and services throughout West Africa. To achieve it, Agosin, (1991, p.56) states that, the movement was broken down into three phases, e.g., first protocol, relates to the Rights of Entry and abolition of Visa; the second, the Rights of Residence, and the third, Community citizenship in any member country of West Africa. Travellers' passports consisting of three categories in three different colours were also introduced, e.g., *Red,* for Diplomatic personnel *Blue,* for the Service staff and *Green,* for the Ordinary people. The categorisation of the passport was necessitated to enhance movement among citizens and visitors to boost trade throughout the sub-region. Consequently, in February 2002at Ouagadougou member countries agreed that 'certificate' for travelling become ECOWAS passport to promote trade across West Africa. However, in line with domestic laws, member countries reserve the rights of entry to any person(s) suspected to be of questionable character. Enabling environment for the movement of people, goods and services was created. Also, common language, common currency and the common single large market were agreed to be driven in order to intensify or deepen trade within the sub-region. Coleman (1996, p.105) states that a well-managed economic integration with emphasis on the best-case scenario will certainly enhance trade to gain a wide range of macro-economic and financial benefits as well as an increase in investment and savings.

However, despite all the lofty and laudable measures employed to promote trade, it becomes necessary to ask whether economic integration has enhanced regional trade in West Africa? The answer is no. This is because, from available empirical data, it appears economic integration was the mere signing of documents because the founding objectives of economic integration to liberalise and promote free trade is still unfounded across the sub-region. Supporting the above claim, Adiorto (2010, p.13) states that, the inability of ECOWAS to achieve single large market size for the more significant part of the commodities locally produced as well as a common language (as most member countries speak English, Portuguese as against the others French) constituted threats to trade in the sub-region. Asante, (1996, p.72) states that the implementation of a common customs and monetary union by financial institutions to widen its market area and also help in boosting a strong common currency has not been achieved till date. It is painful to state that, each member country is still using its own customs tariff as is evident at the different borders throughout the sub region. The existence of these different currencies (some of which are not easily convertible) among member countries further constitute a challenge to economic integration project. Ojo (2005, p.39) says, the continued use of respective currencies by the member countries have created problems of payment arrangements and convertibility with consequent difficulties for inter-country commercial transactions. This stunted situation no doubt elongates the destination of economic integration in West Africa. The financial institutions are therefore constrained by the non-realisation of a common Central Bank for the entire Economic Community of West African States.

Accordingly, Turkson(2012, P.110) laments that the observed 'un-seriousness' paid to economic integration agenda has culminated into substantial trade decrease in the sub region's total exports to the world, especially in the agricultural sector. For instance, cereals have a decrease of (5.2%), other food (3.9%), red meat (4.4%) and wearing apparel (6.8%). Specifically, the exports units had decreases in three sections as well. this includes; cattle (-1.0%), other crops (-0.2%) and other mineral (-2.0%). Industry and services also had decreased on the average in total export by 1.1% and imports by 1.0%, which accounts for poor trade growth throughout the sub-region. Hence, the activities of economic integration have not been encouraging, and the way it goes, have shown trade decrease within the community.

1. Economic integration and infrastructure in West Africa

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in facilitating trade and provides a platform for economic growth. Infrastructure is vital to economic integration because it aided trade to thrive. For instance, farm produce and manufactured goods produced locally are conveyed to the market as a result of good road infrastructure. Straub (2008, p.154)posits that physical infrastructure is necessary and sufficient to trade and conclude that, a well-developed infrastructure e.g., telecommunications, energy, transport and water will significantly and positively contribute to strengthening economic integration. Infrastructure especially road helps in reducing the distance between regions, integrates and connects the different sovereign countries national markets to other markets in the world. Quality infrastructure e.g., road, rail, air and port efficiency in both landlocked and coastal countries are important factors that determined trade outcomes. Accordingly, trade thrives more effectively on transportation infrastructure because it helps to facilitate conveyance of goods and services from where they are produced or are in abundance to where they are scarce or limited in supply. World Bank (2013, p.256) posits that, in all societies, be it developed or developing, transportation infrastructure becomes the very key that facilitates trade.

Consequently, having seen the necessity of infrastructure to trade, it becomes imperative to find out whether economic integration has significantly improved infrastructure to enhance trade in the sub-region? Thus, a study on the above suggests that economic integration has not improved infrastructure to enhance trade in West Africa. For instance, Nabar-Bhaduri (2012, p.210) states that there are perceived mundane and pristine infrastructure which adds little or nothing to enhance significant trade, thereby making it look an unrealistic dream in West Africa. Nabar-Bhaduri further laments that communication networks linking almost all Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) lack direct shipping link, especially from Ghana to other member countries e.g. Cote d'Ivoire. This, of course, has distorted movement and discouraged potential traders from participating in regional trade across West Africa.

2. Economic Integration and Fear of Domination among Member Countries

Golub (2015, p.76) states that the size, population, human and material endowments of some big member countries has threatened membership and participation of the smaller countries in economic integration in West Africa. This is because they became apprehensive that these big countries will use their endowments to dominate their interest. The scenario has caused dis-enthusiasm and ill-stimulated faith in this category of member countries across the sub-region. Every country is believed to have equal rights, privileges and sovereignty. It would deem it unwise for the perceived more prominent countries e.g., Nigeria to a lord or wield influence over the smaller countries. Jebuni, and Soludo (1995, p.87) state that, Nigeria is perceived to have overshadowed every other country in terms of population, gross domestic product, industrialisation and natural resource endowment in the region. The fear and argument is that, Nigeria would potentially be the most dominant country in the market and will benefit more in economic integration than any other country in the sub-region. The French member countries will not be glad to see Nigeria lording over the rest member countries. This is because French member countries still keep their allegiance and loyalty to their colonial masters especially as French currency and language are different from that of Nigeria which further poses discouraging posture to the detriment of the tenets of economic integration in West Africa. Hur and Park (2012, p.1288) posit that the debilitating and unacceptable status quo created by fear of domination has caused many member countries to lose tariffs which have technically destroyed the local production and manufacturing base across the sub-region. This, however, has discouraged and relaxed the interest of promoting economic integration in some member countries e.g., Mauritania. Thus informs the thinking to seek alternative integration outside the borders of West Africa. Hence, fear of domination tends to have impeded the ideals of economic integration and strangulated the very essence of regional trade in West Africa.

Political Governance and Economic Integration

Wallace, (2002, p.87) posits that, the internal poor governance structure of many member countries have led to high costs of political governance which culminated into corruption, high overhead burdens, pandemic hunger, deprivation, bad leadership styles, inflation and economic depression throughout West Africa. The scenario further affected investment, purchasing and savings powers of the people to which active participation in trade cut a hole through the bottom across the sub-region. The unstable political environment which often exhibits violence and instability also constituted a hindrance to achieve economic integration in West Africa. Eleazu (1978, p.96) says, conflicts have diminished the capacity of the state, the region and the continent to focus on integration and development and has adversely affected the prospects for achieving the gains of economic integration in West Africa.

Arthur (2005, p.5) suffice it to say that, after over 40 years of ECOWAS formation, economic integration project is still at infancy. No country in the sub-region has shown leadership as every country continue to watch each other with suspicion. Considering that integration agreement involves the cession of a measure of sovereignty for common sub-regional interest, there's no gainsaying that clear and unfettered commitment of member countries has not been shown beyond lip service and signing treaties at the time of its formation. Thus, signing of economic integration treaty by the leaders was seen as a sine qua non for the emergence of the strategy and not to enhance effective implementation and follow up to promote trade growth and spread across West Africa. De Melo, and Tsikata (2014, p.51) state that, perceived sit-tight approach of West African leaders towards sovereignty is condemnable as the concern for the sovereign will endanger common co-operation, interest and focus which to a large extent have stained the dream of economic integration in West Africa. Thus, the continued refusal to 'give a bit to gain so much' which is one of the motives of economic integration as exhibited by the leaders themselves tend to have negated co-operation, focus and interest for common bonding towards economic growth and development throughout West Africa. This concern for sovereignty by the leaders as against common economic growth is most detestable, despicable and reprehensible because it the leaders that are supposed to hold unto the ideals of the philosophy has kept it a mirage to the detriment of the sovereignty of the different member countries. Inotai (1986, p.88)states that the attitudinal, ideological and psychological makeup of the leaders towards national sovereignty constitutesa hindrance to the achievement of economic integration strategy in the sub-region. For instance, many countries held strong determination to demonstrate and maintain their national sovereignty and integrity as against common wishes and aspirations of the sub-region.

Antwi-Danso (2005, p.145) states that the tenacious hold on to sovereignty necessitated show of poor political governance posture which have created inroads for the adoption of different national currencies, national central banks, national airways, national shipping lines, national stock exchanges, etc by the different sovereign countries thereby slowing down the dream of common sub regional currency and market to boost trade throughout West Africa. Thus, economic integration project is still seen mere rhetoric with volumes of print documents and roadmaps far away from promoting effective regional trade in the sub region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Strong and powerful competitions among countries to optimise trade and have large market advantages above others through economic integration leaves countries of West Africa with little or no option but to cue in. This is because, even the successful countries/zones of the world which would have otherwise been complacent have embraced economic integration to sharpen their advantages over and above their competitors. Thus, member countries should have unbridled commitment to ensure economic integration significantly achieve its founding objectives through removal of all impediments to trade in West Africa.

Economic integration attempt has not significantly achieved its founding objectives as there are still challenges of restriction of movement, poor infrastructure, fear of domination and poor political governance at every member country in the sub-region. There are also issues of the absence of single large market size, common currency and common language in ECOWAS countries till date. The three main languages spoken across West Africa are namely; English, French and Portuguese further make communication difficult, thereby stampeded trade, buying and selling across the sub-region. The inability of ECOWAS to achieve single large market size for the more significant part of the commodities locally produced as well as a common language (as most member countries speak English, Portuguese as against the others French) constituted threats to trade in the sub-region. The scenario has truncated ECOWAS signed a treaty on economic integration and regional trade especially as the strategy still exist in mere name or concept and have remained in form and not in reality till date throughout West Africa.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Continual restriction of movements, fraudulent and corrupt practices at the various borders and checkpoints should be discouraged in its entirety.
2. Functional infrastructure, e.g., road, rail, telecommunications, produce storage facilities, air and sea transportation systems, should be provided to aid regional trade in West Africa.
3. Member countries should be seen and treated equally as pursuing the same interest in order to reduce or eradicate the fear of domination among member countries in the sub-region.
4. A clear and unfettered commitment of the leadership exhibited through good political governance will bring economic integration from its present infancy level and from beyond lip service and signing treaties to become a reality throughout West Africa.

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