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Keywords: *CESA, education.*

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The Challenges, Pragmatic Justification and more Effective Ways of Implementing the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025)

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I. Introduction

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa as the framework for transforming education and training systems in Africa (AUC CESA Journal, 2017). The CESA 16-25 was established as a means of creating a new African citizen who will be an effective change agent for the continent's sustainable development as envisioned by the AU and its 2063 Agenda (CESA 16-25, 2015). The Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. Introduced in 2013, it builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development (Brand South Africa Research Note, 2015). The realization that education is a critical tool in realizing goals of the Agenda 2063 is what led to the birth of the CESA 16-25 in 2015. This was upon the understanding of the lack of human capital on the continent (Addaney, 2017).

At the adoption of the CESA, there was a call for Member States, Regional Economic Communities, partners, private sector and civil society to popularize and raise awareness about CESA. This came along with another call for the collaboration with the Commission to develop implementation plans and mobilize domestic resources for the implementation of CESA. This call was re-iterated in 2017 at the Second Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST2) in Cairo, Egypt. On the CESA Implementation Platform, Ministers called on Member States and Regional Economic Communities to popularize and organize local launching of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa as Africa's domestication of the global SDG 4 and Education 2030, and reiterated the call for Member States to support the work of the Commission (AUC CESA Journal, 2017).

CESA serves as a continuation initiative by the African Union to the Second Decade of Education for Africa which came to its end in 2015. This was a plan of action that span from 2006 to 2015 focusing on gender and culture; education management information systems; teacher development; tertiary education; technical and vocational education and training; curriculum, and teaching and learning materials and; quality management (African Union, 2006).

According to the CESA Journal (2017), CESA's content was a result of continental and global discussions on post-2015 development goals. The CESA and its content reflect Africa's contribution to the global Education 2030 programmes and constitutes Africa's implementation framework for the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal number four (SDG 4) on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all (AUC CESA Journal, 2017). The CESA, among other initiatives, complements the SDG 4 especially when taking into consideration the fact that it (SDG 4) is lacking in as far as promoting higher education is concerned. For example, as Teferra (2018) notes, the SDG 4 only barely refers to higher education. It reads: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and sets 10 targets of which only two relate to higher education (Teferra, 2018).

In the 2017 session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology held

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in Cairo, Egypt from the 21st–23rd of October, progress made in CESA implementation was recognized and commended. Then, in relation to the implementation, the committee discussed a number of critical issues such as Girls and Women's Education, School Feeding, the Pan African University as well as African Writers and Teacher Development. They also called for establishment of the African Union Teachers' Prize (AUC CESA Journal, 2017).However, according to CESA:

> "virtually all development players now concur that for meaningful and sustainable economic growth to be achieved, tertiary education must be central to any national development agenda. Countries around the world are striving to build this sector either under pressure, as is the case in Africa, or as a priority in their strategic development plans, as in developed and emerging countries" (Teferra, 2018).

The shortfalls with the different projects and initiatives at the continental level, such as the SDG 4 and the Second Decade of Education for Africa, and the need to facilitate implementation of other crucial initiatives such as the Agenda 2063 highlight the significance of the CESA.

Heeding to the CESA's call for awareness and collaboration,a gender mainstreaming guideline for CESA was developed by FAWE in collaboration with AU-CIEFFA targeting the elimination of gender bias possibilities in all CESA activities (AUC CESA Journal, 2017). According to Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, the African Union Commission, the CESA Indicators manual was finalized by AU-IPED in collaboration with ADEA in 2017 and would be available for implementation by the end of the first quarter 2018. The manual provides a harmonized framework against which to benchmark progress of member states tracking the performance of various departments of Education in achieving the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa. It will also facilitate the strengthening of the continental AU Education Observatory, as the one stop platform for education data of African countries; and make the Observatory a more effectual agent for capacity building and policy analysis of Member States and RECs (CESA 16-25 Indicators Mannual , 2017).

II. The Current Difficulties of Implementing cesa 16-25

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) is arguably an ambitious project for Africa which seeks to ensure that her dream for educational development comes to fruition. It, though, is bedeviled by a number of challenges that militate against its successful implementation. According to the CESA 16-25 document, challenges are immanent in all levels of education which are pre-primary, primary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), secondary, tertiary as well as informal and non-formal education and training and illiteracy.

One of the areas which the CESA seeks to address is pre-primary education. This is an important area as it places special emphasis on preparation for school and the child's own knowledge, skills, experiences and other potentialities. Not all schools provide this and in some cases in which they do, they do not have adequate and efficient human and material resources to use for this purpose. Pre-primary education mainly employs play as the mode of learning and the acquisition of positive outlook on life. The CESA (16-25) document points out that this is one of the key pillars which prop up future learning as well as training. Be that as it may, this important pillar of education is facing a myriad of challenges. A study carried out by Mghase and William (2016) in the Tanzanian pre-primary education revealed that head teachers faced multiple challenges in regard to managing pre-primary education. This means that they lacked essential skills and knowledge that are important in the supervision of pre-primary classes. Such a scenario is cause for concern as these heads will not be able to meaningfully advise subordinates on how to go about their teaching. The CESA (16-20: 15) document observes that "Many children (in Africa) go to primary school unprepared and thus discontinuities between the home and classroom environments are prevalent." Ideally, the role of pre-primary education is to bridge the gap between home and school. In cases where bridging the gap has failed, this could account for poor performance by the children when they finally go into primary school. Mghase and Williams (2016) proceed to say that, in their study, they noted a marked shortage of resources ranging from classrooms, qualified staff and teaching and learning materials. This Tanzanian situation is only a tip of the iceberg and many countries in Africa are victims to this problem.

CESA 16-25 also grapples with the vestiges of colonialism in learning spaces. Years after African countries have become independent, even pre-primary education makes use of foreign language, or the former colonial master's language, as the language of instruction. As CESA 16-20 (15) notes: "It is very difficult for the child in kindergarten to cope with a new language and structured approaches to teaching and learning". To add on, research has amply demonstrated that children's first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning not only at pre-primary level, but throughout primary school (UNESCO, 2008). When a foreign language is used as the language of instruction, children will not be able to carry out learning tasks successfully and teachers will feel overwhelmed by children's inability to participate, early experiences of

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school failure, and other related problems. In cases in which they master the foreign language there is the fear that they lose the ability to connect with their African cultural heritage(Ball, 2014).Further, Ball (2014) sheds more light on the effects of using foreign languages for the instruction of children at pre- primary and primary school level when she says that they will be unable to communicate about more than mundane matters with parents and grandparents, and this will account for a depletion of the Africans' repository of languages and dialects and the cultural knowledges that are conveyed through them. For these reasons, the CESA 16-25 identifies Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as the next frontier if Africa is to realize sustained quality education and training.

The other challenge that the CESA notes that impinges on pre-primary education is children's readiness to learn in school. Children's readiness for school has changed from a primarily maturational definition to a more socially constructed concept (Gesell and Ames: 1974; Pandis: 2001). According to Murphy and Burns (2002), school readiness is a product of the interaction between the child and different environmental and cultural experiences that increase development outcomes for children. Such an approach is supported by the United Nations World Fit for Children (WFFC) mission statement of 2002 which perceives school readiness as that which promotes a good start in life in a nurturing and safe environment that enables children to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn. This is an all-inclusive statement which, though, remains a pipe dream to most African countries.

That most schools in Africa, especially those in SSA, are not ready schools is a major drawback to the implementation of the CESA. This means the school environment and related practices do not foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children(Mghase & William, 2016). Most families are not ready and they they do not focus on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school. More often than not, children are not successful as they lack competence in basic behaviors and abilities including literacy, numeracy, ability to follow directions, working well with other children and engaging in learning activities. On a broader scale, school readiness encompasses physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge, including mathematics. Also important are attitudes towards learning such as task persistence, attention, creativity, initiative, curiosity and problem solving.

What this means is that most schools offering pre-primary education are not child-friendly (CFS) (UNESCO, 2008) and lack high-quality learning environment that offers appropriate levels of instruction and is safe, secure and inclusive.

Finally, child-friendly schools are child-centered and focus on characteristics that are most beneficial for children's holistic development and comprehensive learning. The challenge to the CESA in this regard is that school environments are not child-centered in teaching and learning and that there no health provisions in most instances as schools have not incorporated nutrition, deworming and vaccination programs. Also lacking are hygienic practices which include providing clean water and environments as well as sanitation. Other areas of concern include the use of unsafe and sub-standard places for learning. Punishment, abuse or violence and lack of gender sensitivity predominate and derail the CESA agenda.

The CESA is also facing challenges in primary education. This is in spite of the tremendous progress made in terms of access to this level of education in the last two decades. According to the CESA (16-25) document, the main challenge in primary education is to sustain access while, simultaneously, improving learning outcomes. Although from 1999 to 2012, the adjusted net enrollment ratio leap-frogged from 59% to 79%, there remain some 30 million children who are out of school and need to be brought into the school system.

The CESA also faces the problem of qualified and competent teachers. In an attempt to solve this problem, many countries are sacrificing standards and undermining progress by hiring people with little or no training(UNESCO, 2017). The same paper shows that by 2014, at least 93 countries had an acute teacher shortage, and needed to recruit some four million teachers to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The UNESCO policy paper says that if the deadline for ensuring there are sufficiently trained teachers in schools was extended to 2030, it means more than 27 million teachers would have to be hired - 24 million of whom will be required to compensate for attrition, according to UIS data. At the current rates, however, about 30% of these 93 countries will not be able to meet these needs. Notably, SSA faces the greatest teacher shortage and accounts for two-thirds of the new teachers needed by 2030. What worsens this problem is that there is a steadily growing school-age population.

"A quality universal primary education will remain a distant dream for millions of children living in countries without enough trained teachers in classrooms," said Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO. "Teachers are the core of any education system. Some countries, under pressure to fill gaps,

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have resorted to recruiting teachers who do not have the most basic training. A reading of UIS data indicates that, in one-third of countries with data, fewer than 75% of primary school teachers were trained according to national standards in 2012. In Angola, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and South Sudan, this figure falls below 50%. Resultantly, in about a third of countries in SSA, the GMR shows that the challenge of training existing teachers is greater than that of recruiting new teachers to the profession.

The other difficulty that the CESA is confronted with has to do with the teacher- pupil ratio. High teacher-pupil ratios are not working positively in the quest to offer the best learning experiences to the learner (UNESCO, 2014). Countries must ensure that all new teacher candidates have completed at least secondary education. Conversely, the GMR shows that the numbers of those with this qualification in many countries are in short supply: eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa would have to recruit at least 5% of their secondary school graduates into the teaching force by 2020. The problem is acute in Niger which would have to recruit up to 30%.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the cost of paying the salaries of the additional teachers required by 2020 totals an extra US$5.2 billion per year, according to UIS projections, before counting for training, learning materials and school buildings (Hendrik van der Pol, director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics). Some four countries which are the Central African, Malawi, Mali and Chad will have to increase to a greater degree, their education budgets so to cover the education bills and the costs of training new recruits.

In most African countries, there is a pattern of supply in urban areas and shortage in rural areas and this is strong evidence that the problem of teachers in rural schools will not be solved simply by producing more teachers. Most teachers do not want to work or stay in rural areas due to rampant low salaries, lack of access to professional opportunities and discouraging social isolation(Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010).

TVET in Africa also faces a number of challenges. In spite of this, African counties continue to make spirited efforts to expand TVET training facilities but this appears to be too costly.

There is also a discrepancy in TVET access especially for poor people in rural areas. As most TVET institutions are situated in the big cities, such a scenario puts paid to huge barriers to economic and geographical inequalities and also gender inequalities (African Union, 2006).

In addition, the current system of education in most African countries is mostly theoretical and lacks the practical element and this can be a challenge in fostering technical skills and enhancing the capability to achieve growth in their economy (Muriithi, 2005). There is no doubt that TVET needs many materials for teaching and learning, especially in the form of specialist equipment and consumable materials and lack of resources is one of the major factors to ineffective TVET system. More to this, most of the available equipment in TVET institutions is not in good working order or directly relevant to the curriculum. The internal efficiency of polytechnics is low and that there is underutilization of facilities and equipment coupled with weak management and ineffective teaching staff. As a result, it is impossible for most graduates to find employment or launch their own businesses, and to work productively (UNESCO-UNEVOC).

While great attempts are being made to provide tertiary education in Africa, there are also factors that militate against the successful implementation of this project. According to the CESA 16-25 document, virtually all development players realize that for any meaningful and sustainable economic growth to be realized and sustained there is need for prioritizing tertiary education in the development agenda of nations. However, enrollment figures in universities do not point to encouraging trends.

African higher education, at the beginning of the new millennium, faces unprecedented challenges as the demand for access is always increasing, especially in the context of Africa's traditionally low post-secondary attendance levels, but higher education is recognized as a key force for modernization and development. Most of Africa's academic institutions face major barriers in the provision of education, research, and service needed if the continent is to advance. What is clear is that African universities currently operate under very difficult circumstances, which include the social, economic, and political problems facing the continent and in the context of globalization.

For Africa to succeed economically, culturally and politically, it must have a strong post-secondary sector and academic institutions are a key element to the future. It is important to note that higher and tertiary education had largely been ignored by national governments and international agencies but there has been the realization that this cannot be ignored as higher education is the key driver to socio-economic development. Africa, a continent withfifty -four countries, has slightly over 620 institutions thatfit the definition of a university and by international standards, Africa is the least developed region in terms of higher education institutions and enrollments. Most countries on the continent cannot claim comprehensive academic systems as they have just a few academic institutions and have not yet established the differentiated post-secondary systems required for the information age(Taskforce of Higher Education and Society, 2000).

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In northern Africa, however, the overall trend and state of university education is considerably different from the rest of SSA. Even in the SSA, a few countries, such as Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa have their own unique characteristics. There is diversity in function, quality, orientation, financial support, and other factors in African universities and pronounced differences in national circumstances and realities.

The CESA also focuses on informal and non-formal education and training and illiteracy in Africa. This area, too, is experiencing some challenges. According to the CESA document, illiteracy is a major challenge to the adoption of scientific and technological innovations geared towards improvement in agriculture, health and people's livelihoods. Following this, there is needed to stem it so that it does not hamper economic and social progress on the continent.

It is not misnomer to say that Africa has the highest number of children, youth and adults who are out of school. According to UNESCO (2015), 6 out of 10 countries with the highest out of school children are from Africa. This translates to very high figures and calls for corrective action to be taken.

It has been the practice that non-formal education and training has largely been put in the hands of NGO'S, thus relying on external development resource to expand alternatives for education. Sadly, there is currently a decline in external funding and the picture painted is not at all rosy if African governments do not take a pro-active role in addressing this anomaly.

Such a scenario is further worsened by the rapidly increasing population which raises the danger that socio-economic success in Africa may be retarded by a huge population of illiterate people (CESA 16-25). Regrettably, only a few countries continentally have been able to embark on massive literacy campaigns that could transform lives on the African continent. It is a sad scenario that community learning centers are still few in number in both rural and urban areas. African cities remain obliged to fully embark on the learning cities initiative in an attempt to put to nought the notion of ignorance conjured by absence of these institutions.

If Africa is to move out of the quagmire of failure in her pursuit for excellence, there is a compelling need for these difficulties to be addressed. It is only after these pertinent issues ate addressed that one can think of an efficiently and effectively educated Africa taking a significant share of the cake in global socio-economic development.

III. Practical Reasons of Implementing the CESA 16 – 25

In a recent interview with a French newspaper Le Monde, the chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, Maurice Obstfeld, asked him how to stimulate the potential of world growth, he replied: "First of all, investing in education, and especially in the younger ones, who will be the next innovators (Obstfeld, 2018). We can do more and better in this field. Our econometric studies show that, even in the poorest countries, education efforts offer real, this also holds true for the United States, and this makes even more sense when it comes to promoting equal opportunities. "This acts as an explanation into the efforts on improvement of education by countries globally, inspiring regional bodies into acting on the best strategies that would be implemented in ensuring that the desired goals in access to quality education are attained.

Also for businesses, wherever in the world, education, training and skills are essential to boost investment and productivity, as well as to boost entrepreneurship. A shortage of skilled workers is an obstacle to investment. And without investment, neither wealth nor employment is created. It is therefore a serious and dangerous barrier to human development and inclusive growth. Access to education, training and qualification is still an important factor of freedom and contributes to a better citizenship.

Africa and Africans are obviously not an exception to these principles and values. In Africa, too, human development, of which education is a central component, together with health, enables people to participate and benefit from the processes of economic growth. As stated in the African Economic Outlook 2017, the most educated and healthy people tend to have better wages and the same document also points out that the lack employment is the most pressing challenge for the young population (African Economic Outlook, 2017)

On the African continent, a young person is generally three times more likely to be unemployed than an adult (International Labour Organization, 2015). And the African Development Bank (ADB) estimates that half the young population is unemployed or inactive, and 35% are in vulnerable jobs (AfDB, 2016). In addition, the youth unemployment rate increases with the level of schooling, indicating that education systems in Africa are not preparing people for the job market. Young people who have completed tertiary education in Africa are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than those with primary education or less (ILO, 2015), all as stated in the Africa Economic Outlook for 2017.

The investment in education in order to fulfill all its potential has to go hand in hand with the creation of career and career guidance processes throughout all schooling and working life. Developing career management skills, self-awareness of interests and motivations, understanding how these interests relate to professions and careers are essential soft skills for

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investment in education to reach its highest potential in Africa. Companies play an essential role in this process, pointing out the skills and qualifications they will need, and acting in coordination with the education system in offering training possibilities in a practical context.

Pre-primary education has taken more account in recent times, and while progress is being made in some areas, early learning of children is often neglected, putting millions of children at a disadvantage before they even begin primary school.

World leaders recognized the key role that the early years play in tackling inequality by agreeing to a crucial target within the Sustainable Development Goals (ODS), they agreed that by 2030 they will ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality pre-school education, in order to serve as a preparation for primary education.

According to State of Education in Africa Report (SEAR) (2015), "In 2012, 184 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide. Nearly 11 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education in sub-Saharan Africa in 2008. Globally, 8 of the 10 countries with the lowest pre-primary net enrollment rates are in sub-Saharan Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, only seven countries achieved the gross enrollment ratio target of 80 percent or more students enrolled in pre-primary education programs. Yet, enrollment in pre-primary education programs is expanding throughout Africa. Enrollment rose by almost two and half times between 1999 and 2012. On average, only 20 percent of young children in Africa were enrolled in pre-primary programs in 2012"(State of Education in Africa Report, 2015).

This demonstrates that African countries have to invest more in pre-school education, increasing the material and economic resources for their development, as well as the quality of education, in order to make pre-school education free and compulsory for all the children and pay special attention to the children who need help.

In relation to primary education, in SEAR (2015) affirms that between 1990 and 2012, the Africa region has experienced an impressive increase in the number of children enrolled in primary schools, from 62 million to 149 million children. And another positive achievement is that in sub-Saharan Africa, since 2000, 15 countries have abolished the schools fees, which gives the children more possibilities to frequent schools, but in other hand no African country has achieved universal primary education, and in the world in 2012, 58 million children of primary school age were out of schools, and 38 million children of that number were in Africa, and half of all out-of-school children in Africa will never go to school.

According to SEAR (2015), "in sub-Saharan Africa achieved the greatest gains in secondary education participation compared to all other regions of the world between 1999 and 2012. Worldwide, there were 552 million youth enrolled in secondary schools in 2012. Some 49 million secondary students resided in Africa. After graduating from primary school, many students are finding it difficult to attend secondary schools close to home. Across Africa, secondary schools can accommodate only 36 percent of qualifying secondary students. Young people living in rural communities are more likely to have limited access to secondary education compared to youth in urban areas. Seven out of ten rural youths have never attended school" (p.8).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is extremely important as it offers an opportunity for professional development, which enhances Africa's global competitiveness and the creation of new decent jobs, and helps strengthen the workforce. In 2012 in Africa just 6 percent of secondary schools were enrollment in TVET programs, 2 to 6 percent of educational budgets are devoted to develop TVET skills (State of Education in Africa Report, 2015).

According to a report in the Word Development Report, 2018, entitled Learning to Realize Education's Promise, explains that low-income and developing countries are most affected by the global learning crisis. In low-income countries, less than 5% of students in late high school score above the minimum proficiency level for reading. This is at 14% for math. In sub-Saharan Africa, less than 7% of high school students are proficient in reading, compared to 14% in math. The report also explains that school attendance is not a problem in sub-Saharan Africa, but learning gaps remain high (Word Development Report, 2018). Many children are not well prepared to learn due to illness, malnutrition and other social problems affecting the region. The quality of teaching is poor because some teachers are not particularly well-educated. Another problem affecting sub-Saharan Africa is the absence of teachers. The variable classroom absence combines absences from school with absences of class among the teachers who are in school. For example, in Kenya, the difference between the two variables shows that 32% of teachers enter school without attending classes. The report suggests that teachers' absence can be attributed to low wages - teachers often have to take on secondary jobs to support themselves. In addition, in addition to teaching, many teachers find themselves dealing with administrative tasks that are normally outside their area of work due to the lack of staff in schools.

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In general, education in Africa has developed over the years as statistics show, but education in Africa is still facing major difficulties today, there will still be insufficient numbers completing secondary school, especially girls, and very few post-secondary institutions and posts available to high school graduates. Currently, only 30% of African girls complete secondary education there are places in the mainland university for only 6% of all eligible secondary school graduates.

IV. The Experiences and Lessons of Implementing CESA 16 – 25

Since its inception by the African Union, some strides have been attained in the CESA 16 – 25's implementation across the continent. Nearly two years after the adoption of CESA 16-25, African countries are at different stages of progress in integrating/ mainstreaming the internationally and regionally agreed targets and commitments into their national education policies, plans and practices (PACE, 2018).

a) Higher Education Pan-Africanization (through Pan African universities)

In the efforts to enhance education that is relevant to the continent's needs, the CESA has a special focus on higher education, propagating for the advancement of Pan African centres of excellence. The implementation of the CESA with this aspect has been noticeable, although not at a satisfying level. It has seen the birth of Pan African University (PAU) institutes in selected countries representing different regions on the continent. The PAU Institutes in four of Africa's five regions are embedded within existing universities of excellence in those regions. The first one is the PAU Institute for Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change (PAUWES) which is hosted at Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen in Algeria (Northern Africa). This is followed by the PAU Institute of Life and Earth Sciences (including Health and Agriculture, PAULESI) hosted by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (Western Africa). Third is the PAU Institute for Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI) which is in Kenya (Eastern Africa). The fourth one is the PAU Institute for Basic Sciences hosted at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya again. The last of the institutes is the PAU Institute for Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS) at University of Yaounde II in Cameroon (Central Africa)(AUC CESA Journal, 2017). PAU's fifth thematic institute, on Space Sciences, will be hosted by South Africa and is expected to be operationalized this year (2018). The Institute for Space Sciences (PAUSS) will be based at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and a consortium of eight universities in South Africa. Its existence sees coverage of all the five regions of the continent which form the continental lay-out of the Pan African University (AUC CESA Journal, 2017).

The Pan African University offers full scholarships to all students enrolled into its programs with calls for scholarship applications issued and widely disseminated by the Rectorate and students apply online for a wider outreach. The Pan African University is already contributing to the integration of the African Continent through extra language courses in all the institutes and consolidated courses on the History of Africa plus Gender and Human Rights, across all programs (Khadija, 2018).

However, there are still numerous challenges in the collection, compilation and analysis of statistical data in higher education sub sector in particular at institutional level in Africa (African Development Bank, 2017). For example, "only 2 out of 23 countries (i.e. Ghana and Seychelles) in Sub-Saharan Africa completed the Higher and Tertiary Education questionnaire to UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2015" (African Development Bank, 2017). Experts in higher education have bemoaned the coordination of the fragmented and parallel systems in place as one of the biggest challenges in many countries: the monitoring of education systems is the responsibility of multiple ministries, agencies and departments across different levels of government (African Development Bank, 2017). There is also a lack of clear and comprehensive indicators to underpin the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Higher Education sector. Unfortunately, these are the indicators that are critical for tracking the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25), Africa's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 on "Quality Education" (African Development Bank, 2017). This signifies little progress in the implementation of the CESA 16 – 25 specifically with regards to higher education pillar.

b) Gender Equality in Education

One of the initiatives contained in the CESA 16 – 25 is the effort to achieve equality between boys and girls in terms of access to education. although there have been various initiatives targeting the reduction of gender parity in terms of access to education, even within the CESA's initiatives the results have not been satisfying. For example, in the Pan African Universities, as of 2017, the total number of female graduates stood at thirty percent (30%) of the total graduating students (AUC CESA Journal, 2017).

Doraba (2017) observes that despite various African governments developing policies in response to the CESA 16 – 25 among other initiatives, implementation is still neglected. The implementation

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process is often compromised or inconsistent. This is often linked to among other factors: lack of policy awareness and understanding by the key implementers at the national and community levels; minimal consultation with the beneficiaries of the policies; and lack of data depicting the impact of the policies on the ground (Doroba, 2017). The limited resource allocation to support the policy implementation process and the lack of political will among government leaders further leads to the shelving of these key yardsticks for progress (Doroba, 2017).

Despite the numerous efforts in inventing policies that are centered on equal access to education, reports show that the number of out–of-school children in Africa continues to soar. For instance, a 2016 UNESCO report shows that about 264 million children and youth are out of school, with a majority of these coming from sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2017). According to the report, girls are still more disadvantaged than boys by a wider margin:

> Girls are more likely than boys to never set foot in a classroom despite all the efforts and progress made over the past two decades. According to the UIS data, 9 million of the 15 million adolescent girls who will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school, live in sub-Saharan Africa.(UNESCO, 2017)

However, there are still a few instances of progress and success in the implementation of the CESA 16 – 25 goals related to gender equality in some countries. In The Gambia for example, the development and implementation of education policy 2016-2030 is bridging the discrepancy in access to education for both girls and boys(Doroba, 2017). Doraba (2017) further notes that Gambia's Education Sector Policy 2016–2030 is the first sector-wide policy in the country written after the separation of the portfolio of Higher Education from Basic and Secondary, which saw the creation of a ministry responsible for higher education, research, science and technology and the repositioning of the former Ministry of Education to focus on basic and secondary education matters. "As a result of the changes, gender parity in the Gambia's classrooms is now almost at par. Currently, more students are enrolling for health and agriculture studies but the Ministry is also promoting engineering courses to young ladies."(Doroba, 2017).

c) Collaboration between AU and NGO for CESA

The call for collaboration by the Heads of State at the summit that saw the launch of the CESA 16 – 25 as well as reiterations by ministers of education in follow-up conferences have yielded some positive results in the implementation of the strategy. On the forefront of interventionist programmes aimed at attaining the CESA's objectives has been the Forum for African Women Education (FAWE). For every objective that relates to education, the organization has developed a clearly outlined list of interventionist measures. This has seen FAWE developing 10 different strategic interventionist measures responding to 10 CESA objectives that relate to education(FAWE, 2017). The objectives tackle crucial areas such as revitalizing the teaching profession, ICT education, gender parity and equity in education, infrastructural renovations as well as literacy campaigns among others(AUC CESA Journal, 2017).

In each of the CESA clusters – the different categories through which strategic implementations are attained – there is a specific lead partner in collaboration with the African Union. The table below presents some of the CESA 16 – 25 cluster information, with each thematic area presented along with the lead partners that are active in collaboration in the given area:

Thematic clusters	Active	Launched	Date	Lead Partner
STEM Education	Active	Launched	30th September, 2016	African Institute for Mathematical Sciences
ICT in Education	Active	Launched	11th November, 2016	Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative
Teacher Development	Active	Launched	9th December, 2016	UNESCO-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
Women and Girls Education	Active	Launched	December, 2016	International Center for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa
Higher Education	Active	Launched	8th June, 2017	Association of African Universities/INHEA
School Feeding	Active	Launched	31st May 2017	World Food Program

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Education Planning	Active	Not launched	October, 2017	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Peace Education	Active in safe schools' and 'education for peace'	launched (Technical Advisory Committee exists)	November, 2017	Save the Children/UNESCO
TVET	Active	Not launched	November 2017	New Partnership for Africa's Development

d) The CESA School Feeding Cluster

During the African Union Summit in January 2016, the African Heads of State decided to adopt a continental strategy on home grown school feeding programmes, to enhance retention rates and performance of children in schools, whilst boosting income generating activities and economic development in local communities (African Union, 2018). This declaration encourages AU member states with operational school feeding programmes to continue their programmatic efforts, while inviting other member states to learn and adapt lessons from those running school feeding programmes.

The CESA School Feeding Cluster has been much of a success in a number of countries on the continent. This is mostly the case because its adoption came at a time when there were similar initiatives by other international organizations in collaboration with governments as noted at the 2016 Heads of State Summit where the CESA was launched. For example, in Malawi, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology started the school-feeding program in as early as 1994 with the help of the World Food Program, initially targeting selected schools in 24 districts (Kamlongera, 2009). In some countries, the school feeding program has been in place for so long, much earlier than Malawi. For example, Cape Verde introduced its school feeding program in 1979.In September 2010, the Government of Cape Verde took over responsibility for funding and managing the national school feeding program which had been in place since 1979 under the management of WFP(FAO, 2010). The Government requested the United Nations (UN) technical support in specific areas aimed at consolidating and strengthening the gains already made in order to secure continuity of the program. At the time, the project covered 100 percent of public elementary schools, registering a high enrolment rate of 92 percent for the 2007/2008 school year, while supporting the food security and nutrition of students and providing social protection to the most vulnerable families (FAO, 2010).

The feeding program has so far been a success. For example, evaluations of the school feeding programmes on the continent show positive and near-immediate impacts on increasing girls' attendance and enrolment rates, even in the absence of specific, gender-related programme objectives(African Union, 2018). And, there are examples of school feeding programmes going beyond simply serving in-school meals to accomplish progress vis-à-vis gender equity, such as distributing Take-home Rations (THR) in Burkina Faso and giving goats (Niger) to high-performing girl students as a way of encouraging girls to stay in school, hiring local women to work as remunerated school caterers (Nigeria), the participation of more women in smallholder cooperative societies that sell to Home-grown School Feeding (HGSF) programmes (various countries), amongst other initiatives (African Union, 2018).

The success of the school feeding program mainly results from the fact that there were already working structures for the same before the CESA 16 – 25's adoption of the program. This also explains the call for collaboration with various institutions which the CESA has always emphasized on. It demonstrates that for the CESA to be implemented successfully there is need for such collaborated efforts. In recognition of the relevance of the school feeding program in CESA, the XIX Global Child Nutrition Forum in Montreal in 2017 praised the African Union for launching the Implementation Cluster on School Feeding under its Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), acknowledging the importance of global and regional networks such as the Pan-African Network for School Feeding and Nutrition.

e) TVET and the CESA

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) calls for the expansion of TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthening linkages between the world of work and education and training systems. With a view to guiding the African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities, the AUC is developing a continental Plan of Action for the promotion of Technical, Professional and Entrepreneurial Training and Youth Employment in Africa (PACE, 2018). Additionally, the AUC has commenced The Skills Initiative for Africa with support from the German Government. The continental programme aims at strengthening occupational

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prospects of young people in Africa through practical skills development.

In line with the CESA's TVET goals, the Malawi Government is registering some progress in its effort to expand provision of improved technical, entrepreneurial, and vocational education and training (TEVET) to its young people by building community technical colleges and community skills development centres in its smaller centres and introducing a harmonized curriculum(PACE, 2018). With technical assistance from UNESCO and funding from the EU, the Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) is promoting inclusion by enhancing the image of TVET, providing opportunities for women and girls to try their hand at a trade, and identifying and responding to challenges faced by females in traditionally male occupations. Currently, STEP is informing its work from studies on career guidance and counseling, sexual reproductive health, gender-based violence, and inclusion (PACE, 2018). As reported by the Malawi Government at the 2018 Pan African High-Level Conference on Education in Kenya, the major initiatives that are currently under way in the country include women's apprenticeship programs, support to administrators to reduce cases of gender-based violence in colleges, development of student-orientation materials, training on codes of conduct for instructors etcetera.

V. Effective Ways of Implementing CESA 16 – 25

CESA 16-25 is aiming to achieve many objectives by 2025 in order to fully reorient African education and training systems towards the achievement of the AU's vision and Agenda 2063. To achieve the goals, strategic objectives have been put in place and they are:

1. Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels
2. Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education
3. Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems
4. Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration
5. Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity
6. Launch comprehensive and effective literacy campaigns across the continent to eradicate illiteracy
7. Strengthen the science and math curricula and disseminate scientific knowledge and the culture of science in the African society
8. Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems
9. Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness
10. Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups
11. Build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and improve the management of education system as well as the statistic tool, through capacity building for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and usage.
12. Set up a coalition of all education stakeholders to facilitate and support initiatives arising from the implementation of CESA 16-25

The objectives have been set but to develop Africa, now actions need to be taken. Some of these objectives can sound vague and monotonous, if we just see them written down and no major action taking place for it to be accomplished. The above mentioned objectives were set in order to bring development to Africa but sometimes we forget that Africa besides the need to be developed needs to be modernized.

The better way to achieve or implement CESA through these objectives is to change the mentality of African citizens in all the countries. Right now, many Africans can only perceive themselves as victims. They have first to stop thinking of themselves as beggars in need of charity. In order to change the current perception of Africa and Africans, it would be really helpful if the aid organisations were to wind down and pull out, and the media would do their job properly and portray Africa as it really is, not as a disaster zone full of warlords, dictators, pirates, famine victims and disease. One strategy that African nations should look at is reworking the current model of what constitutes a nation. As it stands, the nations of Africa are largely based on the colonial model which did not take into consideration the various ethnic and religious backgrounds of the local people. When it comes to Education in Africa and trying to change it for the better, the most effective way is not just to change the system or graduate many students.

The problem of persistent underdevelopment has only one cause. It is the failure of university education to fulfil the promise to underdeveloped countries that it provides more than technical training. The consistent failure of university education to provide graduates with the ability to perform as effectively as

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expatriates from the West and from the developed countries of Asia is the single cause of underdevelopment. These countries now have an army of university graduates. Yet, they continue to wait for development to begin at some unknown future date. But a persistently underdeveloped country (PUC) always needs expatriate leadership in much larger numbers than it can afford or tolerate. Underdevelopment is permanent because the need has not been fulfilled.

Vikas Pota in his article about How to Fix Education in Africa, he points 3 major steps for this purpose. First, there needs to be a focus on the unglamorous area of vocational training. In South Africa, where half of young people are unemployed, three-quarters of companies struggle to fill engineering roles. African governments must work closely with employers to find out where the skills gaps lie. India's experience should be a cautionary tale. The National Skills Development Council there created many trained workers who haven't found demand for their qualifications in the labour market. Employer involvement is how countries such as Germany raised vocational education's standards, filled skills gaps and kept youth unemployment down (Pota, 2015).

There are signs that this is beginning to happen. The Go for Gold partnership in South Africa, collaboration between the education department and engineering firms, offers promising students extra school classes and paid work experience(Pota, 2015).In Nigeria, philanthropist Tony Elumelu, who has funded a huge programme to plug the shortage of plumbers, electricians and welders, is working to encourage the government to adopt a more work-based approach to vocational training(Moore, 2017).

Second, African schools must harness new technology. Distance learning, in which lessons are live-streamed over the internet, can provide a backstop of quality when teachers' standards vary so wildly (Pota, 2015).The Varkey Foundation operates a distance learning initiative – "Making Ghanaian Girls Great" – tailored for girls, who are prone to leaving school prematurely. Lessons are led by a teacher based in a studio in the capital, Accra, that are then fed into classrooms throughout the region (Pota, 2015). A local teacher is present in each classroom to ensure that pupils keep up with the lessons.

Third, the energies of the private sector should be set free to assist public education systems (Pota, 2015). It has the resources to scale up quickly, whereas education has to compete with hospitals and roads for straitened government budgets. Free from direct education ministry micro-management, the private sector also has the ability to innovate.

Perhaps one of the reasons behind the implementation of CESA 16-25 resides in the worrying trends in learning achievements as presented in notable reports that majority of learners are not learning (World Bank, 2018). This problem is prominent in early grade education across the continent. African countries may not have financial and technical capacity to deal with such challenges. In view of this, Africa's traditional donor countries through their development agencies have engaged governments in ensuing that early grade learning is improved. One such initiative is the literacy interventions, which the United States government through United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has partnered with more than thirty-five countries across the continent to strengthen literacy gains in early grade learning. In Malawi for instance, this progamme called National Reading Programme (NRP) will run from 2016 to 2020. Through such partnerships, USAID is offering financial as well as technical support in areas of literacy development to build capacity and other technical as well as material supports.

Another partnership worth pointing out is that involving aid assistance from the government of China through its African human resource development initiative which intends to give scholarships for African students to study in China in a foreseeable period. African Union has been advertising Chinese government scholarships since 2016 and it is expected that 15,000 Africans will benefit from this opportunity in its lifespan (African Union).

Lastly, the CESA 16 – 25 can best be implemented through strong collaborative efforts between international and local organizations and the different governments on the continent. As noted, there have already been instances of success in several projects such as the school feeding and Pan African University initiatives. This is the case because the strategies were integrated into organizational systemic structures that were already operational. In several African countries for example, the school feeding program has been in existence for decades. The situation is not much different with the existence of universities. As such, when strategies which are in line with work that has already been in existence, it has always been easy to facilitate their successful implementation.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016 -2025) as introduced by the African Union, if executed well, holds the ability to transform the education of Africa. Through its inclusion at national and regional levels, though it has strategies of implementation targeting a specific period (2016-2025), the progress pertaining to implementation does not necessarily reflect this urgency because it has

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encountered several challenges. The challenges faced exist at all levels of education. These are the pre-primary, primary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), secondary, tertiary as well as informal and non-formal education and training and illiteracy.

For example, one can deduce from the discourse at hand that at the pre-primary level in many African countries, teachers lack the necessary knowledge and expertise to support high quality pre-school education. Lack of other resources such as teaching and learning materials which emanates mostly from lack of commitment by governments and international as well as local organizations also adversely affects education at all the levels.

The other main challenge that can be extracted from the discussion on the CESA 26–25 implementation relates to the political and historical context of the continent. Several years after independence, traces of colonialism still exist in the language of instruction with most education systems deploying previous colonial languages as media of instruction. It is the existence of such problems that validate the creation of institutional interventions into the progress and development of Africa through initiatives such as the Pan African University.

Pertaining to the challenges encountered in higher education, access has always been a problem, along with other problems such as the provision of education and research which are needed for the proper advancement of the continent. As much as this is the general situation in Africa, it has to be noted that there are some regions on the continent that are better off than others. For example, experiences in education in North Africa are different to the rest of Sub Sahara Africa. In the north, literacy and TVET are far much improved. There is diversity in function, quality, orientation, financial support, and other factors in African universities and other pronounced differences in national circumstances and realities.

However, with the existence of several initiatives under the CESA 16-25, the disparities that currently exist primarily between some countries in the north and a majority of countries in the Sub-Saharan region are bound to extinction. This can become a reality if the implementation strategies are made effective. For example, CESA's strategic focus on higher education which resulted to the birth the Pan African University, is already contributing greatly to education on the continent. The initiatives targeting gender equality in education on the continent have also registered success in certain areas. For example, the initiatives' legal dimensions have necessitated the effectiveness of laws and policies in education that target the elimination of disparities. This has been possible with the help of international and local NGOs in partnership with governments. A good example has been FAWE's continued lobby for readmission policies in various countries, targeting teen mothers who remain out of school after pregnancy because the law does not allow them a chance to return. In addition, initiatives such as the school feeding projects have been boosted by the systemic obligations of the CESA School Feeding Cluster, rendering it a success in a number of countries.

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