

JOURNAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN STUDIES

2025 Volume 11 № 2 (71)

Academic Research Journal. Published since 1998

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Publisher: **Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences**. The journal is registered with the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media. Registration Certificate PI No. FS77-60887 of March 2, 2015.

ISSN 2412-5717 (Print). ISSN 3034-3496 (Online). Subscription by the catalog "Russian Press", Index **85011**.

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E-mail: uch-zap@inafr.ru
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УЧЕНЫЕ ЗАПИСКИ ИНСТИТУТА АФРИКИ РАН

2025 Том 11 № 2 (71)

Научный журнал. Год основания 1998

Главный редактор

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Учредитель издания: **Федеральное государственное бюджетное учреждение науки Институт Африки РАН.** Журнал зарегистрирован в Федеральной службе по надзору в сфере массовых коммуникаций, связи и охраны культурного наследия. Свидетельство ПИ № ФС77-60887 от 2 марта 2015 г.

ISSN 2412-5717 (Print). ISSN 3034-3496 (Online). Подписка по каталогу «Пресса России», индекс **85011.**

При цитировании ссылка на журнал «Ученые записки Института Африки РАН» обязательна. Воспроизведение или распространение полностью или частично текста «Ученых записок Института Африки РАН» в любой форме и любыми способами не допускается без письменного согласия редколлегии. Позиция редакции необязательно совпадает с мнениями авторов.

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123001, Москва, ул. Спиридоновка, 30/1
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Интернет: <http://africajournal.ru>

Подписано в печать 20.03.2025
Заказ № 136. Объем 17 п.л.
Тираж 500 экз.

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Focus of the Issue:

MODERN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS
IN AFRICA

Research article

**EDUCATION IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES:
ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE'S PATH TO AN ACCESSIBLE
AND SOVEREIGN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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Abstract. The article analyzes the current state of education in Angola and Mozambique and the roots of the problems that prevent these countries from achieving true cultural sovereignty—a set of socio-cultural factors that allow the people and the state to form their identity regardless of external influence, preserve historical memory, and adhere to traditional spiritual and moral values; the sovereignty, of which an integral part is a planned, developed, truly national system of education. The authors draw attention to the fact that both countries, which had been Portuguese colonies for many years, had a largely similar legacy of the colonial past by the time of independence. During the period of independent development, both states have made significant progress in eliminating illiteracy and building a system of universal education. But the anti-colonial and civil wars that plagued both Angola and Mozambique for a long time became an obstacle to the economic and socio-political development of these countries, including education. Colonial education was modeled on the metropolis, and its characteristic feature was the almost complete exclusion of the indigenous population from the system of education. A significant barrier to Africans' access to education was the lack of schools and their insufficient funding, low teaching standards, and racial discrimination. The consequences of the colonial past and the heavy legacy of the civil wars are still making themselves felt today. Foreign partners, including the Russian Federation, are helping both countries to solve existing problems. Russia's

willingness to further develop its long-standing cooperation with Mozambique and Angola in the field of education was stated on the sidelines of the Second Russia-Africa Summit in 2023.

Keywords: education, Angola, Mozambique, colonialism, discrimination, national language problem, sovereignty

Authors' contribution: joint research.

Conflict of interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-5-21

For citation: Griбанова V.V., Grishina N.V. (2025). Education in Post-Conflict Societies: Angola and Mozambique's Path to an Accessible and Sovereign Education System. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-5-21>

INTRODUCTION

The problem of overcoming the legacies of colonialism and neocolonial influence on various aspects of the life of African countries has recently acquired particular importance. One of the most important tasks of modern development has become achieving not only political or economic but also cultural sovereignty and, as an integral part thereof, sovereignty in the field of education, as well as the support of national languages. The main component of this process is the creation of a truly independent education system focused on national needs. The evolution and functioning of the European-type education system in Angola and Mozambique have similar features and results due to the common historical processes that took place in both these countries. Both former Portuguese colonies, Angola and Mozambique share a common burden of colonial legacy, great achievements during the period of independence, the difficult experience of anti-colonial and civil wars, and, as a consequence, a number of missed opportunities on the way to achieving true educational sovereignty. The paper shows how the colonial authorities created obstacles to the education of the indigenous population; what impressive progress has been made towards achieving universal education and in the development of national languages and the eradication of illiteracy in the first phase of independence in both Angola and Mozambique; how badly the national education systems of both countries were damaged during the hostilities. Serious difficulties standing in the way of the development of education in the current period and measures to overcome them are also analyzed in the paper.

THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

Angola. During the colonial period, the education of the indigenous population of Angola was at a very low level. By the 1870s, there were only 489 students in the country [Duffy 1959: 257]. There were no secondary schools; in 1919, the first lyceum was

opened in Luanda. Higher education institutions did not exist until 1962, and only a few Angolans could study in European universities. Among them was the future president of independent Angola, A.A. Neto. As in other African countries, the first schools in Angola, established by missionaries, formed the basis of education. Public schools appeared much later. Under colonial law, the education of Africans was administered by Catholic missions, and only in areas where they were absent was education directed by the colonial administration. By 1954, public schools accounted for only 20% of educational institutions at all levels and were intended mainly for children of Europeans [Duffy 1959: 314].

The education system was built on the model of the metropole, and a characteristic feature of it was the almost complete removal of the indigenous population from the management of education. Africans were allowed to work only at the lower levels of the system. From the beginning of the 20th century, the colonial authorities actively participated in the shaping of the sphere of education, paying considerable attention to “moral education” and teaching the Portuguese language. In the 19th century, teaching in local African languages was prohibited.

Education was racially based, and there were separate schools for Africans and Europeans. While the latter were organized to a high standard, the schools for Africans were very poorly equipped, and very little money was allocated for their maintenance. In the Portuguese colonies, it was difficult for Africans to enter European schools, even during the later stages of the colonial period, when the process of establishing interracial schools was already underway in the colonies of other European countries. To be admitted, Angolans had to pass a difficult exam and have a good knowledge of Portuguese; then they could be admitted to schools for Europeans if there were vacancies. By 1955, the schools for “civilized” residents had 4016 Angolan students and 11071 Europeans [Ponomarev 1963: 34].

In addition to maintaining public schools, the administration of the Portuguese colonies financially helped private schools, but, according to the law of 1941, it was forbidden to give subsidies to missions other than Portuguese Catholic ones [Hailey 1957: 1215]. The budget spending on education in the Portuguese colonies in Africa was the lowest of all African colonies. In 1951, in Angola, they amounted to 1.3% of budget expenditures (in the British colonies, expenditures on education reached 15%) [Hailey 1957: 1257]. At the same time, Angola spent 33 times more money on the education of a European student than on the education of an African child. Gradually, Africans themselves began to play a significant role in financing education. In rural areas of Angola, teachers received salaries from funds collected by local authorities [Ponomarev 1963: 42–43].

According to the 1950 census, 96.6% of the country’s population was illiterate. Of all the children who studied from 1967 to 1970, only 4.4% completed the full course of primary education and passed the exam for the 4th grade. Even the colonial authorities admitted that the primary education of Africans provided extremely superficial knowledge and led to repeated illiteracy [Khazanov 1999: 356].

The system of higher education was introduced in Angola only in 1963, and this innovation was implemented along with a number of other limited reforms to improve education in the colonies of Portugal. The purpose of these reforms was to create an

African elite brought up on Portuguese culture. They did not result in any significant increase in literacy among Angolans. By 1974, only 15% of the country's population could read and write [Fituni 1985: 164].

Mozambique. The European education system in Mozambique began to take shape in the middle of the 19th century. The education of Africans was carried out almost exclusively by Catholic and Protestant missions. To educate the children of whites and so-called assimilated citizens, public and private schools were established. Thus, the principle of separate education became the basis of the education system. In the 1870s, there were only about 400 students in Mozambique. The first public schools opened later than missionary schools. By 1900, no more than 146 Africans and “mulattoes” were enrolled in public schools in Mozambique, in addition to the children of white settlers [Duffy 1959: 257–258].

After 1940, in accordance with the Concordat between Portugal and the Vatican, the Church began to exercise control over the activities of all educational institutions. The use of local languages in the teaching process was prohibited, except in schools at Protestant missions, so the main language of instruction was Portuguese. Until almost the end of the colonial period, the European education system served only the children of white settlers. In 1951, when Mozambique was declared an overseas province of Portugal, only 4,500 white children and 5,000 Africans attended primary school, while 800 European children and only 5 African children attended the only secondary school [People's Republic of Mozambique 1986: 181].

A characteristic trait of the system was the category of “assimilated” citizens—Africans who received the status of indigenous inhabitants of Portugal. The Portuguese authorities proclaimed that they did not pursue a policy of segregation towards the indigenous population but, on the contrary, sought “general assimilation.” Portuguese officials even expressed the opinion that there was “no colonialism” in the colonies of Portugal at all, and marriages between Africans and white residents of dependent territories were cited as an example. However, an illiterate African could not become “assimilated” and receive Portuguese citizenship and all the benefits associated with it [Bavo and Coelho 2022: 56–64].

The state of education in Mozambique was such that it was practically impossible for the indigenous people to receive it even at the primary level. In rural areas, there were virtually no schools, with the exception of rare missionary stations, and only a small part of the African population lived in the cities. And even in the administrative center of Lourenço Marques, where all the children of white settlers attended school, only a few percent of African children went to primary school. Thus, the country had the highest percentage of illiteracy among the indigenous population—99%, and by 1956, there were only 4.5 thousand “assimilated natives” in Mozambique [Makarov 1959: 20].

The impetus for the development of education among Africans was the beginning of the armed struggle for independence. The Portuguese government made concessions in the social sphere and, among other things, increased the number of educational institutions, expanded the eligibility criteria for students, and abolished the control of the church over the education system, making it secular. The indigenous population was given the opportunity to study together with whites in any educational institution. But this remained a formality: in reality, Africans had the opportunity to receive education only

within the framework of the so-called adaptive school: a 2-year preparatory course for the study of the Portuguese language and a 3-year elementary primary school, which were run by religious missions and introduced the indigenous population to the Portuguese language, culture, and history of Portugal [Chimbutane 2018].

But despite attempts to improve the situation in education, only 30% of African children in the early 1970s were enrolled in school, and for the vast majority of them, education ended at the primary elementary 3-year school, with only 1% of students continuing their education, mainly in vocational education. 93% of Mozambicans were illiterate [People's Republic of Mozambique 1986: 182].

ACHIEVEMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

Angola. Since independence in 1975, the restructuring and improvement of the education system has become one of the most important areas of development in Angola. A broad campaign to eradicate illiteracy was launched in the country. On November 22, 1977, the first president of Angola, António Agostinho Neto, in his speech, proclaimed the opening of the literacy campaign. This day, November 22, has been officially fixed as the National Educator's Day since 1978. The adult population was educated at the place of work or service. By 1983, 44% of the population had already become literate. Angola was awarded the UNESCO Prize in 1980 for its achievements in the eradication of illiteracy.

The problem of the national language, an integral part of the cultural sovereignty of the young independent state, was also solved. Since the population spoke 11 main languages, they began to be used in the educational process, first in the primary classes of rural schools and then gradually in urban schools. The use of national languages was hampered primarily by the fact that they were unwritten. The Government had worked to develop practical scripts. In 1978, the National Institute of Languages was established. By 1983, primers and textbooks were published in 6 African languages, including Kwanyama and Kimbundu.

Primary and lower secondary school enrolment has increased dramatically since independence. By 1983, 2,600,000 children were studying in primary schools (grades 1–4), and 400,000 children were studying in secondary schools [Fituni 1985: 165]. By this time, education in primary school was proclaimed secular, compulsory, and free. The principle of combining education and work was approved. Children from the age of 5 were admitted to the free preparatory class. A big problem was the lack of teachers. In 1977, only 25,000 teachers worked in the education system, of whom only 7% had special education and were extremely unevenly distributed among the provinces.

In the 1970s, preparations were made for the introduction of compulsory eight-year education, and a new education system was being developed, which was supposed to unite preschool institutions, eight-year schools, technical schools, and centers for the training of skilled workers. Schools were created where young people could study while continuing their work on farms or in factories.

Since independence, Angola has faced enormous challenges in higher education. In 1974–1975, many university students and teachers left the country. Under bilateral agreements between the governments of Portugal and Angola, the majority of Angolans belonging to the national elite continued to enroll in Portuguese secondary schools,

polytechnics, and universities. However, many of those who studied in Portugal were unable to complete their studies or did not return to Angola.

The National University of Angola in Luanda, founded in 1963, remained the only institution of higher education. In the early 1970s, up to 4,000 people studied there, but only 10% of them were Africans. In the 1978/1979 academic year, only 1252 students studied here, but in 1981/1982, their number reached as many as 8 thousand [Fituni 1985: 166]. In 1979, in honor of the country's first president, the University of Angola was renamed the University of Agostinho Neto.

Meanwhile, the civil war and foreign intervention, the consequences of which the government of independent Angola faced, significantly slowed down the development of the country's social sphere. Despite all the efforts of the authorities, the civil war significantly undermined the development of the education system. Between 1977 and the mid-1980s, school attendance declined in some areas, and the costs of the war absorbed the money needed to build schools, print books, and buy equipment. The main obstacle was, of course, the military operations themselves in the southern and central regions of the country. Their consequences, including UNITA attacks on schools and teachers and the massive displacement of the rural population in those areas, disrupted the normal education of hundreds of thousands of children.

During the civil war, almost half of all schools were looted and destroyed, leading to problems with overcrowding in classrooms. In addition, factors such as unexploded ordnance, lost identity documents, and poor health prevented children from attending school regularly. In 1995, 71.2% of children aged 7 to 14 attended school. However, more boys were attending school than girls, and there were significant differences in attendance between rural and urban areas. Teachers tended to be poorly paid, undertrained, and overworked (sometimes teaching two or three shifts a day). Although budgetary allocations for education increased in 2004, the education system in Angola remains grossly underfunded.

In 1999–2000, the gross enrollment rate in primary education was approximately 74% and the net enrollment rate in primary education was about 30%. In the provinces most affected by the war, the overall coverage rate averaged less than 40%. In 2002, only 26% of children enrolled in primary school reached the fourth grade. Girls tended to have a lower enrollment rate than boys.

By the end of the civil war, Angola's education infrastructure was largely destroyed. In 2002–2004, 66% of girls and 57% of boys were enrolled in primary school, but only 57% and 59%, respectively, actually attended it. There were no data on secondary school registration rate, but the real attendance rate was 22% for girls and 20% for boys [Encyclopedia Africa 2010: 257].

Mozambique. In this country, as early as the years of the struggle for independence under the leadership of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), a system of education based on revolutionary-democratic principles began to take shape in the liberated territories. Since 1970, the first public schools of several types were being opened in the territories under the control of FRELIMO: 2-year schools for young children; boarding schools for teenagers, fighters, and commanders of guerilla detachments. By the end of this year, 120 schools were opened, where 12 thousand people studied [People's Republic of Mozambique 1986: 183].

Among the first decrees of the new Mozambican government were laws on the nationalization of all private and missionary educational institutions and on the creation of a unified public education system. Religious education was abolished, and ideological, political, and labor education was included in the curriculum; education was declared free at all levels. FRELIMO had set three main objectives in the field of education: the fight against illiteracy, the democratization of education to ensure that all children are enrolled, and the elimination of discrimination against women in education.

The use of old school textbooks brought from Portugal was prohibited by law [Bussotti, Nhaueleque 2022: 150]. A commission was created to develop new textbooks. Since 1977, educational literature was being published for all school subjects. The curriculum included the native language, African folklore, national music, political education, and labor education. Instruction in the upper grades continued in Portuguese, but in the primary classes of rural schools and in literacy courses, instruction was conducted in the national languages with a written language: Tsonga, Shona, Shangaan, Shirengo.

After the reform of 1977, Mozambique had a unified public education system. Since 1983, the first stage of primary education has been compulsory. By that year, the number of primary school students had more than doubled from 672,000 in 1975 to 1.5 million, with 5,800 such schools. From 1977 to 1983, the number of secondary schools increased from 33 to 136, and the number of students from 43 thousand to 105 thousand people [People's Republic of Mozambique 1986: 185].

After independence, Mozambique established a wide network of vocational schools and centers to train skilled workers for the agriculture and industrial sectors. They accepted graduates of primary schools. For a long time, higher education could only be obtained at the E. Mondlane University¹ in Maputo and at the School of Army Cadres. In the mid-1980s, 2.5 thousand students studied at 12 faculties. About 70% of them combined their studies with work.

The first steps to eradicate illiteracy among the adult population were taken by the FRELIMO leadership as early as the years of armed struggle. Since independence, the eradication of illiteracy has become one of the main tasks of the Government. In 1978, a campaign was launched under the slogan "Every citizen should be able to read and write." It took place in several stages, during each of which the illiterate learned to read, count, and write for 2 hours a day.

The difficult political situation associated with the hostilities because of the civil war and intervention also left a negative imprint on the education system of Mozambique [King, Nevins 2021: 140]. In addition to all the difficulties for the educational process brought by the war, schools in Mozambique were often the targets of RENAMO attacks². The literacy rate of the population fell from 20% in 1983 to 14% in 1990 [Mungazi, Walker 1997: 84]. After the end of the war, the situation improved slightly, and by 1998, the literacy rate of the population reached 40%; at the same time, there were 2 times more literate men than women [Higher Education in Mozambique 2003: 17].

¹ Until 1976, the University of E. Mondlane was called the University of Lourenço Marques.

² The Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana) was an armed anti-government organization that later grew into an opposition political party.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE CURRENT STAGE

Angola. In order to improve the situation in the Angolan education system, a number of specialized programs were introduced. In 2004, the government completed a nationwide campaign that has registered 3.8 million children under the age of 18 since August 2002. UNICEF and the Government of Angola recruited and trained 29,000 primary school teachers for the 2004 school year. As a result, enrollment increased by almost 1 million, mostly in grades 1 to 4. In April 2004, the Ministry of Education held a public consultation on the proposed “National Action Plan on Education for All.”

With the increase in oil prices by the end of the 2000s, the Angolan government received significant financial resources through taxes on profits from oil and diamond production [Nhabinde, Lichucha 2023]. The increase in the state budget revenues, together with the end of the armed conflict, opened up a new opportunity to expand and improve Angola’s education system.

In addition, the Ministry of Education has requested the introduction of the “Cuban system” (a Cuban method of teaching adult literacy through audiovisual means) starting in March 2009 in the provinces of Luanda, Benguela, Huambo, and Bié, with subsequent extension to other parts of the country. This method was first implemented in Luanda as a pilot project, for which a group of 10 teachers from Cuba went to Angola in early 2009. Cuban specialists have taught at Angolan state universities and other educational institutions since the signing of the first cooperation agreement in 1976, and now Angolan students receive higher education in that country in 30 areas of training, including medicine, veterinary medicine, agronomy, civil engineering, and industry. According to the President of the National Youth Council, I. Kalumba, over the years of cooperation with Cuba, Angola has been able to train more than 45 thousand specialists in various specialties that are in demand in the socio-economic sphere³.

In 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding on Higher Education was signed between Angola and Cuba, providing for the possibility of direct contacts between the training centers of both countries without the mediation of the ministry. Educational institutions of the two countries can conclude bilateral agreements on the hiring of teachers and the implementation of joint research projects. A bilateral technical committee has also been set up to promote Angolan and Cuban training and research centers for the development of teaching and research. Angola’s Ministry of Education is speeding up training to ensure that 50% of university professors have a master’s degree and 14% have a doctorate by 2027⁴.

However, in remote rural areas, the social sphere, including education, is still underdeveloped. This led to increased migration to municipal and provincial capitals, where basic services and schools were forced to work beyond their capacity. Many of the

³ Cuba – Angola: 45 years of cooperation. *Pravda*. Vol. 98 (31158). 09.09.2021. (In Russ.). <https://gazeta-pravda.ru/issue/98-31158-9-sentyabrya-2021-goda/kuba-angola-45-let-sotrudnichestva/?ysclid=lzqjvdfjlu989957871> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

⁴ Higher education institutions focus on Angola-Cuba cooperation. *Prensa Latina*. 15.04.2024. <https://www.plenglish.com/news/2024/04/15/higher-education-institutions-focus-on-angola-cuba-cooperation/> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

newly built schools lacked qualified teachers, curricula, staff, and the necessary resources.

A big problem for the Angolan education system is the education of special categories of children. Years of conflict have left many students, including former child soldiers, disabled. The abuse suffered by many abducted and war-affected girls has made them particularly vulnerable. For these categories of youth, the learning opportunities available to them often do not meet their needs [Langa 2013: 66–68].

In 2024, the country's first lady, Ana Díaz Lourenço, advocated for strengthening the promotion of literacy education for girls and overcoming school gaps, especially in rural areas. In Angola, she said, the project “Empowering Girls and Education for All” has been implemented since 2021, involving about 9 million students in preschool, primary, and secondary schools. The project aims to train teachers and school leaders, support strategies to empower girls by improving the education system and access to education, empower girls and young women, and enable them to enroll and complete at least secondary education⁵.

Dalva Ringote Allen, Minister of Social Development, noted that the country has made significant progress in the education sector, increasing primary school enrollment to 76% in 2022⁶.

Currently, education in Angola is multi-stage and based on the principle of accessibility [Warikandwa et al., 2023]. Basic primary education is compulsory and free, lasts for 8 years, and is divided into three stages: 4-year primary (6–9 years, grades 1–4) and two more 2-year primary (10–11 years, grades 5–6, and 12–13 years, grades 7–8). Basic education is considered to be incomplete general education.

The next stage is secondary education, received at the age of 14–17. In the case of preparation for admission to higher educational institutions, this is education in grades 9–11, which provides complete secondary education. It is also possible to obtain secondary vocational education, in educational institutions of a vocational and technical orientation, in 4 years.

The third stage is the stage of higher education, which requires entrance examinations. Education in universities is provided for several programs and can reach 6 years. The first stage is a bachelor's degree (2–3 years), then master's programs with a diploma (2–3 years). It is possible to study under the licentiate program (4–6 years old). After studying at the university, it is possible to obtain a doctoral degree after defending a research work⁷.

In addition to the University of Agostinho Neto in Luanda (UAN), which had been the only one in the country for a long time, in 1998, the Catholic Church also founded the Catholic University of Angola (UCAN) in the capital. Over the years, UCAN has accumulated about 40 faculties scattered throughout most of the country. After political

⁵ A educação é vital para o futuro de qualquer país. *Jornal de Angola*. *Jornal de Angola*. <https://scm.gov.ao/web/noticias/a-educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o-%C3%A9-vital-para-o-futuro-de-qualquer-pa%C3%ADs> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

⁶ Ministra de Estado anuncia na ONU avanços no domínio social em Angola. *Jornal de Angola*. <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/ministra-de-estado-anuncia-na-onu-avancos-no-dominio-social-em-angola/> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

⁷ Afonina N. The system of education in Angola. *Handbook Author 24*. 20.01.2025. (In Russ.). https://spravochnick.ru/pedagogika/sistema_obrazovaniya_v_angole/ (accessed : 21.01.2025)

liberalization in the 2000s, private universities began to emerge. Some of them were affiliated with universities in Portugal: Universidade Lusíada, Universidade Lusófona, and Universidade Jean Piaget (all of which are located in Luanda). Others were Angolan initiatives: the Universidade Privada de Angola (Luanda and Lubango), the Technical University of Angola (Universidade Técnica de Angola, Luanda), the Methodist University (Luanda), the Metropolitan University (Universidade Metropolitana, Luanda), and the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Relações Internacionais, Luanda. Saudi Arabia announced the creation of an Islamic university in Luanda. In 2009, UAN was divided: while it exists under the same name in the provinces of Luanda and Bengo, the faculties in Benguela, Huambo, Lubango, Malange, and Uige now constitute autonomous public universities.

The Ministry of Education of Angola is speeding up the training of specialists so that by 2027 50% of university teachers have a master's degree and 14%, a doctoral degree⁸.

Higher education in Angola is characterized by high cost (in connection with which many Angolan students study abroad, including in Russia) and elitism. In general, among the current trends in the insufficiently satisfactory development of education in Angola are the lack of qualified teachers at all levels of education, the lack of schools and equipment, insufficient funding of the education system, and low literacy of the population [Cassinela, Ckagnazaroff 2023]. At the same time, we can also note positive trends, such as the massification of primary and secondary levels of education and the development of digitalization.

If in 2001 the literacy rate among the adult population was 67.41% (54.19% for women, 82.92% for men), then in 2022, it was 72.4% (62.5% for women, 82.8% for men). In the age group of 15–24 years, 72.19% of Angolans (63.18% of women, 83.78% of men) were literate in 2001, in 2022—83.3% (80.7% of women, 85.9% of men)⁹.

To address the challenges, the Angolan government is implementing reforms aimed at improving the quality of education, increasing teachers' salaries, and expanding access to education for all segments of the population [Paulo 2021: 403].

For example, Angola's National Development Plan 2018–2022 identified medium-term strategies to increase access to quality education, including: improving the quality of teaching; improving and expanding preschool education; increasing primary and secondary school enrolment by improving the quality of education, combating school failure and guaranteeing pedagogical support for students with special needs; promotion of the improvement of pedagogical and vocational training, increasing the number of vocational courses in accordance with the needs of the labor market; reducing illiteracy among young people and adults; improving the physical conditions and health of students and turning the school into an inclusive space. A long-term national strategy, *Estratégia de Longo Prazo Angola 2025*, promotes the development of human potential and education of Angolans¹⁰.

⁸ Higher education institutions focus on Angola-Cuba cooperation. *Prensa Latina*. 15.04.2024. <https://plenglish.com/news/2024/04/15/higher-education-institutions-focus-on-angola-cuba-cooperation/> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

⁹ Angola – Literacy rate 2022. *Countryeconomy*. <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/literacy-rate/angola> (accessed: 25.02.2025)

¹⁰ Education in Angola. *Global Partnerships for Education*. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/angola> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

Cooperation in the field of education with international organizations is actively developing: in December 2020, the UN Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and the Network of African Science Academies, which collaborate to establish academies of science in the least developed countries in Africa, as well as to support and advise the government in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), announced the opening of the Academy of Sciences of Angola. In his speech, the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, Bornito de Sousa Baltazar Diogo, stressed that “It is urgent to train Teacher 4.0 and School 4.0 where we will train the children of today who will build Angola in 2050 and the 4th Industrial Revolution, based on the country’s current reality.”¹¹

In December 2022, the country joined the Global Partnerships for Education (GPE). According to Luísa Maria Alves Grilo, Minister of Education of Angola, “Becoming a member of the Global Partnership for Education represents the strong engagement of the Angolan government in mobilizing international resources to complement national efforts to promote quality, equitable and inclusive education for all, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal number 4. Angola is honored to benefit from the Global Partnership for Education funds and ensure that more children have access to education, as well as improve learning outcomes and gender equality, as stated in its National Development Program.”¹²

In the field of training top-level specialists, Angola and Russia have long-term contacts. Russian-Angolan cooperation in the field of higher education began thanks to the Protocol between the governments of the USSR and the People’s Republic of Angola on the recognition and equivalence of educational documents of April 21, 1986. Among the graduates of Russian universities were Angolan politicians of the highest rank: for 38 years, the country was led by Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who received his education at the Azerbaijan Institute of Petroleum and Chemistry; in 2017, he was succeeded at the post of president by João Lourenço, a graduate of the Moscow V.I. Lenin Military-Political Academy.

Russia allocates significant funds from the federal budget for the training of students from the African continent in Russian universities within the quota of the Government of the Russian Federation. For example, at the Russia-Africa Economic Forum held in October 2019 in Sochi, the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, M.M. Kotyukov, and the Minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation of the Republic of Angola, Maria do Rosario Bragança Sambo, held a working meeting, during which the Russian side confirmed the willingness of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation to further assist Angola in the training of highly qualified specialists, and both sides stressed the importance of expanding bilateral cooperation in the field of scientific, technical, and innovative activities.

The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Angola on the Mutual Recognition of Education,

¹¹ UN Technology Bank and Network of African Science Academies launch the Angola Academy of Science to strengthen the capacity of science academies in African Least Developed Countries. *UN*. <https://www.un.org/technologybank/news/un-technology-bank-and-network-african-science-academies-launch-angola-academy-science> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

¹² Angola joins the Global Partnership for Education. *Global Partnership for Education*. 09.12.2022. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/news/angola-joins-global-partnership-education> (accessed: 25.02.2024)

Qualifications, and Academic Degrees, signed in 2019, updates the regulatory framework of bilateral relations in the field of education, taking into account the changes that have occurred in the education systems of the states over the past 30 years. The updated agreement contributes to increasing the attractiveness of Russian education, and education, qualifications, and academic degrees obtained in Angola are recognized in the Russian Federation automatically and free of charge, thereby significantly simplifying the admission of Angolan students to Russian educational institutions, as well as the employment of holders of Russian education upon their return to their homeland¹³.

The agreement entered into force in early 2022. Currently, the largest number of Angolan students study at the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Most often, citizens of Angola choose to study music, oil and gas engineering, medicine, electric power and electrical engineering, management, construction, computer science, chemical technology, architecture, and economics¹⁴.

Mozambique. The national legislation in the field of education in Mozambique is represented by the Constitution of the Republic (1990), the Law on the National Education System (1992), which defines the basic principles of its functioning, and the Law on Higher Education (2009). The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the management of education at all levels in Mozambique¹⁵.

In December 2018, the Law on the National Education System was revised, as a result of which compulsory free education was increased from seven to nine years, the period of primary education was reduced from seven to six years, and the secondary level now covers a period of six years instead of five. Thus, compulsory free education covers 6-year primary school and the first stage of secondary school (grades 7–9). Graduates of the upper secondary school stage (grades 10–12) take the final exams for the Certificate of Secondary General Education, which gives access to higher education programs. According to the updated law, preschool education is recognized as an element of the education system but is not a prerequisite for entering primary school. In 2019, only 3.5% of children aged 3 to 5 years were enrolled in preschool institutions, while primary school enrollment doubled between 2004 and 2018.

In recent years, Mozambique has made significant progress in the field of education. However, almost 2 million children of primary school age do not attend classes, more than a third of students drop out before grade 3, and less than half complete primary school. In the upper grades of primary school, the gender gap is becoming more pronounced, as many girls drop out of school. Due to a number of factors, one of which is the high absenteeism rate of teachers, many children are able to study only 74 out of 190 planned school days per year¹⁶.

¹³ Russia and Angola have signed an Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Education, Qualifications and Academic Degrees. *Ministry of Education and Science of Russia*. 23.10.2019. (In Russ.). <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/novosti-ministerstva/21790/> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

¹⁴ Russia and Angola have mutually recognized education, qualifications and academic degrees. *Ministry of Education and Science of Russia*. 13.01.2022. (In Russ.). <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/45926/> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

¹⁵ Mozambique. *National Accreditation Agency in the field of education*. (In Russ.). <https://nic.gov.ru/ru/inworld/af/mozambique> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

¹⁶ Plano Estratégico da Educação 2020–2029. *Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano*. 2020. <https://mept.org.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Plano-Estrategico-de-Educacao-2020-2029.pdf> (accessed: 05.02.2025)

In 2022, Mozambique celebrated the 60th anniversary of the introduction of higher education in the country. In 1962, the first institution of higher education was opened, the Estudos Gerais Universitários de Moçambique, renamed the Universidade de Lourenço Marques in 1968 and known as the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane since 1976. This university cooperates with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Association of African Universities (AAU), and the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW). Until now, it is the largest higher educational institution in the country. As of 2023, over 48,300 students studied at the university, of which 41% were women¹⁷.

The higher education system of Mozambique includes 8 universities, but young people from wealthy families prefer to study at universities in Portugal and other European countries.

Currently, the higher education system in Mozambique has two stages: bachelor's and master's (licentiate), though not all faculties of universities offer master's degrees. In state universities, full-time bachelor's degree education is free, while part-time and master's degrees are paid.

In line with the national and international development agenda, the Strategic Education Plan (*Plano Estratégico da Educação*) 2020–2029 was adopted in Mozambique in May 2020, aimed at training “citizens with knowledge, skills, moral, civic, and patriotic values, capable of contributing to the development of a cohesive society adapted to the constantly changing world.” Its priorities are: equal access to education for children, young people, and adults in the full cycle of preparation for school, primary, and lower secondary education; guaranteeing basic literacy for children, youth, and adults; ensuring effective governance by empowering Ministry of Education staff and applying evidence-based policies and strategies. The plan also includes a gender perspective in all priority areas for the development of the education system¹⁸.

Despite the fact that the country has declared free primary and partially secondary education, as of April 2024, only 60.7% of the adult population was literate¹⁹. The literacy rate among citizens aged 15 to 24 years is 83.67% for men and 69.73% for women. The overall youth literacy rate is 76.67%²⁰.

Among the education programs implemented in Mozambique are projects carried out since 2013 in the city of Pemba (Cabo Delgado province) to increase access to primary education for children and provide adult literacy education. Training is free of charge; pupils of all age groups are also provided with school supplies and new equipment free of charge. The Pemba Commercial Institute Project provides students with a hands-on workshop in electrical engineering, scholarship opportunities, and training and certification for faculty and managers of the institute itself²¹.

¹⁷ *Eduardo Mondlane University*. https://www.unipage.net/en/22713/eduardo_mondlane_university (accessed: 25.05.2024)

¹⁸ *Plano Estratégico da Educação 2020–2029*. *Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano*. 2020. <https://mept.org.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Plano-Estrategico-de-Educacao-2020-2029.pdf> (accessed: 05.02.2025)

¹⁹ Population of Mozambique. *BDEX*. <https://bdex.ru/naselenie/mozambique/> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

²⁰ Population of Mozambique. *Countrymeters*. <https://countrymeters.info/ru/Mozambique#literacy> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

²¹ Education projects in Mozambique. *Eni*. 08.09.2023. <https://www.eni.com/en-IT/actions/global-activities/mozambique/education-project.html>. (accessed: 25.05.2024)

As in many African countries, children and young people from wealthy families have the opportunity to study in international schools, such as the International School of Maputo, the Stella Maris International School (in the cities of Nacala, Quelimane, Beira, Xai-Xai), the International School of Beira, the American International School of Mozambique (in Maputo). In these institutions, the Portuguese and English languages are taught²². Curricula in international schools differ from national ones and are designed to ensure that graduates will be able to apply their knowledge in practice in a variety of fields of modern knowledge not only at home but also abroad. On the other hand, these schools act as an instrument of influence and soft power and form a pro-Western worldview among the educated stratum of society [Ndaipa, Edström, Geschwind 2022: 17].

At present, Russia has also joined the process of assisting the education system of Mozambique. Since 2023, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, together with pedagogical universities, has opened more than 60 educational centers in Russian in 28 African countries, including Angola and Mozambique.

Thus, at the Pedagogical University of Maputo, the first students began their studies at the Center for Open Education in Russian of the Volgograd State Social and Pedagogical University (VSPU). For two months, students study the Russian language and get acquainted with Russian culture. Each participant can choose the course that is most interesting for them from six educational programs. Each program includes a unique master class on tongue twisters in Russian, Russian folk games, dances, or making Russian folk dolls from fabric, as well as the basics of calligraphy. Interest in the programs of the Center for Open Education in Russian in Mozambique is high; more than 100 applications have already been submitted²³.

It is also worth noting the participation of Angola and Mozambique in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa, CPLP*), an international organization that unites states in which Portuguese has the status of an official language. The document on the creation of the SPLP was signed in Lisbon on July 17, 1996, by the heads of Angola, Mozambique, Portugal, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe. Later, East Timor and Equatorial Guinea joined the organization. One of the main goals of the Community is to consolidate the national and multinational cultural identity of the Portuguese-speaking countries. From 1996 to 2021, 13 SPLP conferences were held, at which fundamental decisions were made. An important outcome of this work was the approval of the Strategic Plan for Multilateral Cooperation in the Field of Education, designed for 2015–2020. The expected availability of education should lead to an increase in production, a reduction in unemployment, especially among young people, and a tangible reduction in poverty and an improvement in the quality of life of the population²⁴.

²² List of international schools in Mozambique. *Teacher Horizons*. <https://www.teacherhorizons.com/schools?countries=Mozambique> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

²³ Polyakova M. The Center for Open Education in Mozambique began to work with the first students. *Russian language in the Republic of Mozambique*. 12.09.2023. (In Russ.). <http://rus-center-mozambique.vspu.ru/358> (accessed: 25.05.2024)

²⁴ Tokarev A.A. Community of Portuguese-speaking countries. *The Great Russian Encyclopedia*. 01.08.2022. (In Russ.). <https://bigenc.ru/c/soobshchestvo-portugalioazychnykh-stran-ee99f3> (accessed: 15.08.2024)

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the process of development of the education systems in Angola and Mozambique, it can be concluded that the similarity of the historical development of these states, consisting in the same legacy of the colonial past, attempts to build a state of the socialist type at the first stage of the period of independence, the heavy damage caused by the long period of civil wars, determines both many achievements and problems of the current stage of development, the latter being the obstacles to the achievement of Angola and Mozambique's genuine cultural sovereignty in the development of national education and languages.

By shaping the sphere of education as an elitist and fully culturally oriented metropolis, the colonial authorities were solving the problems of governing dependent territories to the detriment of their national development. The leadership of Angola and Mozambique, after achieving independence in these countries, was actively involved in overcoming the aftermath of the colonial past in the field of culture and education, but a long period of political instability significantly complicated this work. The result was such problems as a lack of qualified teachers at all levels of education, a lack of schools and equipment, insufficient funding of the education system, low literacy of the population, a gender gap, and a huge dropout rate of students at the primary levels of education. Overcoming these problems remains the main task of the governments of both countries at the present stage.

Particular attention in the educational sphere should be focused on the development of national languages. Both Angola and Mozambique had a strict ban on the use of local languages as a medium of instruction during the colonial rule of Portugal, which led to the widespread use of Portuguese and its acquisition of the status of an official language after independence. This situation has not only complicated the process of teaching Africans but has largely deprived students of the ability to rely on the basis of their national culture. During the period of independence, a lot was done to develop national languages and cultures, but largely due to the difficulties of the political life of both countries, these efforts were not enough. Now, when university students have the opportunity to study in different languages, their interests are mainly focused on mastering professional knowledge in English and Portuguese as languages of international communication. In addition, numerous private educational institutions, through teaching in European languages, also consolidate the dominance of European culture to the detriment of the development of national culture, thus promoting their influence.

Being an integral part of culture, education plays a crucial role in the development of the state and society, which, of course, is taken into account in the process of preserving and strengthening the cultural sovereignty of any country. This was reflected in the Declaration of the Second Russia–Africa Summit held in St. Petersburg in July 2023. The educational component is of great importance in the fight against the remnants of the colonial past.

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ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В ПОСТКОНФЛИКТНЫХ ОБЩЕСТВАХ: ПУТЬ АНГОЛЫ И МОЗАМБИКА К ДОСТУПНОЙ И СУВЕРЕННОЙ СИСТЕМЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. В статье анализируется современное состояние образования в Анголе и Мозамбике и корни проблем, мешающих достижению этими странами подлинного культурного суверенитета – совокупности социально-культурных факторов, позволяющих народу и государству формировать свою идентичность вне зависимости от внешнего влияния, сохранять историческую память, придерживаться традиционных духовно-нравственных ценностей, частью которого является развитая, подлинно национальная система образования. Авторы заостряют внимание на том, что обе страны, долгие годы бывшие колониями Португалии, ко времени обретения независимости имели во многом схожее наследие колониального прошлого. В период независимого развития оба государства достигли заметного прогресса в ликвидации неграмотности населения и построении системы всеобщего образования. Но антиколониальные и гражданские войны, терзавшие и Анголу, и Мозамбик на протяжении долгого времени, стали препятствием на пути экономического и социально-политического развития этих стран, в том числе и сферы образования. Колониальное образование формировалось по образцу метрополии, его характерной особенностью было почти полное отстранение представителей коренного населения от просвещения. Существенной преградой для доступа африканцев к обучению были нехватка школ и дефицит их финансирования, низкий уровень преподавания, расовая дискриминация. Последствия колониального прошлого, тяжелое наследие гражданских войн дают о себе знать и в настоящее время. В решении существующих проблем обеим странам помогают иностранные партнеры, среди которых и Российская Федерация. Готовность России к дальнейшему развитию многолетнего сотрудничества с Мозамбиком и Анголой в образовательной сфере зафиксирована на полях Второго саммита «Россия–Африка», прошедшего в 2023 году.

Ключевые слова: образование, Ангола, Мозамбик, колониализм, дискриминация, проблема национального языка, суверенитет

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов: совместное исследование.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-5-21

Для цитирования: Грибанова В.В., Гришина Н.В. Образование в постконфликтных обществах: путь Анголы и Мозамбика к доступной и суверенной системе обучения. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Том 11. № 2. С. 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-5-21>

**EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:
OVERCOMING THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM
AND THE AFTERMATH OF PROLONGED CONFLICTS**

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Abstract. Access to education constitutes a critically important socio-economic issue for developing countries, particularly those that have suffered from protracted armed conflicts and political instability. Conflicts have severely deteriorated the educational infrastructure, resulting in the closure of numerous schools. Political instability has further exacerbated the situation by diverting resources away from the education sector and undermining efforts to develop and implement effective educational policies. The absence of a safe environment has hindered children's learning and development, thereby reducing prospects for socio-economic progress. These problems are clearly manifested in the case of the Central African Republic (CAR), which for decades has been enduring prolonged crises, armed conflicts, political instability, economic stagnation, and social fragmentation. The education system there continues to face serious challenges. A shortage of qualified personnel, insufficient funding, and other socio-economic barriers significantly limit access to education for residents of remote regions, indigenous peoples, nomadic tribes, refugees, and internally displaced persons. In addition to domestic issues, the education system is significantly influenced by international and foreign actors, including non-profit organizations (NPOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Their projects, on the one hand, continue to provide temporary solutions; on the other hand, they contribute to the country's dependency on external assistance and to the formulation of public policies that do not always align with national interests. This article examines the historical context of the development of the education system in the Central African Republic, its current condition, the impact of armed conflicts, governmental efforts and the national education strategy, as well as the influence of foreign actors on educational policy.

Keywords: education system, Central African Republic, sovereignty, education sector reforms, analysis of educational materials, education of indigenous and nomadic peoples

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-22-41

Conflict of interest: The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

For citation: Kirikova T.N. (2025). Education System in the Central African Republic: Overcoming the Legacy of Colonialism and the Aftermath of Prolonged Conflicts. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. №. 2. Pp. 22–41. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-22-41>

INTRODUCTION

Research in development economics confirms that basic and vocational education play a pivotal role in stimulating economic growth in developing countries, combining direct economic benefits with social transformations [Becker, Chiswick 1966]. Empirical evidence provided by studies conducted by the World Bank [Psacharopoulos, Patrinos 2018] and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)¹ studies demonstrates that investments in primary and secondary education yield the highest social returns: the development of foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, critical thinking) directly correlates with growth in labor productivity and GDP [Hanushek, Woessmann 2008].

However, armed conflicts and terrorist attacks, which result not only in the destruction of schools and infrastructure but also in profound psychological trauma among students, severely undermine educational opportunities. Children are abducted, subjected to violence and recruitment, and deprived of prospects for a normative childhood and education. This systemic deprivation jeopardizes the future well-being of multiple generations, relegating them to vulnerable population groups². Consequently, many youths, due to the inaccessibility of education, are unable to pursue peaceful livelihoods and professional trajectories, thereby constituting “lost generations”.

The median age of Central Africans stands at 17.8 years, while life expectancy is 50 years (48.8 years for males, 51.4 years for females)³. Consequently, multiple generations have been born since the country gained independence in 1960. It is noteworthy that dependency ratios⁴ remain exceptionally high: the total dependency ratio reaches 80.9%⁵, with the child dependency ratio at 74.2%⁶. These values directly determine fiscal pressures on social policy expenditures. Higher ratios necessitate increased allocations for educational infrastructure, social protection, healthcare, and related sectors—allocations that consistently fall substantially below actual needs.

The challenges of establishing and developing basic education systems in African nations, alongside associated constraints, are analyzed in studies by Russian scholars examining both continent-wide trends [Borisenkov 1987; Gribanova 2020] and regional specificities. The education system of the Central African Republic has been examined through interdisciplinary lenses: from youth policy analysis [Murafa, Nguetobaye 2024] and comparative studies on educational accessibility in Central African states [Fedotova, Melemokosso 2024] to comprehensive research on educational reforms targeting improved accessibility and quality [Zavialova, Dormidontova 2023a, 2023b, 2023c].

¹ For instance, *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* evaluates 15-year-old students' competencies in mathematics, reading, and science. This benchmarking tool enables cross-national comparisons of educational quality across 80 participating countries. Source: Programme for International Student Assessment. *OECD*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa.html> (accessed: 15.03.2025).

² Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic. *UN*. 12.02.2016. <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2016/133> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³ Central African Republic Population. *Countrymeters*. https://countrymeters.info/ru/Central_African_Republic (accessed: 15.03.2025)

⁴ The proportion of the economically dependent population (youth/elderly) to the productive working-age population.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, innovative methodologies such as art pedagogy are being explored within initiatives promoting Russian language acquisition in CAR [Rudneva 2023], demonstrating the integration of traditional and contemporary educational approaches in postcolonial societies.

Research by Central African scholars and experts operating within the Central African Republic constitutes a valuable contribution to understanding localized educational challenges and development prospects. Illustrative examples include studies examining: the impact of socio-political crises on primary education system functionality [Gounebana 2006]; determinants of student dropout rates [Namouyisse 2007]; the evolving roles of the state and church as strategic partners addressing critical educational needs [Banga 2017]; and methodological approaches to history instruction in CAR schools [Sokola 2023].

The present study aims to: (1) analyze the educational system of the Central African Republic; (2) identify key operational impediments; (3) examine the impact of political instability and economic determinants; and (4) evaluate the efficacy of international humanitarian programs and governmental initiatives in sectoral reform. Furthermore, it scrutinizes strategic development vectors, including: adaptation of pedagogical frameworks to diverse ethnic constituencies; reduction of donor dependency; and consolidation of national policy oversight. Particular emphasis is placed on investigating CAR's educational historiography, service accessibility and quality metrics, alongside socioeconomic and political determinants influencing systemic development.

The research methodology employs an interdisciplinary approach encompassing the analysis of international best practices and efficacy assessment of implemented educational programs. Content analysis was applied to documentation from international organizations (UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, among others) and scholarly publications. Furthermore, field research was conducted between January and June 2025, incorporating interviews and systematic examination of contemporary instructional materials for primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary education in the Central African Republic. This integrated methodology enables comprehensive problem diagnosis and facilitates the development of sustainable solutions to advance CAR's educational system while progressively reducing the influence of external actors.

INITIAL POST-INDEPENDENCE REFORMS

The attainment of political independence in 1960 created conducive conditions for democratizing and reforming CAR's education systems. In 1961, Addis Ababa hosted the inaugural Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa. The conference declared commitments to overcome the legacy of colonial underdevelopment [Borisenkov 1987: 90] and established continental targets to be achieved by 1981: implementation of universal, compulsory, and tuition-free six-year primary education; expansion of secondary education enrollment to 20%; increase of tertiary enrollment to 2%; and significant reduction of adult illiteracy rates [Gribanova 2020: 72].

During the 1960s, the authorities of the Central African Republic prioritized the expansion of the national education system. President David Dacko (1960–1966), a former school principal, initiated nationalization of missionary schools. This policy was

principally driven by the government's objective to reinforce sovereignty through reforming the educational framework intrinsically linked to the colonial legacy. Concurrent aims included curriculum standardization and integration of civic education components.

Moreover, denominational schools were predominantly accessible to children of the same faith, creating significant social barriers, whereas the new state system espoused the principle of equal opportunity for all. This differential access proved consequential for public sector employment, where graduates of secular institutions received preferential treatment.

The crisis triggered by discrimination against religious school teachers whose compensation and career advancement opportunities lagged significantly behind public-sector counterparts accelerated reforms. Surging unionization among these educators catalyzed subsequent policy changes [Banga 2017: 143–168].

By 1963, all African educators from denominational schools had been integrated into the civil service [Gounebana 2006: 69]. This nationalization epitomized a pan-African postcolonial trajectory wherein education was conceptualized as the bedrock of nation-building and a cornerstone of sovereignty.

Consequently, the gross enrollment ratio surged significantly: from 21% in 1960 to 60% in 1972, marking a crucial advancement in CAR's educational development [Gounebana 2006: 68–70].

However, not all educational sector reforms proceeded without disruption. Secondary school strikes occurred in 1971 and 1972, protesting inadequate learning conditions, followed by university student strikes at the University of Bangui in 1974, 1975, and 1976 over systematic non-payment of scholarships and salaries [Yarisse Zocizoum 1981: 794].

In 1979, Emperor Bokassa announced that all schoolchildren in the country were to wear uniforms designed by himself. It was sold in a store owned by one of his wives. The uniform, which cost about \$30, was beyond the means of many families. The students held a demonstration. They were joined by adults protesting against the rising food prices. Peaceful actions escalated into pogroms of shops, including the *Le Pacifique* store belonging to the Empress. The Emperor sent troops to quell the riots. In response to the automatic fire, the protesters started shooting back from bows. New protests in 1979 resulted in the arrest of approximately 180 children and teenagers. Of these, only 27 survived. The rest were killed in prison or died of starvation, torture, and beatings⁷.

Mass killings hastened the downfall of Jean-Bédél Bokassa. In September 1979, with the support of France, which initiated Operation "Barracuda," Emperor Jean-Bédél Bokassa was overthrown, and David Dacko regained power in the country (1979–1981). These events came to symbolize popular resistance to dictatorship and are still commemorated in the Central African Republic as a day of remembrance for the victims of the regime [Bauters 2012: 11].

However, the reinstatement of David Dacko's regime failed to deliver the long-anticipated stability to the nation. The economy, ravaged by Bokassa's eccentric policies,

⁷ "In the yellow hot Africa, in its central part..." *The Kommersant*. 22.08.2020. (In Russ.). <https://www.kommersant.ru/gallery/4465099> (accessed: 20.04.2025)

persisted in a profound crisis; infrastructure necessitated urgent modernization and substantial state investment; while French advisers continued to exercise de facto governance over key ministries of the CAR, including the education sector [Carayannis, Lombard 2015: 4].

The severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR also had a destructive impact. The Soviet Union had been sending pedagogues to the Central African Republic, facilitating the construction of infrastructure facilities, and allocating financial funds. Students from the CAR received higher education in the USSR, which formed the local intellectual elite.

The education sector suffered more than any other social sphere from chronic underfunding. Teachers continued to organize strikes due to regular multi-month delays in salary payments. Thus, for example, during the 2002/2003 academic year, state school teachers who had not received salaries for nine months declared an indefinite strike. This led to the mass closure of educational institutions, depriving thousands of children of access to education⁸.

Many schools required capital investments, while the shortage of local specialists necessitated hiring foreign teachers, thereby exacerbating dependency on external aid. Furthermore, alongside rising social tensions, ethnic conflicts among indigenous peoples intensified, further eroding national cohesion. The weakness of security forces made it impossible to establish peace and order, leading to the deployment of numerous international peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.

SCHOOLS AS BATTLEGROUNDS

Chronic underfunding of key state institutions in the 1990s led to a systemic crisis that affected not only the education sector. The military was also impacted, as ethnic tensions within the armed forces, combined with delayed salary payments, triggered a series of mutinies (April 18, May 18, and November 15, 1996)⁹, which severely undermined the economy and state governance [Carayannis, Lombard 2015: 326]. Armed groups, taking advantage of the country's destabilization, expanded their influence, which had a detrimental effect on overall security and led to increased militant activity and a series of attempted coups d'état [Giroux, Lanz, Sguaitamatti 2009: 7–8].

These factors inevitably precipitated a deep crisis in the Central African Republic's education system, driven by political instability, armed conflicts rooted in interethnic and interreligious tensions, and persistent underfunding. Amidst the constant conflicts, many schools ceased to fulfill their core functions.

During the many years of protracted conflict, school buildings often became bases for armed groups, which used them as barracks, command centers, and weapons depots. In active combat zones, schools were shelled and destroyed; many were deliberately

⁸ The situation in the Central African Republic and activities of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). *UN*. 03.01.2003. P. 4. <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2003/5> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

⁹ République Centrafricaine: anatomie d'un état fantôme. Rapport Afrique. *International Crisis Group*. 13.12.2007. № 136. P. 10. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/central-african-republic-anatomy-of-a-phantom-state-french.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

razed to prevent opposing forces from using them as troop quarters. Schools were also widely repurposed as makeshift shelters for refugees and internally displaced persons. Cumulatively, these factors inevitably led to the suspension of educational activities in remote settlements for years or even decades, while the infrastructure was completely destroyed and often beyond repair¹⁰.

In December 2012, several armed groups predominantly composed of Muslims and primarily based in the northeastern regions of the Central African Republic united under the command of the “Séléka”¹¹ militia, led by Michel Djotodia. As Séléka grew stronger, Christian and animist “local defense” militias began to emerge in response, calling themselves “Anti-Balaka”¹². The country descended into civil war. According to a study conducted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) across 176 of the 1,933 formal primary schools in 11 out of 17 prefectures, between December 2012 and September 2013, 86% of schools had been closed at least once, and 70% of students never returned to their studies due to fear of violence, insecurity on the way to school, destruction of educational infrastructure, and shortages of teachers and learning materials¹³.

For teachers, this period became the most difficult in the country's history. Many were forced to flee their homes, and some became victims of armed groups. Teachers were subjected to persecution and killings, as militants perceived them either as representatives of the state or as individuals spreading a “foreign” ideology¹⁴.

A tragic aspect of the emerging crisis was the widespread recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. According to UNICEF, between 2013 and 2015, more than 10,000 children in CAR were recruited by various armed groups¹⁵. These groups seized schools and forcibly abducted children to their camps. Boys were trained and used as combatants, while girls were forced into sexual slavery and servile labor¹⁶. The psychological pressure and ideological indoctrination caused many children to perceive

¹⁰ An uncertain future? Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic. *Internal displacement monitoring center*. 01.05.2011. P. 26–27. https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201105-af-CAR-an-uncertain-future-thematic-en.pdf?_gl=1*1ij6qvs*_ga*NjY4NzA5MTEwLjE3Mzk1NzAyOTQ.*_ga_PKVS5L6N8V*MTczOTU3MDI5My4xLjAuMTczOTU3MDI5My42MC4wLjA (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹¹ The Séléka coalition (from the Sango language meaning “alliance”) primarily comprises four rebel groups: the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (*UFDR*), the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (*CPJP*), the Convention of Patriots for Salvation of Kodro (*CPSK*), and the Union of Republican Forces (*UFR*).

¹² In the Sango language, it means “anti-machete”.

¹³ A step back: The impact of the recent crisis on education in Central African Republic - A joint education assessment. *Reliefweb*. 18.10.2013. <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/step-back-impact-recent-crisis-education-central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic. *United Nations Security Council*. 13.04.2011. P. 7. <https://watchlist.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-SG-Report-on-CAR.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹⁵ Central African Republic: armed groups agree to release child soldiers, says UNICEF. *UN News*. 05.05.2015. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/05/497852> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹⁶ An uncertain future? Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic. *Internal displacement monitoring center*. 01.05.2011. P. 20–25. https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201105-af-CAR-an-uncertain-future-thematic-en.pdf?_gl=1*1ij6qvs*_ga*NjY4NzA5MTEwLjE3Mzk1NzAyOTQ.*_ga_PKVS5L6N8V*MTczOTU3MDI5My4xLjAuMTczOTU3MDI5My42MC4wLjA (accessed: 15.03.2025)

education as “the enemy” and war as the only path in life, culminating in the creation of a “lost generation”—tens of thousands of young people who knew nothing but violence.

The mass recruitment of minors occurred amid total impunity for members of armed groups and the absence of state protection for civilians. Children endured violence and severe trauma: they were compelled to kill, subjected to torture and punitive measures, and deployed as expendable frontline personnel. Following the cessation of hostilities, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of these children presented formidable challenges. Many remained permanently unable to reintegrate into civilian life, deprived of educational opportunities and capacities for social adaptation¹⁷.

Funding for child reintegration programs is primarily sourced from international organizations. However, resource mismanagement prompted the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to impose 40–60% budget reductions in 2022¹⁸. Consequently, one in five demobilized children received no program support and remained unable to transition to civilian life¹⁹.

Armed conflicts and civil wars have precipitated a profound humanitarian catastrophe and created significant obstacles to the country’s development and the consolidation of its sovereignty. The incumbent authorities confront the critical imperative to redress the devastating legacy of these conflicts: near-total educational infrastructure collapse, mass teacher exodus, chronic funding deficits, and systematic violence against students and schoolchildren. Ruined schools epitomize squandered potential, while successive “lost generations” have come of age amid unrelenting fear, deprived of fundamental knowledge and competencies.

“REBOOTING” THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In 2016, Faustin-Archange Touadéra assumed office in the Central African Republic. An intellectual educated at African and European universities, a mathematics professor, and former rector of the University of Bangui, he recognizes education’s pivotal role in establishing a sustainable civil society. Consequently, he undertakes strategic efforts to reinforce the country’s beleaguered education system.

In May 2016, the Central African Republic government formally petitioned the European Union, United Nations, and World Bank Group for support in conducting a Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPA). Collaborating with international donors, the CAR Government subsequently developed and adopted the 2017–2021 National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (*Plan National de relèvement et consolidation de la*

¹⁷ Coulange C. L’intégration des enfants soldats centrafricains dans la société s’est avérée une tâche extrêmement difficile. *Alternatives Humanitaires*. 21.05.2024. <https://www.alternatives-humanitaires.org/fr/2024/05/24/la-reintegration-des-enfants-soldats-en-centrafrique-quelles-perspectives-pour-penser-ladieu-aux-armes/> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹⁸ En Centrafrique, les finances publiques sont dans le rouge. *Radio France Internationale*. 04.05.2022. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220504-en-centrafrique-les-finances-publiques-sont-dans-le-rouge> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

¹⁹ Cas individuel (CAS) – Discussion: 2022, Publication: 110e session CIT. *International Labour Organisation*. 2022. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/fr/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13101:0::NO::P13101_COMMENT_ID:3187463 (accessed: 15.03.2025)

paix 2017–2021)²⁰. This framework established five-year priority objectives: (1) quantifying financial requirements for recovery and peacebuilding; (2) designing context-responsive operational, institutional, and financial mechanisms; and (3) establishing an integrated monitoring platform to track reform implementation while coordinating humanitarian, political, developmental, and security interventions²¹.

Pursuant to this plan, the government defined concrete targets: constructing 218 schools, recruiting 1,000 teachers, creating 1,200 school canteens, and distributing learning materials kits to 150,000 students²². International donors allocated €13.4 million (2017), €24.5 million (2018), €43.7 million (2019), and €7.8 million (2020–2021) for educational system reform²³.

Subsequently, the Central African Republic (CAR) Government extended the National Plan's validity through 2023²⁴. This adjustment reflected the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation between the CAR Government and 14 armed groups²⁵, alongside compounding effects of the *COVID-19* pandemic that impeded timely achievement of planned outcomes.

Nevertheless, these measures proved insufficient. According to UNICEF report²⁶, a quarter of children remained unenrolled in primary education in 2019, while preschool enrollment stood below 6.3%. By March 2021, security crises compounded by the pandemic had forced widespread school closures. The primary school completion rate plummeted to 27%. Persistent barriers to educational access and quality included chronic underfunding, restrictive gender and socio-cultural norms, prohibitive household education costs, inadequate infrastructure, poorly adapted curricula, and acute teacher shortages. Critically, two-thirds of primary educators were “parent-teachers”—community-funded individuals lacking formal pedagogical training.

Furthermore, despite all governmental efforts, teacher strikes persisted with regularity²⁷. This pattern underscores the critical imperative of addressing educator compensation and benefits. Even as authorities strive to meet teachers' demands,

²⁰ Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix (2017-2021). *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)*. 17.11.2016. https://minusca.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/plan_national_de_relevement_et_consolidation_de_la_paix_-_final.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2025)

²¹ *Ibid.* P. 7–8.

²² *Ibid.* P. 34.

²³ *Ibid.* P. 71.

²⁴ Rapport combiné de mise à jour et d'extension à fin 2024 du document de stratégie pays (DSP) 2017-2021 et de revue de la performance du portefeuille pays (RPPP). *Groupe de la Banque Africaine de Développement*. 03.2023. P. iv. https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/projects-and-operations/rca_-_rapport_combine_de_mise_a_jour_et_dextension_a_fin_2024_du_document_de_strategie_pays_dsp_2017-2021_et_de_revue_de_la_performance_du_portefeuille.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2025)

²⁵ Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, February 2019 (S/2019/145). *Reliefweb*. 15.02.2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/political-agreement-peace-and-reconciliation-central-african> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

²⁶ Descriptif de programme de pays. République centrafricaine. E/ICEF/2023/P/L.13. *Conseil économique et social Nation Unites*. 03.01.2023. P. 3/18. https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/14711/file/2023-PL13-Central_African_Republic_CPD-FR-ODS.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2025)

²⁷ Centrafrique: les enseignants menacent une nouvelle fois d'entrer en grève. *Radio Ndeke Luka*. 05.01.2024. <https://www.radiondekeluka.org/62932-centrafrique-les-enseignants-menacent-une-nouvelle-fois-dentrer-en-greve> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

economic and social constraints—including acute classroom overcrowding and staff shortages—must be systematically factored into policy responses²⁸.

Despite the formally enshrined principle of free primary education, the actual costs of schooling remain high for many. Pupils are required to bear expenses for learning materials and school uniforms. Moreover, the practice of unofficial levies (so-called “contributions”) imposed by schools for “various needs” is widespread. Non-payment of these levies results in pupils being excluded from the educational process until payment is made, creating barriers to education for children from low-income families.

In 2020, the government of the Central African Republic approved the Education Sector Development Plan (2020–2029), outlining three priority areas: expanding access to all levels of education while ensuring inclusive and safe learning environments; reforming teacher training, recruitment, and retention strategies for qualified personnel; and revising curricula, improving teaching methodologies, and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms²⁹. According to the Plan, implementation costs for 2020–2022 totaled approximately \$11.5 million for preschool education, \$51.4 million for primary education, \$21 million for general secondary education, \$5.1 million for technical/agricultural education, vocational training, and literacy programs, \$1.4 million for higher education and research, \$5.26 million in administrative expenses, and \$10.37 million in ancillary expenditures. Cumulatively, this represented approximately 9.9% of the Republic’s annual budget. Notably, while education spending demonstrates an upward trend, it remains below the Sub-Saharan African average of 13.86% (*Fig. 1*).



Fig. 1. Education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure, 1990–2023.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data³⁰.

²⁸ Plan sectoriel de l’éducation 2020-2029 de la République centrafricaine. *Global Partnership*. 2020. P. 161. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/content/plan-sectoriel-de-leducation-republique-centrafricaine-2020-2029> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

²⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data. *UNESCO*. <https://databrowser.uis.unesco.org/browser> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³⁰ Ibid.

In 2023, funding for the education sector, aligned with achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) coordinated by the United Nations, reached \$21.3 million. Key donors included specialized UN agencies, notably UNICEF, the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), underscoring the inter-agency nature of support for educational initiatives within the global context³¹.

However, in 2024, a reduction in funding volume to \$18.2 million USD was observed. This decline was driven by the reallocation of financial resources toward other priorities, notably SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), coupled with shifts in the structure and levels of contributions from international donors.

The World Bank allocated a \$30.85 million grant for the period 2021–2025 to support implementation of the *Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Strategic Plan* within the framework of the *Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2020–2029*. However, interim results as of 2025 indicate a lag behind established target indicators, despite the substantial grant³².

Despite the existence of a well-structured action plan and allocated funding, the education sector in the Central African Republic continues to face systemic challenges. These include acute teacher shortages and reliance on volunteer staff—even in the capital³³—bureaucratic delays, disruptions to the learning process in remote prefectures³⁴, and inadequate school infrastructure³⁵. Critically, chronic underfunding in education has rendered the Central African Republic dependent on international actors, who leverage this dependence to exert political influence in pursuit of their own strategic interests.

OVERCOMING EUROCENTRISM

A key priority in educational policy is transforming the existing learning system to align with the state's socio-cultural and historical specificities.

In the Central African Republic, the educational model retains structural resemblance to the French system, having undergone only partial modifications (*Fig. 2*). One such adaptation is the integration of non-formal (alternative) education elements. As a result, instead of establishing a sustainable model for a national education system, the Republic has inherited a fragmented and disjointed structure.

³¹ Central African Republic. *UN Sustainable Development Group*. <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³² Central African Republic - Education Sector Plan Support Project. *World Bank Group*. 15.07.2021. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P173103> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³³ Koena J.-F. En RCA, les écoles souffrent d'un manque d'enseignants. *Deutsche Welle*. 21.02.2024. <https://www.dw.com/fr/centrafrique-ecole-crise-enseignants-el%C3%A8ves/a-68331908> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³⁴ Centrafrique: la réponse du gouvernement et la Minusca sur le retard dans le déploiement des enseignants. *Radio Ndeke Luka*. 21.11.2024. <https://radiondekeluka.org/77071-centrafrique-la-reponse-du-gouvernement-et-la-minusca-sur-le-retard-dans-le-deploiement-des-enseignants> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³⁵ Centrafrique: à Mala, les études s'arrêtent après la classe de seconde. *Radio Ndeke Luka*. 24.03.2025. <https://www.radiondekeluka.org/82828-centrafrique-a-mala-les-etudes-sarretent-apres-la-classe-de-seconde> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

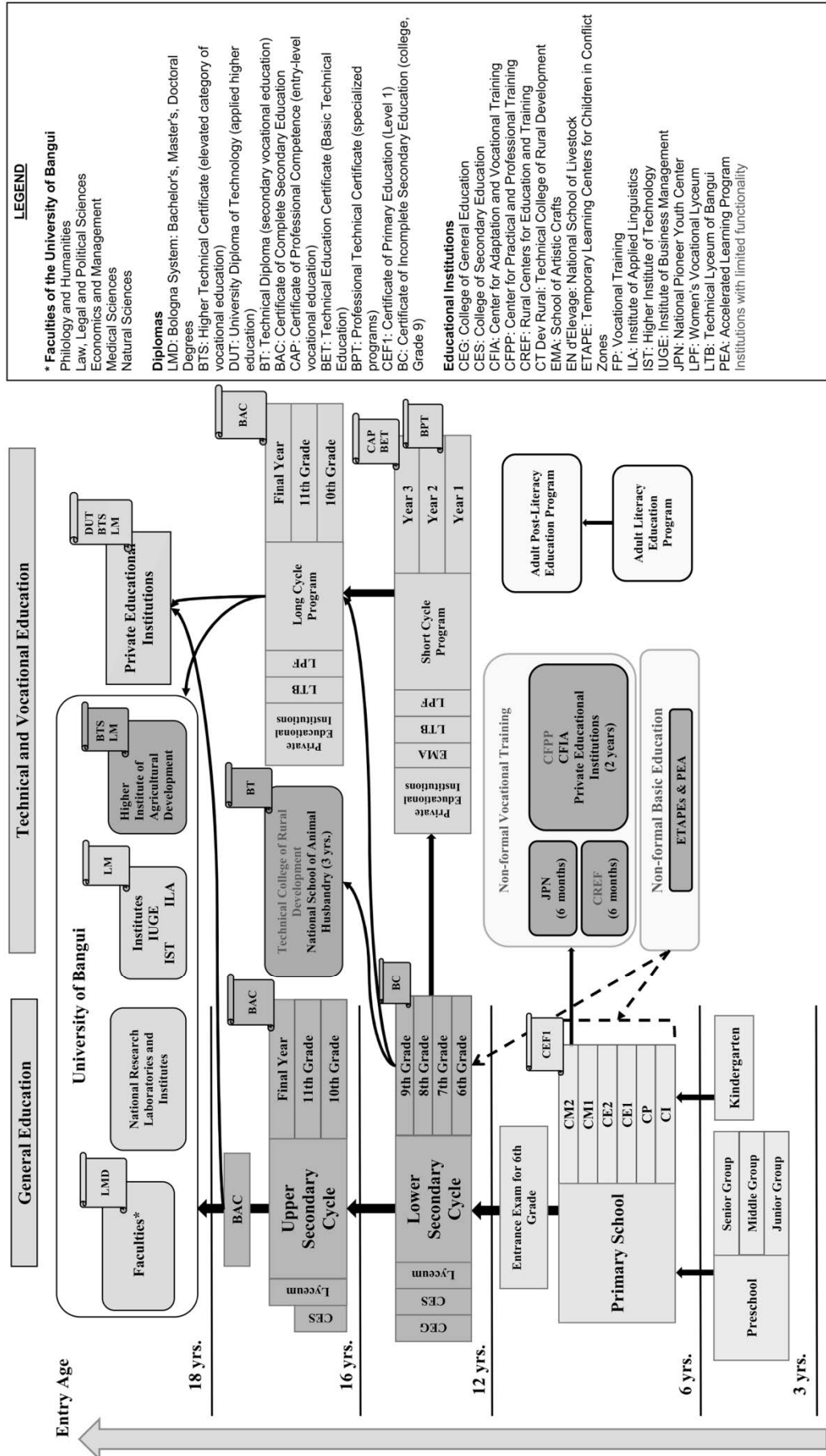


Fig. 2. Structure of the Education System in the Central African Republic.

Source: Plan sectoriel de l'éducation 2020-2029 de la République centrafricaine. *Global Partnership*, 2020. P. 195. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/content/plan-sectoriel-de-leducation-republique-centrafricaine-2020-2029> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

The quality of educational and instructional materials also fails to meet the needs of Central African schoolchildren and demonstrates a formalistic approach in terms of content. For example, the school textbook “*HISTOIRE. GÉOGRAPHIE. ÉDUCATION*” for middle school levels (CM1–CM2, equivalent to grades 5–6), published by the National Institute for Pedagogical Research and Instructional Support under the Ministry of National Education of the Central African Republic (INRAP, *Institut national de Recherche et d'animation pédagogique*), illustrates this issue. This institute is responsible for the development and piloting of curricula and textbooks for primary and lower secondary education, as well as for producing instructional materials for teachers (including a pedagogical journal, radio and television programs, and other materials).

The textbook, comprising 161 pages, contains approximately 49,000 printed characters (based on an analysis of its textual content). A significant portion of the content is devoted to illustrations, including drawings and photographs. For comparison, the Russian history textbook “World History. History of the Ancient World. Grade 5” by A.A. Vigasin, G.I. Goder, and I.S. Svetsitskaya contains around 380,000 printed characters. In its history section, African children aged 11–14 are presented with information about cave dwellers, geographical discoveries made by representatives of Western civilization, and colonialism—including the colonial period of the Central African Republic and its close ties with France.

The section devoted to the First and Second World Wars spans a mere four pages (*Annexes 1–4*), despite the fact that Central Africans were coerced into participating in these conflicts. The post-independence period beginning in 1960 is covered in only a few pages and features a timeline of CAR presidents’ tenures (*Annexes 5–6*). The authors of the educational materials thus significantly downplay the significance of the country and its people in global historical events.

It is important to note that school instructional materials are often not original or locally adapted developments—they are largely based on textbooks from Cameroon. The Central African Republic, in cooperation with other Francophone African countries, participates in the creation of shared didactic materials. This activity is carried out within the framework of the intergovernmental initiative “Educational Resources”, implemented by UNESCO with financial support from the French Development Agency (*AFD, Agence Française de Développement*)³⁶. Such a practice highlights the existing dependency of educational content quality on external regulation, which maintains the influence of the former colonial power over the standardization of teaching materials. In turn, this raises critical questions regarding the autonomy of education systems in Central African countries as a whole and the extent to which the depth and content of instruction align with the objectives of developing the education sector in support of national sovereignty and the formation of human capital in the Central African Republic.

This narrative echoes France’s colonial educational policies, specifically the 1948 reforms implemented across French colonial Africa. At that time, the education system was standardized according to the French model: curricula and textbooks were imported

³⁶ Education – Pédagogie pour l’enseignement des mathématiques et du français: 13 pays de l’Afrique subsaharienne francophone adoptent des stratégies communes. *Le Quotidien*. 18.05.2024. <https://lequotidien.sn/education-pedagogie-pour-lenseignement-des-mathematiques-et-du-francais-13-pays-de-lafrique-subsaharienne-francophone-adoptent-des-strategies-communes/> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

from France, resulting in the marginalization of local knowledge regarding African history and geography [Borisencov 1987: 73–75]. Consequently, the absence of critical analysis of the colonial past and the emphasis on Eurocentric knowledge continue to shape the country's contemporary educational system.

This quality of education falls critically short of contemporary norms and requirements. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of school graduates not only lack general knowledge of their country's history—a deficit which negatively impacts the development of their civic identity—but also fail to acquire the necessary professional skills. This deprives them of opportunities for further education and significantly impedes their employability. Furthermore, educational materials are far from universally accessible to students. Due to chronic and persistent underfunding, students are compelled to purchase textbooks and school supplies themselves. As a result, the pupil-to-textbook ratio in the 2018–2019 academic year stood at 54:1 for the CM1 level and 45.7:1 for the CM2 level³⁷.

Another significant challenge is the deficit in methodological and didactic support for educators. Access to libraries within the country is severely limited, with the majority falling under the purview of private organizations. Furthermore, approximately 75% of teachers lack proficiency in digital tools for online research, compelling them to rely on outdated materials and knowledge acquired during their initial training. Novice teachers, in particular, face substantial difficulties in planning and organizing the instructional process, often forced to rely on the textbook as their primary—and frequently sole—source of information. Substituting comprehensive preparation with brief notes or materials borrowed from colleagues diminishes their teaching effectiveness and constrains the depth and breadth of subject matter presentation [Sokola 2023: 26].

Consequently, effective modernization of the education sector requires the establishment of long-term mechanisms for autonomous financing and the revision of school curricula based on the actual needs of the economy and society.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCING: BENEFIT OR TOOL OF GOVERNANCE?

Due to an extreme shortage of the domestic budget and a weak system of control and management in the education sector, thousands of Central African Republic children cannot gain access to quality education. The vacuum is filled by foreign actors and various non-commercial organizations implementing educational programs. Their initiatives often have a temporary character but at the same time exert significant ideological influence on unformed children's minds, promoting Western values and their own ideals. The short-term character of the programs creates a risk of leaving schoolchildren with an incomplete volume of necessary knowledge and skills and, as a consequence, the impossibility of the full-fledged integration of the rising generation into society.

³⁷ Plan sectoriel de l'éducation 2020–2029 de la République centrafricaine. *Global Partnership*. 2020. P. 195. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/content/plan-sectoriel-de-leducation-republique-centrafricaine-2020-2029> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

One example of temporary work with the most vulnerable layers of the population by the international community is the *ETAPE* (*Espaces temporaires d'apprentissage et de protection des enfants*, Temporary spaces for learning and protection of children) [Murseli 2019: 73–93]. *ETAPE* schools are managed and financed by the international community and are not intended to be a long-term part of the system of education of the state where they are deployed. The functioning of such schools depends on external financing and contractual obligations between non-commercial organizations and donors. In case of delay of payments, the schools stop conducting their activity.

Traditionally, *ETAPE* schools are not integrated into the educational system of the host country; however, in the Central African Republic, initiatives were realized on providing succession in *ETAPE* education³⁸. Teachers in these schools are so-called “teacher-parents,” with whom representatives of international organizations conduct specialized trainings, including on psychology and sociology.

Another example is the Global Fund *Education Cannot Wait* (ECW)³⁹, which is implementing a comprehensive strategy in the Central African Republic aimed at expanding access to education and improving its quality. The programs financed by the fund cover a wide range of activities, including the reintegration of children into the education system, professional training for teachers, support for student achievement, and the implementation of educational radio programs for children living in remote and hard-to-reach areas of the country. As part of this effort, two key initiatives were launched: the *First Emergency Response* program in 2017, aimed at rapid crisis response in the education sector, and the *Multi-Year Resilience Programme* (MYRP), which began in 2019 and focuses on the long-term development of the education system and its resilience to external shocks. In 2023, the ECW fund allocated \$2 million for the First Emergency Response program, bringing the total amount of funding provided to the Central African Republic by Education Cannot Wait since the start of its operations to \$70 million⁴⁰.

In principle, such initiatives could have produced positive outcomes. Yet this potential is negated by two critical impediments: the lack of centralized coordination by the Central African Republic government, which risks further fragmenting the education system, and the erosion of sovereignty in educational policymaking, whereby key decisions, programs, and teaching materials are effectively imposed externally. Crucially, these organizations’ efforts are directed not at rebuilding and strengthening the national education system but at entrenching state dependence on external funding. While providing stopgap support, this dependence inherently risks forfeiting decision-making autonomy—a dynamic that fundamentally undermines national sovereignty. A direct manifestation of this systemic weakening is the outflow of qualified teaching professionals from public schools to

³⁸ Un enseignement fondamental 1 équitable et inclusif soutenu par des enseignants qualifiés et un système éducatif transformé. Pacte de partenariat. *Global Partnership*. 08.2023. P. 6. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/node/document/download?file=document/file/2023-11-pacte-partenariat-republique-centrafricain.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

³⁹ Increasing access to safe, quality education for children impacted by ongoing conflict and crisis in the Central African Republic. *Education Cannot Wait*. <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/our-investments/where-we-work/central-african-republic> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

⁴⁰ Education Cannot Wait Announces US\$2 Million First Emergency Response in the Central African Republic: Total Funding Reaches US\$70 Million. *PR Newswire*. 16.06.2023. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/education-cannot-wait-announces-us2-million-first-emergency-response-in-the-central-african-republic-total-funding-reaches-us70-million-301853245.html> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

educational centers operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which directly diminishes the capacity of the national education system.

EDUCATION OF NOMADIC AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The greatest hardships are experienced by Indigenous Peoples and nomadic pastoralists, for whom education remains inaccessible. Their educational needs presuppose a specialized approach accounting for the cultural and socio-economic realities inherent to their way of life. However, the existing education policy, fundamentally reliant on Western financing, has over an extended period ignored a significant part of the population and the specificities of numerous communities in the Central African Republic. This, in turn, has served not only as a factor for marginalization, radicalization, and escalation of ethnic conflicts, but also as a cause of catastrophically low coverage of state-provided education among Fulani (Mbororo, Peuhl) and Pygmy children.

Indigenous peoples (for example, Aka and Baka Pygmies) and nomadic pastoralists (Fulani) experience especially acute difficulties in obtaining basic education⁴¹. Their traditional way of life, often based on hunting, gathering, and herding, does not align well with the classical model of school education.

The government undertakes attempts to solve these problems. For indigenous peoples, such as the Aka and Baka, with the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture of the CAR, programs for the integration of children into the traditional education system are being implemented⁴². This approach allows children to assimilate more easily and obtain knowledge without breaking away from the traditional system of cultural and experience transmission. The educational programs cover practical classes concerning hunting and gathering, studying the basics of ecology, as well as basic school subjects. Such an approach to the organization of learning not only contributes to increasing the level of literacy among these peoples but also becomes an important factor in the preservation of their unique cultural identity.

The Fulani people historically used an Arabic-based script (Ajami) for writing Fulfulde and possessed written literature: historical chronicles, poems, legends, and songs. However, traditional forms of upbringing within families and communities played the primary role. Colonial and post-colonial education systems dismissed this approach as a “vestigial form of cultural life” [Borisenkov 1987: 38], making it virtually impossible for children from Fulani nomadic tribes to integrate into formal education. Currently, with the involvement of CAR’s Ministry of Livestock and Animal Health (*Ministère de l’Elevage et de la Santé Animale*), adaptive learning programs are being implemented. The core objective of these initiatives is to integrate basic school education into the daily activities of nomadic pastoralists⁴³.

⁴¹ Exposé du représentant de la minorité ethnique peuhl de Centrafrique. 17.07.2004. P. 3. https://www.cendoc.docip.org/collect/cendocdo/index/assoc/HASH7f9c/1032e933.dir/312_fs.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2025)

⁴² Plan en faveur des peuples autochtones (PPA). *World Bank Group*. 09.2022. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099950009262241056/pdf/P1658550d5c7a20ca0961f0b474e6323746.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

⁴³ Les Peuhls Mbororo de Centrafrique une communauté qui souffre. *International Federation for Human Rights*. 06.2015. P. 3. https://fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_les_peuhls_de_centrafrique_aidspc.pdf (accessed: 15.03.2025)

One significant initiative involves the development of mobile schools—transient educational units that follow nomadic pastoralists during herd migration routes, delivering basic education to children. The program primarily targets Fulani pastoralist children whose families engage in seasonal transhumance. It incorporates their unique mobility patterns, preventing educational disruptions while maintaining pastoral lifestyles. These schools operate across borders, including Sudan and Chad, where the initiative receives institutional backing, establishing it as a multinational educational framework in Central Africa⁴⁴.

The Ministry of Livestock and Animal Health is also developing vocational training programs for youth from nomadic tribes. These initiatives provide applied knowledge in veterinary science, agriculture, artisanal livestock product processing, and economics fundamentals. Such programs aim to enhance the economic independence of nomadic tribes by enabling the preservation of traditional livelihood systems while facilitating adaptation to contemporary socioeconomic conditions.

Particular emphasis is placed on bilingual instruction methodology, enabling children to acquire French, an official language alongside Sango, without severing ties with their native vernacular and traditional culture. Another initiative involves a “parent-teacher” training program that partially addresses teacher shortages by preparing educators directly within local communities. Participants receive instruction in fundamental pedagogy and teaching methodologies.

However, challenges pertaining to social integration persist. Children from ethnic minorities routinely encounter discrimination within conventional society, which adversely impacts their motivation to pursue basic education. In this context, initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Livestock and Animal Health under Minister Hassan Bouba’s personal stewardship exemplify integrated educational modalities adapted to traditional communities. Mobile schools and adaptive programs mitigate geographical and cultural barriers, facilitating harmonious integration of these groups into the national socioeconomic framework.

COLLABORATION WITH RUSSIAN EDUCATORS

Among international actors that have begun actively participating in the development of the Central African Republic's education system in recent years, one can also highlight Russia.

A significant development in international humanitarian cooperation was the 2022 inauguration of the “Russian House” cultural-educational center in Bangui, the capital. Within its framework, complementary educational programs have been deployed, targeting comprehensive acquisition of the Russian language—including foundational writing literacy and advanced written proficiency. Since 2024, Russian language courses have been extended to encompass both adult and juvenile audiences.

Within the framework of “Russian House” activities, an initiative is being implemented to introduce Russian as a Foreign Language courses into educational

⁴⁴ Rapport d'activités IRAM 2022. *Institut de recherche et d'applications des méthodes de développement*. 2023. P. 16. <https://iram-fr.org/ouverturepdf.php?file=mep-ra-22-iram-bat-web-1687515120.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

institutions of the Central African Republic. Qualified specialists of the organization, possessing specialized pedagogical training, conduct Russian Language classes on the premises of two state schools in Bangui, CAR's capital. Additionally, educational programs operate at the Reverend Sergius of Radonezh School, functioning under the parish of the Russian Orthodox Church in Bimbo. This project facilitates not only the popularization of the Russian language but also the development of bilateral cultural-humanitarian dialogue between Russia and CAR. Students gain access to studying Russian culture, traditions, and linguistic heritage, which expands their educational opportunities and lays the foundation for long-term interstate cooperation.

Another crucial aspect of the center's operation involves organizing cultural-enlightenment events targeting the popularization of Russian culture. These encompass screenings of Russian films in French, thematic soirées, and interactive sessions employing art-pedagogy methods that integrate artistic practices into the educational process. The linguo-cultural competence of "Russian House" attendees is developed through performance practices, including learning Russian songs and creating theatrical productions based on Russian classical dramatic works. This methodology enables the integration of elements of Russian culture and traditions while accounting for traditional approaches and specificities of Central African society [Rudneva 2023]. Such synthesis facilitates deeper comprehension and assimilation of Russian-language culture, adapting it to the local context.

It is noteworthy that this initiative has historical antecedents. During the period of Soviet-Central African cooperation, educators from the USSR worked in the African country, teaching not only the Russian language but also natural science disciplines (mathematics, physics)⁴⁵. At the current stage, plans for reintegrating Russian into the national school curriculum are being actualized, reflecting a trend toward restoring a multi-vector cultural-educational dialogue.

CONCLUSIONS

The educational system of the Central African Republic constitutes an integral component of national sovereignty; however, its development confronts profound structural challenges rooted in the colonial past and decades of political instability. Following the attainment of independence, reform efforts frequently prioritized the formal expansion of educational access while ignoring the imperative to adapt curricula to the nation's cultural and socioeconomic realities. Political crises, civil conflicts, and chronic underfunding have precipitated catastrophic infrastructure collapse and engendered "lost generations" deprived of foundational knowledge and competencies.

Despite governmental efforts, dependence on external assistance remains a critical problem. Existing programs and initiatives, while providing short-term solutions, simultaneously exacerbate systemic fragmentation and undermine national control over educational policy. Instructional materials borrowed from Francophone neighbors or developed with participation from the former metropole perpetuate a Eurocentric narrative, impeding the formation of civic identity and critical thinking.

⁴⁵ Novoselova E. Why Central Africans Would Study Russian. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. 07.02.2022. (In Russ.). <https://rg.ru/2022/02/07/zachem-budut-uchit-russkij-v-centralnoafrikanskoj-respublike.html> (accessed: 15.03.2025)

Prospects for overcoming the crisis are linked to resolving systemic challenges. Firstly, strengthening public governance through establishing transparent mechanisms for coordinating international assistance. Secondly, implementing deep curricular reforms integrating national history, languages, and traditional knowledge—enabling the dismantling of colonial stereotypes and enhancing education’s alignment with society’s genuine needs and demands. Thirdly, investing in teachers: salary increases, professional retraining, and remote-area support, since educators constitute the foundation of any educational system. Vulnerable groups—notably Fulani nomadic tribes and indigenous peoples—require particular attention.

The historical legacy of productive engagement with Soviet educators retains enduring relevance within the collective memory of Central African society, where high levels of trust persist regarding Russian educators’ professional capabilities. A fundamental distinction of Russia’s strategy compared to other states’ practices lies in its commitment to a partnership model of engagement—one precluding ideological expansion and demonstrating reverential regard for national self-determination and traditions. Implementation of joint educational initiatives, including developing pedagogical materials based on Soviet and Russian academic methodologies, holds potential to catalyze systemic transformation of the nation’s educational landscape.

Education constitutes not merely a social service but the bedrock of sovereign development. Without an autonomous, contextually adapted educational system, the CAR risks complete entrapment in external dependency – where young people forfeit opportunities for dignified livelihoods, while the nation surrenders prospects for prosperous futures. Success remains contingent upon equilibrium: leveraging global resources must complement strengthened national oversight, and international cooperation must serve Central African societal interests rather than supplant them. Only then will education cease to be a geopolitical battleground and instead become an instrument of creation capable of restoring hope to entire generations.

Supplementary Materials⁴⁶: Annexes 1–6. Excerpts from the textbook “*HISTOIRE. GÉOGRAPHIE. ÉDUCATION*” (Grades 5–6, Central African Republic). Pp. 126–129, 134–135 (19 sheets) with English translation.

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Научная статья

СИСТЕМА ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОАФРИКАНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ: ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЕ КОЛОНИАЛЬНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ И ПОСЛЕДСТВИЙ ЗАТЯЖНЫХ КОНФЛИКТОВ

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Аннотация. Доступ к образованию представляет собой критически важную социально-экономическую проблему для развивающихся государств, в особенности тех, которые пострадали от продолжительных вооруженных конфликтов и политической нестабильности. Конфликты значительно ухудшили инфраструктуру образования, что привело к закрытию многих школ. Политическая нестабильность усугубляла эту ситуацию, отвлекая ресурсы от сектора образования и подрывая усилия по разработке и реализации эффективной образовательной политики. Отсутствие безопасной среды препятствовало обучению и развитию детей, снижая перспективы социально-экономического прогресса. Эти проблемы находили свое выражение в Центральноафриканской Республике (ЦАР), на протяжении десятилетий переживавшей затяжные кризисы, вооруженные конфликты, политическую нестабильность, стагнацию экономики и социальную фрагментацию. Система образования продолжает сталкиваться с серьезными вызовами. Нехватка квалифицированных кадров, ограниченность финансирования и другие социально-экономические барьеры существенно ограничивают доступ к образованию для жителей удаленных регионов, коренных народов, кочевых племен, беженцев и внутренне перемещенных лиц. Кроме внутренних проблем, значительное влияние на образовательную систему оказывают международные и иностранные организации, некоммерческие и неправительственные организации. Их проекты, с одной стороны, продолжают обеспечивать временные решения, однако, с другой, ведут к зависимости страны от внешней помощи и формированию государственной политики, не всегда соответствующей национальным интересам.

В данной статье рассматривается исторический контекст развития системы образования Центральноафриканской Республики, ее текущее состояние, влияние вооруженных конфликтов, государственные усилия и национальная стратегия в области образования, а также иностранное воздействие на образовательную политику.

Ключевые слова: система образования, Центральноафриканская Республика, суверенитет, реформы сектора образования, учебные материалы, образование коренных и кочевых народов

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-22-41

Для цитирования: Кирикова Т.Н. Система образования Центральноафриканской Республики: преодоление колониального наследия и последствий затяжных конфликтов. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 22–41. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-22-41>

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AS A KEY ELEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract. Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has historically played a central role in ensuring employment and food security in the region. However, under contemporary conditions, the agricultural sector faces profound contradictions: on the one hand, it remains the economic foundation; on the other, it is losing its workforce due to youth migration to urban areas and the laborers shifting to service sector and the extractive industries. Despite high unemployment rates, young people avoid agriculture, perceiving it as an unprestigious, low-paying, and technologically backward sector. The author argues that resolving this situation requires transforming agricultural education. The article emphasizes that modern agriculture is ceasing to be “traditional”—it now demands specialists with expertise in agronomy, biotechnology, logistics, management, and digital technologies. However, the current agricultural education system in SSA does not meet these challenges. To address these issues, the author proposes reforms to the education system, including shifting curricula toward a practice-oriented approach. An example is the Russian model of continuous agribusiness education, which begins in preschool agricultural clubs and extends to specialized universities. Digitalizing education could make agricultural professions more attractive to youth. Strengthening international cooperation between the SAA countries and the Russian Federation can also help African youth receive appropriate education. The development of agricultural education is one of the key conditions for ensuring sustainable progress in sub-Saharan Africa. Its transformation requires a systematic approach that unites government, business, and international partners.

Keywords: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), agricultural education, socio-economic development, food security, sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, unemployment

Conflict of interest: The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-42-57

For citation: Gavrilova N.G. (2025). Agricultural Education as a Key Element of Socio-Economic Development in Sub-Saharan African Countries. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 42–57. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-42-57>

INTRODUCTION

Historically, agriculture in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries has played a crucial role in ensuring employment and food security for the population. However, under current conditions, the region’s agriculture faces numerous challenges, and its position is weakening due to the growing popularity of the service sector and extractive industries.

Agricultural production is experiencing a shortage of workers, even as high unemployment persists in many countries.

Youth, who make up the majority of African society, do not consider agriculture an attractive sector and are in no hurry to join the ranks of agricultural producers. Young people view work in the agricultural sector as hard, uninteresting, and not offering stable income. As a result of this loss of workforce, agricultural production fails to provide the population with the necessary food. SSA countries have the highest number of undernourished people in the world. According to FAO data¹, in 2023, 20.4% of the population in SSA was undernourished; the global average was 9.1%, with figures of 6.2% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8% in Central America, 3% in Central Asia, 13.9% in South Asia, and 12.4% in Western Asia² (see Fig. 1).

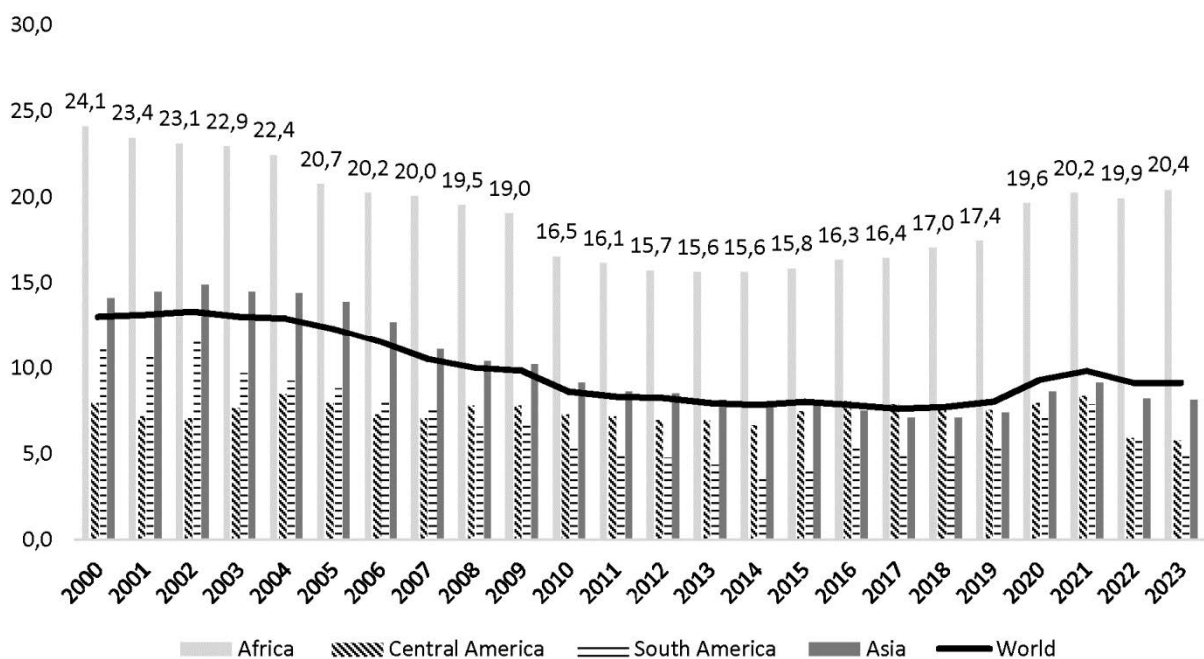


Fig. 1. Prevalence of malnutrition in African countries and the world, % of population.

Source: compiled by the author based on FAOSTAT data³.

Without attracting young people to the agricultural sector, it is unlikely that this situation can be reversed. At the same time, modern agriculture has the potential to become attractive to the younger generation. In a number of countries, it has evolved into a high-tech industry requiring specialists with unique knowledge and skills in agronomy, animal husbandry, information technology, production management, logistics, food processing, and other promising fields. However, SSA countries currently lack an adequate level of education to support the adoption of new technologies [Denisova, Kostelyanets 2022]. Therefore, the development of training in agricultural specialties becomes particularly important.

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

² Suite of Food Security Indicators. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS> (accessed: 25.01.2025)

³ Ibid.

At the end of 2023, the African Union adopted a new Digital Agriculture Strategy⁴, which places significant emphasis on improving education levels and digital literacy among agricultural workers. The document highlights the importance of promoting digital skills in schools and universities, as educational initiatives are key drivers of agricultural transformation. The strategy specifically emphasizes the crucial role of education in attracting youth to the sector, suggesting they could become the driver of agricultural development.

The present paper addresses the issue of promoting agricultural education among youth in SSA countries and attracting them to agricultural production. The study aims to assess the current state of education at various levels, identify the current status of agricultural education, and develop proposals to enhance its role in the socio-economic development of SSA countries.

AGRICULTURE IN THE ECONOMY OF SSA COUNTRIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Agriculture plays a vital role in Africa's economy, contributing about 15% to the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), according to the World Bank⁵. It not only ensures food security but also serves as the main source of income for millions of people, particularly in rural areas (49% of the SSA population, 13% in the Middle East and North Africa)⁶.

In recent decades, the number of workers in agricultural production has been declining. This is a serious issue with multiple underlying causes. Agricultural workers are leaving the sector due to low income and constantly changing production conditions, opting instead to move to cities in search of stability. Other reasons include a lack of prospects with outdated technologies, limited access to social infrastructure (such as education and healthcare), and the natural decline of the workforce due to the aging of farmers and insufficient youth engagement.

There is virtually no replacement for departing workers, and the agricultural sector is experiencing a labor shortage that has serious consequences for both the sector and the broader economy. Primarily, this results in decreased agricultural output, leading to food shortages, rising food prices, and reduced food security. The lack of domestically produced goods increases dependence on imports and results in inefficient use of foreign currency. The decline in youth entering the agricultural sector slows rural development and lowers the living standards of families dependent on farming.

The agricultural sector in Africa faces numerous challenges that hinder food security. The main reasons why agriculture does not provide an adequate level of food sufficiency include:

⁴ AU Digital Agriculture Strategy (DAS) AU Implementation Plan 2024 – 2030. *African Union*. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/au225158.pdf> (accessed: 31.01.2025)

⁵ Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP). *World Bank Group*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS> (accessed: 31.01.2025)

⁶ Employment in agriculture (% of total employment). *World Bank Group*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=ZG> (accessed: 31.01.2025)

1) low productivity (use of outdated farming methods and limited adoption of modern technologies) [Morozenskaya et al. 2024];

2) climate change (droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events adversely affect agricultural production);

3) underdeveloped or non-existent rural infrastructure (poor roads, insufficient storage facilities, irrigation systems, transport, sorting and processing centers, and other critical infrastructure);

4) political factors (armed conflicts that virtually eliminate the possibility of economic activity, and political instability that discourages investment in agriculture and worsens the business environment) [Kostelyanets 2014];

5) social and cultural barriers (obstacles for women to engage in farming and the perception of agriculture as “non-prestigious,” which deters youth) [Ayoade 2011];

6) a lack of access to financing (difficulties obtaining loans and financial support for farmers, limited investment in the sector, and insufficient state support).

Thus, Africa’s agricultural sector fails to ensure food security due to a combination of the factors listed above. Many of these issues are directly linked to insufficient qualifications, low levels of education, or a complete lack of education among producers.

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Another contemporary issue faced by SSA countries is the high level of unemployment in some of the nations of the macro-region (see Fig. 2).

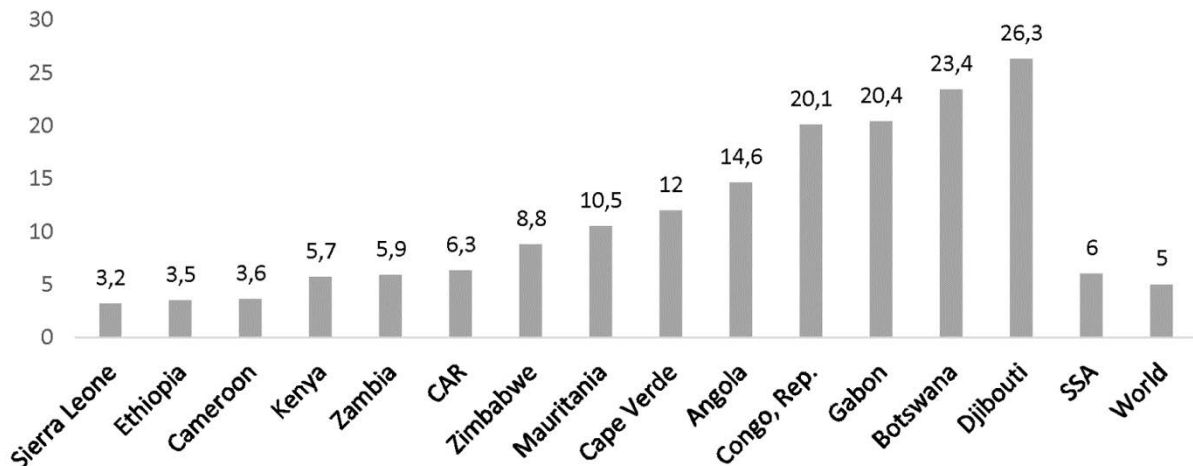


Fig. 2. Unemployment, 2023, %.

Source: compiled by the author based on data from the *World Bank Group*⁷.

The high unemployment rates in some African countries are the result of a combination of factors that interact and create a complex economic environment. These include rapid population growth, high rates of urbanization, a shortage of jobs, and the consequences of economic and political instability, among others. Particular attention should be given to low levels of education and skills among the population.

⁷ Unemployment, total (% of total labor force). *World Bank Group*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> (accessed: 24.01.2025)

Africa has the fastest population growth in the world. More than 60% of the continent's inhabitants are under 20 years old⁸. It is important to note that young people prefer to live in large cities and leave rural areas. The number of young people entering the labor market in cities significantly exceeds the number of available jobs. Many of them have a low level of education and qualifications and therefore do not have sufficient skills to work in modern industries. This creates a high level of youth unemployment. According to Russian researchers, "the continued high birth rates and population growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa will ensure an increase in demographic weight in the coming decades" [Abramova 2010]. Given the above and observing the continuing population growth in Africa, it is necessary to focus on the fact that the issues of youth education, increasing the efficiency of the agricultural sector, and strengthening the continent's food security are more relevant than ever [Gribanova 2020]. These three factors are interconnected.

Agricultural education helps to gain knowledge about more efficient agricultural production and optimal use of resources. Putting such knowledge into practice will lead to an increase in the quantity and improvement of the quality of food. Education helps to change the diet towards its balance and diversity, which ultimately leads to improved health of the population and a decrease in the level of malnutrition. People who have received education in agricultural production find it easier to find work in rural areas, which reduces unemployment and urbanization, or create their own business, which contributes to the development of entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. Both have a positive effect on food security.

Agricultural specialists are in demand for decision-making at both the small-scale community and national levels. With relevant knowledge, they can contribute to the development and adoption of effective agricultural policies, which are so important for modern African states.

In recent decades, humanity has had to adapt to changes occurring on the planet. The African continent is the epicenter of climate fluctuations⁹, and the issue of responding to change is particularly acute there. With agricultural education, producers can apply optimal adaptive technologies that strengthen food systems.

Thus, agricultural education can not only have a direct impact on the level of agricultural productivity, employment, and food security but also contribute to improving the nutrition and health of Africans, developing agricultural entrepreneurship, and helping to adapt to changes [Gombo, Mukhametzyanov 2022].

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

One of the important aspects of the current state of the agricultural sector is its unpopularity among young people, who prefer prestigious jobs with stable, high incomes. Agriculture is associated with hard physical labor, outdated technologies, primitive tools, and low earnings. As a result, agricultural education is not in demand among youth and

⁸ Median and average age in global comparison. *WorldData.info*. <https://www.worlddata.info/average-age.php> (accessed: 21.01.2025)

⁹ Responding to climate change. *UN Environment Programme*. <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/regional-initiatives/responding-climate-change> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

requires rehabilitation in their perception. The simplest way to promote the sector is to engage students from the earliest grades.

There are many examples of how children are introduced to agriculture in elementary school. In 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations developed and implemented the School Gardens project aimed at training younger schoolchildren in agricultural practices and producing food on school grounds with student participation¹⁰. The project's main goal is to promote healthy eating using food grown by the students themselves, develop life skills (such as growing plants and animals and preparing nutritious meals), and provide environmental education from an early age.

The curriculum includes gardening, environmental studies, and home economics. Gardening classes teach students how to grow plants, harvest crops, and store and prepare food. Young students participate in all the processes, see agriculture “from the inside,” and perceive it as a vital life activity rather than something “non-prestigious” or “boring.” Basic agricultural education not only provides initial theoretical knowledge but also ensures its practical application: students often work in school gardens, grow plants, care for animals, harvest produce, and perform other agricultural tasks. Several initiatives modeled on the School Gardens project have been developed and implemented.

In South Africa, the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) supports the development of school gardens to grow food locally, combat malnutrition, promote environmental education, and support sustainable natural resource management¹¹. Under this program, the organization “Food and Trees for Africa” (FTFA) runs a significant initiative called School Gardening to support food security¹². The project targets preschool, primary, and secondary school students. FTFA helps integrate agricultural education into existing school curricula across South Africa for schools interested in running their own gardens. One successful example is an elementary school in Pretoria, which not only provides early agricultural education but also transformed a vacant urban lot into a garden for growing herbs and vegetables. The school produces food for its own use and for sale¹³. In Ghana, the Organic School Project also trains students in crop cultivation and organic farming. The produce grown by the students is used to supplement their own diets¹⁴.

Educational initiatives can also be found in Nigeria (Toddler’s Garden), Tanzania (Games with Seeds), Mozambique (Children’s Agro Club), Kenya (Farmer’s Tales), and other countries, where children aged 3–7 receive early agricultural education.

There are successful examples of older students receiving specialized agricultural education. In South Africa, the Harry Oppenheimer Agricultural High School, which serves students in grades 8 through 12, has been operating since 1982 and allows students to specialize in agriculture. Its curriculum includes modules such as Agricultural Sciences

¹⁰ A new deal for school gardens. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. <https://www.fao.org/4/i1689e/i1689e00.pdf> (accessed: 16.12.2024)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Food and Trees for Africa*. <https://trees.org.za/education/> (accessed: 18.12.2024)

¹³ A new deal for school gardens. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. <https://www.fao.org/4/i1689e/i1689e00.pdf> (accessed: 16.12.2024)

¹⁴ Ibid.

and Agricultural Management Practices¹⁵. A similar secondary school exists in Nigeria—the Ibadan Grammar School—where livestock farming is a mandatory subject and crop production is offered as an elective¹⁶. Many schools have extracurricular agricultural clubs, and students often take part in environmental projects [Malabe, Wakawa, Gwary 2019].

In Kenya, agricultural education at the primary and secondary levels is supported by two platforms: the Young Farmers Clubs of Kenya (YFCK)¹⁷ and the 4-K Clubs of Kenya¹⁸. The former are more common in secondary schools. These school-based clubs aim to teach students modern agricultural practices, sustainable land use, and entrepreneurship. Participants—typically students aged 12–18—gain hands-on experience in crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and managing small-scale farming projects. Schools allocate land plots for training farms where students can experiment with innovative methods such as drip irrigation and organic farming.

The 4-K Clubs in Kenya are youth agricultural organizations designed for schoolchildren and young people in rural areas to develop skills in agriculture. Schools and communities provide plots for practical activities where youth grow crops, care for animals, and implement innovations such as solar-powered irrigation systems—an environmentally friendly irrigation method that runs on solar energy¹⁹. Kenya has around 4,000 4-K clubs with approximately 200,000 members.

These examples show that agricultural education at the primary and secondary levels does exist in SSA countries. However, due to the complexities of organizing educational programs that address agricultural specifics, there are only a few hundred such schools—far from enough to cover the number of students who could continue into agricultural careers after completing their education²⁰. Challenges include training teachers, developing curricula, and providing necessary materials, facilities, land, equipment, and animals. These schools are difficult to establish in urban areas because they require adjacent land for demonstration farming.

HIGHER AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Higher agricultural education is fairly widespread in SSA countries [Gavrilova 2024b]. However, determining the exact number of agricultural universities is difficult due to the absence of a continental database and varying classifications of educational institutions. Based on open sources, the total number of agricultural institutions—

¹⁵ *Harry Oppenheimer Agricultural High School*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170731090958/http://hoahs.co.za/> (accessed: 11.12.2024)

¹⁶ *Ibadan Grammar School*. <https://ibadangrammarschool.org/> (accessed: 14.12.2024)

¹⁷ *Young Farmers Clubs of Kenya*. <https://ask.co.ke/product-categories/> (accessed: 19.12.2024)

¹⁸ *4-K Clubs of Kenya*. <https://4-kclubs.go.ke/> (accessed: 17.12.2024)

¹⁹ Solar-Powered Irrigation Systems: A clean-energy, low-emission option for irrigation development and modernization. *Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, GACSA*. [https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/52160f7e-6106-41d1-b170-fb230a4e7071/content#:~:text=Solar%2Dpowered%20irrigation%20systems%20\(SPIS,GHG\)%20emissions%20from%20irrigated%20agriculture](https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/52160f7e-6106-41d1-b170-fb230a4e7071/content#:~:text=Solar%2Dpowered%20irrigation%20systems%20(SPIS,GHG)%20emissions%20from%20irrigated%20agriculture) (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²⁰ Hood L. Agriculture training in South Africa badly needs an overhaul. Here are some ideas. *The Conversation*. 08.11.2017. <https://theconversation.com/agriculture-training-in-south-africa-badly-needs-an-overhaul-here-are-some-ideas-85272/> (accessed: 26.12.2024)

universities, faculties, and colleges—can be roughly estimated at 160 to 200. However, to obtain accurate data, the creation of a pan-African register of educational institutions is necessary.

Table 1. **Leading agricultural universities in Africa**

Rank in Africa among agricultural universities	Rank in Africa among universities	Rank in the world	University (country)	Brief description
1	4	430	University of Pretoria (South Africa)	The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences is a leader in the number of researches, innovations, and training of personnel for agribusiness
2	8	805	University of Nairobi (Kenya)	Leading center in East Africa for training and research in plant science and veterinary science.
3	7	1295	Makerere University (Uganda)	Strong programs in sustainable agriculture and environmental management.
4	11	932	University of Ghana (Ghana)	A wide range of programs and research on food security and sustainable development
5	3	422	Stellenbosch University (South Africa)	One of the oldest and most prestigious agricultural science departments in Africa, renowned for its practice-oriented teaching and research programs.
6	13	1006	University of Ibadan (Nigeria)	A leading university in West Africa, renowned for its research in crop, livestock and forestry.
7	34	1681	University of Zambia (Zambia)	Conducts research programs aimed at improving the efficiency of food production and the sustainability of agriculture
8	53	2634	Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania)	Leading center for training specialists for East and Southern Africa, with emphasis on veterinary science, forestry, and environmental management.
9	35	2130	Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)	Research in crop production, livestock production, and agricultural economics
10	6	610	University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)	Training of specialists in agronomy, soil science, and environmental management

Source: TOP 20 Agricultural Universities in Africa: Shaping the Future of Agribusiness. *Agricultural Business insights*. 22.07.2024. <https://agribusinessspace.com/2024/07/22/top-20-agricultural-universities-in-africa-shaping-the-future-of-agribusiness/> (accessed: 12.05.2025); 14131 universities from 183 countries ranked across 246 topics. *EduRank*. 02.03.2025. <https://edurank.org/> (accessed: 12.05.2025)

As demonstrated by Russia's experience in compiling a registry of general and specialized universities, such a measure helps identify not only quantitative but also qualitative imbalances in the higher education system²¹.

African agricultural universities that shape the future of the agrarian sector through innovation and sustainable practices are assessed using rankings that take into account education quality, scientific output, technological implementation, industry partnerships, infrastructure, and alumni success. The rating of the leading and most prominent agricultural universities or universities offering agricultural programs (see *Table 1*) is based on an analysis of academic standards, funding levels, practical training components, global reputation, and impact on local communities.

An analysis of the positions of Africa's leading agricultural universities in global rankings shows that even the best institutions occupy modest positions internationally. Only two universities—Pretoria and Stellenbosch (both in South Africa)—are among the world's top 500, ranking 430th and 422nd, respectively. Other leading agricultural universities on the continent rank significantly lower. Furthermore, major specialized institutions such as the University of Zambia, Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), and Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria) fall outside the global top 1000. This indicates that Africa's agricultural universities, on the whole, lag behind even average global standards in terms of education quality, research activity, and innovation potential.

Although some programs and research areas are strong, African agricultural universities generally hold low positions in international rankings, reflecting their limited capacity to train highly qualified professionals and advance modern agricultural technologies. This confirms that the existing agricultural education system on the continent is failing to meet growing challenges and is in urgent need of large-scale modernization.

The agricultural education programs at the aforementioned institutions in SSA cover areas such as animal husbandry, agronomy, agricultural engineering, soil science, agribusiness, and other agricultural fields, addressing all aspects of agricultural functioning. It can be said that Africa does possess the "educational base" for training specialists in agriculture. However, it is important to note that, according to UN forecasts, Africa's population will reach 2.5 billion by 2050²². The continent is also demographically "young"—60% of its population is under the age of 25. Each year, millions of young people reach the age for higher education. Even assuming that there are around 200 higher education institutions (or faculties) on the continent training agricultural specialists, it is clear that the current capacity of Africa's agricultural education system does not match the scale of its demographic challenges. The system needs significant expansion. African countries must invest more in educational sovereignty.

²¹ Russia wants to create a register of multidisciplinary and specialized universities. *Izvestia*. 12.02.2025. (In Russ.). <https://iz.ru/1837858/2025-02-12/v-rossii-khotiat-sozdat-reestr-raznoprofilnykh-i-spetcializirovannykh-vuzov> (accessed: 12.05.2025)

²² Guengant JP. Africa 2050: African Demography. 2013. P. 20. *IRD*. https://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/divers13-07/010059333.pdf (accessed: 12.05.2025)

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

In addition to long-term education for children and youth at various levels—from primary to higher education— short-term programs focused primarily on adults are also practiced in SSA countries. According to the World Bank, agricultural extension is the process of helping farmers become aware of and adopt improved technologies from any source in order to increase production efficiency, income, and overall well-being²³. The most well-known initiative supporting this process is the system of agricultural extension services.

In Nigeria, advisory services are regulated by the federal government, and extension offices operate in each of the country's 36 states. In 2023, about 7,000 civil servants were employed as extension agents²⁴. The knowledge extension centers are linked to research institutes and agricultural universities. The system is designed to diagnose problems in agriculture, seek solutions, test technologies, and promote the most effective ones for large-scale adoption by farmers.

In Malawi, there are 8 agricultural development divisions that cover 28 districts. In 2023, approximately 1,700 extension workers served around 4 million farmers [Agwu et al. 2023: 14].

In South Africa, agricultural and advisory services are provided in all nine provinces. In 2023, there were 2,700 government consultants, and about 1,500 individuals worked in private advisory offices. However, their coverage of farmers was uneven. In Eastern Cape, one extension agent served 1,000 small-scale producers; in Mpumalanga, the ratio was 1:2,700; and in KwaZulu-Natal, it was 1:723 [Agwu et al. 2023: 26]. Many universities and colleges in South Africa offer a variety of programs of different durations aimed at improving the qualifications of agricultural workers at all levels.

In Kenya, the main provider of agricultural advisory services is the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD)²⁵, which operates across all 47 counties in the country.

In addition to government involvement, some extension services are provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which offer farmers technical support, assistance in obtaining loans, resource provision, and training in specific agricultural production technologies. Their goal is to enhance the professionalism of producers and integrate them into their supplier networks.

In almost all countries, extension centers face similar challenges. The most critical issue is the lack of qualified personnel, resulting in one specialist often being responsible for hundreds of farmers. Another common problem is insufficient funding for these services from both government and private investors. A third obstacle is the poor coordination between numerous service providers, both public and private, which often leads to duplication of efforts and conflicting approaches²⁶. In addition, outdated

²³ Agricultural extension. *World Bank*. <https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/956441468763806805/agricultural-extension> (accessed: 15.12.2024)

²⁴ Nigeria: In-depth Assessment of Extension and Advisory Services. Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project. *Feed the Future*. 2017. <https://digitalgreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nigeria-In-Depth-Assessment.pdf> (accessed: 24.12.2024)

²⁵ *The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development*. <https://kilimo.go.ke/> (accessed: 25.12.2024)

²⁶ Nwobilor I. Digital Technologies and the Right to Education in Africa. *Paradigm Initiative*. 30.08.2023. <https://paradigmhq.org/digital-technologies-and-the-right-to-education-in-africa/> (accessed: 22.11.2024)

extension methods and the lack of digital technology integration reduce the effectiveness of services. The work of advisory centers is also constrained by outdated infrastructure, bureaucracy, and political instability [Sennuga, Alo, Sokoya 2021].

TACKLING THE WORKFORCE CRISIS THROUGH EDUCATION REFORMS AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Despite educational programs of varying levels and intensities, international assistance, and numerous government initiatives, the agricultural sector in SSA countries—as demonstrated above—still fails to ensure an adequate level of food security. Agriculture continues to face systemic problems that limit its productivity.

One major factor is the gap between education and practice. In many institutions, instruction remains theoretical, with methods being taught that are not adapted to local conditions, let alone the altered climate and other evolving circumstances. Graduates often complete their studies without acquiring practical skills for working in agriculture. Another issue is the outdated information still presented as core material in educational institutions [Conn 2017]. The digital transformation of education is proceeding at an inadequate pace, hindering the modernization of the learning process [Gribanova, Ulanova 2022].

Attention should also be paid to the educational gap. Even if students receive basic agricultural education at the primary level, only a small portion have the opportunity to continue it at secondary and higher levels due to various factors. The lack of developed curricula, infrastructure, trained teachers, and modern equipment all stem from insufficient funding and other constraints [Kpaka et al. 2022].

SSA countries need to implement reforms in their education systems [Gavrilova 2021]. As a first step, it would be useful to conduct a comprehensive study to determine what kinds of specialists, and in what numbers, will be in demand in all areas of agricultural production in the coming years. This would involve analyzing the current state of agricultural production by type and quantity, assessing current worker productivity, and developing an optimal agricultural production plan that would eliminate the food deficit. The gap between current and required production levels would help identify the workforce deficit. At the state level, it would then be possible to allocate training quotas among educational institutions and guarantee employment for young graduates upon completion of their studies. The example of the USSR is relevant here, where targeted education programs were widely implemented with guaranteed employment upon graduation.

RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE OF OVERCOMING THE WORKFORCE CRISIS IN THE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX' AND PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION WITH AFRICA

The Russian education system offers examples of how to bridge gaps between educational levels [Tarabrina 2019]. One such example is the model of continuous agribusiness education, which involves training at multiple interconnected levels [Voronchikhina, Filimonyuk 2018]. The first level is preschool education, where children

learn the basics of agriculture through extracurricular activities, observe the cultivation of crops, and learn to care for animals. At higher levels of education—in middle and high school and in specialized secondary and higher institutions—students can study more advanced and modern methods for running efficient and profitable agricultural production using technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Drones, soil, water, and air sensors, and modern agricultural machinery undoubtedly attract the interest of young people and challenge the outdated notion that the sector is backward and farmers are poor [Gavrilova 2024a].

The Russian Federation is currently actively planning to modernize its agricultural education system. A recent study identified a shortage of 200,000 professionals in the agro-industrial complex (AIC)²⁷, prompting the development of a new federal project, “Personnel for the AIC.”²⁸

Initial steps have already been taken to address the shortage of agricultural workers. In 2024, 50 pilot agro-technology classes were launched across eight regions, currently enrolling around 1,000 students. Some regions have independently initiated similar classes. By the end of 2025, nearly 600 agro-technology classes will be operating in 63 regions, with the number expected to reach 18,000 by 2030²⁹. There are plans to further expand agro-technology classes in rural areas. The emerging unified concept of agricultural workforce training will include both secondary and higher education institutions. The proposed Russian model of seamless, continuous agricultural education could serve as a blueprint for developing similar systems in SSA countries.

Joint programs for training qualified agricultural personnel at Russian universities may become a promising direction for future cooperation between the Russian Federation and SSA countries [Morozenskaya, Kalinichenko 2023]. Active work is already underway in this area. For example, in 2023, the Russian chemical holding company PhosAgro—one of the largest fertilizer producers—and the leading Russian agrarian university, the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, signed cooperation agreements with universities in Egypt, Zambia, Uganda, and other countries during the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum³⁰.

The Russian Federation is increasing the number of state-funded university placements for African students: at the first ministerial conference of the Russia–Africa Partnership Forum, it was announced that the number would rise to 4,800 for the 2025/2026 academic year³¹. It is also worth noting that over the past five years, interest among African students

²⁷ Kulistikova T. The shortage of personnel in the agro-industrial complex exceeds 200 thousand people. *Agroinvestor*. 28.01.2025. (In Russ.). <https://www.agroinvestor.ru/markets/news/43666-defitsit-kadrov-v-apk-prevyshaet-200-tysyach-chelovek/> (accessed: 31.01.2025)

²⁸ Federal project “Personnel in the AIC”. National project “Technological support of food security.” *Government of the Russian Federation*. (In Russ.). <http://government.ru/rugovclassifier/924/about/> (accessed: 20.04.2025)

²⁹ Oksana Lut spoke about the priority tasks of developing agricultural science and education. *Agrarian News*. (In Russ.). <https://agronovosti.ru/oksanalut-rasskazala-o-prioritetnyh-zadachah-razvitiya-agrarnoj-nauki-i-obrazovaniya/> (accessed: 01.02.2025)

³⁰ PhosAgro and a number of leading universities in African countries have signed agreements on cooperation in promoting agricultural education. *PHOSAGRO*. 02.08.2023. (In Russ.). <https://phosagro.ru/press/company/fosagro-i-ryad-vedushchikh-vuzov-stran-afriki-podpisali-soglasheniya-o-sotrudnichestve-v-prodvizheni/> (accessed: 18.03.2025)

³¹ The number of budget places for African students is increasing. *Russian Union of Rectors*. 14.11.2024. (In Russ.). <https://rsr-online.ru/news/2024/11/14/chislo-mest-dlya-afrikanskikh-velichivaetsya/> (accessed: 18.03.2025)

in studying agriculture in Russia has grown significantly³². According to a survey conducted by Rosselkhozbank, 17% of students at Russian agricultural universities believe their knowledge would be most useful in African countries, and one in three students (34%) expressed a desire, at varying levels of confidence, to complete an internship in Africa. Among the preferred countries for work, students named South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Uganda³³.

In 2024, RUDN University began training 121 specialists for Ghana at the request of its industrial partner, the Jospong Group of Companies. Ninety-one students will study agronomy and thirty will study ecology. The students plan to return home after graduation to help develop their country's agricultural sector³⁴.

Russian companies such as PhosAgro and Uralchem are integrating educational programs into their operations in Africa. For example, they train farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, fertilizer use, and soil assessment using the online platform Pro Agro Lectorium. These companies are also participating in the AFRILAB project, a network of soil laboratories in 48 African countries, in partnership with the FAO, enabling local specialists to analyze soil and fertilizer quality [Sviridov, Andreeva 2024].

CONCLUSION

Agricultural education in Sub-Saharan African countries is a crucial tool for overcoming the food crisis, youth unemployment, and the technological backwardness of agriculture. Despite the historical role of the agricultural sector, its potential is hindered by systemic problems: climate change, outdated production methods, labor shortages, and low productivity. Youth, who make up the majority of the population, are turning away from agricultural work, perceiving it as “non-prestigious” and low-paying, which exacerbates the labor shortage and reliance on food imports. Solving these problems requires transforming agricultural education into a bridge between traditional practices, modern technologies, and market demands.

An analysis of the current state of Africa's workforce training system reveals a gap between education and practice: curricula are often not adapted to present-day conditions, graduates lack practical skills, and extension services suffer from a shortage of qualified personnel and funding. However, the region already has successful initiatives that demonstrate a path forward. These examples show that education can significantly improve perceptions of agriculture if it combines theory with practice, adapts to local conditions, and introduces learners to the use of modern digital technologies.

The Russian Federation is developing a concept for training agricultural personnel based on a model of continuous agribusiness education. In this context, the development

³² Exotic stronghold: Africans have begun to study agriculture in Russia en masse. *Izvestia*. 04.04.2025. (In Russ.). <https://iz.ru/1864933/kseniia-nabatkina-valeriia-mishina/ekzoticheskij-oplot-afrikancy-stali-massovo-izuchat-selskoe-hozyajstvo-v-rf> (accessed: 12.05.2025)

³³ RSHB. Students about Africa: it is interesting to gain experience, but to work in Russia. *Rosselkhozbank*. 02.08.2023. (In Russ.). <https://www.rshb.ru/news/02082023-000002> (accessed: 12.05.2025)

³⁴ RUDN will train 121 agronomists and an ecologist for Ghana at the request of the industrial partner – the Jospong group of companies. *RUDN*. 17.09.2024. (In Russ.). <https://www.rudn.ru/media/news/international-cooperation/rudn-podgotovit-dlya-gany-121-agronoma-i-ekologa-po-zakazu-industrialnogo-partnera--gruppy-kompaniy-jospong> (accessed: 12.05.2025)

of international cooperation between the Russian Federation and SSA countries in training agricultural specialists is highly relevant. The introduction of Russian continuous agribusiness education programs is possible, provided they are adapted to the conditions of specific African countries. The recommended reform should cover educational programs at all levels, primarily through the introduction of a practice-oriented approach. Education must also be adaptable to changing climatic conditions and market trends and incorporate the latest scientific and technological advancements into the learning process.

The transformation of agricultural education must shift the public perception of agriculture itself. It should be shown that the modern agricultural sector offers opportunities for efficient, profitable, and technologically advanced entrepreneurship that is appealing to people of all ages. The training of agricultural professionals must become an integral part of sustainable development, addressing youth unemployment, low productivity in the agricultural sector, and insufficient food security.

The experience of the Russian Federation—where reforms in agricultural education are already yielding positive results—demonstrates that systemic change is possible even under difficult conditions. For Africa, this is not just an opportunity—it is a necessity that will shape the future of millions of people.

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Научная статья

**АГРАРНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ КАК ВАЖНЫЙ ЭЛЕМЕНТ
СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ
СТРАН СУБСАХАРСКОЙ АФРИКИ**

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Аннотация. Сельское хозяйство стран Субсахарской Африки (ССА) исторически занимает одно из центральных мест в обеспечении занятости населения и продовольственной безопасности данного региона. Однако в современных условиях аграрный сектор сталкивается с проблемой: оставаясь основой экономики, он теряет кадры из-за миграции молодежи в города, оттока работников в сектор услуг и добывающую промышленность. Несмотря на высокий уровень безработицы, молодежь избегает работать в сельском хозяйстве, воспринимая агросектор как низкооплачиваемую и технологически отсталую отрасль. Выход из этой ситуации автор статьи видит в трансформации аграрного образования. Современное сельское хозяйство перестает быть технологически отсталым, оно требует специалистов с навыками в агрономии, биотехнологиях, логистике, управлении и цифровых технологиях. Однако текущая система аграрного образования в ССА не соответствует этим вызовам. Для их преодоления автор предлагает проведение реформы в системе образования с изменением образовательных программ в сторону практико-ориентированного подхода. Примером может служить российская модель непрерывного агробизнес-образования, где обучение начинается в дошкольных кружках и продолжается вплоть до специализированных вузов. Цифровизация образования сделает аграрные профессии привлекательными для молодых людей. Содействовать африканской молодежи получить соответствующее образование может укрепление международного сотрудничества стран ССА с Российской Федерацией. Развитие аграрного образования является одним из ключевых условий обеспечения устойчивого прогресса в странах Африки к югу от Сахары. Его трансформация требует системного подхода, объединяющего государство, бизнес и международных партнеров.

Ключевые слова: Субсахарская Африка, аграрное образование, социально-экономическое развитие, продовольственная безопасность, устойчивое развитие, устойчивое сельское хозяйство, безработица

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-42-57

Для цитирования: Гаврилова Н.Г. Аграрное образование как важный элемент социально-экономического развития стран Субсахарской Африки. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 42–57. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-42-57>

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA (1963–2022)

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of the development of the education system in the Republic of Kenya from 1963 to 2022. In a rapidly changing world and growing social demands, the country's education system has undergone significant changes. The article analyzes the key stages and reforms of education policy in the Republic of Kenya, starting with Independence and the reforms undertaken by the first President, Jomo Kenyatta, and ending with the work of the government of President Uhuru Kenyatta. Special attention is paid to the main achievements in the field of education, such as increasing access to basic education, creating programs to improve the quality of education, and introducing modern technologies into the educational process. The problems and challenges faced by the education system are analyzed, including inequality in access to education for various segments of the population and teaching staff shortages. The arguments are supported by statistical data from the UNESCO UIS database, the World Inequality Database on Education (WISE), reports from the Ministry of Education of Kenya, as well as examples of successful initiatives at the level of public and private institutions. In the article, the author presents a regional review of Kenya's key education policy and legislative framework and of the existing research on the quantity and quality of primary education in the country, highlighting the importance of educational reforms for the socio-economic development of Kenya. The study focused on issues of quality education in the light of the achievements of Education for All (EFA) and Universal primary education (UPE). It analyzed the problems associated with the increase in primary school enrollment and their subsequent impact on the quality of education in Kenya.

Keywords: Kenya, education, Kenyan education, primary and secondary education, Harambee schools

Conflict of interest: The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements: The author acknowledges the helpful comments of the Editorial Board, peer reviewers, and several colleagues from Africa.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-58-74

For citation: Rakhmatullin Sh.D. (2025). Development of the Primary and Secondary Education System in the Republic of Kenya (1963–2022). *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 58–74. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-58-74>

INTRODUCTION

Education in Kenya has been actively studied in Russian historiography since the early 2000s. There are works on the subject of the colonial history of the development of education [Gribanova 2020; Karpov 2023]; works analyzing the impact of economic factors on the quality of education in Kenya based on statistical data [Hideg 2021]; works considering the educational system and healthcare [Gribanova, Ponomareva 2018; Matveeva 2004]; works studying the accessibility of education, as well as initiatives of the local population (*harambee* schools [Matveeva 2013]), reforms aimed at improving the quality of education, introducing new technologies, and updating curricula [Chepkirui 2011]; works updating the concept of “Collective Self-Reliance” (CSR) in view of the formation of a multipolar world [Degterev 2024].

The same situation can be seen in foreign historiography, which is mainly focused on particular aspects of education in Kenya. For example, there are publications on ethnic inequality in education in Kenya [Alwy, Schech 2004]; examining the history of education of nomadic peoples [Carr-Hill, Peart 2005]; analyzing education reform policies and their assessment [Imana 2020]; and addressing the impact of information and communication technologies on the educational process [Kirimi 2014]; as well as works aimed at the analysis of educational reforms, their assessment, and recommendations [Mackatiani, Ariemba, Ngware 2020; Muricho, Chang’ach 2013; Odebero 2007].

The main source of information for this paper was office records and regulations, as well as reports from the Government of the Republic of Kenya and the Ministry of Education of Kenya covering their activities for the period 1963–2022. The documents provide an assessment of existing educational structures, disadvantages, and problems related to the quality and accessibility of education, the development of students’ individual abilities, their preparation for the workforce, and the cultivation in them of civic responsibility. They also offer recommendations on the implementation of reforms aimed at improving the educational system.

TO ELIMINATE THE “THREE ENEMIES OF DEVELOPMENT”: EDUCATION REFORM UNDER PRESIDENT JOMO KENYATTA

The country’s history is very dramatic: indigenous peoples, deprived of their legal rights during the long colonial period, sought to acquire them; most Kenyan children did not have access to education; the colonial authorities in every possible way restricted the rights of indigenous peoples living in their territories. This manifested in racial discrimination, in particular, when allocating the places in schools and funding the construction of educational institutions.

In 1963, immediately after independence, the Kenyan government vowed to eliminate or reduce the scale of the three “enemies of development”: poverty, illiteracy, and disease [Imana 2020; Muricho, Chang’ach 2013]. This program was aimed at providing education and improving the well-being of underprivileged citizens. Overcoming these problems was important for the young republic, which needed skilled labor to improve its economic situation.

At the time of the declaration of its independence on December 12, 1963, Kenya had significant disparities in school infrastructure. According to statistics by the Ministry of Education, there were 5,058 primary schools and 151 secondary schools at that time [Eshiwani 1990]. Education for the indigenous people was mainly initiated by local communities and councils of the indigenous peoples, such as Kamba and Kikuyu, in *Harambee*¹ schools or by church groups and some non-governmental organizations. These groups were the main providers of primary and secondary education for the local citizens before the declaration of independence [Matveeva 2013].

An important feature of the Kenyan education system is its funding by local communities. Such support is evident in the form of *Harambee* schools. The roots of the Kenyan *Harambee* movement go back to colonial times and embody the idea of mutual assistance, the participation of each member of society in the solution of pressing problems and overcoming disparities in access to social services, such as education and health care.

The term is found in the languages of many ethnoses of Kenya: the Luo call it *Konyir Rende*, the Luhya—*Obwasio*, the Kikuyu—*Ngwatio*, the Kamba—*Mwethia*, and the Masai—*Ematonyok*. It is estimated that *Harambee* self-help, especially in rural areas of Kenya, accounted for more than 30% of development investments, a unique phenomenon based on local social institutions [Mwiria 1990; Mbithi, Rasmusson 1977]. This concept existed prior to the emergence of ideological calls for independent development—a Self-Reliance policy that relied on local social institutions and was based on the “bottom-up” approach, functioning with little financial support from the government, and sometimes without it altogether.

The characteristic trait of the Kenyan *Harambee* movement was its highly politicized nature during the early period of independence. Politicians, who sought to win over voters, actively directed their efforts to organize self-help both inside and outside their constituencies. This concept became a national motto and appeared on the national coat of arms on *Madaraka Day*² in 1963, when the first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta (1964–1978), officially proclaimed it a state policy [Mbithi, Rasmusson 1977].

Independence was a pivotal moment in the provision of education, especially for the native population of Kenya. The departure of the colonial administration and the growth of the urban sector led to the beginning of the process of decolonization in the field of education, the emergence of employment opportunities for Kenyans with formal education. A goal was set to guarantee all citizens equal access to education and participation in the governance of the country. Law on Education No. 211 of 1968 was a legal document containing general provisions aimed at eliminating racial discrimination in the educational system and nationalizing the educational process. This was part of the Kenyan Government’s overall policy of creating equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

¹ *Harambee* means “all pull together” in Swahili. Since 1965, a Movement for the construction of secondary «Harambee Schools» (*Harambee Secondary School Movement*) began to develop spontaneously in the country, mainly in economically more developed central Kenya, where residents are engaged in commercial agricultural production.

² *Madaraka Day* (“Internal Self-Rule Day” or “Self-Governance Day”) is a national holiday celebrated annually on June 1 in the Republic of Kenya. On this day in 1963, Kenya gained internal self-rule after being a British colony since 1920.

The commitment of the international community to address this issue played an important role in this. Many reforms were initiated thanks to the first African Conference on the Development of education in 1961 [Gribanova 2020: 72]. African leaders met in Addis Ababa with the joint sponsorship of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and agreed to achieve universal primary education.

In order to implement this initiative, the Kenyan Government launched an educational development plan (1964–1970), which focused on enrollment of children in schools, building new schools, and provision of primary education. President Jomo Kenyatta introduced a free primary education program in 1974 and also abolished fees for the first four years of education.

Nevertheless, the significant increase in school construction, the remuneration of teaching staff, and the development of educational programs fell on the shoulders of *Harambee* activists and parent councils, whose goal was to ensure the welfare of their children. The authorities have shifted monetary expenses to the *Harambee* movement, limiting the scope of public financing. The funds were provided exclusively for the development of public educational institutions in the central regions. All semi-arid and arid regions had very low academic achievement rates. Almost all children attended primary school in Muranga and Kiambu, and primary school enrollment in the Central Province was about 20% of the total population, while in the North Eastern Province it was 8% and in the Rift Valley Province it was only 1% [Mbithi, Rasmusson 1977].

Most of the primary and secondary educational institutions in rural areas were *Harambee* schools, which were established, funded, and managed by local communities. The management of most *Harambee* schools was mainly in the hands of local leaders, primary and secondary school teachers, and clergy. These people formed local committees responsible for the fundraising, hiring teachers, and organization of the educational process. The *Harambee* movement provided more than 40% of total national spending on education development and controlled more than 62% of all secondary schools in the country [Mwiria 1990].

By 1966, the number of community-run and community-funded schools (*Harambee* schools) had increased from 199 to 226. In 1967, the Government began to provide assistance to *Harambee* schools [Matveeva 2004; Matveeva 2013], paying for teachers' training to improve their skills. The Ministry of Education recognized the special role of these schools in its annual report for 1968, which noted: "Without the *Harambee* effort the rate of growth of secondary school places would not have grown as fast as it has"³. By 1973, there were about 600 schools of this type in the country, compared with 381 public schools, according to the Ministry of Education. The report also noted that out of 180,000 secondary school students, about 80,000 attended *Harambee* schools. More than 70% of the schools receiving aid were former *Harambee* schools⁴.

The first reforms in the field of education were based on the 1964 Ominde report⁵. The document noted the importance of the transformation of the national education system from a colonial system to one that would promote national unity and

³ Annual Report. *Ministry of Education*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1968. P.4

⁴ Education celebrates Uhuru. Nairobi: Government Printer. *Jomo Kenyatta Foundation*, 1973. https://openlibrary.org/works/OL7086407W/Education_celebrates_Uhuru (accessed: 26.02.2025)

⁵ The document prepared a commission led by Kenyan economist James Ominde, which contained recommendations for reforming the colonial education system.

development. This report marked the end of the system of racial segregation in education. The Ominde commission has provided scholarships to African students for admission to former European and Asian schools [Imana 2020].

In 1966, the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), predecessor of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), introduced a unified curriculum and unified exams. From 1967 to 1984, Republic of Kenya had a 7-4-2-3 education model, which included seven years of primary education, four years of secondary education, a further two years of higher secondary school or vocational colleges, and university studies, the duration of which depended on the chosen program (most often, from three to five years).

The transition to the next level of education was controlled through examinations. In primary school, students took the exam to get the *East African Certificate of Primary Education (EACPE)*. Students received a certificate of general education after successfully passing the *East African Certificate of Education (EACE)* Examination after 4 years of secondary school or obtained the *East African Advanced Certificate of Education (EAACE)* after 2 years of higher secondary school. Further, on the basis of the rating-point system, students had the opportunity to choose a university for further studying and obtaining a higher education diploma. The East African Certificate of Education replaced the *Cambridge School Certificate (O-Level)*; the East African Certificate of Advanced Education replaced the *Cambridge Certificate of Advanced School Education (A-Level)*.

It is worth noting that the reforms presented in the report of James Ominde have been criticized over time for the Commission's failure to address the main issues related to the expansion and sufficient enrollment of children in public educational institutions. The education system instilled "Western" thinking, forming individualism among school graduates, incompatible with African collectivism.

In order to solve the problem of management in the educational sector, President Jomo Kenyatta transferred the *Harambee* schools under the control of the Ministry of Education in 1969, made them public schools, and provided them with qualified teaching staff. The reform allowed for an increase in the number of public institutions and also solved the problem of underfunding *Harambee* schools. In 1975, the Government established a program to help *Harambee* schools, known as the "*Harambee Secondary Schools Package Program*".

Many of the measures taken have proved ineffective due to insufficient funds for the reform of the vast number of *Harambee* schools. There were concerns that government spending would be increased too much if the process of mass construction of *Harambee* schools, which was expected by local residents, continued (for example, in 1984 there were 1,466 *Harambee* schools, compared with 300 in 1970) [Mwiria 1990].

In order to reduce the desire of local communities to create new educational institutions, the Government has declared it illegal for any group of individuals to build schools without the approval of the Ministry of Education. In addition, local communities had to raise at least 40,000 Kenyan shillings (about \$2,500) before opening a school, which was a huge amount of money at that time. As a result, the large *Harambee* movement lost its power, and the Ministry of Education began the process of nationalization of all educational institutions through reforms. Most of the *Harambee* schools were integrated into the national system in 1974, but unevenly, since it was the

central province that benefited most from these transformations, strengthening the already dense network of schools in the region [Hornsby 2013: 138-140].

Despite the results achieved, during the presidency of J. Kenyatta, education system faced serious challenges, including a shortage of teachers, insufficient funding, and poor-quality education. There have been significant criticisms of the 7-4-2-3 education system. The discussion focused on the curriculum, which lacked flexibility and the ability to adapt to the changing needs of citizens and the labor market [Mackatiani, Ariemba, Ngware 2020].

For the most part, the curriculum remained Eurocentric. Obviously, the Ominde Commission, established by the Kenyan Government to promote the decolonization of education immediately after independence, provided good recommendations. However, very little has changed in terms of the curriculum, educational structure, and language of instruction.

The reforms did not take into account the development of rural areas, where the vast majority of Kenyans lived—a critical mistake that was repeated in subsequent years. Many students could not complete the transition from elementary school to secondary school due to a lack of parental finances, and unemployment increased due to the fact that the labor market could not accept even those who graduated from high school.

In 1976, the situation was analyzed in a report by the Commission on Education of Peter Joseph Gachathi (the Gachathi report). The issue of unemployment was raised in it: “One of the largest problems confronting the country is that of unemployment. This problem is aggravated by the annual output of school-leavers whose numbers continue to swell following the enormous expansion of the education system in the first ten years of independence”⁶. These challenges became apparent in the late 1980s, which led to the need for further reforms.

EDUCATION REFORMS UNDER PRESIDENT DANIEL ARAP MOI: FROM THE “BOTTOM-UP” PROCESS TOWARDS A “TOP-DOWN” POLICY

The next President of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi (1978–2002), noticed that he would follow in the footsteps of J. Kenyatta, implementing the *Fuata Nyayo*⁷ policy. Nevertheless, “African socialism” and its basic principles underwent revision, which also affected the education sector. Moi’s policy had shifted towards authoritarianism and neoliberal reforms. This resulted in a formal expansion of the access to education but also in a decline in quality, the politicization of schools, and rising inequality. President Moi continued to develop the primary and secondary education program; however, the changes were not so significant. *Harambee* schools’ development projects became less important. The nature of politics had undergone a transformation from a “bottom-up” process to a “top-down” process. In 1970–1980, the greater need for educational institutions due to the increase in population did not solve the problem of the funding of public schools. In 1980–2000, key policy reforms were developed and implemented,

⁶ Report of the National Committee on educational objectives (Gachathi Report). Government Printer. *Ministry of Education*. 1976. P. 34. <https://academia-ke.org/library/download/report-of-the-national-committee-on-educational-objectives-and-policies-the-gachathi-report-1976/> (accessed: 07.03.2025)

⁷ From Swahili *Fuata Nyayo* —“following someone’s footsteps.”

which can be traced in the reports of Mackay⁸ in 1981, Kamuge⁹ in 1988, and Koech¹⁰ in 1999.

A notable reform was the establishment in 1980 of *The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC)* to organize and monitor the conduct of exams in primary, secondary, and some higher education institutions. The Council was necessary to ensure their quality and fairness, and to control the internal certification process. Kenya started issuing official certificates that were recognized at home and abroad, and introduced a unified database of results.

In 1981, the presidential commission for the establishment of the second national University in Kenya (in accordance with the Mackay report) recommended changing the educational model and switching to the 8-4-4 system: eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education, and four years of higher education. This new educational system was adopted in 1985. It was mainly aimed at developing students' basic skills for their future jobs and was supposed to solve the problem of high unemployment. More emphasis was placed on the literacy and numeracy skills, as well as on streamlining exams and raising educational standards and trust in the system.

The introduction of the 8-4-4 educational system also made economic sense. The fact is that Western countries and international organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as donor countries, provided financial support for educational reforms in developing countries, including Kenya. This support was often accompanied by recommendations for reforming the educational system in accordance with the Western standards. In the case of the 8-4-4 model, Kenya took the American model of education as a basis and adapted it to local realities in order to receive stable financial support [Muricho, Chang'ach 2013].

At the same time, the new 8-4-4 system was described as complex and did not take into account the cultural traits of Kenyans. It was characterized by a high degree of exam difficulty. The inability to score the required number of points for admission to universities and mid-level colleges meant that students would not be able to study in the fields they dreamed of, leaving them in a status of unemployed.

In the years following the adoption of this system, school enrollment rates remained high, but dropout rates remained equally high: 45.5% of the students who entered school in 1979 left school in their fifth year of primary school. Due to staff shortages, the teacher-pupil ratio dropped significantly, from 1:33 to almost 1:40 [Somerset 2007]. The extension of primary school education by one year, from 7 to 8 years, required the construction of 13,370 new classrooms and additional equipment for technical and agricultural disciplines (laboratories, workshops, etc.) [Charton 2021].

⁸ Report of presidential working party on the establishment of second university (Mackay Report). Government Printer. *Ministry of education*. 1981. <http://libraryir.parliament.go.ke/items/066f6f43-8141-4e78-b257-b0fd51eef724> (accessed: 26.02.2025)

⁹ The presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond (the Kamunge Commission). Government printer. *Ministry of Education*. 1988. <https://academia-ke.org/library/download/report-of-the-presidential-working-party-on-education-and-manpower-training-for-the-next-decade-and-beyond-kamunge-report-march-1988/> (accessed: 26.02.2025)

¹⁰ Report of the inquiry into the education system of Kenya (*TI QET*) (Koech report). Government Printer. *Ministry of Education*. 1999. <https://uoeldkenya.wordpress.com/2017/05/17/koech-report-recommendations-19992000/> (accessed: 26.02.2025)

The costs were mostly paid by the parents due to the resumption of additional fees and the proliferation of the *Harambee* policy for the construction of new classrooms. Since 1983, educational institutions had stopped providing school supplies, and parents were officially responsible for equipment of children and classrooms. The emphasis on basic education since 1979, to the detriment of other levels, corresponded to the liberal approach of international organizations and the emergence of the first plans for structural adjustment [Charton 2021].

In 1988, a report by the Kamunge Education Commission recommended reducing the number of exam subjects due to the high workload on students under the new 8-4-4 model. Despite the innovations, many parents of students could not afford to pay for their children's education: formally, school education was free, but the high costs of uniforms, textbooks, accommodation, and transportation put a burden on the family budget, which was reflected in the low level of secondary school enrollment.

An important date was November 20, 1989, when the United Nations Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹¹. Article 28 of the Convention states that every child has the right to education, and primary school education should be compulsory and free for all. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtien in 1990, addressed the issue of providing quality education and developed strategies to address this issue. The Republic of Kenya was recognized as one of the leading countries in the field of education¹².

Kenya was one of the first countries in Africa to adopt international standards in the field of education and to ratify some important documents, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of July 11, 1990¹³. The Kenyan Parliament passed the Children Act in 2001. Section 7 (1) of this Act states that every child has the right to education, which is the responsibility of the Government and parents¹⁴. Unlike many countries that focus only on academic education, Kenya has introduced practical subjects (agriculture, crafts) into the school curriculum, which corresponded to the slogan "*Education for Self-Reliance*."

The concept of "Collective Self-Reliance" gained widespread popularity in the 1960s and 1980s in the context of national development strategies of several countries (primarily the Arusha Declaration of 1967 by J. Nyerere, 70% of the text of which is taken up by the section "Self-Reliance," presented in the format of worldly wisdom¹⁵). While the 1967 Arusha Declaration observed a reserved and negative attitude towards the institution of aid due to its conditionality, as the discourse evolved at the global level, transforming it into the agenda of the New International Economic Order, perceptions

¹¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (adopted by the Resolution 44/25). *UN*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child> (accessed: 02.02.2025)

¹² World declaration on education for all Meeting basic learning needs, 1990. *UNESCO*. https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/declarations/pdf/jomtien.pdf (accessed: 06.02.2025)

¹³ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990. *African Union*. 1990. <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-rights-and-welfare-child> (accessed: 25.03.2025)

¹⁴ The Children Act, 2001 (No. 8 of 2001). Government Printer. *Ministry of Education*. 2001. <https://www.socialprotection.go.ke/sites/default/files/Downloads/Children-Act-2001.pdf> (accessed: 26.02.2025)

¹⁵ *The Arusha Declaration*. 05.02.1967. https://www.maktaba.org/download/file/579/The_arusha_declaration_Julius_kambarage_nyerere.pdf (accessed: 08.05.2025)

changed. In the 1980s, it was stated that developed countries should provide aid to developing countries, which, of course, the former could not agree to [Degterev 2024].

The next decade (1990–2000) was the most difficult period for the country, as the economic crisis affected the financing of education. Shortly before that, in 1988, under pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, Kenya was forced to introduce tuition fees (cost-sharing). Many children stopped going to school between 1992 and 1994. The total number of students was decreased. The share of drop-outs increased from 36% in 1989 to 47% in 1999 [Fredriksen 2023; Inyega 2021].

One of the factors that led to a decrease in the quality of education was the introduction of a cost-sharing system in primary and secondary schools. Between 1994 and 1997, the average annual cost to elementary school for families increased from \$12 to \$22. As a result, the most economically vulnerable segments of the population were deprived of access to education. For those who were able to complete primary education, secondary education opportunities continued to decline, and the percentage of transition from primary to secondary education dropped from 49% to 40% between 1992 and 1999 [Charton 2021]. The Government's contribution under this system was mainly limited to paying teachers' salaries and maintaining school infrastructure, while parents were required to provide school uniforms, stationery, supplies, and books, as well as make financial contributions.

Shortly before the 1997 general election, amid extreme political tension and violent protests and strikes at 50 schools (including the prestigious Alliance Girls High School), a commission was appointed to review the education reform.

In 1999, President D. Moi initiated a new commission to create a *Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET)*. It became obvious that the 8-4-4 education system was not working as expected when it was created. The main complaints concerned access, quality, and meeting the needs of Kenyans in the labor market, many of whom remained unemployed even after completion of higher education. The Koech Commission report (1999) concluded that, like most other developing countries, Kenya faces the challenge of providing quality education to all Kenyans against a backdrop of a growing population and dwindling resources [Odebero, Ndiku 2007]. It should be noted that after the election of President Moi, he abandoned the idea of a total revision of educational policy under the pretext of the high cost of reform.

It is also worth noting that the Education Act of 1968, which was in force at that time, was outdated because it did not take into account the current state of affairs of Kenyan society in obtaining education. In 2001, the Children Act (Children Act No. 8, 2001) was adopted, which prohibited discrimination in access to education and banned child labor. However, the law did not address the issues of early childhood care, education for people with special needs, and the role of parent associations and committees. A comprehensive law on basic education, which would take into account these important needs of society, was adopted only in 2013.

Although the recommendations made by the Government's education reform commissions had led to inconsistent results, the Kenyan education system continued to expand between 1973 and 2002, with the number of students at both primary and secondary levels more than doubling (see *Figure 1*). During this period, the number of teachers in primary schools also doubled, and the number of secondary school teachers

tripled. Today, the annual graduation rate of teachers exceeds the number of available vacancies. In 2023–2024, the Kenyan Ministry of Education announced a freeze on the mass recruitment of teachers due to lack of funds [Chepkirui 2011]. By 2002, 49.3% of primary and 47.5% of secondary school students were girls, compared with 34.2% and 31.7%, respectively, in the period before independence [Mackatiani, Ariemba 2020; Fredriksen 2023].

However, gender equality has not been achieved at the university level. The share of female students increased from only 27% in 1992 to 37% in 2002. Another persistent problem was the low rate of transition from elementary to secondary school. The number of students in the 9th grade (1st grade of secondary school) was only 40% of the number of students in the 8th grade (standard 8th grade) of primary school¹⁶.

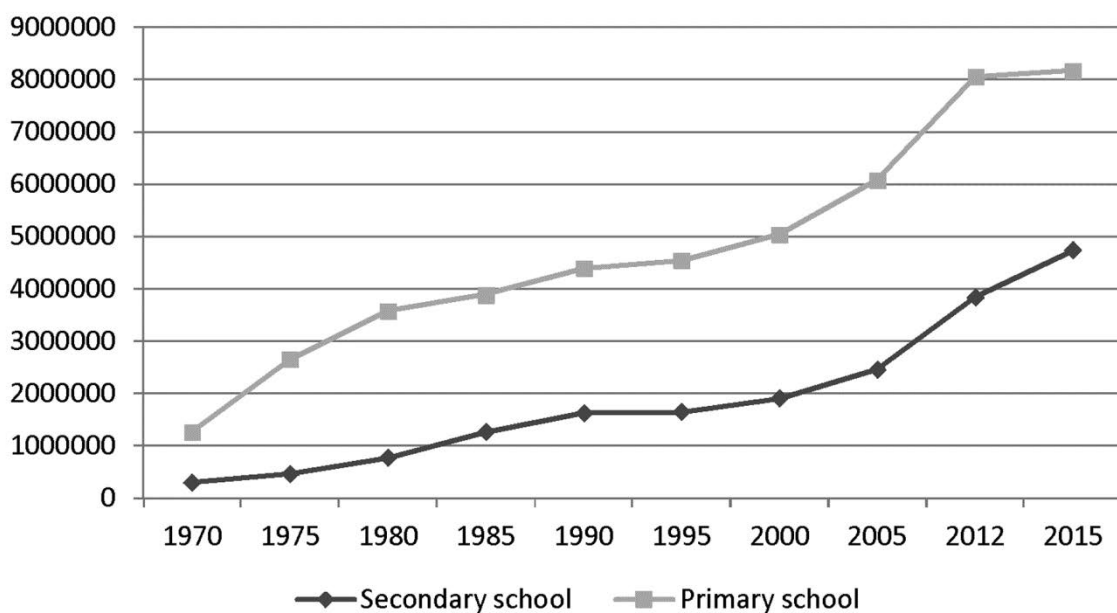


Fig. 1. Number of primary and secondary school students in Kenya, 1970–2015.

Source: compiled by the author based on the materials of the Basic Education Statistical Booklet 2020. Republic of Kenya Ministry of Education. <https://www.education.go.ke/> (accessed: 12.02.2025)

RISING STUDENT NUMBERS AND DECREASE IN TEACHING STAFF: THE CHALLENGES OF PRESIDENT MWAI KIBAKI'S EDUCATION POLICY

In 2003, the administration of President Mwai Kibaki (2003–2013) came to power. This period became an important stage in the development of Kenya's education system. One of the reforms undertaken by the new administration was the abolition of primary school fees in 2003 (although additional fees remained, for example, for uniforms, textbooks, and meals). After that, more than a million students enrolled in primary schools¹⁷. Unfortunately, however, there was no proportional increase in either the number of schools or the number of teachers [Inyega et al. 2021]. According to national

¹⁶ Continental report of the Education in Africa: Placing equity at the heart of policy. UNESCO. 2023. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384479> (accessed: 09.04.2025)

¹⁷ Kenya Facts and Figures, 2012. Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). 2012. <http://knbs.or.ke/downloads/pdf/Kenyafacts2012.pdf> (accessed: 25.03.2025)

statistics, in 2011, the school enrollment rate in Kenya reached 95.7%. The number of students enrolled in the first grade of primary school increased by 30.6% between 2003 and 2010, which led to an increase in the total number of primary school students from 7.2 million to 9.4 million¹⁸.

At the request of international financial organizations (the IMF and the World Bank), the government was forced to cut spending on education, which led to massive layoffs of teachers. By 2009, the number of teachers had decreased, and strikes by teaching staff began in the country under the slogans of ensuring cash payments. The shortage of teachers in the country in 2010 amounted to 66 thousand people. Between 2002 and 2009, the number of students per qualified teacher in primary schools increased from 34 to 52; in secondary schools, from 18 to 31¹⁹.

The increase in the number of students in both primary and secondary schools raised serious concerns about the Kenyan school system's ability to maintain an acceptable level of education. To address the escalating problem, the Government began to allocate one-time grants to local communities as development funds that could be used in accordance with local needs. A significant part of these funds was spent on the improvement of Harambee's local schools.

In 2003, the Kibaki Administration began to develop a comprehensive reform—the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP). Its fundamental framework was outlined in a 2005 document by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)²⁰. The program was aimed at increasing access and equality, as well as improvement the quality of education in several key areas: education and training, human resource management, teacher training, information and communication technology, research and development, finance, and the legal framework [Imana 2020].

The KESSP program is a sector-wide plan for improving education with detailed goals and new governance structures based on greater decentralization of responsibility throughout the education system, along with systematic monitoring and evaluation. It also provides estimated costs, including the difference between the costs and the expected government revenues, which international donors were expected to cover. Initially, donors were enthusiastic, but concerns about corruption and mismanagement of funds led the World Bank and other donors to suspend support for KESSP in 2009.

In 2008, Kenya adopted the Kenya Vision 2030 long-term strategy, which took into account the country's national development plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4)²¹ program. One of its main ambitious goals was to ensure 100% coverage of basic education and to close the gender gap (especially in the northern and coastal

¹⁸ Economic survey, 2011. Nairobi: *Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS)*. 2011. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/2011-economic-survey/> (accessed: 11.04.2025)

¹⁹ Draft progress in attainment of MDGs and way forward towards achieving MDGs by 2015 in Kenya. *Government of Kenya (GoK) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*. 2010. <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/kenyadraftmdgreport2010.pdf> (accessed: 11.04.2025)

²⁰ Sessional paper no. 1 of 2005: A policy framework for education, training and research, on meeting the challenges of education, training and research in Kenya in the 21st century. *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology*, 2005. <https://repository.kippra.or.ke/items/e410c8e8-3806-4f9d-a80c-7c8b10306c10> (accessed: 06.02.2025)

²¹ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interrelated goals developed in 2015 by the UN General Assembly as a “blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all.” SDG-4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

regions). In accordance with the national Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) plan, it was planned to introduce digital learning (provide schools with tablets, computers, and access to online platforms) as well as expand the network of technical colleges by 2025 and increase the proportion of students in STEM classes (specialized groups for the study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

It is also worth noting that the new Constitution, which was adopted in 2010²², granted the right to free compulsory eight-year education, with special attention to minorities, the disabled, and other marginalized groups. Over the past decade, the rise in the duration of schooling was accompanied by a rapid increase in the number of students receiving primary education. The school enrollment rate in 2002 was 62%, which was lower than the average for low-income countries and Sub-Saharan Africa (66% and 63%, respectively). However, by 2009, the school enrollment rate in Kenya had increased to 82%, which was higher than the average for low-income countries and sub-Saharan Africa (81% and 76%, respectively) [Nikolay, Prizzon, Hine 2014].

According to national statistics, in 2011, the school enrollment rate in Kenya was 95.7%²³. The number of first grade (first year of primary school) students increased by 30.6% between 2003 and 2010, as part of the rise in the total number of primary school students from 7.2 million to 9.4 million as a result of the Free Primary Education policy (FPE) and lower financial barriers to entry²⁴.

THE LIGHT AND SHADOWS OF DIGITAL LITERACY: PRESIDENT UHURU KENYATTA'S EDUCATION POLICY

Uhuru Kenyatta, the President of Kenya in 2013–2022, prioritized the primary to secondary school transition program. The president sought to ensure equal learning opportunities regardless of socio-economic status. He also spearheaded digital literacy initiatives by establishment information and communication technology (ICT) labs and centers to integrate Kenyan children in the global digital revolution, in line with the long-term Kenya Vision 2030 initiative. He declared: “Our vision and goal were to ensure that every Kenyan child had equal opportunities.”²⁵

Notable educational policy measures include a project to provide laptops or tablets to first-grade elementary school students across the country and the Basic Education Act (2013). The aim of the project was to promote digital literacy and prepare young students for the changing conditions of the modern world.

However, this project was very expensive. In 2013, the Kenyan government allocated about \$665 million for the project, which angered various educators and school

²² The constitution of Kenya, 2010. *National Council for Law Reporting*. http://parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2023-03/The_Constitution_of_Kenya_2010.pdf (accessed: 09.02.2025)

²³ Continental report of the Education in Africa: Placing equity at the heart of policy. *UNESCO*. 2023. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384479> (accessed: 09.04.2025)

²⁴ The education task force on the realignment of the education sector to the constitution of Kenya 2010: Towards a globally competitive quality education for sustainable development. Government Printer. *Ministry of Education*. 2012. <https://vision2030.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Re-Alignment-Education-Sector..pdf> (accessed: 23.03.2025)

²⁵ Uhuru brags about his achievements as President of Kenya. *The Kenya Times*. 14.07.2022. <https://thekenyatimes.com/latest-kenya-times-news/uhuru-brags-about-his-achievements-as-president-of-kenya/> (accessed: 25.03.2025)

associations²⁶. In addition to the high cost of the project, the problem with its implementation was that few teachers and students were fully aware of how to use computers and how to work with all the functionality of new technologies. The government lacked qualified personnel to implement the program, and schools sometimes lacked classrooms and even sockets for connecting to the power grid.

The National Education Development Plan, published by the Kenyan Ministry of Education in 2014, highlighted regional disparities in the provision of education, gender inequality, and enrollment in primary and secondary education. Female literacy rates in Kenya were showing significant regional differences. For example, in large cities such as Nairobi, the female literacy rate reached about 90%. However, in poorer and more remote northern areas such as Mandera, Turkana, and Wajir, this figure was significantly lower, amounting to less than 10%²⁷.

It was revealed that in arid and semi-arid areas, in informal urban settlements, inequality in school funding and lack of developed infrastructure are particularly visible. The increase in the number of students in primary schools was not accompanied by a rise in the number of staff and infrastructure in some regions, which led to overcrowding in schools significantly exceeding the national average [Mackatiani, Ariemba, Ngware 2020]. In 2014, the pupil–teacher ratio in Kenyan public primary schools was 34.5:1. However, in some districts the ratio was much higher—60 and even 70 students per teacher. In public secondary schools, it was only 20.2:1²⁸.

The second component of the national reform was the planned shift of the educational cycle in the country from 8 years of primary school and 4 years of secondary school (cycle 8-4) to 2 years of preschool education, 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 3 years of senior secondary school, as well as 3 years of higher education (minimum), the cycle: 2-6-3-3-3.

One of the goals of this change is to provide students with more opportunities to choose a specialization at the early stages of school education and to improve training methods in the field of technical and vocational education (TVET). This concept was developed by the Ministry of Education in an attempt to provide a curriculum that allows for specialization in order to combat rising unemployment in Kenya, which rose from 8.9% in 2008 to 9.3% in 2019²⁹.

In 2017, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology Fred Matiangi launched an active campaign called *Tupeleke Watoto Shule* (“Let’s take our children to school”). The aim of this initiative was to ensure a 100% transition of students from primary school to secondary school. This initiative was launched as part of a global campaign to provide all children with 12 years of basic education. Under the original 8-4-

²⁶ Kenya giving laptops to all first-graders amid controversy. *The Christian Science Monitor*. 18.06.2013. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2013/0618/Kenya-giving-laptops-to-all-first-graders-amid-controversy> (accessed: 25.03.2025)

²⁷ National education sector plan. Volume one: Basic education programme rationale and approach. Government Printer, *Ministry of Education*. 2015.

²⁸ Basic education statistical booklet. Nairobi: *Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development*. 2014. <https://kicd.ac.ke/curriculum-reform/basic-education-statistical-booklet/> (accessed: 26.03.2025)

²⁹ Basic education curriculum framework. *Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development*. 2017 <https://kicd.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CURRICULUMFRAMEWORK.pdf> (accessed: 21.03.2025)

4 system, Kenya's secondary schools were divided into four territorial groups: national, overseas, district, and regional.

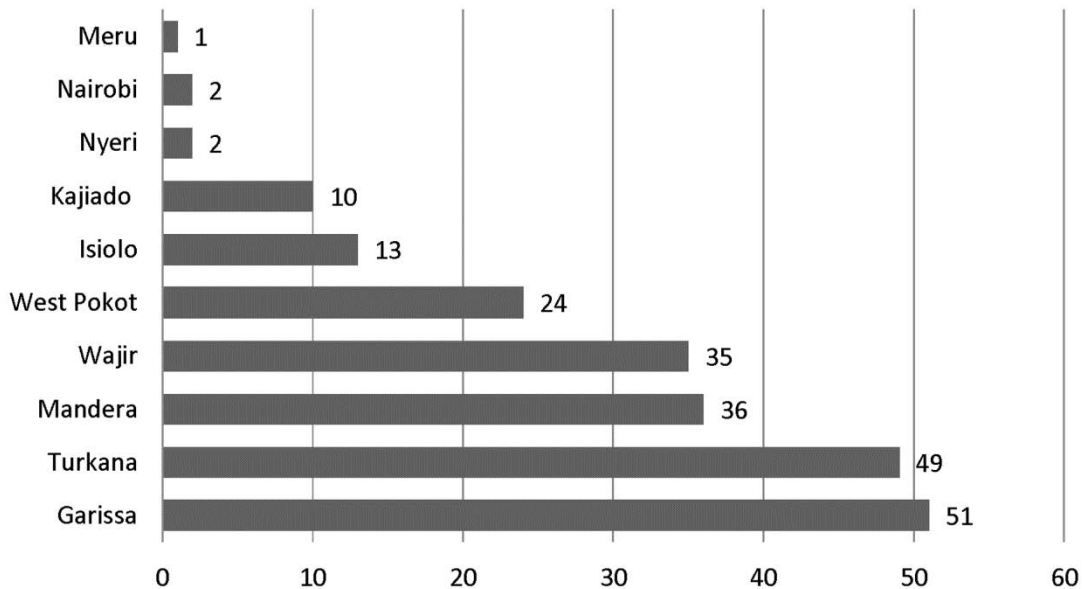


Fig. 2. **Children who do not attend an educational institution, by region in 2022 (%)**.

Source: compiled by the author based on materials from the World Inequality Database on Education. Kenya. UNESCO UIS (WISE). <https://education-inequalities.org/countries/kenya> (accessed: 25.03.2025)

Kenya, like many other countries, faced the problem of COVID-19. To prevent the spread of the disease in educational institutions, the Kenyan Government closed all schools and higher education institutions. On-site education was temporarily replaced by distance learning. However, due to the unavailability of technology and fast and reliable Internet access, students in rural areas and from low-income families were left out of education. Prolonged school closures led to increased child labor, school dropouts, child pregnancies, and early marriage. All this was reflected in the low level of student transition from primary to secondary school, which undermined the new strategies already developed in the Kenyan education sector aimed at increasing access to education.

Kenya implemented large-scale education reforms, including the transition to the 2-6-3-3-3 system and teacher retraining. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) facilitated a phased rollout, but the process required more time than anticipated.

In 2023, the new education model was officially launched. However, school administrations faced a number of problems: the allocation and transition of lower grades to secondary school (and, consequently, the demand for teaching staff in each individual school), the list of potential career paths and specialized classes for each senior secondary school, staffing of the schools, and the search for funding. The Ministry of Education is currently facing all these challenges.

CONCLUSION

Over time, a number of curriculum reforms have been implemented in Kenya in response to the needs of the labor market, and curricula have been adjusted in accordance

with local and international legal documents. It can be argued that the Kenyan curriculum is becoming more inclusive and practice-oriented and aimed at the development of vocational skills. This commitment to development is reflected in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4), and the Kenya Vision 2030 program. Kenya has provided broad access to education at the primary and secondary levels. Special attention has been paid to information and communication technologies (ICT) in training programs. Major Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs were launched, and the proportion of students in STEM classes (specialized groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) was increased in accordance with the programs of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4), as well as the Kenya Vision 2030.

Kenya adopted a number of important legal documents in the field of education: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (July 30, 1990), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (July 11, 1990), the Children Act of 2001, the provisions on education in the Constitution of 2010, and the Education Act of 2013.

Since 2002, free primary education has been introduced, and since 2008, secondary education has been free. Finally, mathematics, science, and vocational subjects have been introduced in schools, which proves that recent educational reforms are aimed at developing innovation in education in line with the program Kenya Vision 2030.

However, it was not always taken into account how these initiatives would be implemented in the future. The fundamental disadvantage of the education reform process in Kenya was the lack of proper involvement of the key stakeholders—parents, teachers, and students—in the development of educational policy. This has led to the low effectiveness of some reforms, and, in some cases, to an aggravation of problems: increased unemployment among graduates and inefficient allocation of educational resources.

Despite the efforts of various Commissions to find solutions to education problems, the country still faces serious challenges in terms of the quality, equality, and accessibility of educational services. Many of the recommendations made by the Commissions were either not implemented or partially implemented.

The education reforms in Kenya initiated in 2019–2020 largely reflect modern realities and take into account the specifics of the national education system. Initiatives over the past decade, including the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) and the Kenya Vision 2030, have shown effectiveness in addressing these challenges. Currently, the focus is shifting from quantitative indicators towards improving the quality of education, enhanced teacher training, an increase in the number of specialized classes, and the development of infrastructure programs.

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**РАЗВИТИЕ СИСТЕМЫ НАЧАЛЬНОГО И СРЕДНЕГО ОБЩЕГО
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КЕНИЯ
(1963–2022 гг.)**

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию процесса развития образования в Республике Кения с 1963 г. по 2022 г., то есть с момента обретения независимости до настоящего времени. В рассматриваемый период система образования страны претерпела значительные изменения. В работе анализируются ключевые этапы реформы образовательной политики, начиная с предпринятых первым президентом Джомо Кениаты, заканчивая работой правительства президента Ухуру Кениаты. Особое внимание уделяется основным достижениям в сфере образования, таким как увеличение доступа к базовому образованию, создание программ по улучшению качества обучения, внедрение современных технологий в учебный процесс. Рассматриваются проблемы и вызовы, с которыми сталкивается система образования, в том числе неравенство в доступе к обучению для различных слоев населения, нехватка кадровых ресурсов. Аргументы подкреплены данными статистического института ЮНЕСКО, Всемирной базы данных о неравенстве в сфере образования (*World Inequality Database on Education, WISE*), отчетов Министерства образования Кении, а также примерами успешных инициатив на уровне государственных и частных учреждений. Был проведен региональный обзор основных направлений политики в области образования и законодательной базы Кении, а также проанализированы существующие исследования о количестве и качестве начального образования в стране. Автор подчеркивает важность образовательных реформ для социально-экономического развития Кении. Исследование было сосредоточено на вопросах качественного образования в свете программы «Образования для всех» (ОДВ) и всеобщего начального образования (ВНО). В работе проанализированы проблемы, связанные с увеличением числа учащихся в начальных школах, и их последующее воздействие на качество образования в Кении.

Ключевые слова: Кения, образование, кенийское образование, начальное и среднее образование, школы *харамбее*

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Благодарности. Автор выражает признательность редакционной коллегии, рецензентам, а также нескольким коллегам из Африки за полезные комментарии.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-58-74

Для цитирования: Рахматуллин Ш.Д. Развитие системы начального и среднего общего образования в Республике Кения (1963–2022 гг.). *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 58–74. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-58-74>

RUSSIA – AFRICA

Research article

RAFU'S NETWORK DIPLOMACY: CULTIVATING THE BRICS SPIRIT IN EDUCATION

© 2025 M.N. Zalyvskiy, T.C. de Oliveira Bunder

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Abstract. The article examines the role of network diplomacy in the emerging multipolar international system using the example of the Russian-African Network University (RAFU) during the period of its coordination by Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU) in 2023–2025. The authors argue that the modern world is characterized by the impact of two interrelated but multidirectional forces—interdependence and fragmentation—affecting the sphere of international relations and diplomacy. In their article, the Russian and Brazilian researchers present a theoretical overview of the concept of network diplomacy, focusing on its importance for the development of cooperation in science, culture, and education. Despite the lack of hierarchy and stable financing, non-governmental networks, according to the authors, have a high potential for forming sustainable partnerships and an atmosphere of trust. The very emergence of RAFU is, according to the authors, the direct consequence and manifestation of the rise of Russian-African relations to a new level. RAFU's network activity during the period under review reveals its contribution to supporting Russia's diplomatic efforts aimed at strengthening Russian-African relations. RAFU appears as an important institution that promotes mutually beneficial cooperation in higher education. The authors analyze the compliance of the activities of the Russian-African Network University with the “BRICS spirit” and the Concept of Russian Foreign Policy, emphasizing the university's commitment to the principles of equal cooperation, sovereignty, inter-civilizational dialogue, and mutual respect. An analysis of the first years of the network university's activity allows the authors to conclude that it functions as an integration network mechanism for African and Russian higher education institutions as well as scientific and technological institutions and promotes information exchange aimed at mutual expansion of socio-economic and educational cooperation.

Keywords: Russian-African relations, network diplomacy, higher education, educational diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, BRICS Spirit, RAFU (Russian-African Network University)

Conflict of interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contributions: joint research.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-75-91

For citation: Zalyvskiy M.N., de Oliveira Bunder T.C. (2025). RAFU's Network Diplomacy: Cultivating the BRICS Spirit in Education. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-75-91>

INTRODUCTION

The current international system is experiencing a period of conflicting dynamics, characterized simultaneously by two interacting forces, interdependence and fragmentation, shaping the conduct of international relations and diplomacy. On the one hand, the profound integration of the global market, the emergence of different international actors (e.g., transnational companies, international organizations, and epistemic communities)—marking a diffusion of diplomatic activities, traditional and informal—and the fast-paced informational era (marked by simultaneity) summarize the interdependence of its actors, structurally altering communications and trade [Morozov, 2022; Heine, 2013].

Moreover, as new global and transnational challenges emerge (e.g., pandemics, climate change, AI development and its unknown consequences, refugees, and others), the necessity for joint actions and interdependence is increasing significantly, demanding close cooperation and new approaches to mitigate these problems.

On the other hand, the modifications in the world order, majorly demonstrated by the failure of the liberal institutions (i.e., the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization) [Mearsheimer 2019] and the emergence of relevant new players and the current multipolarity (emphasized by the BRICS+ new governance model) [Konkin 2017], have intensified fragmentary tendencies. Above all, caused by the attempts of the Western powers engaged in reasserting their power by force and coercion (i.e., unilateral and arbitrary sanctions or pressuring other countries in international organizations).

In this context, Euro-Atlantic attempts to isolate Russia have failed miserably. This outcome stems not only from the increasing autonomy and agency of the Global South but also from Russia's long-standing partnerships and stable, mutual relationships across the region. For instance, the refusal of many African nations to blindly align with the economic war against Russia underscores their growing independence [Chipaike, Knowledge, 2018], demonstrating a capacity to act based on their strategic interests rather than external dictates¹.

Nonetheless, despite the incremental socio-economic improvements, it is very difficult for African countries to resist the external pressure of the former metropolises, the reason for which largely lies in the disparities in access to education and its quality.

¹ Korybko A. Western pressure fails to waver African states' determination. *Global Times*. 29.07.2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202307/1295280.shtml> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

Many of them are still struggling to ensure basic literacy, numeracy, and school completion at the primary and secondary level². Additionally, low higher education enrollment, limited vocational training opportunities, and a mismatch between acquired skills and labor market demands further hinder socio-economic development and the potential for long-term growth.³

To alleviate these problems, the Russian-African Network University (RAFU) Consortium was created, which operates within the framework of this network structure and focuses on educational, cultural, technological, and scientific cooperation. It develops partnerships and unites key actors from Russia and the countries of the African continent in the field of higher education.

RAFU emerged in the context of the new heights reached in Russian-African relations, symbolized by the 2019 First Russia-Africa Summit. The first seeds of the consortium were planted during the summit, which identified scientific, technical, and informational cooperation⁴ as key priorities for strengthening the partnership, highlighting the need for more joint research projects and the organization of international conferences to foster scientific and cultural exchanges.

The formal establishment of the organization two years later, in 2021, reflects the evolution of Russian-African commitments toward achieving new levels of partnership. Moreover, Professor Alexey Maslov⁵, director of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University, highlights in an interview with Sputnik that RAFU builds on a longstanding tradition of educational cooperation dating back to the Soviet era. He emphasizes that the consortium extends beyond academic partnerships, encompassing joint scientific research and advanced laboratories in fields such as space technology, energy, and agriculture.

Currently, RAFU includes 41 organizations across 14 African countries (see *Fig. 1* and *Annex 1*) and 84 Russian scientific and educational institutions, with further expansion underway. The Peter the Great Polytechnic University of St. Petersburg (SPbPU) manages its operations.

Dmitri Arsenyev, SPbPU's vice-rector, states that RAFU aims to reach as many African nations as possible to support local higher education systems⁶. The consortium is also committed to launching joint scientific projects, with industrial partners playing an active role. RAFU's framework provides opportunities to address education and research and development challenges in Africa. A key focus is training highly qualified personnel through modern technical and professional methods, bridging the skills gap in African

² DataBank. Education Statistics – All Indicators. *World Bank*. 06.25.2024 <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

³ Education in Africa: placing equity at the heart of policy. Continental Report. Education 2030. *UNESCO*. 31.05.2024. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/education-africa-placing-equity-heart-policy-continental-report> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

⁴ Declaration of the First Russia-Africa Summit. *Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum*. 24.10.2019. <https://summitafrica.ru/en/about-summit/declaration/> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

⁵ Russian-African Network University is 'Much Larger Than Just Education,' Professor Says. *Sputnik Africa*. 11.07.2024. <https://en.sputniknews.africa/20240711/1067460755.html> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

⁶ Polytechnic hosted the second RAFU international conference. *RAFU*. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/politech-provel-tvoruyu-mezhdunarodnyu-konferenciyu-rafu> (accessed: 15.04.2025)

labor markets. Additionally, RAFU addresses policy-related issues such as regulatory frameworks, accreditation, and quality assurance.⁷

This paper examines how RAFU applies network diplomacy through its educational, cultural, and scientific engagements across Africa. To achieve this, the article first provides a general theoretical overview of the network diplomacy concept, then explores RAFU’s connection to the BRICS Spirit and the Russian Foreign Policy Concept, and, finally, analyzes the consortium’s networking activities over the past two years.

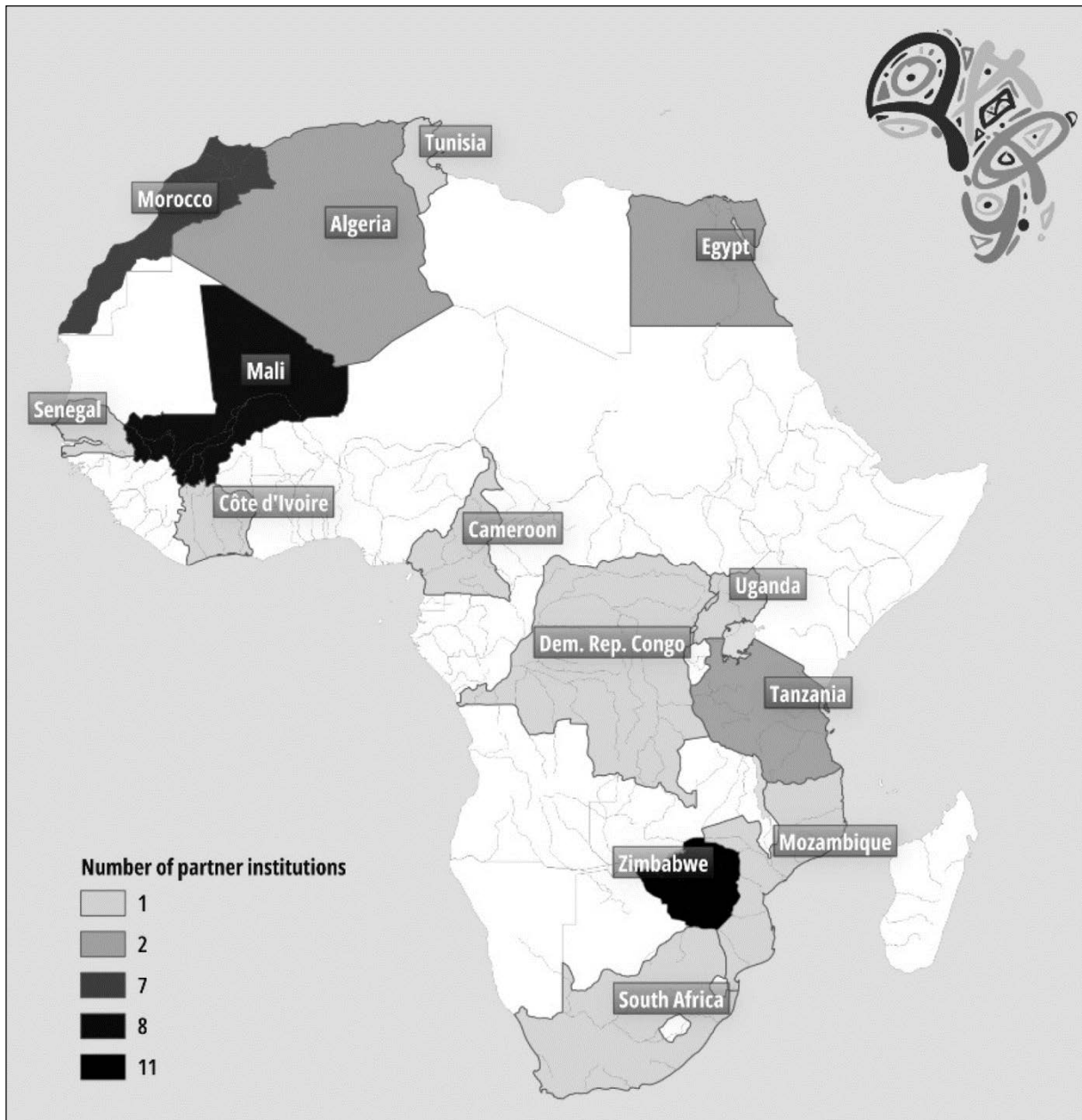


Fig. 1. **RAFU Participants.**

Source: created by the authors using QGis, based on RAFU data.

⁷ Agreement on the creation of the consortium “Russian-African Network University.” *RAFU*. 20.08.2021. (In Russ.). https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/agreement_rafu_ru.pdf(accessed: 17.03.2025)

Concerning the scholarly literature regarding RAFU, it can be stated that it continues to be exceptionally limited due to its relatively recent establishment in 2021 and the limitations of open-source information. Despite several works touching on education diplomacy in different aspects—from general theoretical elements of its conduct [Khan, Ahmad, Fernald, 2020; Peterson, 2014], to the nexus of soft power and education diplomacy [Wojciuk, Michalek, Stormowska 2015; Hong 2014] in the cases of China, the EU, and Finland, or even studies concerning Russian activities in higher education cooperation [Ilyina, Serova, 2022; Fominykh 2020; Chepurina 2014; Mäkinen 2016] and Russian-African educational cooperation [Bezdudnya, Prokopenkov, Treyman 2024]—RAFU is still underexplored and merely mentioned.

Accordingly, the novelty of this paper lies in an in-depth overview of RAFU's activities, opening horizons for new research concerning Russian-African higher education cooperation developments and the conduct of Russian public diplomacy. It is worth acknowledging that this work is, in part, reflexive/self-referential: the authors were involved, directly and indirectly, with the conduct of the consortium during the last years.

Furthermore, unlike Western scholarship [Metzl 2001; Zaharna 2007; Heine 2013], which tends to overemphasize the role of non-state actors and portray them as “neutral” and, therefore, preferable, if only for their “impartiality,” this paper takes a more grounded approach to network diplomacy. Ultimately, informal institutions, organizations, and transnational networks remain dependent on states and operate within the constraints of national sovereignty and legal frameworks [Mearsheimer 1995].

NETWORK DIPLOMACY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of network diplomacy can be defined as the active involvement of multiple actors (public and private)—beyond traditional ones such as diplomats, ministries, and presidents—in transnational activities for a common goal, building new forms of interaction and communication with counterparts in other countries. Different from traditional diplomatic approaches, networks are focused on transparency, multidirectional flows and exchange of information, and accountability and have a more horizontal relationship, cultivating all constituencies [Metzl 2001: 77–78; Heine 2013; Hayden 2013; Morozov 2022; Lebedeva, Morozov, Shebalina 2019; Flew, Hartig 2014]. As Craig Hayden [2013: 21] points out, networks are more than mere “maps of relations” but are permeated with the characteristics—such as shared ideas, conduct, norms, and values—that these interactions of the actors involved in the network consist of, forming a social structure of its own.

The main goal of network formation is to create multilateral interactions at multiple levels—from government officials to experts, specific segments of society, and businesses—in order to create solutions for specific international problems while promoting national interest [Metzl, 2001; Lebedeva, Morozov, Shebalina 2019]. The concept is closely associated with multilateral diplomacy and public diplomacy, sharing similar methods of conduct and objectives.

This approach creates an alternative link of cooperation in specific cases (e.g., educational and scientific cooperation, regulatory discussions, cultural exchange, among others) while guaranteeing a more flexible and adaptable social structure due to

the lack of clear hierarchical definitions. Transgovernmental networks of state officials and employees across various themes have been expanding rapidly over the past decades [Heine 2013; Hayden 2013; Lebedeva, Morozov, Shebalina 2019]. These networks facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation on matters not necessarily correlated to high politics, which are often overlooked by national security agencies, ministries of foreign affairs, and other strategic sectors, providing incremental benefits while reducing information uncertainty, consolidating common ground, and solving transactional costs in specific sectors with a relatively low cost [Lebedeva, Morozov, Shebalina 2019; Metzl 2001] and a simpler communication platform than traditional approaches.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that these mechanisms undoubtedly strengthen Russia's position in the international arena by managing broad network structures in fields that are sometimes underestimated (in terms of “soft power” potential) in the top priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even at a time when Western counterparts were already actively developing their networks beyond their state borders [Kolosova 2014]. The literature highlights that network diplomacy has notable advantages in cultural exchange, scientific, and academic fields due to its non-hierarchical and non-transactional characteristics [Metzl 2001: 78; Lebedeva, Morozov, Shebalina 2019: 7].

In the case of RAFU, for instance, it relies on a hybrid [Bjola, Manor 2022] and horizontal diplomatic approach, expanding the means, both digital [Nweke 2012] and physical/traditional, for informal and scholarly relations between young academics, researchers, and directors of key educational institutions in Africa and Russia while simultaneously interacting constantly with other governmental institutions, such as *Rossotrudnichestvo*⁸, and Russian officials, such as ambassadors and ministers.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress the misleading division between non-state actors and the state when talking about global politics. The delimitations, while they exist in reality, are more subtle than they appear. The interaction between individuals, organizations, private enterprises, and governments is multidimensional, extremely interactive, constantly evolving and changing, and fundamental in modern diplomacy [Morozov 2021]. Moreover, informal institutions and non-state actors are playing an increasingly prominent role in this global landscape and must continue to be considered in discussions on Russian foreign policy-making. Additionally, as analyzed by Ted Hsuan Yun Chen, informal diplomatic activities have mutually reinforcing effects with the traditional diplomatic mechanisms, helping formal international cooperation to be consolidated [Chen 2021]. In this sense, establishing direct channels with these emerging actors, such as universities, research centers, and businesses engaged in research and development, across Africa and formalizing cooperation agreements are essential steps in solidifying deeper relationships with these countries.

Effective non-governmental networks, though not as efficient as government networks due to the lack of clear hierarchies and funds [Adler, Firestone 2018: 6], offer

⁸ *Rossotrudnichestvo* (short for the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) is an executive authority responsible for spreading Russia's humanitarian influence in the world, developing and coordinating international relations and international humanitarian cooperation, including with CIS countries, and supporting compatriots living abroad.

excellent prospects for creating lasting relationships and building an atmosphere of trust. If the network is perceived as mutually beneficial and adding value to all parties, it can be translated into a soft power resource.

Another key aspect of network formation is the structural effect of them in legitimizing shared goals and beliefs through group identity formation based on information spreading, constant communication, consensus, and trust building [Haiden 2013]. Such ideas and practices, according to Haiden, “become ‘powerful’ because they propagate across networks and become difficult to dislodge” [Haiden 2013: 21]. In this sense, Peter Haas’s concept of epistemic communities is important to be remembered; it comprehends the network of professional experts and academics in specific policies and issue areas united by four solidifying features: 1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, 2) causal beliefs, 3) notions of validity, and 4) a common policy enterprise or set of common practices [Haas 1992: 3]. For Haas, these transnational communities’ ideas have a pervasive and penetrating capacity to spread ideas and deep core beliefs, causing real systemic impacts, being diffused to other nations via the leaders, professionals, and/or scientists that were influenced by them [Haas 1992: 17].

That is why the Russian government needs to recognize the durability of these components and focus on nurturing its own internal networks, which is vital, while linking them to broader external networks.

In this sense, network diplomacy serves as an auxiliary role beyond traditional, state-centered hierarchical structures, which majorly focus on national security and economic functions. Expanding the “arms” of the state into new domains—such as education and research, as observed in the Russian-African Network University initiative—through external networks is crucial. For that, the formation of public diplomats in Russia is essential and plays a key role in bridging the dialogue between the Russian government and foreign populations. These professionals should focus on network-oriented engagement, informing and explaining to foreign audiences and potential partners the benefits that such networked cooperation could yield.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize that RAFU, along with other Russian government-led network diplomacy initiatives, operates differently from its Western counterparts. On the one hand, the liberal internationalist approach [Lord 2010] operates under Western universalistic deep core norms and values, negating the subjectivity and diversity of different cultural contexts. In this regard, Milton Santos, one of the greatest Brazilian thinkers of the second half of the 20th century, understands the liberal order as an unquestionable political-economic system marked by a single discourse of the world—the Americanization of the world—in which the actors (states, local communities, and individuals) who do not follow these tenets blindly are discarded or ostracized [Santos 2017].

The U.S. American network diplomacy, exemplified by the infamous USAID⁹ and National Endowment for Democracy¹⁰ institutions, uses instruments of influence,

⁹ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an agency of the U.S. government responsible for managing civilian foreign aid and development assistance. It was founded in 1961. The general political management of USAID’s activities is carried out by the US Secretary of State. The organization’s budget is more than \$50 billion. After the criticism of the US President, Donald Trump, USAID has been accused of unjustified and inappropriate spending, corruption and inconsistency with US foreign policy priorities. The agency’s work has been frozen.

intervening in the internal affairs of other countries through the support of opposition organizations, student movements, and universities that share a liberal agenda.¹¹ According to the Chinese Embassy in the United States, the United States has long used democracy as a tool and weapon to undermine democracy in the name of democracy, to sow division and confrontation, and to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, which has led to disastrous consequences.¹²

On the other hand, RAFU is strictly a technical framework network, concerned only with issue-related (higher education, technology, and science) topics, working with established institutions and avoiding disruptions or social engineering experiments. This posture aligns with the tenets of the Russian Foreign Policy Concept and BRICS+ principles: respect for sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, and the cultivation of cultural diversity.

RAFU's model exemplifies the shift to a multipolar worldview, reinforcing Russia's commitment to cooperation based on mutual respect, cultural diversity, and non-interference in internal affairs.

RAFU, THE BRICS SPIRIT, AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT

Even though RAFU is not formally integrated into the BRICS+ platform framework, it fully embodies the BRICS Spirit, emphasizing solidarity, sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, multipolarity, inter-civilizational dialogue, and mutual respect for cultural diversity, thereby strengthening autonomy and sovereignty for a more just international system¹³. These principles closely align with the key tenets of Russia's 2023 Foreign Policy Concept, which states that "Russia stands in solidarity with the African states in their desire for a more equitable polycentric world and elimination of social and economic inequality, which is growing due to the sophisticated neo-colonial policies of some developed states towards Africa. The Russian Federation intends to support further the establishment of Africa as a distinctive and influential centre of world development."¹⁴ The document also champions a continued effort to strengthen and deepen Russian-African cooperation in several sectors, including education and technology.¹⁵

¹⁰ National Endowment for Democracy is an American quasi-autonomous organization founded in 1983 to "promote democracy." It is funded primarily by the US Congress through the budget of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

¹¹ The National Endowment for Democracy: What It Is and What It Does. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. 09.08.2024. https://fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/wjbxw/202408/t20240809_11468618.html (accessed: 17.03.2025).

¹² See: GT Investigates: US Wages Global Color Revolutions to Topple Govts for the Sake of American Control. *Global Times*. 07.12.2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202112/1240540.shtml>; Fact Sheet on the National Endowment for Democracy. *Embassy of China in the USA*. 07.05.2022. http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/202205/t20220507_10683090.htm (accessed: 17.03.2025).

¹³ Kazan Declaration. Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security. *President of Russia*. 23.10.2024. <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/en/RosOySvLzGaJtmx2wYFv0IN4NSPZploG.pdf> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

¹⁴ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 31.03.2023. https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/ (accessed: 17.03.2025)

¹⁵ Ibid.

Moreover, RAFU advocates the fundamental notion of “African solutions to African problems,” reflecting the core values of its African partners.

The RAFU consortium participated in two important events of BRICS+; first, at the 5th BRICS+ International Municipal Forum (2023), RAFU’s commission negotiated and signed cooperation agreements with universities and companies from South Africa, Algeria, and Cameroon¹⁶. During the forum, Andrei Rudskoi¹⁷, rector of SPbPU and chairman of the RAFU presidium, emphasized the scientific and innovative potential of BRICS+ countries, championing deeper cooperation and collaboration in these fields, above all, due to the current volatile international landscape, which requires building long-term horizontal partnerships and friendships.

Moreover, RAFU representatives were in the BRICS Education Ministers Meeting in Kazan¹⁸, which was a great platform for experience sharing, accountability, and prospects for the development of RAFU and highlighting the African vector of BRICS development that was emphasized. These experiences—holding several meetings with representatives of African countries, including the new members and partners, within the BRICS+ framework—were fundamental for making connections with different networks in a wider system of relationships, exemplified in Sergey Lavrov’s words: “BRICS is a truly unique multilateral format and an excellent example of innovative network diplomacy. BRICS platform: Countries that are different in terms of culture and civilization can build relations based on the principles of equality, consideration of each other’s interests, mutual respect, and openness to the outside world.”¹⁹

Furthermore, RAFU principles, as mentioned in its charter²⁰, resonate with the decisions made in Kazan, articulated in the declaration of the 11th Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Education²¹ and the general declaration²² that emphasize the nexus of sustainable development with education, science, technology, and innovation (STI). Higher education cooperation is identified as a central tool for reducing inequality.

For instance, the Kazan Declaration underscores STI as a “critical catalyst for economic development and improved quality of life”²³ and calls for the development of high-tech products to strengthen national economies. Correspondingly, one of RAFU’s

¹⁶ Polytechnic University strengthens international cooperation of BRICS+ countries. *RAFU*. 10.11.2023. <https://www.rafu.ru/en/news/politeh-ukreplyaet-mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo-stran-briks> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ RAFU at the BRICS Education Ministers Meeting in Kazan. *RAFU*. 13.06.2024. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/rafu-na-vstreche-ministrov-obrazovaniya-stran-briks-v-kazani> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

¹⁹ Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s video address to the participants at the BRICS International Youth Camp. *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 10.09.2021. (In Russ.). https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/minister_speeches/1775257/ (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²⁰ Agreement on the creation of the consortium “Russian-African Network University.” *RAFU*. 20.08.2021. (In Russ.). https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/agreement_rafu_ru.pdf (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²¹ Kazan Declaration of the 11th Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Education Final. *BRICS*. 11.06.2024. (In Russ.). https://www.cdn.brics-russia2024.ru/upload/docs/2024-06-13-Final_Kazan_Declaration_of_the_11th_Meeting_of_BRICS_Ministers_11.pdf?1718349998309901 (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²² Kazan Declaration. Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security. *President of Russia*. 23.10.2024. <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/en/RosOySvLzGaJtmx2wYFv0lN4NSPZploG.pdf> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²³ Ibid.

primary goals, as demonstrated on its charter²⁴, is to stimulate innovation in technologically advanced sectors by integrating cutting-edge science from Russian and African universities with international collaboration, particularly involving industrial and high-tech partners.

Therefore, both the BRICS declaration and the RAFU charter highlight the importance of up-to-date education and professional training as essential for addressing the transformative (and sometimes disruptive) changes caused by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the digitalization of the global economy, with a focus on preparing people for the future labor market.

In this context of transformative changes, the BRICS 2024 Labor Ministers' meeting called for improvements in vocational training and initiatives to create a resilient workforce capable of adapting to the rapidly changing world and the growing technical demands of the labor market²⁵. These objectives closely align with RAFU's current ambitions and activities. The consortium is committed to identifying and supporting talented young scientists, equipping them with scholarships, networks, and access to diverse facilities and cultures—core components of its initiatives.

The most important project to execute these objectives is the “RAFU Summer Multidisciplinary University”, offering short educational programs aimed at improving the qualifications of African citizens. The summer program of 2024 was conducted by nineteen Russian universities and offered a diverse range of specialized programs in medicine, AI and smart engineering applications, UAV remote sensing, water resource management, environmental sustainability, and media technologies for tourism promotion, with a persistent focus on innovation, sustainable development, and intercultural cooperation²⁶.

Accordingly, the BRICS+ framework recognizes science and technology as essential pillars for equitable and inclusive development, promoting technological cooperation among its members and partners while emphasizing the significance of expanding technological access and collaboration with the Global South, predominantly least developed and developing nations.

As Konstantin Mogilevskiy, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, asserts, “Science, which is inextricably linked to education, also serves as a tool to improve the quality of human life, while technology and innovation provide knowledge-intensive solutions to key challenges facing the world” [Mogilevskiy 2024: 90]. Furthermore, he highlights that the diverse trajectories of BRICS+ nations create a distinctive environment for genuine and innovative scientific collaboration, offering unique opportunities to tackle global challenges in a sustainable and democratic manner.

Finally, the inter-civilizational dialogue and mutual respect for cultural diversity encompassed by the BRICS Spirit and supported by the Foreign Policy Concept are

²⁴ Agreement on the creation of the consortium “Russian-African Network University.” *RAFU*. 20.08.2021. (In Russ.). https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/agreement_rafu_ru.pdf (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²⁵ Declaration of the Tenth BRICS Labor and Employment Ministers' Meeting, Sochi, Russia, 9–10 September 2024. https://labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Publications/Operations/BRICS%20Russia%202024/BRICS%20Russia%202024_LEMM%20Declaration_10.09.2024_rafu.pdf (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²⁶ RAFU Summer Multidisciplinary University. *RAFU*. 02.04.2024. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/letniy-mnogo-profilnyy-universitet-rafu-2024> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

exemplified by the RAFU's cultural and language diplomacy activities. RAFU operates within the objects of the Russian Federation to promote and develop deeper connections in the humanitarian areas, promoting intercultural dialogue and expanding the Russian language outreach while protecting and respecting traditional spiritual and moral values.

For that purpose, RAFU coordinates and also participates in cultural events in Africa²⁷, while assisting as an intermediary (for the Russian and African universities) for the establishment of language centers on the continent. As part of RAFU's framework, Stepan Sokolov, Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, highlights that "the creation of centers of Russian language and culture in Africa contributes not only to the study of the language but also to the strengthening of cultural ties between our people."²⁸

Conclusively, by aligning its goals with the ideals of BRICS+ and Russian Foreign Policy Concept, RAFU serves as an important institutional instrument for promoting development through education, innovation, and science while contributing significantly to mutual respect and contextuality due to its commitment to international exchanges without interference in internal affairs.

RAFU NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

The RAFU operations, as extensively mentioned before, are majorly focused on building a web of academic, cultural, and scientific partnerships across the African continent and Russian territory, using a wide array of methods such as summits, conferences, training programs, language initiatives, cultural programs, and research collaborations. Through careful review, reflection, and analysis of the major events that RAFU organized and/or participated in during 2023 and 2025, as detailed in Annex 2, it is possible to point out the five major mechanisms of network-building, being them: high-level summits as entry points for engagement; academic conferences as connective hubs; cultural diplomacy for long-term influence; capacity-building; and regional expansion with a multi-stakeholder engagement.

Firstly, the participation of RAFU in large diplomatic forums such as the 5th BRICS+ International Municipal Forum 2023, the Russia-Africa Summit 2023, the XXVII St. Petersburg International Economic Forum SPIEF-2024, and the BRICS Education Ministers Meeting in Kazan was fundamental to the consortium as entry points of engagement and expansion of its network. These massive events, consisting of broader and more complex social structures—with a variety of interests and actors—and several networks, were nodal points for the expansion and activity of RAFU. In this sense, the RAFU's staff used these opportunities for establishing broad institutional commitments while expanding the possibilities with new prospects of cooperation. To illustrate, during

²⁷ "Days of Russian Language and Culture" in Senegal. *RAFU*. 17.11.2023. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/dni-russkogo-yazyka-i-kultury-v-senegale> (accessed: 17.03.2025); "Days of Russian Education in Morocco". *RAFU*. 4.12.2024. (In Russ.). <https://rafu.ru/en/news/dni-rossiyskogo-obrazovaniya-v-marokko> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

²⁸ RAFU Digest № 4. *RAFU*. 2024. (In Russ.). <https://rafu.ru/uploads/files/main/digest/4.pdf> (accessed: 17.03.2025)

these events several important partnerships were consolidated; moreover, it provided the opportunity to experience sharing, demonstrate accountability, and discuss prospects for the development of RAFU with key governmental partners of Russia and African countries.

The second mechanism is the maneuver and operation in academic and scientific conferences and summits. The Russian-African Network University has, during the last years, been actively participating in academic conferences and also organizing the RAFU International Conference in a hybrid format to cover its immense geographic outreach. The RAFU's conference, which continues to be in its first steps, has already shown impressive results with several international partners and experts participating, ensuring the flow of information and knowledge between the participants. These steps are fundamental for the consolidation of Russian-African epistemic communities, creating cultural and intellectual connectivity between experts and institutions. On the other hand, participation in events such as the Russian-Tanzanian Inter-University Meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; the International Scientific and Practical Conference 'Russia, Brazil, and Africa: Strengthening Cooperation of the Global South' organized by Lomonosov Moscow State University; or the Third and the Fourth Congresses of Young Scientists at Sirius (2023 and 2024) are opportunities for expanding the outreach of the consortium, being accountable with partners, and learning with other initiatives and organizations, among others (as in *Annex 2*). As a result, RAFU engages in decentralized diplomacy, where universities and research institutions engage in collaborative problem-solving beyond state-led agreements.

Third, the already mentioned and fundamentally important mechanism of RAFU's networking building, in which soft power plays a crucial role, is cultural and language diplomacy, establishing deeper societal ties and mutual understanding. The coordinated organization and participation in cultural events held in Africa, together with representatives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Russian House, and local authorities, are a fundamental part of RAFU's strategy. For instance, the Days of Russian Language and Culture in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire promoted Russian education, fomented the universities' network, and explored the establishment of Russian language centers. Moreover, the opening of SPbPU-RAFU Information Centers in Morocco (December 2024) and Ethiopia (February 2025) reinforced the Russian academic and linguistic presence in key African regions, as did the Russian Language Center, coordinated by Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (NGLU), and the preparatory faculty, established by Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI," in Addis Ababa, both opened as part of the RAFU event in Ethiopia. These activities, undoubtedly, function as cultural hubs, sustaining long-term contact and connections through soft power elements.

Connected with the initiative of opening informational and language centers is the fourth mechanism, which consists of capacity building through summer multidisciplinary programs, technical training, scholarships, and skill-building programs. In this sense, the 2024 "RAFU Summer Multidisciplinary University," as mentioned in the previous session, trained hundreds of African professionals in different key sectors of the economy and research, addressing skill acquisition, mitigating gaps, and updating the professionals with state-of-the-art practices.

Moreover, the prospects of creating joint master's degree programs could ensure even deeper institutional integration and cultural exchange. These prospects had important advances at the 12th meeting of the mixed intergovernmental Russian-Algerian Commission in January 2025, where inter-university agreements were signed in the field of academic exchanges and joint educational programs between St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU) and a number of Algerian universities.

Regarding the use of the Russian state-funded scholarships for African students, the integrative partnership with Rossotrudnichestvo, Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, and the Informational Centers provides the complete framework to improve the capacity of action of the consortium.

Lastly, the mechanism of regional expansion and multi-stakeholder engagement consists of RAFU's dynamic network structure, which is constantly expanding geographically—not limited to specific countries or regions in the continent—and engaging with multiple sectors and players in the search for common initiatives. As a result of balancing different interests and scientific and cultural perspectives, the consortium promotes an inclusive and flexible collaboration.

In the case of regional expansion and outreach, a good example is the event “Russian-Tanzanian Inter-University Meeting”²⁹ held in November 2024, in which more Tanzanian universities joined the consortium, helping the integration of East Africa into the network. As a matter of illustration of the dynamism and variety of actors involved in this mechanism, the “12th meeting of the mixed intergovernmental Russian-Algerian commission on trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation,” in which RAFU was a key participant, involved the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Algeria Kamel Baddari, representatives of Algerian universities, including the Houari Boumediene University of Science and Technology, Abou El Kacem Saadallah University, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University in Mostaganem, and the National School of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. As a result, RAFU signed agreements in the field of academic exchanges and joint educational programs with leading universities in Algeria.³⁰

CONCLUSIONS

As shown in this article, the RAFU consortium functions as a connective hub and network node for African and Russian higher education, scientific, and technological institutions. It facilitates informational flow and capacity-building to mutually enhance socioeconomic and educational conditions. Therefore, the consortium is not merely a medium and does not only mediate relationships but also facilitates and expands interactions among its varied partners, serving as an auxiliary arm that complements

²⁹ Russian Universities of the RAFU Consortium Participated in a Russian-Tanzanian Inter-University Meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *RAFU*. 12.11.2024. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/vuzy-rafu-prinyali-uchastie-v-rossiysko-tanzaniyskoy-mezhuniversitetskoy-vstreche-v-dar-es-salame-tanzaniya>(accessed: 17.03.2025)

³⁰ RAFU signed agreements with leading universities in Algeria. *RAFU*. 06.02.2025. <https://rafu.ru/en/news/rafu-podpisal-soglasheniya-s-vedushchimi-universitetami-alzhira> (accessed: 17.03.2025).

other governmental initiatives aimed at strengthening the broader Russian-African relations framework. The example of RAFU, among other Russian initiatives, highlights the increasing role of non-traditional networks in today's international politics and should be considered when analyzing Russia's foreign policy formation.

Moreover, RAFU's approach aligns closely with the principles of the Russian Foreign Policy Concept and BRICS+. Its emphasis on collaboration and initiatives that empower the least developed and developing countries through mutual respect and contextuality reflects both the BRICS Spirit and RAFU's foundational goals. By managing broad networks in education, culture, and science while adhering to BRICS principles—such as non-intervention in internal affairs, intercivilizational dialogue, and cultural diversity—RAFU rejects Western interventionist and universalist network methods. This approach enables Russia to secure a stable position in the Global South and effectively promote its interests through a genuine trust-building and respectful diplomatic process.

In practical terms, the consortium—despite its significant and progressive results, the constantly increasing consolidation of joint research initiatives, the growing presence of discussions on the formation of joint programs, and the implementation of digital platforms and centers across the African continent to spread information—has not yet consolidated a full-fledged common educational space. The process of achieving such a level of integration, a mission of RAFU, requires continued effort by the organization within the framework of existing activities while also confronting the natural obstacles inherent in the practice of network diplomacy.

Among the obstacles faced by the organizers, three main areas hinder a faster integration process: lack of visibility, multilingual environment, and financial/logistics matters. First, the lack of visibility is reflected in the difficulty of spreading information and raising awareness of the program across the vast African continent, despite some sporadic coverage in Russian and African media. RAFU remains not the best-known initiative in the Russian-African scientific and educational cooperation. Second, the multilingual environment—even with the high level of language proficiency of the RAFU organizers—becomes a challenge in the broader sense of intercommunication and coordination. Lastly, the matters of logistics and finance have several layers (micro and macro), from the time-consuming long trips and issues of accessibility to the varying levels of university and scientific infrastructure in Africa—which require specific solutions on a case-by-case basis. In this sense, the evaluation of the actual results of the initiative may take years, if not decades, in qualitative terms, due to the complexity of educational formation and scientific development.

Finally, RAFU tries to address, within its scope and capacity limitations, the major challenges in higher education and scientific initiatives in Africa by endorsing Russo-African scientific collaboration and sophisticated professional training. Through its structured network-building mechanisms, RAFU capitalizes on five key approaches: high-level summits as entry points for engagement; academic conferences as connective hubs; cultural diplomacy for long-term influence; capacity-building; and regional expansion with multi-stakeholder engagement. These mechanisms' present flexibility and decentralization, operating in a horizontal approach with different actors, making the characteristics of Russian-African educational partnerships multilayered.

Additional materials to the article³¹:**Appendix 1.** List of African Partner Universities. December 2024, 2 pages.**Appendix 2.** RAFU Key Events & Outcomes (2023–2025). February 2025, 3 pages.

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Научная статья

СЕТЕВАЯ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ РАФУ: ПРОДВИЖЕНИЕ «ДУХА БРИКС» В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается роль сетевой дипломатии в условиях формирующейся многополярной международной системы на примере Российско-Африканского сетевого университета (РАФУ) в период его координации Санкт-Петербургским политехническим университетом Петра Великого (СПбПУ) в 2023–2025 гг. Авторы утверждают, что для современного мира характерно воздействие двух взаимосвязанных, но разнонаправленных сил – взаимозависимости и фрагментации, влияющих на сферу международных отношений и дипломатии. В своей статье российский и бразильский исследователи представляют теоретический обзор понятия сетевой дипломатии, акцентируя внимание на ее значении для развития образовательного, культурного и

научного сотрудничества. Несмотря на отсутствие иерархии и стабильного финансирования, негосударственные сети, по мнению авторов, обладают высоким потенциалом для формирования устойчивых партнерств и атмосферы доверия. Само появление РАФУ авторы расценивают как следствие и выражение выхода российско-африканских отношений на новый уровень. Сетевая активность РАФУ за исследуемый период выявляет его вклад в поддержку дипломатических усилий России, направленных на укрепление российско-африканских отношений. РАФУ предстает как важный институт, способствующий взаимовыгодному сотрудничеству в сфере высшего образования. Авторы анализируют соответствие деятельности Российско-Африканского сетевого университета «духу БРИКС» и Концепции внешней политики России, подчеркивают приверженность университета принципам равноправного сотрудничества, суверенитета, межкультурного диалога и взаимного уважения. Анализ первых лет деятельности сетевого университета позволяет авторам сделать вывод, что он функционирует как интеграционный сетевой механизм для африканских и российских высших учебных заведений, научных и технологических учреждений, способствует информационному обмену, направленному на взаимное расширение социально-экономического и образовательного сотрудничества.

Ключевые слова: российско-африканские отношения, сетевая дипломатия, высшее образование, образовательная дипломатия, культурная дипломатия, дух БРИКС, РАФУ, Российско-Африканский сетевой университет

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов: совместное исследование.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-75-91

Для цитирования: Залынский М.Н., де Оливейра Бундер Т.С. Сетевая дипломатия РАФУ: продвижение «духа БРИКС» в образовании. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-75-91>

COOPERATION OF RUSSIAN PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES (THE CASE STUDY OF OPEN EDUCATION CENTERS)

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Abstract. The objective of the present study is to analyze the nature of Russia-Africa relations in the field of education, with a particular focus on the experience of Russian language dissemination in West African countries and the work of the Centres for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching. The article considers the historical dimension of Russia's collaboration with West African nations in the promotion of the Russian language. A particular emphasis is placed on the positive experience of the partnership that was formed by the Soviet Union over decades but was interrupted in the 1990s due to political circumstances. It also presents the current experience of some Russian universities in implementing the projects to spread the Russian language and culture in the countries of West Africa. The article highlights several significant aspects of educational interaction with African countries and describes the practices of cooperation between Russia and African countries. At present, Russia's 'soft power' in Africa is exercised mostly through the promotion of Russian education in African countries, including the implementation of supplementary general education programs, certification of foreign students in Russian as a foreign language, admission of foreign students to Russian universities under quotas, dissemination of Russian culture through the execution of educational and methodological academic activities, as well as professional development of higher education staff in Africa. The primary outcome of the study is the presentation of a comprehensive practical experience of promoting Russian as a foreign language by some pedagogical universities working in West Africa, which contributes to further African-Russian university partnerships.

Keywords: West Africa, Russian Federation, interaction, partnership, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Centre for Open Education, implementation of educational programmes, Russian language

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-92-105

Authors' contribution: joint research

Acknowledgements: This paper was written as part of Supplementary Agreement No. 073-03-2025-058/2 dated 25 April 2025 to the Agreement on the provision of subsidies from the federal budget for the funding of the government assignment of providing public services (executing works) No. 073-03-2025-058 dated 16 January 2025, concluded between the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education "K.D. Ushinsky Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University" and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. The authors are grateful to the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education "K.D. Ushinsky Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University" (Russia), the Foundation for the Support of Humanities

“My History” Foundation, and the universities of West African republics for the opportunity to conduct the research.

For citation: Boychuk E. I., Vorontsova I. A. (2025). Cooperation of Russian Pedagogical Universities with West African Countries (the Case Study of Open Education Centers). *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-92-105>

THE HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

The long-standing relationship between Russia and Africa¹ is experiencing a new upswing. This appears both inevitable and rational when viewed in the context of the evolving global order, the emergence of a multipolar world, the rise of new centers of power, and the consequent ascendance of the Global South. It has been proposed by experts in the field that both Russia and Africa are exhibiting a mutual interest in a rapprochement. The consolidation of resources and technologies, as well as the commonality of views, are to enable the countries to implement ambitious and mutually beneficial projects in key segments of the economy, from the military-industrial complex, energy, and space exploration to agriculture, education, etc. Moreover, there are no misunderstandings or ambiguities between Russia and Africa regarding the colonial past of African states since Russia was never involved in the colonization of Africa and, on the contrary, supported the continent’s struggle for independence from the colonial powers.

Contemporary studies of Russia’s relations with Africa [Avdalyan 2023; Deich 2017; Kassaye-Nigusie 2017] often turn to the study of the concept of “soft power.” The term is defined as the capacity to realize objectives by means of the persuasive power of one’s culture, ideals, values, and policies, as opposed to the use of coercion [Nye 2004]. Thus, values, culture, and the language that underpins them constitute a significant component of “soft power.”

According to M.R. Avdalyan, the successful transmission of values and the formation of a favorable public image of the state cannot be achieved without a simultaneous development of human potential, the basis of which should be regarded as being firmly established within the domain of education. This is the reason why secondary and higher education systems are often the objects of “soft power,” with countries aspiring to play a prominent role in international relations increasingly developing international educational programs [Avdalyan 2023: 146].

As the successor state to the USSR, the Russian Federation has considerable experience in the export of education. Despite its belated entry into the global education services market, which only occurred after the Second World War, the USSR had attained second position globally in terms of the number of foreign students by the 1980s (surpassed only by the United States) [Sheregi, Dmitriev, Arefiev 2003].

This does not include those who were educated in their home countries under the mentorship of Soviet specialists. It is important to mention that Soviet universities offered specialized multidisciplinary training programs for prospective teachers, with the aim of preparing them to work internationally. These programs integrated education in the

¹ The first documented interactions between representatives of Russian and African Christian and Muslim communities, who undertook pilgrimages to holy sites, occurred as early as the Middle Ages [Goumiledi 2023: 14].

humanities and exact or natural sciences with pedagogy and teaching methods as well as a foreign language that was to be utilized as a language of instruction for teaching subjects within the aforementioned areas. Separate programs for teaching Russian as a foreign language were also developed and implemented. Consequently, the extensive dissemination of Russian educational technologies and practices, in conjunction with the promotion of scientific ideas and a culture of academic and business communication (including via the Russian language), constituted a substantial element of Soviet “soft power,” effectively consolidating countries around the USSR.

The situation changed dramatically after the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulting in profound economic, political, and humanitarian ramifications. Concurrently, Russian-African relations underwent a marked decline, becoming an almost marginal priority in the nation’s foreign policy agenda [Deich 2017: 4]. Nevertheless, the efforts of Russia’s academic and scientific community to preserve the best achievements of Russian education while skillfully integrating effective foreign practices stimulated growing interest in Russian education as early as during the first two decades of the 21st century. This interest is further intensifying today, as Russia is successfully demonstrating that its educational resources are a valuable export asset, while the country’s robust intellectual and cultural base, considerable experience of integrating teaching and research, broad spectrum of scientific activities [Inozemtseva 2009: 4–5], technological sophistication of education, and other valuable attributes give Russia undeniable competitive advantages over other exporters of educational services in the global market.

African countries have been and continue to be one of the main importers of Russian education. The establishment of cooperative relationships between the USSR and Africa in the field of education commenced shortly after the attainment of independence by many African states in the 1960s. The USSR provided substantial support to African countries in developing educational centers at all levels, from constructing and equipping schools, colleges, and universities to providing highly qualified personnel for the entire education system, helping thereby to increase literacy and general education among the African population and to develop human capital on the African continent.

The geographical coverage of African countries that sent their students to Soviet (later Russian) universities and welcomed Soviet (later Russian) teachers who shared educational practices adopted in their country was extensive, encompassing all regions of the continent.

African students came to the USSR on scholarship programs to master the educational programs of the 5-year specialist degree (less frequently, postgraduate programs) in a variety of fields, including medicine, engineering (with a particular emphasis on mechanical engineering and mineral extraction), agriculture, pedagogy, and didactics. In exchange, teachers and subject specialists from the USSR were deployed to educational institutions on the African continent to deliver instruction in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, and other academic disciplines [Martynova, Yapi 2022; Waliyullahi 2016]. Collaborative scientific research endeavors were undertaken, academic and educational projects were implemented, and conferences and symposiums were convened.

In a number of countries, such as Benin, Ghana, and Sudan, specialized centers were established to promote the achievements of Soviet science and technology, culture, art, and sports [Ndiaye 2008; Kulkova, Sanusi 2016]. These centers traditionally organized Russian language courses, after which graduates could compete for the right to receive free higher (including postgraduate) education at institutes and universities in the USSR. These and other initiatives were accompanied by the promotion of rich Russian culture and the Russian language.

EXPERIENCE IN PROMOTING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The provision of Russian language training to African students was central to the implementation of academic and educational initiatives. In the case of **Senegal**, interest in learning Russian emerged rapidly following the ratification of the 1967 Agreement on Cooperation in Science, Culture and Technology, and the establishment of the embassy and cultural center in Dakar. A substantial section devoted to the study of the history and geography of the USSR was introduced to the official programs of the Senegalese education system, supplemented by Russian, which entered into the list of languages offered for study as a foreign language, along with German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic (both at schools and universities). According to M. Ndiaye, one of the most significant achievements in the field of education was the establishment of a Russian language department at the Cheikh Anta Diop University (*Université Cheikh Anta Diop*) in Dakar [Ndiaye 2008: 44].

The crisis in the teaching and promotion of the Russian language in Senegal, which stemmed from the suspension of support for relevant programs following the collapse of the Soviet Union, is gradually being overcome. A collaborative endeavor between the Association of Russian Language Teachers of Senegal and the Senegalese Ministry of Education has been initiated with the objective of addressing the prevailing challenges in the domains of teacher training, student recruitment, the establishment of Russian language clubs, and the organization of Pushkin Day, with the support of the Russian Embassy in Senegal and The Gambia [Ndiaye 2008: 47].

The Russian government has been facilitating the implementation of measures aimed at enhancing the professional competencies of Russian language instructors in Senegal as well as developing a teaching and methodological base for Russian language educational programs. In autumn 2024, a substantial Russian media library and lecture hall, named “Innopraktika,” was inaugurated at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. The objectives of the institution include the establishment of a Russian cultural space and the provision of a platform for dialogue on cultural, humanitarian, social, and other universal topics².

The 1960s were marked by the strengthening of the Russian language’s position in **Nigeria** [Avdalyan 2023; Aigbovia 2020; Okoedion, Okolie 2020; Chukwube 2023]. As early as 1960, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) had introduced elective Russian language courses. Subsequent to the establishment of official diplomatic relations and the growing influence of the USSR in Africa, interest in the Russian language increased, leading to its inclusion in a full-fledged educational program. In 1965, Russian was incorporated into the curriculum at the University of Ibadan (UI), and in 1970 at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) [Avdalyan 2023: 148].

Russian has experienced a decline in popularity in Nigeria, consistent with global patterns, but today it ranks as the third most studied European language in Nigerian universities, surpassed only by French and German. Research on key aspects of Russian language instruction in Nigeria has documented the emergence of institutions, programs, and organizations promoting Russian language and culture within the country. For instance, the office of “Russkiy Mir” (“Russian World”) at the University of Lagos provides access to audio and video publications, library collections, information materials, and scientific and

² A media library will be created at a university in Senegal to promote Russian culture. *Russkiy mir*. 29.07.2023. (In Russ.). <https://russkiymir.ru/news/316098/?ysclid=m4ppk7nybr55800459> (accessed: 05.05.2025)

methodological literature. There are a number of organizations that facilitate communication in Russian and offer a comprehensive insight into contemporary Russia, including “Istok” (“Origin”) in Abuja and “Russkiy Dom” (“Russian House”) in Lagos, which undertake educational initiatives and conduct presentations, creative meetings, business forums, film screenings, and exhibitions at their venues. Additionally, they provide instruction in Russian to both adult and children’s audiences [Avdalyan 2023: 150–151].

The Soviet Union made a significant contribution to the development of the educational system in the **Republic of Mali**. Particular emphasis was placed on the provision of technical and material support: equipment, textbooks, brochures, etc. were supplied to Malian schools. Soviet teachers were providing instruction to students at five educational institutions in Mali, with Russian language study being compulsory. However, the most significant component of Soviet assistance was the construction of educational institutions to provide the country with highly qualified local personnel, which was recognized as a fundamental condition for ensuring Mali’s economic sovereignty [Davidchuk, Degterev, Korendiasov 2022: 721].

In addition, training programs for Malian students were organized at Soviet universities. Nevertheless, despite the comprehensiveness of Soviet assistance in personnel training, this area was the least developed. The provision of education and a range of internships in the USSR proved incapable of addressing the fundamental issue of the severe shortage of qualified personnel experienced by Malian enterprises. This ultimately compelled them to seek assistance from both Soviet specialists and those from other countries [Davidchuk, Degterev, Korendiasov 2022: 722].

Presently, the Russian language is taught in secondary schools and universities within the Republic. RUDN University (also known as the P. Lumumba People’s Friendship University of Russia) has established six centers “Russkoye Prostranstvo” (“Russian Space”), which offer permanent Russian language courses. Evidence from both historical Soviet teaching practices and current Russian language promotion in Mali points to a positive response of the population towards collaborative educational projects. Additional motivation stems from the potential for employment in enterprises involving Russian capital, or from pursuing higher education in Russia, incentivizing Russian language learning and cultural engagement [Aleshkovsky et al. 2024: 75].

Ghana was among the first African countries to gain independence from Britain (1957), and, within a year, diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Ghana and the Soviet Union, followed by an exchange of embassies in 1959–1960 [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 297]. During the early 1960s, scientific and cultural exchange programs were in operation in both countries, and a Soviet cultural center was opened in Ghana, where Russian language classes were held. It has been estimated that hundreds of thousands of students were trained in these courses [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 297]. Some of the course graduates pursued their education in the Soviet Union. Beginning from 1961, more than 2,000 Ghanaians were educated in the USSR, while approximately 1,000 students enrolled in Soviet schools across more than forty cities within the country [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 298].

Concurrently, a significant number of Soviet specialists, including geologists, engineers, medical professionals, and educators, were engaged in various projects in Ghana. The scope of cooperation between Ghana and the USSR encompassed all domains deemed significant to the African state, including precious metal mining, the building of fishing vessels and factories for fish processing, and the energy sector. Noteworthy initiatives within the energy sector include the construction of the Bui hydroelectric power station (which commenced its active phase in the 1980s and was fully completed in 2013)

and works on the introduction of nuclear energy (where the USSR assisted Ghana in developing a nuclear reactor for research purposes and an isotope laboratory in Legon) [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 298]. Following a brief cessation in relations consequent to the military coup in Ghana in 1966, the USSR resumed cooperation with the country, including in the field of education. Beginning in 1973, nationals of Ghana were once again granted the opportunity to pursue their studies in the USSR. The association of graduates from Soviet universities was established. In 1975, the Soviet Cultural Center recommenced its activities [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 299].

Following a period of isolation due to a series of coups and political instability in Ghana, the nation resumed its contacts with the USSR in the 1980s. However, these contacts declined again in the early 1990s, this time due to the collapse of the USSR. Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, the countries have been engaging in dynamic interaction in both traditional sectors of the economy and new areas such as transport, security, and high technology. Ghana and Russia are also developing fruitful cooperation in the field of education. The Russian language is taught in universities in Ghana. In 2005, 300 students at the University of Ghana in Legon opted to study Russian as a foreign language [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 307]. In 2007, the Russian Embassy in Accra organized for the first time a Russian language competition for students, with the objective of assessing their proficiency in the Russian language and their knowledge of Russian history and culture. The competition has evolved into an annual event, during which Russian diplomats deliver lectures and organize exhibitions dedicated to historical and cultural events in Russia [Kulkova, Sanusi 2016: 308]. The present study explores the ongoing dissemination of the Russian language within Ghanaian educational institutions.

However, according to Ghanaian sociologist R. Tenkorang, the level of competition among foreign languages studied in the country's educational institutions is notably high. Due to the peculiarities of the linguistic landscape of African nations and China's current political and economic strategies towards Africa, the foreign languages of utmost demand are French and Chinese, as they can secure for the graduates employment opportunities within Ghana and the broader African continent. The establishment of an organization similar to the Chinese Confucius University, in terms of its functions, appears to be a rational measure for the purpose of promoting the Russian language in Ghana [Tenkorang 2022: 120].

At present, 11 cooperation agreements have been signed between Russian and Ghanaian universities, with the majority concerning the education of Ghanaians at Russian universities. In December 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and the Ghanaian Ministry of Education on cooperation in the field of higher education. It involves the development of joint programs and projects, the exchange of experience and information, and the organization of joint events. The agreement was concluded on the sidelines of the 4th meeting of the Intergovernmental Russia-Ghana Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation. Following a request from the Ghanaian side, an increase in the number of the Russian state-funded places for study in Russian universities for Ghanaians was approved, from 70 to 110. At present, there are more than 900 Ghanaian students enrolled in bachelor's, master's, and specialist programs in Russia, of whom more than 300 are studying free of charge³. The collaboration in the domain of training national personnel for Ghana in Russia was continued in 2023. In the 2023/2024 academic year,

³ Russia and Ghana expand cooperation in higher education. *Russian Ministry of Education and Science*. 18.12.2023. (In Russ.). <https://t.me/minobrnaukiofficial/6919> (accessed: 10.05.2025).

110 students selected under the Russian government-funded quota commenced their studies at Russian universities⁴.

The Russian language and educational practices are also becoming a subject of interest in educational institutions in the **Republic of Côte d'Ivoire**. The diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire were established in January 1967, followed by a period of suspension between 1969 and 1986, and are currently on the rise. The 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the country has led to a significant intensification of bilateral cooperation in a number of key areas. These include national defense and security, the extraction and processing of hydrocarbons and other minerals, the construction of power facilities, the establishment of ties in the field of agriculture, and, naturally, in the sphere of culture and education. In 2016, Ivorian students received approximately thirty scholarships from the Russian Federation, with the possibility of an increase in the number of candidates. In certain instances, students are prepared to fund their own education, as evidenced by the fact that in 2015, 120 individuals pursued academic studies in Russia at their own expense [Okana-Gakosso 2023: 159].

Cooperation between Russia and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire is most actively developing in the higher education sector. A significant number of agreements on scientific and educational cooperation between universities were signed in 2022–2023. The nation's advantage lies in the increasing use of the Internet, encompassing the implementation of educational programs. This approach has proved to reduce educational inequality, including in rural areas, and promote the involvement of a significant number of citizens in the learning process. As a follow-up of the outcome of the second Russia-Africa summit, the prospect of establishing an online platform for the instruction of Russian in several universities in Côte d'Ivoire is being deliberated [Aleshkovsky et al. 2024: 75].

Cultural and scientific ties are also being actively developed with **Benin**. After a long hiatus, Beninese students resumed studying at Russian universities on state scholarships in 2003. In 2024, Benin's quota in Russian universities was 150 places funded by the state. Beninese diplomats are also improving their professional qualifications at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Gérard Gbaguidi, a Soviet university graduate, and his Russian wife founded the A. K. Vereshchagin Higher School of Construction in Cotonou. The Russian Embassy regularly provides the school with fiction books in Russian. The Association of Beninese Graduates of Soviet and Russian Universities ("Soyuz-Benin") is based in Cotonou too. Since 2017, the Embassy has held an annual Russian Film Festival in Benin⁵.

Burkina Faso is home to a non-governmental "Russkiy Dom" ("Russian House"), which hosts meetings with representatives of Russian universities and offers Russian language courses to over 200 Burkinabés. In response to a request from partners, the decision was made to increase the number of state scholarships available to Burkinabé citizens. In 2017, the two countries' ministries of education signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of higher education. Since the end of 2023, the Russian-Burkinabé "African Initiative" association has also been operating in the country, implementing a number of cultural projects attracting musicians and graffiti artists⁶.

⁴ Russian-Ghanaian relations. *Russian Embassy in the Republic of Ghana*. (In Russ.). <https://ghana.mid.ru/ru/countries/ghana/political-relations/> (accessed: 10.05.2025)

⁵ 2021 presidential election in the Republic of Benin. *Institute for African Studies*. 12.05.2021. (In Russ.). <https://www.inafran.ru/node/2473> (accessed: 10.05.2025)

⁶ Primakov: "Russkiy Dom" in Burkina Faso will prepare students for admission to Russian universities. *TASS*. 24.01.2024. (In Russ.). <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19805581> (accessed: 10.05.2025)

The training of specialists at Russian universities remains one of the key areas of Russia-Togo bilateral cooperation. To date, more than 900 Togolese nationals have received an education in Russia. For the 2023/24 academic year, 86 scholarships were allocated from the federal budget to Togolese citizens. Until 1992, the Russian Embassy had provided significant assistance to the Russian community in Togo in resolving various issues. However, after its closure (today Russia's interests in Togo are represented by the Russian Embassy in Benin), cultural ties with Russia have significantly diminished. In fact, there are no Russian institutions operating in the country anymore. Nevertheless, the Association of Russian Women in Togo, "Druzhba" ("Friendship"), helps to keep Russian citizens united⁷.

Programs to promote the Russian language in other West African countries, such as **Liberia** and **Cape Verde**, were implemented under agreements on cultural and scientific cooperation between the USSR government and African republics in the 1970s and 1980s. These agreements aimed to encourage the study of the languages and literature of the respective countries' peoples in educational institutions. At the same time, cultural and scientific ties were established, and these are gradually being resumed at present.

CENTRES FOR OPEN EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES⁸

Since 2023, Centres for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching (COEs) have been operating in almost half of the countries of West Africa: Benin, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal. A number of Russian universities have been actively promoting COEs, including the State University of Education (operating in Benin, Nigeria, and Cameroon); Saint Petersburg State University (Guinea and Central African countries); South Ural State University of Humanities and Pedagogy (Senegal, Mali); Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire).

Universities implement supplementary general education and development programs for foreign students and schoolchildren, whilst also organizing events to promote the Russian language and culture and to assist university teachers in partner countries in improving their qualifications. For instance, between 2023 and 2024, the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin offered on-site Russian language training to 600 students and distance learning programs in Russian to an additional 120 students. In a similar vein, the University of Lagos in Nigeria delivered in-person Russian courses to 524 students and distance language training to 200 students. In 2024, a total of 373 students were enrolled in in-person Russian language classes at the educational institutions in Senegal and 390 students at the private Ahmed Baba Institute in Mali⁹.

⁷ Trade and economic cooperation. Togolese Republic. *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 2023. (In Russ.). <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/tg/1737907/> (date of reference on 10 May 2025)

⁸ In 2023, Centres for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching (COEs) were established with the support of the Russian Ministry of Education in 54 countries worldwide, the number having increased to 62 countries by 2024. In the same year, the number of COE's open platforms had reached 170. In accordance with the directive issued by the President of the Russian Federation (No. Pr-1087 of 30 May 2023), the Foundation for the Support of Humanities "Moya Istoriya" ("My History" Foundation) has been designated as the operator of the Comprehensive Network of COEs with effect from 2024. The Foundation's support has been instrumental in facilitating the attainment of commendable outcomes by country operators. In 2024, the number of COE students learning Russian reached 15,700. The centres employed 252 teachers, implemented 326 educational programs in Russian and hosted more than 135 educational, informational and scientific events around the world. The aforementioned information was obtained from the concluding meeting of the Foundation's country operators, held on 3 December 2024.

⁹ The aforementioned information was obtained from the concluding meeting of the Foundation for the Support of the Humanities "My History" Foundation's country operators, held on 3 December 2024.

In the two-year period, 609 students from the University of Ghana and 608 students from universities in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, including such institutions as the Félix Houphouët-Boigny State University (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny) and a number of private universities—ETIC (ETIC-U), the Methodist University (Université Méthodiste de Côte d'Ivoire), and the Abidjan University Institute (Institut Universitaire d'Avidjan)—have successfully completed the aforementioned programs.

In 2024, there was an observed increase in the interest of schoolchildren in learning Russian in these republics. This issue was discussed at the concluding meeting of the Centres for Open Education, organized by the foundation “Moya Istoriya” (“My History” Foundation) for Russian pedagogical universities implementing projects to promote Russian as a foreign language.

Among all the universities mentioned above, only the University of Ghana has included teaching the Russian language in its core educational programs. At this institution, a considerable number of students enroll in such programs as Archaeology-Linguistics-Russian Language, Economics-Psychology-Russian Language, Philosophy-History-Russian Language, and others. Within a three-component program, students are formally granted the opportunity to study only one foreign language (or occasionally two, namely French and Spanish) as part of their formal education. Under certain circumstances, students can obtain a bachelor's degree without having studied a foreign language.

According to statistics cited in publications by lecturers at the University of Ghana's Department of Modern Languages, the number of students studying Russian has increased from 112 in 2001 to 528 in 2024 [Chaibok-Tverefu 2018: 83–90]. In a short space of time, universities have organized educational, informational, and methodological events that have brought together students and teachers from Africa and Russia. For instance, South Ural State University of Humanities and Pedagogy collaborated with the Center for the Organization of Scientific and Cultural Events in the Field of Public Diplomacy to hold an international youth forum titled “I Want to Know the World.” Representatives from Russia, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Niger participated in the forum.

A total of 117 people, including high school and university students, participated in the international forum. A series of events were organized with the purpose of providing career guidance to their participants, featuring presentations on the Russian education system, the most promising areas of study, and the prospects for receiving education in Russia. Graduates who had successfully completed their studies at Russian universities shared their experiences with forum participants, telling them, in French and in Russian, the stories of their professional successes achieved through their graduation from Russian universities.

In October 2024, South Ural State University of Humanities and Pedagogy organized a Congress of Russian Language Teachers in Dakar. In the course of the event, a presentation was delivered on the subject of the Russian education system and the opportunities for studying at Russian universities. The presentation was composed of contributions from seven Russian universities. A series of methodological master classes were conducted for African educators in the field of Russian language instruction, along with a master class designed for individuals aspiring to undertake the TRFL (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language). A review of contemporary textbooks on Russian as a foreign language (RFL) for students and teachers of Russian was furnished.

In December 2023, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky held an international scientific and practical conference entitled “Russia-Africa 2023: The Paradigm of Education.” Its purpose was to discuss current issues of scientific, methodological, and educational support for educational and enlightenment activities promoting the Russian language and Russian culture in African countries and the

implementation of the Russian Federation's humanitarian policy abroad. The conference was attended by representatives of the Russian Ministry of Education, St. Petersburg State University, 11 pedagogical universities of Russia, and teachers of Russian as a foreign language from African universities and schools.

In 2024, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University hosted the "I Love Russia" festival of science and arts, which comprised a Russian language competition for schoolchildren and students, a competition of works by universities and schools' students entitled "I Draw Russia," interactive platforms presenting the Russian traditions and Russian culture, and a concert of Russian songs and dances performed by Ivorian students.

The operating countries have identified several issues, most notably, difficulties in facilitating access to online education and free online platforms, as well as a paucity of teaching and methodological literature on Russian as a foreign language. In certain countries, groups of students pursuing Russian language studies within the context of supplementary education programs are enrolled without consideration of the students' level of knowledge, education, and age. Moreover, there is a disparity between the commencement and cessation dates of the academic year in Russia and in partner countries, a circumstance that introduces a degree of complexity to the COE planning its activities and the organization of training for foreign students in Russian universities.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE YAROSLAVL STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR OPEN EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLICS OF GHANA AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The Centre for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching in the Republic of Ghana was established at the University of Ghana in the capital city of Accra in 2023, following the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation. At present, close collaborative relationships are being cultivated with the university, with the Department of Modern Languages, in particular. In 2023, general development programs in Russian as a foreign language were devised and implemented for university students at the "Elementary" (A1), "Basic" (A2), and "First Certification" (B1) levels. In addition, three events (educational, informational, and methodological) were conducted, and testing was carried out based on the results of the Russian as a Foreign Language course at the "Elementary" (A1), "Basic" (A2), and "First Certification" (B1) levels of Russian language proficiency.

From 15 June to 31 July 2024, teachers from Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University (YSPU) visited the University of Ghana to implement six supplementary general development programs, each with a duration of 72 hours. The programs included "Russian Language in Professional Communication" and "Russian Statehood: A Synopsis of the Governance Landscape in the Russian Federation"; "Meeting at A.S. Pushkin's: The Life and Creative Work of the Russian Poet"; "Spiritual and Moral Values of the Russian People"; "Student and School Movements: How Russian Youth Live"; "Musical Geography: Instruments and Dances of the Peoples of Russia," as well as testing Russian language proficiency.

During the 2023–2024 academic year, Russian language instruction was provided at Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University within the Faculty of Russian Philology and Culture (9 students) and the Faculty of Foreign Languages (2 students). Following the conclusion of the Russian language course, a test was administered to the Ghanaian students based at YSPU in order to ascertain their level of proficiency in Russian as a foreign language (levels A1–B1).

Furthermore, plans for cooperation with the private language school E-MORT, which teaches Russian to children and adolescents between the ages of 9 and 14, were discussed.

The Centre for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching in Côte d'Ivoire is organized on the basis of four universities in Abidjan.

During 2023, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University concluded cooperation agreements with the private university ETIC-U¹⁰, the Félix Houphouët-Boigny State University, and the Methodist University (Université Méthodiste de Côte d'Ivoire) in Abidjan. In 2024, a further agreement was made with the University Institute of Abidjan. In the same year, the private schools Muguet and Ephrata in Abidjan demonstrated a particular interest in teaching Russian.

In 2023, supplementary general development programs in Russian (levels A1, A2, and B1) were devised and implemented for students of partner universities in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. Subsequent to this, three events (educational, informational, and methodological) and testing were conducted, the basis of the latter being the results of the Russian as a foreign language course completion. The purpose of this testing was to assess the level of Russian language proficiency.

At present, within the framework of the existing agreements and with the active support of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, close cooperation with all four universities is ongoing. In autumn 2024, a delegation of educators from Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University visited the universities in Abidjan. The objective of the visit was to implement six supplementary general development programs, each encompassing 72 hours. The programs included "Oh, Sport, you are Peace: a century of sport in Russia," "Historical milestones in the development of the Russian state," "Russian language: Rich and Beautiful: How to Speak Russian Correctly," "Great Cities of Russia: History and Modernity," "Once Upon a Time: Secrets of Russian Fairy Tales," "Traditions and National Holidays of the Peoples of Russia," as well as to conduct educational and informational events and to assess Russian language proficiency. During the 2023–2024 academic year, eight students from partner universities pursued their Russian language studies at the Centre for Open Education in Russian and Russian Language Teaching, affiliated with the Faculty of Russian Philology and Culture at Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University.

In order to promote the Russian language and popularize models and practices of the Russian education system, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University is organizing methodological support for educational and enlightenment activities. This includes the provision of advanced training courses (longreads) on business communication in educational and academic environments and on the use of information and communication technologies in educational environments. The textbook for students from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire on the Russian language and Russian regional culture, "Listening, Speaking and Writing about Yaroslavl: Step by Step to Success," was written. This textbook has been specifically designed for use as a supplementary teaching tool within general development programs for foreign students. It is composed of two parts. The first part contains tasks in English and Russian and is intended for English-speaking students, while the second part offers tasks in French and Russian for French-speaking students. The materials have been developed based on the experience of teaching students from YSPU's partner universities in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

African students possess a strong inclination to pursue Russian language studies, an experience that has been widely regarded as a prestigious endeavor across numerous

¹⁰ École Technique Informatique et Commerciale (Université).

African nations and has a long history dating back to the 1960s. A significant economic incentive for choosing to study at Russian universities is the fact that Russia annually funds the education of African students at all levels, from undergraduate to postgraduate programs. For instance, the Russian Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire facilitates the annual enrollment of 100 Ivorian students at Russian universities free of charge, with an option of taking a pre-tertiary Russian language training course for one or two years. It is evident that possessing a certificate attesting to the attainment of the Russian language, even at the A1 level, will confer a significant advantage to students. Consequently, it can be posited that the interest in Russia as a nation with traditional values, which is proactively engaged on the African continent and furnishes young individuals with the prospect of acquiring a robust education, constitutes a compelling impetus for the pursuit of proficiency in Russian. At the same time, however, such elevated motivation is not sufficiently stable; therefore, the task of the organizers of the educational process is to identify the reasons for this instability in order to find ways to maintain a high level of motivation to learn Russian.

Consequently, the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation have led to a notable increase in the efforts of Russian universities to promote the Russian language, as well as to foster collaboration between Russian pedagogical universities and their partner institutions in West African countries. The collaboration between Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University and universities in the Republics of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire has evolved into a productive union over the past two years, as evidenced by the enhanced interest in learning Russian on the part of universities and schools in these republics: there has been an annual increase in the number of platforms with which Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University carries out educational and cultural interaction.

The productivity of this collaboration is evidenced by the interest shown by Ghanaian and Ivorian students and school graduates in enrolling in master's and bachelor's degree programs at higher education institutions in Yaroslavl. Furthermore, there is a noticeable interest amongst teachers in enhancing their qualifications through YSPU programs and postgraduate studies. It is imperative to acknowledge the significance of Russian universities' work aimed at extending, by utilizing "soft methods," the influence of the Russian Federation within African nations and at fortifying ties with partner countries across a spectrum of interaction, encompassing the realms of education, culture, and science. This endeavor, unquestionably, will leave an indelible imprint on the annals of effective and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Russian Federation and West African countries.

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Научная статья

СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО РОССИЙСКИХ ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИХ ВУЗОВ СО СТРАНАМИ ЗАПАДНОЙ АФРИКИ (опыт центров открытого образования)

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Аннотация. Целью предпринятого исследования является анализ сотрудничества Российской Федерации и стран Западной Африки в сфере образования, в частности, опыта продвижения в африканские государства русского языка и работы Центров открытого образования на русском языке и обучения африканских слушателей русскому языку.

В работе затрагивается история продвижения русского языка в странах западноафриканского региона. Отдельный акцент сделан на положительном опыте партнерства в образовательной сфере, которое формировалось Советским Союзом на протяжении десятилетий после обретения африканскими государствами независимости, но было прервано в 1990-е гг. в силу политических обстоятельств. Рассматривая возрождение сотрудничества в последнее десятилетие, авторы представили современный опыт некоторых российских университетов, которые реализуют проекты по продвижению русского языка и русской культуры в государствах Западной Африки. В статье освещаются некоторые значимые аспекты образовательного взаимодействия со странами Африки, описываются практики сотрудничества России и африканских стран. В настоящее время основной методикой «мягкой силы» является продвижение российского образования в страны Африки, включая реализацию дополнительных общеобразовательных общеразвивающих программ обучения, сертификацию иностранных студентов по русскому языку, прием иностранных студентов на обучение в российские вузы, продвижение русской культуры через реализацию образовательных, просветительских и научно-методических мероприятий, повышение квалификации педагогов высшей школы в Африке. Главным результатом исследования является представление комплексного практического опыта продвижения русского языка как иностранного некоторыми педагогическими университетами, работающими в Западной Африке, что способствует продолжению партнерства африканских университетов с российскими вузами.

Ключевые слова: Западная Африка, Российская Федерация, взаимодействие, партнерство, Гана, Кот-д’Ивуар, Центр открытого образования, реализация образовательных программ, русский язык

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов: совместное исследование.

Благодарности. Статья написана в рамках Дополнительного соглашения № 073-03-2025-058/2 от 25.04.2025 к Соглашению о предоставлении субсидии из федерального бюджета на финансовое обеспечение выполнения государственного задания на оказание государственных услуг (выполнения работ) № 073-03-2025-058 от 16.01.2025, заключенного между ЯГПУ имени К.Д. Ушинского и Министерством просвещения Российской Федерации. Авторы выражают признательность Ярославскому государственному педагогическому университету имени К.Д. Ушинского, Фонду поддержки гуманитарных наук «Моя история» и университетам западноафриканских республик за возможность проведения исследования.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-92-105

Для цитирования: Бойчук Е.И., Воронцова И.А. Сотрудничество российских педагогических вузов со странами Западной Африки (опыт центров открытого образования). *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-92-105>

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Interview

AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE USSR/ RUSSIA IN THE 1960–1990s: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

**Interview with N.A. Ksenofontova, PhD (History), Senior Research Fellow,
Center for Sociological and Political Research, Institute for African Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences**



Natalia Alexandrovna Ksenofontova is one of the eldest members of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences who took part in the formation of African studies in the USSR and Russia. She joined the Institute, which was destined to become the flagship research center of African studies, in 1966, only seven years after its foundation. She had the opportunity to become not only a witness but also an active participant in the academic life of the research team, to observe its development. Memories of N.A. Ksenofontova, a historian by profession and a keenly observant person, about that distant past—about the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, about the patriarchs who had laid the foundation of Soviet and Russian African studies and established a new school of thought, about the people who devoted their scholarly lives to the study of the African continent, about the areas of research—are of lasting

value for modern scholars, since the achievements of the founders, predecessors, and mentors provide the guidelines and methodology extremely relevant in the study of modern processes taking place in Africa. N.A. Ksenofontova, who has witnessed the Institute's emergence and evolution, lists the scholars who have become classics of African studies due to the vast range of their scholarly interests, the scope of the problems researched, the depth of their theoretical conclusions, and their unorthodox approaches to the materials studied. She pays special attention to historians and the directions of their scholarly comprehension of the African past, as well as to researchers in the field of African culture and religions and their works. From a theoretical and methodological point of view, the reasoning of one of the eldest Russian historians specialized in regional studies is intended to help restore the memory of the birth of Russian African studies and the first Russian/Soviet research center in this field—the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which turned 65 years old in 2024.

Keywords: Soviet African studies, Russian African studies, Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, African history studies, African cultural studies

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-106-122

For citation: Ksenofontova N.A. (2025). African Studies in the USSR/Russia in the 1960–1990s: Historical and Cultural Studies (interview). *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 106–122. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-106-122>

– **In October 2024, the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences celebrated its 65th anniversary. Over the past decades, the institution has welcomed numerous generations of scientists. What is your opinion on the continuity of scientific generations?**

– One cannot but share the opinion of academician A.B. Davidson, who strongly emphasized that “no profession can be understood without its history, without the fates of the people who dedicated their lives to it” [Davidson 2017]. Regrettably, it has frequently been observed that new staff members joining the Institute for African Studies over the past decade appear to be unacquainted with the historical development of national African studies, the establishment of the Institute itself, and the founding figures who played a pivotal role in its establishment. In my opinion, they pay little attention to the experience that was accumulated before them. When considering and analyzing today’s problems, they do not always realize their connection with the past and do not use the scientific achievements of their predecessors. There is much to learn!

– **It is for this reason that the recollections of the Institute’s most senior employees, who were directly involved in both the scientific process and in the creation of structural subdivisions, are of such great value. What works on the history of the Institute would you advise new generations of researchers to focus on?**

– I would call “House of Africa in Moscow. Starokonyushenny, 16, Moscow: Institute for African Studies of the RAS” [Solodovnikov 2011] by the Institute’s second director, Vasily Grigorievich Solodovnikov (1918–2018). The book contains rich illustrative material from his personal archive. Other recommended sources include articles and speeches by academician Apollon Borisovich Davidson [Davidson 2003; Davidson 2017] and Artem Borisovich Letnev (1929–2013), a Doctor of Sciences in History who headed the Institute’s Centre for History for 40 years (Letnev 2010: 9–15).

It is imperative to highlight the book by Yuri Mikhailovich Ilyin (1925–2004), PhD in History, entitled “Institute for African Studies (1960–2004)” [Ilyin 2005], who worked at the Institute for more than 40 years. Alongside his scientific work, he engaged in organizational tasks and held senior positions, including scientific secretary for international scientific relations (1960–1971), scientific secretary of the Scientific Council on the problems of economic, socio-political, and cultural development of African countries (1976–2000), executive secretary of the Association of Soviet Africanists. He took an active part in the preparation of the third edition of the encyclopedic reference book “Africa” in two volumes [Potekhin 1963, Gromyko 1987].

Ilyin’s book about the Institute for African Studies is not just a memoir [Ilyin 2005]. Its value lies in the fact that it is a documentary-historical study and an impartial chronicle of events, structural changes, creative research areas, and international scientific relations. It mentions the activities of many staff members of different generations and their contributions to African studies. The publisher has supplemented the work with an appendix, which gives an account of the scientific and scientific-organizational activities of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It also contains a selection of substantial illustrative material from the archives of the Institute and those of Roza Nurgalieвна Ismagilova, Doctor of Sciences in History, who put a great deal of effort into preparing this manuscript for printing after the author’s death. This work is now a bibliographic rarity.

– **Natalia Alexandrovna, you are among those employees who joined the Institute in the first years of its existence. Please tell us how it happened.**

– The Institute for African Studies has been my only place of work for over eight decades, so it has become my life and my destiny. I started studying Africa as a third-year

student at the Faculty of History of the MSU,¹ and I have known the Institute's staff almost since its establishment in 1964. I first came here to consult Leonid Dmitrievich Yablochkov and Bertha Isaakovna Sharevskaya. They invited me to the defense of the PhD thesis of a talented young scholar, Yuri Mikhailovich Kobishchanov, on Aksum² [Kobishchanov 1964]. The Ethiopian ambassador was present. It was a brilliant defense. The impressions from it, from the atmosphere of the heated academic discussion once again convinced me to devote my scholarly life to African studies, especially since the Deputy Director of the Institute, Gleb Borisovich Starushenko,³ invited me to work as a referent, which allowed me to communicate closely with all the staff.

– I am sure that it is important for young people not only to know the scientific research and publications of the past years but also to learn more about the people who conducted these studies. What could you tell about the person who initiated the foundation of the Institute, Ivan Izosimovich Potekhin?

– Ivan Izosimovich Potekhin (1903–1964), a prominent historian and ethnographer, Doctor of Sciences in History, began studying the problems of the peoples of the African continent in the early 1930s, headed the Department of Africa at the Institute of Oriental Studies. Moreover, he was also the first Soviet historian to visit Ghana and other African countries [Safonov 2002: 148–149], which was a significant event in the field of Russian African studies. This inspired him to advocate the establishment of a special institute. He found considerable support from a prominent public figure in the United States, the African-American William Dubois, who was highly respected by the USSR leadership [Mazov 2005: 31–32].

The indomitable energy of I.I. Potekhin, an extremely active, forceful, and enthusiastic person, proved effective. In mid-1959, the country's leadership decided to establish the Institute for African Studies. Although the new organization was tasked with taking a comprehensive approach to studying the peoples and countries of the continent, the central themes were history, economics, the study of the national question, and culture [Mazov 2005: 33–34; Ilyin 2005: 5–8]. On February 2, 1959 I.I. Potekhin, the director of the newly established research center, issued his first order for the Institute. This is how its history began. By the end of the first year, 50 people were working there, including one Doctor of Sciences (the director himself) and several Candidates of Sciences (PhDs). By mid-1962, the research staff had grown to 90 people [Ilyin 2005: 10].

– Natalia Alexandrovna, let me clarify one point: whence came the staff of the new institute? After all, by 1959, not only there was no unified center for African studies in the country, but Africanist researchers were also few and far between.

– You are right, by the end of 1959, only a few scholars in the USSR were engaged in African-related research, specifically at the Institute of Ethnography⁴ and the Institute of Oriental Studies. They formed the backbone of the Institute for African Studies. Some of

¹ Faculty of History, Lomonosov Moscow State University.

² Aksum, or the Kingdom of Aksum, was an ancient Ethiopian state that existed from the 1st to the 10th centuries on the territory of modern Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Yemen, and the southern part of Saudi Arabia.

³ Gleb Borisovich Starushenko, Doctor of Sciences in Law, Professor, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1992–1997), was a Soviet and Russian legal scholar, specialist in international legal problems and the state law of developing countries, the legal problems of the national liberation movement, the international regulation of political and social relations, human and national rights.

⁴ The N.N. Miklukho-Maclay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IEA RAS) is a research institute of the Academy of Sciences in the field of socio-cultural and physical anthropology. It was founded in 1933.

them had previously published fundamental works on the continent: “Peoples of Africa [Olderogge, Potekhin 1954]; “Mahdist Revolt in the Sudan” [Smirnov 1950]; “Matabele and Mashona in their fight against English colonization, 1888–1897” [Davidson 1958], “Social Order of the Malagasy in the 19th Century” [Orlova 1958]; dozens of research articles were also published.

Most of the other staff members had not previously worked on Africa. They were economists, political scientists, geographers, sociologists, demographers, and linguists. They were all just beginning to familiarize themselves with the African continent and its peoples and to learn the specifics of their economic, political, and social development. However, it is no exaggeration to say that all of them, the founding fathers of Russian African studies, who laid the foundations for the Institute, were outstanding representatives of the academic fundamental scientific school.

Given the ethnographic and historical “roots” of the Institute, it is not surprising that in the first decades of its existence, the history and culture divisions were central in the structure in terms of importance. Order No. 12 of February 15, 1960, formed the sectors of modern problems, information, history, culture and art groups. They included such outstanding scientists as Sergei Rufovich Smirnov, Lev Evgenyevich Kubbel, Apollon Borisovich Davidson, Valery Alexandrovich Subbotin, Irina Pavlovna Yastrebova, Matvey Yulevich Frenkel, Georgy Alexandrovich Nersesov, Artem Borisovich Letnev, Yuri Vladislavovich Lukonin, Bertha Isaakovna Sharevskaya. Their ranks were replenished by Antonina Semyonovna Orlova, Roza Nurgalievna Ismagilova, Leonid Dmitrievich Yablochkov, Lyudmila Alekseevna Demkina, Svetlana Yurievna Abramova, who recently defended their PhD theses on African issues. Such exceptionally talented researchers as Vladimir Vasilievich Krylov, Yuri Mikhailovich Kobishchanov, Natalia Borisovna Kochakova, Igor Vasilievich Sledzevsky, Andrey Mikhailovich Pegushev, Alexander Vladimirovich Nikiforov stood out among the young ones.

In his memoirs about those years and the mentioned personalities, Artem Borisovich Letnev, Doctor of Sciences in History, wrote, “It was they, endowed with a special spiritual vision due to their extraordinary life experience, who could see the prospects, who developed parameters for scientific studies, determined their vectors and rates, proved to science officials the paramount importance of comprehensiveness in African studies, instilled in young people a taste for working with primary sources and a rejection of superficiality and opportunism. It was they, the knights of professionalism, who brought up more than one generation of Arabists and Africanists. Those who were fortunate enough to work with them, who stood at the origins of our first works on the history, economy, and culture of Africa, will never forget them” [Letnev 2010: 9].

I would like to say a lot about each of the scholars I mentioned, but of course, the interview format does not allow for that. However, one thing must be said: they were all luminaries in their respective fields. They had an in-depth knowledge of their area of research, engaging in both empirical research substantiated by reliable sources and theoretical discourse. Most importantly, they were highly cultured individuals. This set the tone for the creative team. The atmosphere was defined by benevolence, mutual respect, and support, as well as democratic relations between the Institute’s management and staff and between experienced scientists and novice researchers.

I experienced all of this first-hand. Upon my arrival at the Institute, I was immediately engulfed by a wave of attention from my colleagues. They recommended that I write an article based on my thesis [Ksenofontova 1968: 121–140], helped me enroll in graduate school, supported me in successfully defending my thesis in 1971 and publishing my first book in 1974 [Ksenofontova 1974].

It is noteworthy to mention a tradition that was established in years gone by and which still exists today: at our Institute, as a rule, after defending their dissertation, young employees were usually given the opportunity to plan a monograph, a practice that was not commonplace at other academic institutions. Newcomers were generally treated with great respect and care, and were always supported and promoted. This is still part of the Institute's "corporate culture" in the present day.

– I agree that the scope of this interview does not allow us to discuss all of the scholars you mentioned, but I would love to hear about at least some of them and their contributions to science.

– I would like to share my memories of colleagues who have already been recognized by time and history as outstanding scholars. Given the breadth of their scientific interests, the scope of the issues they explored, their profound theoretical conclusions, and their extraordinary approaches to the subjects they studied, they can truly be considered classics of African studies.

The first of these is Sergei Rufovich Smirnov (1909–1969), Doctor of Historical Sciences, the first scholar to head the History Department. He was a veteran of the Great Patriotic War and a student of Dmitry Alekseevich Olderogge (1903–1987), a Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, the patriarch and one of the founders of Soviet African studies. He was also a colleague of Ivan Izosimovich Potekhin.

His colleague, Artem Borisovich Letnev, wrote the following about S.R. Smirnov, and rightly so: "A widely educated Arabist and Africanist, a deeply erudite scholar with a keen analytical mind, a man of creative thought and high principles, he enjoyed high scholarly authority among the Institute's staff" [Letnev 2010: 10]. I would add that moral criteria were more important to him than anything else; integrity, courage in research, and rejecting hasty conclusions were at the heart of his scholarly approach.

His academic interests were primarily focused on the history of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle. He developed key theoretical problems of the continent, such as the periodization of historical development, the features of indirect rule in British colonies. He was also the first to use the concept of "religious fundamentalism" in relation to certain trends in Islam, highlighting its reactionary nature.

S.R. Smirnov was the first Soviet Sudanologist to engage with field material in Sudan. Based on his research, he published a book entitled "History of Sudan" in 1968 [Smirnov 1968]. His fundamental research was published in several foreign languages and received high praise from African scholars [Smirnov 1974]. This outstanding scholar headed the History Department for 10 years and laid a solid foundation for historical research on Africa and setting it on the right course.

His successor, Doctor of Sciences in History Artem Borisovich Letnev (1929–2013), continued these traditions. Between 1960 and 1990, he published more than a hundred individual and collective monographs and collections on various countries, various eras from ancient to modern, various topics and problems [Letnev 1964; Letnev 1983; Letnev 2002; Letnev 2005; Letnev 2010].

In the context of pre-colonial history and the development of potestary and early state formations, it is also possible to identify the most prominent scholars and their seminal works. Undoubtedly, the most prominent specialist in the ancient history of sub-Saharan Africa, including the specifics of the political, socio-economic, and cultural development of the peoples living there, was Yuri Mikhailovich Kobishchanov (1934–2022), who worked at the Institute from the day of its foundation. He, a man of encyclopedic knowledge and versatile scientific interests, published several dozen monographs, the

topics of which had a very wide range of directions: from studies of ancient civilizations (Meroe, Aksum) in modern-day Sudan and Ethiopia to the socio-political structures of traditional societies, from the consideration of secret societies to the study of local religions, from dance and music cultures and studies of small-scale communal production to the phenomenon of “poliudye”⁵ in the system of various world civilizations, including those of Ancient Rus’, Africa, Asia, and Europe [Kobishchanov 1964; Kobishchanov 1966; Kobishchanov 1973]. He prepared multi-volume editions of studies on the spread of Christianity and Islam [Kobishchanov 2019; Kobishchanov 2008].

Yu.M. Kobishchanov was the author of the theory of the “great feudal formation.” Together with Igor Vasilyevich Sledzevsky, he published serious studies: “Africa: The Emergence of Backwardness and Paths of Development” [Kobishchanov 1974], “Community in Africa” [Tokarev 1978]. He was an excellent popularizer of science. In 1967 and 1970, Yu.M. Kobishchanov, together with V.B. Mirimanov and N.B. Kochakova, published two volumes: “Africa Is Not Yet Discovered” [Kobishchanov 1967] and “Africa: A Meeting of Civilizations” [Kobishchanov 1970].

Yuri Mikhailovich was always brimming with ideas and shared them with his colleagues, bringing together creative teams consisting not only of experienced professionals, but also of young novices, including myself. Long before the Republic of Zimbabwe gained independence, he suggested that I write a monograph entitled “People of Zimbabwe” [Ksenofontova 1974].

Another undisputed classic in the field of African studies was Doctor of Sciences in History Natalia Borisovna Kochakova (1932–2014), whose erudition and professional scope were exceptionally broad, covering the pre-colonial history and culture of the peoples of Nigeria and other ethnic groups in West Africa. Her scientific analysis was also extremely profound.

Starting with her pioneering work “Yoruba City-States,” published in 1968, in which she examined the origins of the Ife civilization and raised general questions about the nature of socio-political institutions during the transition from a classless society to a class-based society [Kochakova 1968].

N.B. Kochakova was the author of dozens of articles and several monographs, the most notable of which is the seminal work “The Birth of the African Civilization: Ife, Oyo, Benin, Dahomey” [Kochakova 1986] stands out. In this book, while exploring the features of the development of history, culture, and religion, Natalya Borisovna focused on the analysis of traditional institutions of governance and power, as well as the role of secret societies. Many of her research articles were devoted to the problems of African historiography [Kochakova 1979].

It is also important to acknowledge the significant contributions of Lev Evgenievich Kubbel (1929–1988) to the field of West African history, particularly his works on the ancient and early feudal history of the region. These include “From the History of Ancient Mali” [Kubbel 1963], “Land of Gold” [Kubbel 1966], “Songhai Empire” [Kubbel 1974], and “In Search of the Niger” [Zotova, Kubbel 1972]. Thematically related to these is Igor Vasilyevich Sledzevsky’s work “The Hausa Emirates of Northern Nigeria” [Sledzevsky 1974].

Major studies on pre-colonial state formations of Central Africa, the Great Lakes Region, and Madagascar were written by the eminent Africanist, PhD in History, Antonina Semenovna Orlova (1921–1993): “History of the State of Congo” [Orlova 1958], “Pages from the History of the Great Savannah (Pre-Colonial History of the States

⁵ Poliudye: in Kievan Rus’, the practice of gathering tribute by the rulers from their vassal peoples.

of the Bakonto, Bakuba, Baluba, and Balunda Peoples)” [Orlova 1963], and other monographs [Orlova 1968, Orlova 1978]. She was the first at the Department of Ethnography of the History Faculty of Moscow State University to teach a course on Africa.

Through this process, I also had the opportunity to learn about African history. By studying the ancient civilization of Zimbabwe-Monomotapa and the early political formations of the peoples of Zambia and Uganda, I was able to confirm the autochthonous origin of monumental stone construction [Ksenofontova 1968; 1974; 1984; 1990].

– Nowadays, the scientific study of colonialism attracts a great deal of attention. I believe that this field of study should build on the work of earlier researchers. Which researchers would you single out?

– Of particular note is the unrivaled contribution to this area of African studies made by Svetlana Yuryevna Abramova (1929–2013), PhD in History, who devoted many years to studying the transatlantic European-American export of African slaves to plantations and mines in America and the West Indies until the second half of the 19th century, as well as its impact on the development of countries in Europe and the New World.

In preparing her groundbreaking work, S.Yu. Abramova processed and analyzed a huge amount of memoirs and academic literature published in European languages, as well as statistical materials. She consulted the archives of Liverpool and the British Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1823, and the National Archives of Great Britain. The monograph “Africa: Four Centuries of the Slave Trade,” edited by Dr. Davidson, was published twice [Abramova 1978, Abramova 1992] and translated into French in 1988 [Abramova 1988].

In the 1960s–1990s, the Institute’s scholars, including Yulia Nikolaevna Zotova, Yuri Vladislavovich Lukonin, Valery Alexandrovich Subbotin, Andrey Mikhailovich Pegushev, Matvey Yulievich Frenkel, Lyudmila Alekseevna Demkina, Leonid Dmitrievich Yablochkov, and others, prepared dozens of monographs on the history of the conquest of territories on the African continent, the peculiarities of colonial administration by France and the British Empire, the creation and functioning of colonial societies, and the role of indigenous peoples within them.

Two fundamental studies on the history of the national liberation struggle of African peoples in modern and contemporary times were published in the 1970s: “History of the National Liberation Struggle of the Peoples of Africa in Modern Times” [Frenkel 1976] and “History of the National Liberation Struggle of the Peoples of Africa in Modern Times” [Gromyko 1978].

In 1981, the Institute’s History Department began publishing a series of major studies devoted to individual countries. The first book in the series was “History of Nigeria in Modern and Contemporary Times” [Zotova, Sledzevsky 1981]. In total, 16 books were prepared on various countries, including Zaire, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Togo, Zambia, Mauritania, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Liberia. I played an active role in these publications, writing sections on the pre-colonial and colonial history and culture of the peoples of Uganda and Zambia.

Traditional culture and cultural development in African countries received considerable attention in the encyclopedic reference book “Africa” in its first (1963) [Potekhin 1963] and second (1987) [Gromyko 1987] editions. This is not surprising, given that the history and traditional culture of African peoples are closely intertwined and inextricably linked. Therefore, many Africanist historians were also experts in culture.

I understand that I got carried away listing colleagues' achievements, but each of their works represents an irreplaceable brick in the building of Russian African studies, so it would be a shame to leave anything out.

– **Along with historical research, cultural studies was initially one of the Institute's flagship areas of activity. Could you please tell us more about these studies?**

– The fate of cultural studies at our Institute has been complicated. In 1960, a cultural studies group was formed within the History Department, then it was transformed into a department headed by a prominent scholar and representative of the Leningrad school, a student of Dmitry Alekseevich Olderogge (1903–1987), Lev Evgenievich Kubbel (1929–1988). Lev Evgenievich was a highly erudite scholar and a leading specialist in ancient and medieval history, African traditions and culture. He was also an exceptional organizer of scientific research. He edited several monographs and trained many students and postgraduates, including myself.

In collaboration with Viktor Vladimirovich Matveev, L.E. Kubbel prepared and published a two-volume edition of a series of Arabic sources from the 7th to 13th centuries on the ethnography and history of sub-Saharan African peoples [Kubbel, Matveev 1960] and translated the Sudanese Chronicles from Arabic [Kubbel 1984]. His article “Oldest Reports on the Customs of Brother and Sister Co-Rule” is considered a pioneering study of gender issues in Soviet African studies [Kubbel 1961: 149–151]. He was also the first to develop the theory of potestarinness [Kubbel 1988: 149–151].

Lev Evgenievich was a charming and kind-hearted man, always evoking sentiments of sympathy and respect. His works were distinguished by the encyclopedic nature of the knowledge and the breadth of the topics he researched. As a result, they rightfully became part of the golden fund of Russian African studies. Under his leadership, specialists in the fields of culture, art, folklore, literature, and religion prepared and published more than a dozen fundamental studies.

– Could you perhaps name some studies by Lev Yevgenyevich's followers that you consider to be the most significant?

– I would consider the following studies of literature, oral folk art, and theater to be particularly valuable: “Drum Rhythms: Poets of Africa” [Galperina 1961], “Through the Eyes of the Heart: Poems of the Peoples of Angola, Mozambique, the Cape Verde Islands, and São Tomé” [Tulchinskaya 1961], “Literature of the African Countries” [Breskina, Vavilov, Potekhina 1964], “Fiction of the African Countries in European Languages. Bibliography” [Breskina, Vavilov 1967], “Folklore and Literature of the Peoples of Africa” [Olderogge 1970], “Contemporary Literature of Africa. Eastern and Southern Africa” [Nikiforova 1974], “Myths and Fairy Tales of Africa” [Kotlyar 1976], “Problems of Cultural Development in Independent African Countries” [Vavilov 1971], “Contemporary Theater in Tropical Africa” [Lvov 1977].

In the field of fine arts, noteworthy contributions include “Art of Tropical Africa in the Collections of the USSR” [Olderogge 1967], “Tropical Africa Masks and Sculptures” [Gromyko 1985], “Art of Africa” [Mirimanov, Chernova 1964], works by Yu.M. Kobishchanov and N.B. Kochakova.

– **Which scholars in this field would you particularly like to highlight?**

– In my opinion, the outstanding Africanist Vil Borisovich Mirimanov (1929–2004) merits particular attention. He was a Doctor of Arts, a member of the Union of Artists and the International Association of Art Historians. According to the renowned orientalist and Doctor of Science in Philology, Sergei Yuryevich Neklyudov, V.B. Mirimanov “was unique, probably the only specialist in our country in three areas of art history: primitive

art, the art of Tropical Africa, and the art of the European avant-garde... These areas had a deep internal connection for Vil Borisovich; he saw the correlation between Paleolithic monuments, the traditions of living archaism, and the work of 20th-century avant-garde artists based on them” [Neklyudov 2009: 4].

The scholar had worked at the Institute for African Studies for ten years, defended his PhD thesis on “Rock Art in the Sahara”, as well as his doctoral dissertation on “Art of Tropical Africa: Typology, Semantics, Evolution” [Mirimanov 1986]. From major studies of African culture (books and articles from the 1960s to the 1980s) and a generalized review of the history of primitive and traditional art, V.B. Mirimanov progressed to studying the mythological picture of the world and problems of style in art [Mirimanov 1967; Mirimanov 1973; Mirimanov 1986]. This outstanding scholar was known for his modest and somewhat reserved character. His profound dedication to his profession was driven by his passion for his work. He believed that the most important thing for him was to “protect the space of his world—the world of art and the world of science” [Neklyudov 2009: 6].

– **Music has been left out of our cultural research overview, which, in my opinion, is unacceptable, particularly with regard to Africa...**

– You are right. The 1960s–1980s witnessed a significant surge in research into African musical culture. The fact that the music of the peoples of the continent is unlike anything we have known before, that it is bizarre and mysterious, is noted in the in-depth studies of Yuri Mikhailovich Kobishchanov, written by him alone and in collaboration with the renowned composer Dzivani Mikhailov (1938–1995), who conducted seminars and lectured at the Moscow Conservatory and in many countries across Asia and Africa, and in the United States. The following publications were released under the auspices of the Institute for African Studies “Amazing World of African Music” [Kobishchanov 1967: 239–339] and “Spectacular, Dance, and Musical Culture of Secret Societies” [Kobishchanov 1981: 107–118].

I would like to highlight the works on African musical culture carried out by a PhD in History, Liya Oliverovna Golden (1934–2010), known in the West as Lily Golden. She worked at the Institute for 30 years, publishing numerous books on the history of Africans in Russia and more than 100 works on African music in the 1960s–1980s. She was a member of the Council of Elders of the International Cross-Cultural Black Women’s Studies Institute, New York, a professor at many universities around the world, and an honorary doctor of the University of Chicago. She was a tireless fighter against racism. She demonstrated unwavering commitment to the struggle against racism, a commitment that characterized her life’s work. Like her life, all her work was full of sharp turns of fate and a kaleidoscope of events.

Her grandfather, Hillard Golden, was a slave who became a wealthy landowner after his emancipation, and her grandmother was half-Indian. Her father, Oliver Golden (an African American), and her mother, Bertha Isaakovna Bialek (Jewish), came to the USSR in 1931. Leah herself studied at the History Faculty of Moscow State University, where she became friends with the daughter of I.S. Stalin, Svetlana. Golden’s husband was the prominent Tanzanian politician Abdullah Kassim Hanga, who became the Prime Minister of Zanzibar and was assassinated by his political opponents in 1968. A year before his death, she defended her PhD thesis on the topic “African Music: Trends in Historical Development” [Golden 1967]. In 1973, she published a collection of works by African ethnographers and musicologists entitled “Essays on the Musical Culture of the Peoples of Tropical Africa” [Golden 1973].

– **Natalia Alexandrovna, the mysticism of African art naturally brings us to the topic of religion. What would you highlight in this area of research?**

– Despite the atheistic times in Soviet society during the period we are considering, the Institute’s work was characterized by achievements in the field of religious studies. The main and leading specialist in this field of high-level science was Doctor of Sciences in History Berta Isaakovna Sharevskaya (1904–1984), whose works were highly regarded both in the USSR and by foreign Africanists. She enjoyed the respect of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Rus' Pimen.⁶

B.I. Sharevskaya completed her postgraduate studies at the History Faculty of Moscow State University, where she specialized in the study of ancient religions. She subsequently assumed the positions of head of the Department of Religion and Atheism in the Ancient World at the Central Anti-Religious Museum, at the Institute of Ethnography. From late 1959, she worked at the Institute for African Studies. Fluent in several foreign languages, she translated the books of the French philosopher and anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), “Le Surnaturel et la Nature dans la mentalité primitive” [Lévy-Bruhl 1994], “Primitive Culture” [Taylor 1989] by the English ethnologist and cultural anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), and “Les origines de la religion” [Hainchelin 1954] by the French Marxist historian Charles Hainchelin (1901–1944). Berta Isaakovna was the first Russian scholar to prepare a course of lectures on African religions.

As modern scholars have observed, a significant proportion of the work of this distinguished Africanist remains pertinent and valuable in the present day, and special studies have been devoted to her academic heritage.⁷ The conclusions and assessments she made in such fundamental works such as “Old and New Religions of Tropical and Southern Africa” [Sharevskaya 1964] and “Traditional Religions of Tropical and Southern Africa” and “Traditional Religions of Tropical Africa” [Sharevskaya 1975] make these books an encyclopedia of African religions.

In 1967, Berta Isaakovna edited a comprehensive reference book entitled Religions of African Countries, compiled by her student, Heinrich Alekseevich Shpazhnikov, which has been reprinted several times. It contains comprehensive data on traditional cults, Christian-African churches and sects, and other denominations and religions [Shpazhnikov 1967].

For the first time in Russian, B.I. Sharevskaya provided a systematic description of traditional African religious practices, alongside an analysis of various religious phenomena, including fetishism, animism, magic, totemism, the cult of ancestral leaders, and the cult of nature. Considerable attention is given to the role of secret societies, the formation of independent Afro-Christian sects, and their affiliation with the national liberation movement.

– **You mentioned the “difficult fate” of the cultural studies branch of the Institute’s activities. Am I right? That is how dramatic turns are usually characterized. What drama is there in this area of scholarly work?**

– For more than a decade of its work, the Group and then the Culture Department did a lot, but after Lev Evgenyevich Kubbel left for the Institute of Ethnography, many

⁶ Patriarch Pimen, in the world Sergey Mikhailovich Izvekov (1910–1990), headed the Russian Orthodox Church from 1971 to 1990.

⁷ In Issue № 1 of 2025 of the Journal of the Institute for African Studies, in the section “Academic Heritage,” a review by N.A. Ksenofontova of the monograph by B.I. Sharevskaya [Sharevskaya 1964] was posted. Many of the monograph’s provisions retain their relevance in the present day.

specialists moved to other academic institutes: Art Studies, World Literature, etc... And our Institute lost qualified personnel in linguistics, philology, literature, art history. As our colleague Yuri Mikhailovich Ilyin wrote in his memoirs, the liquidation of the Sector in 1972 “dealt a huge blow to African cultural studies and pushed back the study of these problems in the main center of Russian African studies for a long time. The Institute was deprived of qualified staff... Only a few enthusiasts, such as R.N. Ismagilova, Y.M. Kobishchanov, N.B. Kochakova, N.A. Ksenofontova, continued to be persistently engaged in ethnographic and cultural studies. Therefore, when in 1979 the question of establishing the Department of National and Cultural Problems arose, the Institute faced serious staffing difficulties” [Ilyin 2005: 61].

– **So, the department for the study of cultural problems under the direction of Alexei Mikhailovich Vasiliev, a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences, was reconstituted. However, the 1980s and 1990s came, which became critical in the life of the Institute...**

– The re-established Department of National and Cultural Problems, led by Doctor of Sciences in History Roza Nurgalieвна Ismagilova, operated from 1979 to 1998. During this period, its staff published 27 works, which, of course, is not comparable in scale to previous productivity. Nevertheless, I would mention the fundamental collective monograph “Traditional and Syncretic Religions of Africa” [Gromyko 1986], such studies as “The Mechanism of the West’s Influence on the Culture and Cultural Policy of African States” [Ismagilova 1988], “Africa: Culture and Society. Traditions and Modernity” [Ismagilova 1994], “Africa: Cultural Heritage and Modernity” [Ismagilova 1985], “African Culture in the World Civilization Process” [Ismagilova 1996].

The scholarly life at our Institute was developing in line with the demands of the time, taking into account the latest international political and scientific trends. The emergence of new directions in African studies and the corresponding new structures at the Institute were made possible by objective conditions.

– **Could you give us some examples?**

– On the initiative of Igor Vasilyevich Sledzevsky, a group specializing in the study of social development studies was established in 1989. It proposed a novel theoretical method of scientific analysis, according to which the political processes and structures of African states were considered not on the basis of the formation model but rather drawing upon new principles and concepts of political science. The civilizational method of research made it possible to analyze African societies, explain their peculiarities and forms, and outline prospects for their evolution.

The creative team proved itself successful, which allowed the management to transform the group in 1998 into the Centre for Civilizational and Regional Studies, which is still one of the leading research structural divisions of the Institute, with a primary focus on the development of the theory of civilizational development, its cultural constants, the problems of the relationship between culture and personality in situations of social fractures, as well as Islamic studies.

Another significant event was the establishment of the Gender Studies Group in 1991. For the past 35 years, the group has been led by Doctor of Sciences in History Natalia Leonidovna Krylova. The formation of this group marked the formation of a new area in African studies, incorporating elements of various scientific disciplines, including history, ethnology, cultural studies, philology, sociology, political science, psychology, art history, philosophy, and economics. This interdisciplinary approach enables the analysis of diverse aspects of the private and public lives of Africans, both past and present. The book series “Gender Studies of the Institute for African Studies,” initiated

by the group, already includes 26 volumes on the most pressing issues, including the gender aspect of economic, social and political development, women's social and political movements, changes in gender consciousness and the search for identity, the peculiarities of intra-family, generational and inter-gender relations, the problems of gender and power, gender violence, the gender features of culture, art, and literature, and others [Krylova, Prozhogina 2002; Krylova, Ksenofontova 2010; Krylova, Ksenofontova 2014; Ksenofontova, Krylova 2017; Krylova, Grishina, Ksenofontova 2019; Krylova, Ksenofontova 2022; Krylova, Ksenofontova 2024].].

Through their research and publications, both the Gender Studies Group and the Centre for Civilizational and Regional Studies are currently trying to fill the gap in the field of African cultural studies. This demonstrates that there is still considerable potential for further research in this area of scholarship.

– **Natalia Alexandrovna, chronologically, we have now reached the modern period in the Institute's work. In the area of cultural studies that is closest to you, what aspects would you highlight as being of particular significance?**

– In the first quarter of this century, the Centre for History published a significant number of widely recognized works, thereby continuing the traditions of its founders and adhering to their methodologies and scientific research approaches. The Institute has shifted its primary scientific interests away from cultural studies. Far fewer monographs have been published on this subject than several decades ago. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that several fundamental works on the development of traditional and modern African culture, especially music and art, have been published in Russian African studies in recent decades.

The following monographs could be considered successful: “African American Music” [Zaitsev 2004], “Essay on the History of South African Painting” [Skubko 2006], “Traditional Music of Africa (except for Arabic and Somali)” [Kazankov 2010], “Myths of the Peoples of Tropical and Southern Africa: The Foundation of the Spiritual and Social Life of African Society” [Tatarovskaya 2016], “Madagascar. Features of Cultural and Civilizational Development” [Moseiko 2018], “Afrocentrism in the USA: Theory and Practice of Sociocultural Transformations” [Khokholkova 2019], “African Traditions and Modernity: Problems of History, Culture and Gender [Gribanova, Krylova 2020], “Women and Culture. African Traditions. Modern Trends” [Ksenofontova, Ilyina, Tatarovskaya 2021], “Post-colonial Nations in Historical and Cultural Context” [Bondarenko 2022], “Gender Aspects of African Culture: Between Archaic and Modernity” [Krylova, Ksenofontova 2022], “Childhood Culture of the Avatime People (Ghana, West Africa) Transformation of Socialization Practices in 1870s – 1957” [Lapushkina 2023], “Postcolonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Issues of Humanitarian Knowledge. Experience of Interdisciplinary Research” [Moseiko, Kharitonova 2024].

– **To what extent, in your opinion, is research into the cultural aspects of life in African societies in demand at the present time?**

– As Olga Lvovna Sviblova, a well-known scholar in Cultural Studies and a DSc (Philosophy), rightly observed in a private conversation, culture and art are especially in demand in difficult times. This is precisely what we are witnessing now, when Western powers are trying to re-launch the neo-colonialist mechanisms against African countries, and some representatives of European science are trying to impose ideology and postmodernist theories with alien moral and ethical values on them.⁸

⁸ The issue № 2 of the 2024 Journal of the Institute for African Studies is devoted to the topic of mental decolonization.

However, contemporary African policymakers and scholars are actively resisting this. This phenomenon can be traced back to the collective monograph “Decolonising the Human: Reflections from Africa on Difference and Oppression” [Mpofu, Steyn 2021]. In a review of this book, the African scholar Olumide Emmanuel Oluwakayode notes the prevailing discourse of decolonization and reformulation of African identity through “deconstructing the dominance of Western epistemologies” as an important challenge faced by its authors, which “will ultimately overcome the marginality and oppression of the Other, for centuries excluded from Western matrices of being” [Oluwakayode 2024: 175]. The reviewer highlights the achievement of the freedom to generate knowledge from an African perspective, which enhances intellectual independence, as the main tenets and benchmarks of modern African development.

Another very important point raised by African scholars is need for the multilateral dialogue between different civilizations and cultures, and the importance of sharing their achievements in this field. Russia is also working in this direction, strengthening its ties with countries in the Global South in areas such as international politics, economic integration and culture. As posited by the Beninese scholar Chacran Antoine Adebayo such interactions between our countries enable the states of the African continent to effectively integrate into the new geopolitical system while strengthening their economic, social and political significance [Chacran 2024: 106]. It is clear to me that this cannot be achieved without a mutual understanding of history, culture and art. This approach fosters stronger ties and forms various foundations for mutual understanding. In this regard, the Institute for African Studies has a role to play, as its research in various fields, including history and culture, is making a positive contribution to closer ties and contacts between Russia and Africa.

Interview conducted by Yu.D. Kruchkov

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**СОВЕТСКАЯ / РОССИЙСКАЯ АФРИКАНИСТИКА В 1960–1990 ГОДЫ:
ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ И КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ**

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Наталья Александровна Ксенофонтова – один из ветеранов Института Африки РАН, принимавших участие в становлении советской и российской африканистики. Она пришла в Институт, которому суждено было превратиться в флагманский научный центр африканистики, в 1966 г., всего через семь лет после его рождения. Ей довелось стать не только свидетелем, но и активным участником научной жизни коллектива, наблюдать за его развитием. Воспоминания Н.А. Ксенофонтовой, историка по профессии и наблюдательного человека, о том далеком прошлом – о 60–90-х гг. XX в., о патриархах, заложивших фундамент советской и российской африканистики и основавших научную школу, о людях, посвятивших свою жизнь изучению Африканского континента, о научных направлениях исследований – представляют собой непреходящую ценность для современных ученых, поскольку достижения основателей, предшественников и учителей дают правильные ориентиры и методологию в изучении современных процессов, происходящих в Африке. Участник становления и развития Института, Н.А. Ксенофонтова перечисляет ученых, ставших классиками африканистики благодаря широте своих научных интересов, размаху исследуемых проблем, глубине теоретических выводов, неординарным подходам к изучаемым материалам. Особое внимание она уделяет историкам и направлениям их научного осмысления африканского прошлого, а также исследователям в области культуры и религий Африки и их трудам. В теоретико-методологическом отношении рассуждения одного из старейших российских историков-страноведов призваны способствовать восстановлению памяти о годах зарождения африканистики и первого научного центра этого направления – Института Африки РАН, которому в 2024 г. исполнилось 65 лет.

Ключевые слова: советская африканистика, российская африканистика, Институт Африки РАН, исследования истории Африки, африканская культурология

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-106-122

Для цитирования: Ксенофонтова Н.А. Советская/российская африканистика в 1960–1990 годы. Историческое и культурологическое направления (интервью). *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 106–122. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-106-122>

THEORY IN PRACTICE

Research article

IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONALLY ORIENTED APPROACH IN WORKING WITH AFRICAN STUDENTS: FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH IVORIANS

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Abstract. The active development of cooperation between the Russian Federation and African countries has led to an increase in the number of African students in Russian universities and the establishment of Open Education Centers in Africa, overseen by pedagogical universities in Russia. These strategic partnership relations necessitate a reassessment by the academic and pedagogical community of both educational practices with international students and the substantive aspects of teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL), including the enhancement of national-cultural and practice-oriented components in language instruction. Given the need to foster a positive attitude among foreign students towards the Russian language and culture, as well as to strengthen their motivation for obtaining a Russian education, the search for effective teaching practices for RFL instruction among foreign students—particularly those from Africa, specifically Côte d’Ivoire—becomes highly relevant. This study aims to describe the effective methods and techniques for teaching Russian as a foreign language that have been tested by the authors, taking into account the ethnocultural and ethnopsychological characteristics of Ivorian students and creating favorable conditions for promoting the Russian language. The article offers practical recommendations for RFL teachers who engage in educational activities on the African continent or work with African students in Russia. The experience described in this article will help address certain linguodidactic challenges encountered in educational settings with African audiences. The implementation of the system developed and applied by the authors for teaching Russian to Ivorian students has demonstrated that high effectiveness can be achieved by considering specific characteristics of the African audience, such as emotionality, musicality, and artistic expression, as well as leveraging information and communication technologies that accommodate the multifaceted needs and interests of learners.

Keywords: Russian as a foreign language, RFL teaching methodology, Ivorian students, nationally oriented education system, Africa, Côte d’Ivoire

Conflict of interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors’ contributions: joint research.

Acknowledgements. The research was conducted within the framework of the State Assignment to the Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky for 2025 from the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation on the topic “Development of variable models for promoting Russian pedagogical education in Africa” (research project No. 073-00068-25-02).

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-123-134

For citation: Gaponova Zh.K., Serogodskaya A.A. (2025). Implementation of a Nationally Oriented Approach in Working with African Students: From the Experience of Working with Ivorians. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-123-134>

INTRODUCTION

The steady growth of the number of African students at universities of Russia and the establishment of Russian Houses and Centers for Open Education in African countries reflect an increasing interest of the African audience in the studies of Russian as a foreign language and getting a degree in Russia. The Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education, Dmitry Pyshny, mentions in his report dedicated to the cooperation of Russia and African countries in the field of higher education (22nd March, 2024, the National Research University “Higher School of Economics”) that the Ministry has registered an increase of African students at Russian Universities: “According to the plan of enrollment in universities of Russia for the 2023/2024 academic year, the number of quotas [state-funded places in universities] allocated to African students has been doubled. We are planning to keep it at a similarly high level for the 2024/2025 academic year. In the current academic year, there are 34,000 African citizens studying in Russia. As for the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, authorized by the President of Russia in 2023, reinforcement and intensification of Russian-African cooperation is of higher priority.”¹

The geography of educational institutions is significantly expanding. The doors are opening for all African students, the number of state-funded places allocated for African students in the most in-demand degree programs is growing both in federal and regional universities of Russia: “African citizens are studying at 284 Russian Universities located in 86 cities.” [Arefiev, Maximenko 2018: 423]. The deputy head of Rossotrudnichestvo², Kiril Bogomolov, notes that “quotas for African countries are increasing. In 2024–2025, we allocated [to them] 4746 state-funded places at universities, while in 2025–2026, 4816 places.” According to him, the largest beneficiaries of the quotas in the region are Egypt, Algeria, Angola, Chad, Mali, Congo, Nigeria, Zambia, Benin, Guinea, and Zimbabwe³.

Evgeny Primakov, the head of Rossotrudnichestvo, has pointed out during the course of the Second International Parliamentary Conference “Russia-Africa” that the interest of

¹ Russia is preparing highly-qualified specialists for Africa. *The Official Website of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation*. 26.03.2024. (In Russ.). <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/80844/> (accessed: 30.10.2024)

² Rossotrudnichestvo (short for the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation) is an executive authority responsible for spreading Russia's humanitarian influence in the world, developing and coordinating international relations and international humanitarian cooperation, including with CIS countries, and supporting compatriots living abroad.

³ Russia will allocate 4816 state-funded university places for African students. *RIA Novosti*. 14.11.2024. (In Russ.). <https://ria.ru/20241114/studenty-1983655545.html?ysclid=m8iea73r6a860723765> (accessed: 29.11.2024)

African students spreads not only into Moscow and Saint Petersburg but also into universities in other regions of Russia: “This refers to universities all over Russia. We’ve got high-quality universities in all federal districts: Volga, Caucasian, Far-East Federal Districts, as well as other federal universities. There are some high-level regional universities as well: for example, in Ufa, where you can get qualifications that are necessary for employment in the oil industry, which is in high demand in Africa.”⁴

Having received a degree in Russia, African students increase their employment chances both in their country and abroad because the Russian diploma offers considerable job opportunities. It has been stated in the surveys that “almost an equal number of African students, 40.7% and 39.5% respectively, believe that after graduating from a Russian university, they will be able to find a job easily or with little difficulty. Only 8.6% think that it can be hard to be employed with a Russian diploma. These difficulties, in their opinion, can be connected with the fact that these diplomas are not accepted in their home countries or in some countries where they want to be employed” [Gribanova, Zherlitsyna 2008: 61].

Active interest towards studying the Russian language is observed in the countries of West Africa (for example, Senegal, the Republic of Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Côte d’Ivoire): “In local secondary and higher education, the Russian language is placed second after English in comparison to other languages” [Baranchuk 2009: 40]. The Russian Ambassador, Alexey Eduardovich Saltykov, has reported that in Burkina Faso they are trying to implement the study of the Russian language at all stages of education, from schools to universities.⁵ The ambassador has also emphasized that the interest in the Russian language is also increasing in Côte d’Ivoire, where Centers for Open Education are operating under the patronage of Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky.

The tendency of increasing demand for the Russian language studies among African students, marked by many, requires from Russian teachers an adaptation of syllabus, methods, techniques, and methodology of teaching to the specifics of the African audience. The teacher should not only be aware of the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the students present in the classroom but also understand their mindset and possess basic knowledge of educational systems operating in their countries, of forms and methods of learning languages that are customary and most appropriate for these students. If we use forms and methods that have proved to be efficient but are not used in the educational system in which the students have been shaped, these students will not be able to fully participate in the educational process and are bound to experience emotional limitations [Shabayati, Gao 2021: 443]. In our opinion, only a nationally-oriented approach can provide an efficient education, which will make attainable the strategic objectives in the sphere of international cooperation.

NATIONALLY-ORIENTED APPROACH TO TEACHING

The search for an efficient methodology of teaching Ivorian students has determined the implementation of a nationally-oriented approach to teaching Russian as a foreign

⁴ Vatchyanin N. Evgeny Primakov: In some African countries, the competition rate is eight students per one place to study in Russia. *Parliamentary Newspaper*. 20.03.2023. (In Russ.). <https://www.pnp.ru/social/evgeniy-primakov-v-nekotorykh-stranakh-afriki-konkurs-zayavok-na-obuchenie-v-rossii-vosem-chelovek-na-mesto.html> (accessed: 30.10.2024)

⁵ The Russian language is in high demand in Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. *Russkiy Mir*. 28.12.2023. (In Russ.). <https://russkiymir.ru/news/321317/> (accessed: 30.10.2024)

language. This approach implies a deeper understanding of foreign students' mindsets and cultural specifics as well as consideration of educational conditions and individual needs. The analysis of the research in the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language conducted within the last few years has revealed a necessity to integrate the elements of students' native culture into the educational process as a primary strategy of teaching foreign languages [Deponyan 2025; Kozhevnikova, Dudina 2021; Sabitova 2023; Droga, Mahova, Strutskaya 2023; Kholmanskyh, Verisova 2019].

Talking about the term "nationally-oriented" in regard to the process of education, M.N. Kozhevnikova and E.F. Dudina differentiate the principles that allow the implementation of this aspect of teaching to a foreign audience: "The principle of considering the peculiarities of the educational system, the principle of cultural conformity, the principle of practical implications, the principle of national tolerance (that excludes any prejudice against national traits), and the principle of adaptiveness of the Russian educational environment (that assumes an ability to swiftly and appropriately react to the expectations of foreign students in order to overcome integration obstacles)" [Kozhevnikova, Dudina 2021: 226].

These principles can be enhanced with linguistic and methodological aspects explored by K.A. Deponyan, which allow determining the strategy of teaching languages while establishing the educational process: the specifics of the Russian language system and the peculiarities of perception and comprehension of these specifics by the students; the specifics of their learning and cognitive activities, and their linguistic identity [Deponyan 2015]. Therefore, the organization of Ivorian students' learning process based on the updated approach to the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language allows us to offer the practices that consider the specifics of the audience and to actualize the methodological tools in order to facilitate extra efficiency and intensification of the educational process.

NATIONALLY-ORIENTED SPECIFICS OF WORKING WITH STUDENTS FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE: LOCAL TRADITIONS, COLLECTIVE EDUCATION

The specifics of working with Ivorian students require consideration of the following dilemma in teaching the Russian language: as they speak French, they greatly value their dialects and culture-specific words that reflect Ivorian mentality and the country's cultural code. The optimization of the teaching process in Côte d'Ivoire, like in any other country with rich cultural heritage, suggests the necessity to adapt teaching materials to national and cultural peculiarities that are stated in the statutory framework of the Republic.

After gaining independence in 1960, the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire faced the problem of an excessive focus on French culture in the school syllabus that led to the risk of a national identity crisis. The Ivorian system of education's dependence on the French language, which was preconditioned by historical and ideological factors, still causes problems and does not adequately reflect the local socio-cultural and language realia [Kouame 2024: 44].

Different teaching concepts have been offered in order to resolve this issue, including the ones connected with the adaptation of school education to cultural realia. For example, Spanish has become one of the most popular languages to study in Abidjan: the interest of the Ivorians has been stimulated by the Africanization of the syllabus. The collection of textbooks called "Horizontes" (1998–2002), created in collaboration with the Ivorian teachers of Spanish, presents the materials of study adapted to African

pedagogical needs and socio-economic climate [Djandue Bi Drombe 2024]. Teaching practices in Côte d'Ivoire are little adapted to local socio-cultural conditions. The difficulties of teaching French, the official state language, can be explained by the fact that the spoken languages among students are mostly local Ivorian ones [Kouame 2020]; especially the pidgin Nouchi language that is becoming more and more popular in the country.

While working with Ivorian students in Côte d'Ivoire, we were able to notice the tendency to use Nouchi in daily life instead of French. It is also worth mentioning that the authorities of one of the Ivorian universities supported partial usage of Nouchi in teaching Russian (while applying the translation teaching method), thereby stimulating the interest in the national specifics of Ivorian people and focusing on the language tendencies observed among the youth.

When teachers work in Côte d'Ivoire, they face some factors that disorganize the process of education: a low level of student discipline, which is partly connected with an overcrowded and unreliable transport system; students missing classes due to their visits to religious institutions on certain days; a large number of students in the classroom (which requires teachers granting them more opportunities for autonomous studying and practicing); significant differences in age and level of knowledge among students.

The audience we were working with comprised almost 300 people, aged 17 to 29, prevalently male (71.8%). The youth account for a larger percentage of the population, and, according to the experts' forecast, the labor market in Africa is going to grow by 11 million young people annually⁶. The level of education among those who want to study Russian varies a lot: 87% of people had a bachelor's degree; there were students from lycées and some graduate students pursuing their education at technical, medical, law, humanities, and theology departments.

In order to help the students study the Russian language more intensively and enhance the traditional methods of teaching, we designed an online course consisting of 10 units on grammar and lexis aimed at Level A1. All lessons were organized in accordance with the nationally-oriented approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language: the videos feature a Russian teacher and Ivorian students, which allows the African audience to make necessary conclusions about the possibility of successful learning of the Russian language and to master the offered syllabus. Some of the explanations are given in their native tongue and in the context of Ivorian realia.

The system of education in Abidjan shapes a specific approach to the studies of Russian as a foreign language: the shift from personalized teaching to a collective approach. This tendency is determined by large groups of students present at language classes (more than 60 students in each classroom). In these conditions, students demonstrate high efficiency at guided practice and writing tasks, but their communication skills do not get proper development. The productiveness of self-reflection and feedback among such numerous audiences is significantly lower due to teachers' limited abilities to control every student.

In order to optimize the process of teacher-student communication and provide equal access to educational content within the environment of each university, we have created several Telegram channels. The application was used to share study guides, tasks, quizzes, questionnaires, linguistic and cultural audiovisual content, as well as updates on

⁶ New Report Outlines Priorities to Address Africa's Youth Employment Challenge. *World Bank Group*. 27.01.2014. <https://worldbank.org/en/region/afri/publication/new-report-outlines-priorities-to-address-africa-s-youth-employment-challenge> (accessed: 26.10.2024)

current events, for example, conferences and educational activities. Contrary to the common belief of difficulties with the Internet access in Côte d'Ivoire, we were able to actively use the Internet during our classes, which confirms the results of the research conducted as part of the project *PANAF*⁷ among school students to check the capabilities of using the Internet at classes: by 2011, more and more students had been using a mobile Internet connection [Bi Sehi Antoine 2012].

The modern practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language is focused on the use of innovative technologies that make the educational process more interesting and interactive. One of the strongest trends while working with Ivorian students was the usage of the online interactive platform *CoreApp*. The video lessons were accompanied by various interactive tasks, short grammar references, and educational songs, facilitating the process of learning and making easier the comprehension of the study material. The online platform works not only in Russia but also in West Africa. It does not require a registration process and is easy to use. *CoreApp* lets teachers design their own courses and online lessons and provides activity reports; it also allows them to track students' results. This platform can be seen as an alternative to conventional presentations, as it conveys information in different media formats (text, visual, and audio). The free version of the app allows for the creation of separate lessons without a structured course.

As feedback, apart from the *CoreApp*'s activity reports, students also would receive encouraging emoji from their teachers for correct answers in questionnaires and for grammatically correct statements in the chat. This form of feedback can be seen by all chat members and serves as a motivational stimulus for students who view an encouraging emoji as a sign of public acknowledgment of their achievements.

The organization of the process of educating Ivorian students in Russia imposes extra demands on the teacher: it is necessary to design various formats of work with the focus on a personalized approach that allows the teacher to pay attention to each student and to do targeted correction of mistakes. This approach can seem unusual to Ivorian students, who may require more time to adapt to the specifics of working in small groups.

AI-ENHANCED EDUCATION: RAP SONGS AND VIDEOSCRIBING

With the Ivorian youth audience, for whom musicality and love of rap are an integral part of culture, Russian teachers can use a creative methodological technique called "Rap Grammar." This logorhythmic technique, which is based on a "grammar battle," transforms the study of Russian verb conjugations and mastering of new vocabulary into a thrilling and dynamic game. Aided by rap rhythms, students easily memorize and drill verb spelling, lexemes, particular lexical and semantic groups and subgroups, and their grammatical forms. They also unconsciously tap out the beat of the stressed syllables, which helps them develop the feeling of the Russian syllable structure—a very important factor, as the stress in the French language is fixed, whereas in Russian it is mobile.

The efficiency of this method determined its inclusion in the online course. In the self-study part, students are offered several rap songs (recorded by a teacher) and beats to train verb conjugations, verbs of movement, and different vocabulary topics. Our observation has demonstrated that multiple rhythmic repetitions of verb forms make it easier to memorize the inflectional paradigm of these words.

⁷ PANAF is a Pan-African program of research aimed at the study of the pedagogical integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the process of education. PANAF seeks a better comprehension of the ways ICT can increase the level of education and teaching in Africa.

Teachers can use AI (Artificial Intelligence) music generators to create educational rap songs and songs of other genres. One such generator is *Suno AI*, a generative model of machine learning that helps create songs even without the knowledge of musical notation or any music skills. This AI can generate completed pieces of music of all popular musical genres and supports the Russian language. *Suno* can interpret musical styles and adapt to them, which allows its users to create hip-hop and rap versions of songs for children or adapt popular songs to non-standard genres. The service requires registration and authorization through a log-in form. In this way, educational texts, poems, and tongue twisters, including those written by a teacher, can be transformed into pieces of music as easily as a couple of clicks and used as an effective mnemonic technique while teaching African audiences.

It should be noted that Ivorian students are creative, active, and communicative; they are always eager to try new forms of learning. Their excitement motivates teachers of Russian as a foreign language to search for new methods of teaching, which let all the participants gain new impressions and feel positive emotions while studying. As a result, this increases students' motivation to study Russian.

VideoScribing is a technology that combines different types of activities. This is a teaching method based on the combination of painting and explanation of the material spoken out loud. It can be analogized to the process of creating animation, where all characters—lines, shapes, and other simple forms—come to life right in front of students' eyes. The key element of this method is its ability to activate several perception channels, i.e., visual, audial, and kinesthetic. It allows the teacher to present the new information in a more accessible, interesting, and memorable way. As a creative homework task, students are asked to design a video using VideoScribing techniques.

THE USE OF RHYTHM AS THE KEY TO EFFICIENT LEARNING

In Ivorian culture, rhythm plays an important role not only in music but also in everyday life and religious services. These rhythms are of crucial importance to Africans, and they are considered a dominant form of expression. In African cultures, rhythms are perceived as letters, while rhythmic patterns are seen as a form of creative writing, which serves as a medium of communication among people, spirits, and gods [Trofimov, Buksikova 2023: 73].

During national festivals in Côte d'Ivoire, one can see a dance of *Zaouli*, which celebrates female beauty. The rhythm of *Zaouli* takes the form of a dialogue between a percussionist and dancers. The dance is characterized by fast movements of the feet to the sound of a drumbeat and the head movements that imitate “the god of the forest” [Trofimov, Buksikova 2023: 75]. In Côte d'Ivoire, this dance connects all types of dances that are common in the country. Today, the dance of *Zaouli* has become a popular element among many dancing groups in Côte d'Ivoire and is an integral part of the country's cultural heritage [Asante 1996: 23].

Zaouli shows how rhythm that is combined with movement can create a dialogue between the participants and between the participants and the viewers. We believe that this approach can be used in teaching: it is possible to combine rhythm with various language tasks, which will help students memorize words and phrases through physical movements and musical elements. Thus, “the appeal at the lessons to the abovementioned personality traits of African students, which manifest themselves when tasks are presented together with rhythmical tools, facilitates a faster pace of learning and allows for better vocabulary and grammar acquisition.” [Gaponova, Sergorodskaya 2023: 52].

This allows the teacher to make the educating process more nationally-oriented and take into account the specifics of African cultures, showing respect towards the cultural heritage of Ivorian people.

One of the most successful techniques with Ivorian audiences is the technique of grammar and vocabulary anchoring, as well as different melodization techniques, when students are supposed to sing educational texts especially created by teachers for this purpose [Gaponova, Sergorodskaya 2024: 95]. The process of studying the Russian language considerably accelerates when learning tasks are supported by music and rhythm. As G.L. Radchenko mentions, “at the basis of memorization lies the breakdown and further combination of the material through its rhythmization. Emotionally salient educational material is memorized better” [Radchenko 2010: 131]. Thus, the integration of music and rhythm into the process of education intensifies the process of mastering the material and makes learning languages more appealing to African students.

Among African audiences, active education formats are perceived by students as pretty natural. Because of this, every day at the beginning of the first lesson, teachers from Yaroslavl would organize a musical “vocabulary warm-up.” These warm-ups included reading texts to various rhythms or doing simple tasks to the beat, which contributed to the students’ more active involvement in the process of education and helped them study new vocabulary effortlessly and automatically. The text of the warm-up is composed by the teacher in accordance with students’ grammar and vocabulary skills and common methodological principles of practicality and comprehensibility: for example, to study and practice Russian numerals. The blend of texts, rhythm, and music actualizes “natural” specific traits of Ivorian people and creates a comfortable educational atmosphere that improves the process of education.

“SILENT” BOOKS AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND IMAGINATION

One of the tools that can be applied efficiently while teaching communication in a foreign language is the use of various visual stimuli: illustrations, art reproductions, comics, etc. While working with African students, we used the books without words, “mute” or “silent” books. Such books are a valuable instrument for organizing discussions and cooperative story-making sessions, including classes of Russian as a foreign language, since visual reading implies active participation of the recipient, helps overcome the language barrier, and stimulates students’ creative thinking and imagination. As T.I. Erokhina states, a “silent book” has its specific features: “It is universal as it is not tied to any particular language and doesn’t require any translation. A “silent book” is aimed at the development of emotions, imagination, and cognitive abilities... It is also polysemous, as it is the very absence of text, which is designed to transfer information and to present the logical sequence of events and their interpretation, that implies *a priori* the emergence of the subtext” [Erokhina 2023: 198].

Foreign students who demonstrated obvious signs of shyness were much more active to take part in visual reading. Some students would imprint an image verbally by using the resources of the language they are studying, while others would point at it kinesthetically. The latest research in neurological sciences and their application within the field of narratology point to the fact that iconic representations facilitate mechanisms of simulating actions, emotions, and feelings, which can, in turn, ensure deeper understanding of the object and immerse students into the process of interpretation and speaking [Calabrese, Conti, Broglia 2021: 92].

The lack of a verbal component draws students' attention to other languages: the language of signs, colors, visual lines and shades, all of which have unique connotations in different cultures. This provides a supportive environment for cross-cultural communication and realization of contrastive teaching methods.

Visual narration in "silent" books can be interpreted as little worlds where readers navigate through complex interpretations of cultural, natural, and everyday images. As it doesn't require any translation, a "silent" book reaches beyond the author's message, creating a collective discourse that tells the story with the help of illustrations. The verbal component in "silent" books is superfluous as it lowers readers' ability to input their own feelings, preventing them from "imagining" a story and interpreting illustrative metaphors based on their personal perception [Kozhevnikova 2022: 319]. Therefore, this kind of book is similar to the "open work" as described by Umberto Eco: "... open in that it proposes a wider range of interpretive possibilities, a configuration of stimuli whose substantial indeterminacy allows for a number of possible readings, a "constellation" of elements that lend themselves to all sorts of reciprocal relationships" [Eco 1989: 84].

Due to a lack of language units, the potential of "silent" books can be unlocked at any language level, depending on educational aims. For example, while studying the topic "Ecology" at Level B1, we utilized the book by M. Shebeko "Where is my home"⁸, the main characters of which are a girl who cares a lot about environmental pollution and a crawfish who is searching desperately for a new shell among trash piles. After "reading" the book, the students took part in a role-play aimed at the improvement of their speaking skills. The students are divided into groups of four. In each group, they have to choose their roles: *a crawfish*, *Alex, an ecologist*, and *a reckless citizen* who is constantly throwing litter. In the game, *the crawfish* and *Alex* discuss the problems of pollution, *the ecologist* offers solutions, and *the reckless citizen* explains why they don't want to collect their garbage.

Artistic and emotional personalities of Ivorian students determined the use of various drama tools during classes, including the work with "silent" books. Drama-based pedagogics implies no rehearsals; everything takes place *ad lib*, without any preparation. In contrast, theatrical pedagogics requires a drama text, allocated roles, and the dedicated work on the designated role (learning the text by heart and rehearsals) [Nelzina, Panina, Lugovtseva 2016: 126].

While organizing the reading of "silent" books, we recommend that teachers not only work with the interpretation of illustrations and the collaborative plot work, which definitely contributes to the development of communicative competence, but also provide linguistic and cultural commentary: it is necessary to discuss geographical realia (the description of the world, flora, and fauna) and ethnographical realia (realia of everyday life, holidays, leisure time, and superstitions) with foreign students. Before reading the book, we usually suggest that students have a look at the book cover and answer some questions to predict what the story might be about. It is worth mentioning that the process of working with the text remains within the framework of teaching Russian as a foreign language, with various pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted by the authors of the article describes various approved and tested formats of work with Ivorian students while teaching Russian as a foreign

⁸ Shebeko M. (2023). *Where is my home?* Moscow: Nigma. (In Russ.)

language. These approaches can become the basis for the development of new principles and methods of teaching aimed at African audiences, for the creation of study guides for teachers who need effective methodological coaching both in Russia and African countries. The attention to typological features of African students' cognitive spheres determines the search for effective formats of work which allow to intensify the process of learning Russian as a foreign language and to provide full personality development for each student in the modern context.

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Научная статья

РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОГО ПОДХОДА В РАБОТЕ С АФРИКАНСКИМИ СТУДЕНТАМИ: ИЗ ОПЫТА РАБОТЫ С ИВУАРИЙЦАМИ

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Аннотация. Активное развитие сотрудничества Российской Федерации со странами Африки привело к росту численности африканских студентов в российских вузах и открытию Центров открытого образования в Африке, которые курируют педагогические вузы России. Отношения стратегического партнерства требуют пересмотра научно-педагогическим сообществом как образовательных практик со студентами-иностранцами, так и содержательных аспектов методики преподавания русского языка как иностранного (РКИ), в том числе усиления национально-культурной и практикоориентированной составляющей в преподавании языка. В связи с необходимостью формирования у студентов-иностранцев положительного отношения к русскому языку и русской культуре, усиления мотивации к получению российского образования актуально звучит вопрос поиска эффективных практик преподавания русского языка среди иностранцев, учитывающих национальную специфику обучающихся из Африки, в частности из Кот-д'Ивуара. Цель настоящего исследования заключается в описании апробированных авторами статьи эффективных методов и приемов обучения русскому языку как иностранному, учитывающих этнокультурные и этнопсихологические особенности ивуарийских студентов и создающих благоприятные условия для популяризации русского языка. В статье предлагаются практические рекомендации для преподавателей РКИ, которые осуществляют образовательную деятельность на африканском континенте или работают с африканскими студентами в России. Опыт, описанный в данной статье, поможет решить некоторые практические проблемы при осуществлении образовательной деятельности в африканской аудитории. Реализация разработанной и внедренной авторами в практику преподавания системы обучения ивуарийцев русскому языку показала, что высокой эффективности можно достичь, учитывая такие особенности африканской

аудитории, как эмоциональность, музыкальность, артистичность, а также возможности информационно-коммуникационных технологий, обеспечивающих учет многоаспектных задач и интересов обучающихся.

Ключевые слова: русский язык как иностранный, методика преподавания РКИ, студенты-ивуарийцы, национально ориентированная система обучения, Африка, Кот-д'Ивуар

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов: совместное исследование.

Благодарности: Исследование выполнено в рамках Государственного задания Ярославскому государственному педагогическому университету имени К.Д. Ушинского на 2025 г. от Минпросвещения РФ по теме «Разработка вариативных моделей популяризации российского педагогического образования в Африке» (НИР № 073-00068-25-02).

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-123-134

Для цитирования: Гапонова Ж.К., Серогодская А.А. Реализация национально ориентированного подхода в работе с африканскими студентами: из опыта работы с ивуарийцами. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-123-134>

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY OF GRADUATES OF ETHIOPIAN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF THE SOUTHWEST ETHIOPIA PEOPLES' REGION

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Abstract. The article considers the problem of the quality of general education in Ethiopia in terms of the development of functional literacy in school students, using as the example the case of the Southwest Ethiopia Peoples' Region. The idea of this research, conducted within the framework of international cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is to organize a mutually beneficial partnership in the field of education between the two countries and promote the improvement of the quality of education in Ethiopia.

The authors describe the results of a study of the functional literacy of graduates of Ethiopian schools using the case of the city of Bonga as an example. In the context of developing international cooperation between the Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University and Ethiopian universities, a task arises of the development of a diagnostic toolkit accessible to both parties and constructed on the basis of educational content, which would include information about Russia and Ethiopia. The use of such a toolkit allowed the authors to assess the development of three types of functional literacy in students: in reading, mathematics, and natural sciences. Combining the indicators for each type makes it possible to obtain a general picture of the functional literacy of school graduates in the city of Bonga, namely: the majority of participants (85.2%) have an insufficient level of functional literacy, 12.4% have it at a low level, and 2.4% of respondents have an average level of functional literacy development. The authors outline the prospects for further research into the functional literacy of students in Ethiopia, such as improving the diagnostic tools; upgrading the educational content by increasing its thematic diversity and translating into the official languages of the country; expanding the geographical scope of the research; improving the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the sample.

Keywords: Ethiopia, quality of education, Russian-Ethiopian cooperation, functional literacy, types of functional literacy, development of functional literacy, methods of assessing functional literacy

Conflict of interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contributions: joint research.

Acknowledgement. This paper was written as part of Supplementary Agreement № 073-03-2024-060/3 dated 27 May 2024 to the Agreement on the provision of subsidies from the federal budget for the funding of the government assignment of providing public services (executing works) No. 073-03-2024-060 dated 18 January 2024, concluded between the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education “Ilya Ulyanov Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University” and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. The authors express their gratitude to the authorities of the Ilya Ulyanov Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University (Russia) and Bonga University (Ethiopia) for the opportunity to conduct research.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-135-146

For citation: Danilov S.V., Shustova L.P., Mishina A.P. (2025). On the Development of Functional Literacy of Graduates of Ethiopian Schools: The Case of the Southwest Ethiopia Peoples' Region. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-135-146>

INTRODUCTION

The development of cooperation between Russia and Ethiopia is of great importance for the educational systems of both countries. In modern conditions, international partnership in the field of education is one of the ways to implement the so-called soft power, which can be defined as “support and popularization of the Russian language and culture of the peoples of the Russian Federation in foreign countries, export of Russian educational services ..., development of youth exchanges, etc.” [Arskaya 2017: 141].

In this context, educational cooperation can be seen not only as a way to integrate Russian and Ethiopian resources for the more efficient development of the educational systems of the two countries but also as a tool to promote constructive international cooperation in the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. In accordance with the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Russia intends to contribute to the further establishment of Africa as a distinctive and influential center of world development, giving priority, among other areas, to promoting and developing links in the humanitarian sphere, including scientific cooperation, training of national personnel, promoting intercultural dialogue, protecting traditional spiritual and moral values.¹

One of the areas of this cooperation is being implemented by Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University named after I.N. Ulyanov (UISPU) in cooperation with research and academic institutions in Ethiopia, in particular, with Bonga University and Jimma University, on the basis of bilateral agreements.

¹ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*. 31.03.2023. <https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/?lang=en> (accessed: 21.02.2025)

In 2024, as part of the state assignment of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, UISPU implemented the project “A model for the development of functional literacy of African students in the digital educational environment of schools (Ethiopia)” in cooperation with Bonga University. One of the objectives of the project was to conduct research on the functional literacy of Ethiopian schoolchildren and to develop and apply the necessary diagnostic tools [Danilov et al., 2024].

Due to the lack of ready-made didactic and diagnostic tools designed for achieving the required educational and research goals (development and assessment of functional literacy) while at the same time contributing to the cultural integration of the two countries, scholars at Ulyanovsk University have developed some original educational content that includes relevant texts about Russia and Ethiopia, which became the basis for the creation of the author’s methodology for assessing the formation of functional literacy. In 2024, this technique was successfully tested among high school students of Russian schools in Ulyanovsk [Danilov et al. 2025], which became a prerequisite for its application in the study of graduates of Ethiopian schools in the town of Bonga (South West Ethiopia Peoples’ Region).

This determined the purpose of this work, which is to do research into the level of functional literacy among graduates of Ethiopian schools with the case study of the South West Ethiopia Peoples’ Region.

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION QUALITY IN ETHIOPIA

A general characteristic of the vector of the development in the field of education in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in modern conditions is the desire to create a national education system. There are several promising areas that seem to be the most relevant in the focus of our research.

First of all, the training of teaching staff remains an unresolved problem [Tamrat, Levy 2017; Ayenalem et al. 2022; Habshush 2024]. Despite the opening of teacher training colleges in the early 1950s and subsequently teacher training programs at universities, the country has not been able to fully address the shortage of teaching staff. A number of scholars have noted that in the 21st century, there still remains an imbalance between the number of professionally trained teachers and the demand for such specialists in Ethiopian schools [Olkaba et al. 2019]. To date, the situation with the training of teaching staff has not changed fundamentally: only 12 universities in the country offer undergraduate programs in Education and Teaching.²

The Government of Ethiopia is currently striving to enable teachers to develop and maintain the necessary professional qualities. To achieve these goals, various initiatives have been developed and practical measures have been taken to encourage teachers, such as helping them adjust their careers, increasing their salaries, and many others. These steps were taken in order to motivate talented individuals to pursue careers in education, increase teachers’ responsibility for the quality of the educational process, enhance the prestige of the teaching profession, and cultivate respect for the teacher both in school and in society.

² Ethiopia – Bachelor programs in Education and Teaching. *Free Apply*. 2025. <https://free-apply.com/en/articles/country/337996/degree/1/program/19> (accessed: 10.04.2025)

At the same time, studies have shown that many teachers are not satisfied with the profession due to low wages and social status, as well as a heavy workload [Abie 2019; Habte 2019]. A significant number of secondary school teachers in Ethiopia started teaching without any substantial interest in the profession, due to forced employment or lack of other employment opportunities; many lost motivation soon after starting work. Teachers who have started work claim that they chose a profession due to the lack of alternatives, and 70% of them would have gone to work in another field if they had received an equivalent salary in other professions [Mekonnen 2017].

The problems of prestige of the teaching profession and of training and support of teaching staff are important factors affecting the quality of education in the country. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all³, as one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, defines the vectors of major changes taking place in the global educational space. Along with the digitalization of education [Yeheis 2022; Ulanova 2022; Fituni 2022; Khrenkov 2023; Prikhodko, Sherov–Ignatiev 2024] and the development of competencies in demand in the 21st century [Kinfu 2010; Grudko 2019; Krylova 2019], the development of functional literacy of students is considered an important area of ensuring the quality of education [Zakharova 2023].

COOPERATION OF ULYANOVSK UNIVERSITY WITH UNIVERSITIES OF ETHIOPIA IN THE TRAINING OF TEACHING STAFF

As a part of cooperation with the Russian Federation, research and educational projects are being implemented in Ethiopia aimed at improving the quality of education. These projects include cooperation with Russian universities.

One of the universities that is actively working in this area is the Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University named after I.N. Ulyanov. Having initiated the establishment of three Centers for Open Education and Russian Language Teaching in Ethiopia, this university conducts multi-vector cooperation with Ethiopian partners. In order to help Ethiopian schoolteachers to obtain the competencies for the development and assessment of functional literacy of students, in 2024, scholars from the Russian university designed and tested, on the basis of such a Center at Bonga University, a professional development program, “Organization of project activities as a means of developing functional literacy of students in the digital educational environment of a school,” aimed specifically at this target category. Another step in this direction was the preparation of a methodology for assessing the level of functional literacy in Ethiopian schoolchildren, as well as its use for scientific research.

THE METHODOLOGY of FUNCTIONAL LITERACY ASSESSMENT

The basis of the authors’ methodology aimed at assessing the levels of the main types of functional literacy (reading, mathematical, and natural science) [Danilov et al. 2024;

³ Sustainable Development Goals. *UN*. 2015. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/en/education/> (accessed: 16.04.2025)

Danilov, Lukyanova, Shustova 2024] was the educational content developed after the analysis and selection of relevant texts about Russia and Ethiopia. The semantic context of the assignments is targeting the high school students in Ethiopia. However, this does not exclude the possibility of their use for the development and assessment of functional literacy of schoolchildren in Russia and other countries.

When developing the methodology, we proceeded from the following assumptions. Firstly, the content should be adapted to the social and cultural experience of Ethiopian schoolchildren while also helping to bring the cultures of Russia and Ethiopia closer together. Secondly, the use of this content in educational practice should contribute to solving the problem of developing the functional literacy of students. Thirdly, in order to determine the actual levels of the functional literacy, assignments should be designed by analogy with the PISA⁴ model, since this study is aimed specifically at assessing functional literacy.

The structure of the assignments within this methodology is based on two factors. The first one defines the content of the assignments according to the five themes: 1) “Journey through Russia,” 2) “Trip to Ethiopia,” 3) “Culture of Ethiopia and Russia,” 4) “Education and career choice,” 5) “Agricultural industry and trade relations of Ethiopia.” In our opinion, these topics should be relatable to the potential study participants (Ethiopian and Russian schoolchildren and teachers) [Danilov, Shustova, 2024].

When processing and interpreting the results of the functional literacy assessment, the following criteria should be applied: the assignments with a short or detailed answer are evaluated at 2, 1, or 0 points (a fully correct answer is 2 points, a partially correct answer is 1 point, and an incorrect answer is 0 points). Based on the results of the test, the level of functional literacy is determined according to the total score received by the student for completing all the assignments of each separate topic: “high” (from 16 to 18 points), “higher than average” (from 12 to 15 points), “average” (from 8 to 11 points), “low” (from 4 to 7 points), and “insufficient” (from 0 to 3 points). Thus, the maximum score for each of the topics is 18 points.

If necessary, a “paradigmatic” evaluation of the results and their interpretation can be carried out. In this case, researchers determine the necessary type of functional literacy (reading, mathematical, or natural science), after which a selection of the results obtained on all topics is made.

Since the number of assignments on all topics and for all types of literacy is the same—9 (45 tasks in total) and 3 (15 tasks in total), respectively—and the points for completing all tasks range from 0 (incorrect answer or no answer) and 1 (partially correct answer) up to 2 (completely correct answer), the levels of any type of functional literacy can be defined as “high” (6 points), “higher than average” (5 points), “average” (from 3 to 4 points), “low” (2 points), and “insufficient” (from 0 to 1 point).

A comprehensive assessment of the results of the study of the level of the functional literacy of schoolchildren using this methodology is based on the generalization of data obtained after the respondents have completed all the assignments for all topics.

⁴ The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international Student Assessment Program, a test that evaluates the functional literacy of schoolchildren in different countries of the world.

It should be noted that the maximum number of points that a respondent can score is 18 points for a particular topic, 30 points for a particular type of functional literacy, and 90 points for the test as a whole.

For a comprehensive assessment, the results of the test should be pre-processed according to topics or the types of functional literacy. After that, the scores obtained should be summarized and compared with the following values:

73–90 points	High level of functional literacy
55–72 points	Higher than average level of functional literacy
37–54 points	Average level of functional literacy
19–36 points	Low level of functional literacy
0–18 points	Insufficient level of functional literacy

RESULTS OF THE FUNCTIONAL LITERACY ASSESSMENT

The assessment of functional literacy based on the abovementioned methodology was conducted on a sample of school graduates from the town of Bonga (South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region) at the Center for Open Education and Russian Language Teaching established at the University of Bonga. The study was conducted in September 2024. The total sample size was 50 people aged 18–19 years.

The assessment procedure included completing 45 assignments after reading the five texts mentioned above. All texts were translated into English, which the respondents were fluent in. In addition, a professor from UIGPU, who acted as the translator from Russian into English, and a lecturer from Bonga University, who helped, if necessary, in translating from English into the Kaffa language, participated in the process.

The assessment of reading literacy involved identifying the level of the following components: the ability to find and extract information, integrate and interpret it, and use information from the text to achieve personal goals. The assessment of mathematical literacy included determining the level of the ability to apply mathematical concepts, facts, and procedures in practice; interpret, use, and evaluate mathematical results; and translate a mathematical solution into the terms of an analysis of a problem situation. Scientific literacy assessment tasks are aimed at identifying the ability to understand the features of scientific research and scientific explanation of phenomena, interpret data, and use it to draw conclusions.

Based on the results obtained, the levels of functional literacy of Ethiopian students were determined. The generalized results of the study on each type of functional literacy (reading, mathematical, and natural science) for all five texts are presented in *Table 1*.

According to the score translation scale, almost all subjects demonstrate very “modest” results in terms of the level of functional literacy (from 0 to 16 points), identified in the process of completing tasks for each of the five texts.

As for *reading* literacy, 92.8% of students demonstrated an insufficient level, 1.2% of respondents had a low level, and only 6% of participants showed an average level of development of this component of functional literacy. There were no higher-than-average or high levels of reading literacy (*Fig. 1*).

Table 1. The distribution of respondents who scored a certain number of points based on the results of performing tasks on various types of functional literacy

Score	Types of Functional Literacy		
	Reading (persons)	Mathematical (persons)	Natural Science (persons)
0 points	3	6	8
1 point	13	10	16
2 point	8	10	5
3 point	3	10	5
4 point	3	6	3
5 point	5	0	8
6 point	8	0	0
7 point	0	0	0
8 point	2	5	3
9 point	3	3	2
10 point	0	0	0
11 point	2	0	0
Number of respondents	50	50	50

Source: compiled by the authors.

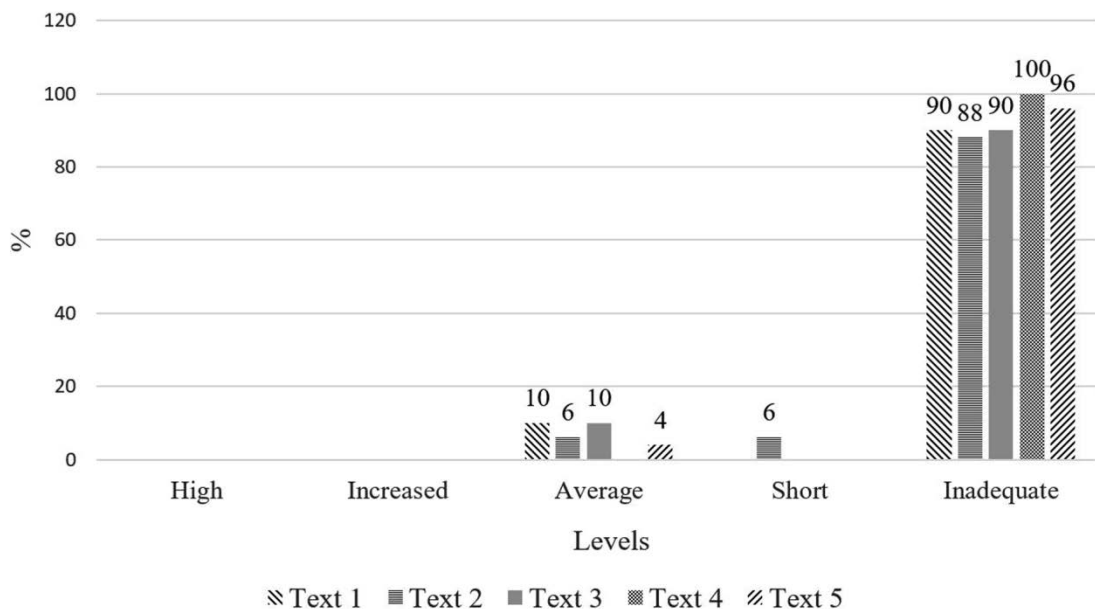


Fig. 1. Level of functional literacy (%).

Source: compiled by the authors.

The results of the participants were slightly higher in the assignments for assessing *mathematical* literacy. Thus, an insufficient level was shown by 77.6% of respondents, while low and average—by 16% and 6.4% of respondents, respectively. Higher-than-average and high levels of mathematical literacy were not identified (Fig. 2).

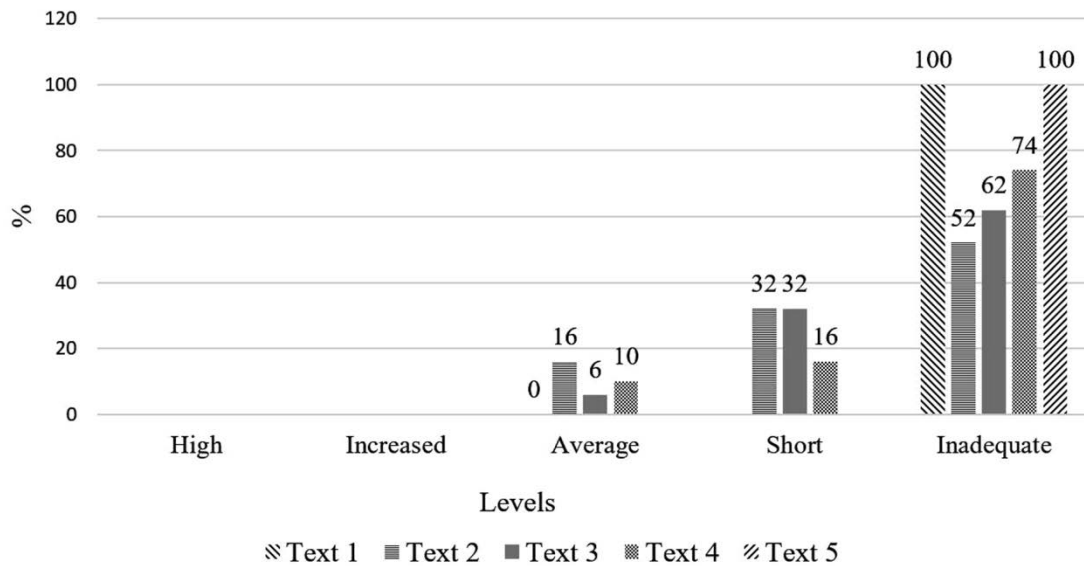


Fig. 2. Level of mathematical literacy (%).

Source: compiled by the authors.

The following results were obtained regarding the scientific literacy of the Ethiopian students: 82% of the subjects demonstrated an insufficient level, 13.6% demonstrated a low level, and 4.4% demonstrated an average level. There were no higher-than-average or high levels of this component of functional literacy (Fig. 3).

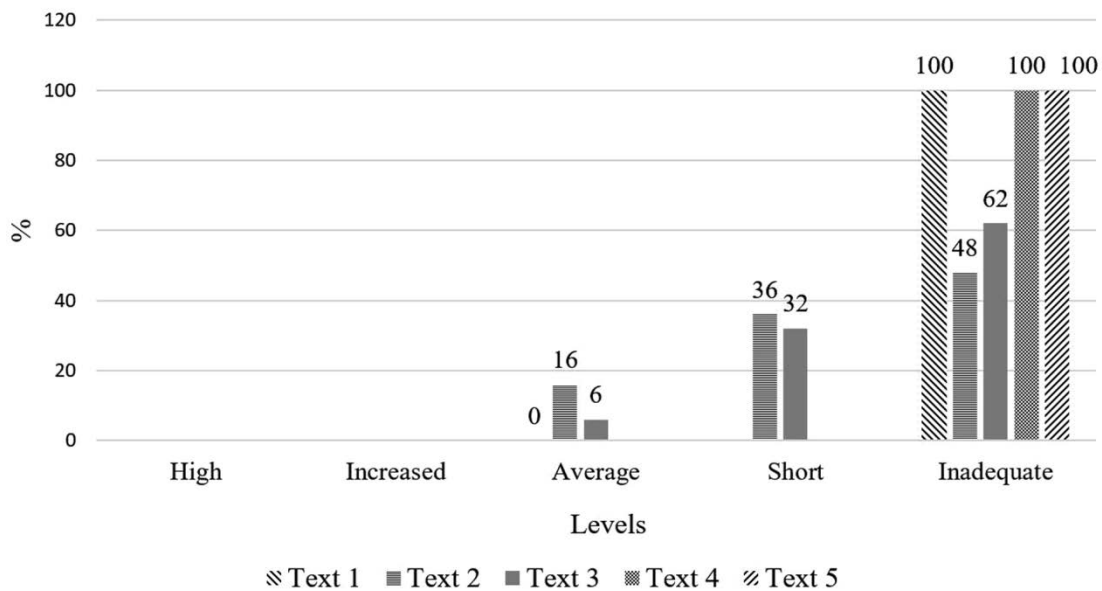


Fig. 3. Scientific functional literacy of the Ethiopian students (%).

Source: compiled by the authors.

Diagnostic data on the overall functional literacy (according to the five texts offered to the participants) showed that only 2.4% of the students showed an average level of functional literacy (for only two texts), another 12.4% demonstrated a low level (for 4 texts), and the remaining 85.2% of respondents had an insufficient level of functional literacy in all five texts (Fig. 4).

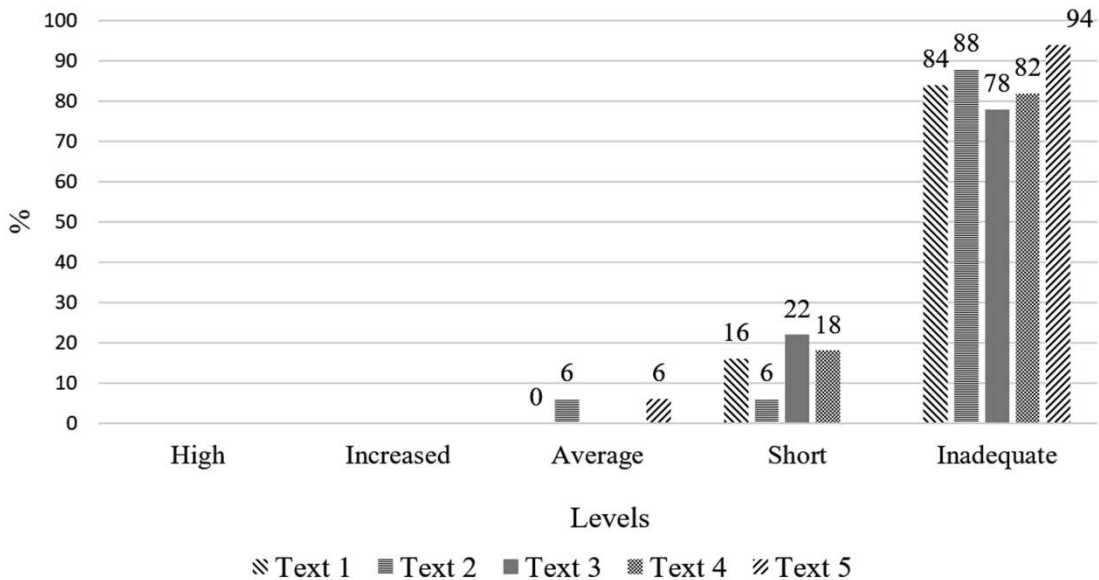


Fig. 4. Level of functional literacy (%).

Source: compiled by the authors.

Summing up the results of the assessment of functional literacy of students in the town of Bonga (South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region), it should be noted that its individual participants demonstrated a low or even an average level of the three (of the five identified by us) types of functional literacy when reading various texts. The overwhelming majority of the subjects (85.2%) demonstrated an insufficient level of functional literacy, 12.4% of the study participants have a low level, and another 2.4% of students have reached an average level.

One of the reasons explaining the results obtained is the lack of attention to the development of functional literacy among students, as evidenced by the fact that Ethiopia has never participated in PISA international functional literacy studies during their entire period. Another factor is the qualitative composition of the sample of respondents, which included only graduates of schools in a particular provincial town of Bonga. Conducting a study on stimulus material in the English language, non-native for the respondents, could act as an additional barrier preventing more relevant results from being obtained.

As a research perspective, we consider further improvement of the methodology for assessing functional literacy and the educational content based on it. In particular, this may be related to the development of new topics and tasks aimed at developing and evaluating all types of functional literacy, including financial, global competencies, and creative thinking. In addition, in accordance with the results obtained, adjustments can be made to the existing blocks of the methodology.

In order to obtain better results, it seems advisable to further translate the text of the methodology into one or more official languages of the country that are native to the study participants. This step will help expand the geography of the study by conducting it in other regions of Ethiopia, which will ensure heterogeneity of the sample and increase its volume.

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Научная статья

ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ГРАМОТНОСТЬ ВЫПУСКНИКОВ ЭФИОПСКИХ ШКОЛ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ РЕГИОНА НАРОДОВ ЮГО-ЗАПАДА ЭФИОПИИ)

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается проблема качества общего образования Эфиопии в аспекте формирования функциональной грамотности школьников на примере региона Народов юго-запада Эфиопии. Идея настоящего научного исследования, проведенного в рамках международного сотрудничества Российской Федерации и Федеративной Демократической Республики Эфиопия, заключается в организации взаимовыгодного партнерства в сфере образования двух стран и содействии повышению качества образования африканского государства. Авторами описываются результаты исследования функциональной грамотности выпускников эфиопских школ на примере города Бонга. В условиях активно развивающегося международного сотрудничества между Ульяновским государственным педагогическим университетом имени И.Н. Ульянова и эфиопскими вузами возникает задача, связанная с разработкой доступного для обеих сторон диагностического инструментария, сконструированного на основе образовательного контента, включающего информацию о России и Эфиопии. Использование данного инструментария позволило авторам осуществить оценку сформированности трех видов функциональной грамотности обучающихся: читательской, математической, естественнонаучной. Объединение показателей по каждому виду дает

возможность получить обобщенную картину функциональной грамотности выпускников школ города Бонга, а именно: у большинства участников (85,2%) она находится на недостаточном уровне развития, у 12,4% – на низком, и у 2,4% респондентов зарегистрирован средний уровень развития функциональной грамотности. Авторами обозначены перспективы дальнейшего исследования функциональной грамотности у обучающихся Эфиопии, среди которых совершенствование диагностического инструментария и образовательного контента, включая увеличение его тематического разнообразия, перевод на официальные языки страны, а также расширение географии, увеличение качественно-количественных характеристик выборки.

Ключевые слова: Эфиопия, качество образования, российско-эфиопское сотрудничество, функциональная грамотность, виды функциональной грамотности, развитие функциональной грамотности обучающихся, методика оценивания функциональной грамотности

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Персональный вклад авторов: совместное исследование.

Благодарности. Статья написана в рамках Дополнительного соглашения № 073-03-2024-060/3 от 27.05.2024 к Соглашению о предоставлении субсидии из федерального бюджета на финансовое обеспечение выполнения государственного задания на оказание государственных услуг (выполнения работ) № 073-03-2024-060 от 18.01.2024, заключенного между ФГБОУ ВО «УлГПУ им. И.Н. Ульянова» и Министерством просвещения Российской Федерации. Авторы выражают признательность руководству ФГБОУ ВО «Ульяновский государственный педагогический университет имени И.Н. Ульянова» (Россия) и Университету Бонга (Эфиопия) за возможность проведения исследования.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-135-146

Для цитирования: Данилов С.В., Шустова Л.П., Мишина А.П. Функциональная грамотность выпускников эфиопских школ (на примере Региона народов юго-запада Эфиопии). *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Том 11. № 2. С. 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-135-146>

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Research article

TRADITIONAL HEALERS AND THE STATE OF MEDICAL INTEGRATION IN ASANTE: A 21st CENTURY DIALOGUE WITH PRACTITIONERS AND RESIDENTS IN ABOABO

**© 2025 S. Adu-Gyamfi, B. Yakubu, A.Y. Nyaaba,
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Abstract. This study looks into how traditional medicine is incorporated into the healthcare system in Asante, focusing on the Aboabo community. For many years, traditional healing methods that are ingrained in the area's cultural legacy have been vital parts of its healthcare. Notwithstanding their importance, formal acknowledgement and incorporation into the mainstream healthcare system are frequently difficult to achieve for these practices. In-depth interviews with a wide range of participants, including locals, biomedical experts, and traditional healers, were conducted as part of this broad qualitative study. The results demonstrate the diverse functions of traditional healers, who, in addition to aiding in childbirth, attend to a broad range of conditions, from acute wounds to chronic illnesses. The community's view of traditional medicine is clarified by this study, which highlights the confidence and dependence on these

professionals. Significant obstacles to integration are also identified by the study, including enduring unfavorable opinions among biomedical professionals who frequently consider traditional techniques to be subpar. The absence of formal acknowledgement by state health authorities and weak regulatory frameworks further complicate the landscape of healthcare delivery. By examining these relationships, this study offers insightful information about the current discussion on healthcare in Ghana and promotes a more inclusive strategy that acknowledges the value of traditional medicine.

Keywords: traditional healers, medical integration, traditional medicine, herbal medicine, primary healthcare, Aboabo community, Asante

Authors' contributions: Adu-Gyamfi S.: conceptualization, data curation, methodology, writing original draft, review, and editing; Yakubu B.: data curation and writing original draft; Nyaaba A.Y.: writing and review; Bempong E.: writing and review; Brobbey M.A.: data curation, writing, review, and editing.

Conflict of interest: The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-147-165

For citation: Adu-Gyamfi S., Yakubu B., Nyaaba A.Y., Bempong E., Brobbey M.A. (2025). Traditional Healers and the State of Medical Integration in Asante: A 21st Century Dialogue with Practitioners and Residents in Aboabo. *Journal of the Institute for African Studies*. Vol. 11. № 2. Pp. 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-147-165>

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Traditional Medicine (TM) as “the sum of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health and prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness”.¹ TM also refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plants, animals, and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose, and prevent illnesses [Fokunang et al. 2011: 284]. TM is believed to be effective in treating a diverse array of ailments, such as malaria and typhoid fever, sexually transmitted infections, infertility, menstrual problems, impotence, piles, cold, influenza, cough, hernia, intestinal problems, bone fractures, mental problems, and more [Gyasi et al. 2016: 6]. Among the Akan people of Ghana, illnesses are divided into two categories: “*bosom yareε*,” which translates to disease caused by malevolent spirits, and “*honam yareε*,” which refers to illness brought on by environmental bacteria impairing the body. Any type of ailment can be treated with rituals or herbs, although natural and spiritual remedies are used the most. This aims to highlight the comprehensive nature of the TM used in African societies to heal illnesses [Fokunang et al. 2011: 286].

¹ WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy: 2002–2005. WHO. 21.02.2002. https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/67163/WHO_EDM_TRM_2002.1_eng.pdf (accessed: 29.05.2025)

Western medicine (WM), sometimes known as orthodox medicine, biomedicine, or conventional medicine, is a term used to describe a medical system that draws its knowledge from scientific methods. Like traditional medicine, western medicine aims to preserve and improve the physical well-being of the members of society; for this reason, it is also seen as a friend to society [Fokunang et al. 2011]. Ghana has a longstanding tradition of engaging in traditional medicine, and a significant portion of the population still seek the assistance of Traditional Medical Practitioners (TMPs). Nevertheless, the country's formal healthcare system has not fully integrated TM. The negative attitudes and perspectives of people towards TM may partly account for the failure of the formal healthcare system to integrate it [Asante, Avornyo 2013]. According to the WHO, TM is one of the most reliable means of ensuring that every Ghanaian has access to healthcare. At its 1978 International Conference on Primary Healthcare in Alma-Ata, USSR, the WHO emphasized the need for all governments to incorporate TM into healthcare systems to increase access and improve people's health.² This declaration marked the first time that governments and nations were urged to formally integrate TM into their primary healthcare systems and recognized its practitioners as members of the healthcare team, especially at the community level [Kayne 2010].

The integration of TM into the formal healthcare systems of developing countries, particularly in Africa, gained momentum in the 1980s, following the Alma-Ata Declaration. Countries like Nigeria began promoting the use of indigenous traditional practices to expand healthcare access. This movement was further reinforced by the UNESCO Declaration of 2005, which emphasized respect for traditional knowledge.³

In the context of this research, "integration" refers to the process of incorporating TM into the current healthcare delivery system of Ghana. It involves the incorporation of traditional medical knowledge and methods into the country's well-established healthcare delivery system [Asante, Avornyo 2013]. To effectively serve all Ghanaians with preventive and curative care, integration also refers to exposing practitioners of both systems to the philosophies and ideas of their counterparts.

Ghana has been implementing a complex medical system since the introduction of WM into the country in the early 19th century. The two dominant medical systems, which are distinct and have been operating side by side, are scientific (western) medicine and traditional medicine. As a result of the former's widespread public funding, it has grown to become the de facto standard in healthcare, complete with established systems and trained professionals. The state provides substantial funding for it. The country has reaped clear benefits from WM, such as a decreased mortality rate and an increase in the average lifespan of its citizens. Nevertheless, owing to its exorbitant service expenses, it engulfs a substantial proportion of the national budget, despite catering to a mere 30% of the populace [Asante, Avornyo 2013].

As the expense of modern scientific healthcare continues to rise, there has been a growing dependence on TM, despite its important role in complementing healthcare

² Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, USSR, 6–12 September 1978. WHO. P. 63. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/39228/9241800011.pdf> (accessed: 29.05.2025)

³ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Adopted 20.10.2005. UNESCO. <https://unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-and-promotion-diversity-cultural-expressions> (accessed: 29.05.2025)

delivery [Opoku, Addai-Mensah, Wiafe: 2015]. Furthermore, inadequate accessibility to modern medicines and drugs to treat and manage diseases in middle- and low-income countries, especially in Africa, may have contributed to the widespread use of TM in these regions, especially in poor households [Fokunang et al. 2011]. Opoku *et al.* [2015], citing the WHO disclosed that "...approximately 70% of the population in the developing world, especially Africa, depend on medicinal plants to meet their healthcare needs. For that reason, the need has always arisen to inculcate traditional medicine in modern scientific medicine" [Opoku, Addai-Mensah, Wiafe 2015: 23].

Research has shown that some TM practices are useful in the management of a wide spectrum of diseases, some of which may not be effectively managed using WM. Fokunang *et al.*, citing Bloom *et al.*, disclosed that "Many Cameroonians today, especially the rural people and the urban poor, rely on the use of herbal medicine when they are ill. Many rural communities in Africa still have areas where TM is the major and, in some cases, the only source of healthcare available" [Fokunang et al. 2011: 285]. As a result, the question of how to integrate these systems has risen to the forefront of contemporary medical discourse.

Indeed, these remedies' significance to the traditional Ghanaian community is undeniable. They have had a significant impact on the physical and spiritual healing of humans in several ways [Opoku, Addai-Mensah, Wiafe 2015]. Many developed economies' healthcare systems now incorporate traditional medical healing practices, including China, Japan, Singapore, India, Korea, and Hong Kong [Kwame 2021]. Full integration of TM into the formal healthcare delivery system apparently is something that Western medical practitioners (WMPs) would like, but when presented with opportunities to collaborate, WMPs are hesitant to acknowledge TMPs as equal partners because they view TMP as inferior to WMP. There must be, therefore, consistent communication and consultation between medical practitioners of TM and WM to lessen the suspicion and misunderstanding of each other's underlying philosophies. This has the potential to foster an environment where practitioners are willing to trust and respect one another, which is an essential condition for the advancement and integration of TM into the country's healthcare system.

There is still evidence of the indigenous medical paradigm that was prevalent in Ghana before the advent of WM. Private entrepreneurs and practitioners, with minimal or no support from the state, are mostly responsible for the sustainability of TM. There is strong theoretical and empirical support for combining the two healthcare systems in Ghana to enhance healthcare delivery. An effective approach to establishing a solid and well-coordinated healthcare system in Ghana is to incorporate the holistic principles of traditional medical practices into the existing Western medical system.

Stakeholders in Ghana and other African nations acknowledge the substantial supplementary function of TM in the provision of healthcare. In 2002, WHO published a report on traditional medicine, stating that approximately 60% to 90% of individuals in low-income countries, including African countries, utilize traditional medicine.⁴ Kwame also affirmed that the use of herbal remedies at home is the first line of treatment for

⁴ WHO traditional medicine strategy 2002–2005. WHO. 21.02.2002. P.9. https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/67163/WHO_EDM_TRM_2002.1_eng.pdf (accessed: 29.05.2025)

60% of children with high fever caused by malaria in Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Zambia [Kwame 2021]. This is primarily due to the accessibility, affordability, and comprehensibility of TM, leading people in these nations to frequently consult TMPs [Asante, Avornyo 2013].

Omowunmi *et al.* noted in 2004 that birth attendants were being recruited in several regions of sub-Saharan Africa to offer cost-effective malaria prevention services to pregnant women. That was important because, according to a 1998 UNICEF report, at that time, only 40% of births in underdeveloped countries occurred in hospitals and health centers, while the remaining deliveries were assisted by traditional birth attendants (TBAs), who may or may not have received training [Omowunmi et al. 2004: 192]. “The lack of healthcare systems in the rural areas forces local people to treat themselves, either by using medicinal plants or by buying high-cost medicine in the rural markets or still further going for cheap roadside medication, predisposing themselves to health dangers caused by the unknown source of these poor medications” [Fokunang et al. 2011: 285].

Ghana is a prime example of the countries that are making efforts to integrate traditional medicine into primary healthcare. About 45,000 traditional healers (the majority of whom were accredited and licensed by various organizations under the general auspices of the Ghana Federation of TMPs’ Association) were believed to provide healthcare for 70% of the population at the time of the enactment of the Traditional Medicine Practice Act (Act 578) in 2002 [Romero-Daza 2002]. The passing of this Act was widely regarded by experts in the TM field as a clear demonstration of the government’s dedication to modernizing TM [Asante, Avornyo 2013]. The Ghanaian government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), has formulated policy alternatives and institutional guidelines to facilitate the integration of Traditional Medical Healing practices in Ghana. The Center for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine (CSRPM), founded in 1975 in Mampong-Akwapim through Dr. Oku Ampofo, is still in operation and aims to facilitate the advancement of herbal medicine [Kwame 2021].

Nevertheless, the process of integration is plagued by several challenges. Indigenous practice is seen as a marginalized occupation, even by the MoH and the Ghana Health Service (GHS). Indeed, only a limited number of institutions have their traditional medicine methods officially acknowledged by the government [Asante, Avornyo 2013]. This study aims to provide contributions and address the gap concerning the role of traditional healers and the state of the integration of traditional medicine into formal healthcare in *Asante*, with a specific focus on Aboabo.

Aboabo is a suburban area located in the vicinity of Kumase (generally spelt “Kumasi”). The location of the site is approximately 2 km west of the Kumase Central Market, inside the transitional forest zone of Ghana. Aboabo exhibits a varied and rolling terrain, with the majority of its residences situated in a valley. The township is intersected by the river Aboabo and its tributaries, and certain areas have rocky terrain. Historically, Aboabo was considered unsuitable for human habitation due to its rocky terrain. The name Aboabo was derived from the *Akan* term “*aboo-aboo*,” which can be interpreted as either “stones-stones” or “rocks-rocks” in a literal sense. Aboabo is a Zongo community. In the Hausa language, the term “Zongo” refers to a location where caravans camp or

where travelers get lodging [Mensah 2010]. Aboabo is often regarded as the largest Zongo community in the Asante Region of Ghana. Reports indicate that individuals from the mostly Muslim northern regions of Ghana began settling in Kumasi around the 19th century, attracted by the abundance of economic prospects in the area. Currently, majority of the population in Aboabo strictly follows Islamic traditions and teachings. In essence, the community has witnessed an increase of many practitioners engaging in a wide range of healthcare practices to ensure the provision of adequate healthcare for the population [Asante, Avorny 2013].

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate traditional healers and the state of medical integration in Asante, with a focus on the Aboabo community, Ghana, in the 21st century. Both primary and secondary data were sourced. The primary data included interviews conducted in 2024 with traditional healers (4) from Aboabo and biomedical workers (4) aged from 18 to 65 as expert informants. It also included three (3) interviewees with users of traditional medicine. The interviews explored historical practices of traditional medicine in Aboabo and the roles of traditional healers.

Data from the Manhyia archives were also sourced, which were primarily correspondence between native physicians and the *Asantehene*. This includes correspondence between traditional medicine practitioner (TMP), Shitor Ayikple and the *Asantehene*, correspondence between TMP Malam Molo and the *Asantehene*, correspondence between TMP Kwesi Bediako and the *Asantehene* among others, with claims by these healers concerning the efficacy of their medicines.

Data sources were analyzed thematically to identify key themes regarding traditional medicine practices, healers' roles, and the nature of collaboration between healthcare approaches. Insights from these interviews within the defined contextual scope aim to inform understandings of community healthcare realities. As for the secondary sources, reports and journal articles were sourced in relation to the objectives of the study.

To address the empirical aspects aligned with the study's objectives, the analysis has been organized into four sections. The first section, already discussed, presented the introduction, problematized the study, and clearly defined its objectives and the methodology. The second section captures the historical practices and integration of TM in Asante in the 21st century, with subthemes. The third section analyzes the collaboration with formal healthcare. The final section concludes the discussions of the study.

HISTORICAL PRACTICES AND INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN ASANTE (ABOABO)

This section discusses the historical practices and integration of traditional medicine in Aboabo. Themes discussed under this section include: traditional medicine practitioners of Aboabo and their spheres of professional competence, traditional medicine practices in Aboabo, the mode of transmission of traditional medical knowledge, and the state of medical integration in Aboabo.

Traditional Medicine Practitioners and Their Professional Competence

As we stated earlier, researchers describe TM as “diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plants, animals, and or mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied singularly or in combination with other things to treat, diagnose and prevent diseases” [Fokunang et al. 2011: 284]. At the same time, as Adu-Gyamfi *et al.* emphasize, the health of an individual in the African traditional worldview has a strong link with the metaphysical and the supernatural world, leading to the need for society to address both natural and supernatural forces; therefore, African traditional medicine usually appeals to both natural and supernatural elements [Adu-Gyamfi *et al.* 2020: 303–304].

Alhaji Sidi, a bone setter, in his interview, gives a general description of traditional medical professions in Aboabo:

“Aside from bone setting, there are spiritual *mallams*⁵. When you bring a patient, I can look into the eye and tell you the patient has 50% chance to live or die, but I normally tell the men, not the women. This is because there are some people, their sickness or injuries are signals that they will die, so I blend the bone setting knowledge with that of the spiritual healing. There are also herbal practitioners around. These people were there, and some are still practicing, but now there are fewer than compared to the early 1950s. We also have the ‘Rukiya.’ If demons possess someone, you will pray for them by reciting Qur’an verses for the demons or jinns to manifest and set the person free. At first, they were much stronger, but this time, the fake ones are many. We can recite for bones to heal, but if you don’t fix them well, they will heal incorrectly. We also have the ‘wanzams,’⁶ who are also in charge of circumcision.”⁷

It is important to note that, though TM is extensively employed by various populations as integral components of their primary and traditional healthcare systems, which prioritize spiritual and cultural beliefs, due to the diverse range of healing techniques encompassed by TM, there is no single definition that encompasses all disciplines within these fields [Kretchy *et al.* 2016]. Another respondent, Alhaji Rufai Abdallah, a mallam, explains the specializations of traditional medicine practitioners in Aboabo:

“We have people who are specialists in diseases that affect children from infancy, and while there are specialists in the treatment of diseases, only a few are knowledgeable in all aspects of traditional medicine. However, in some cases, you could get people who are knowledgeable in two to three aspects of it. These people know more about herbs and the kind of ailments they can treat. There are also people who are into the treatment of fractures and the setting of bones and are specialists.”⁸

It is important to state that, historically, in Asante, these TMPs were required to be licensed through a request written to the *Nsumankwaahene* (the Chief Physician of the *Asantehene*). The letter also included a testimony from a chief in the locale or area the TMP wanted to practice. This is seen in the correspondence between another TMP, Malam Molo, through the *Nsumankwaahene* to the *Asantehene* to obtain a native

⁵ Mallam: In West Africa, an address to a learned man, a scholar of the Qu’ran.

⁶ Wanzam: In Ghana, an itinerant barber who also performs circumcisions and traditional scarification.

⁷ Interview with Dr. Alhaji Sidi, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

⁸ Interview with Dr. Alhaji Rufai Abdallah, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

physician license. He defined his specialty in TM in these terms: “I beg to remark that I am having medicine to cure the following ailments: piles, blindness, leprosy, and barrenness.”⁹

Alhaji Ibrahim Salifu, a herbalist who doubles as a bone setter, describes TMPs’ specialization in Aboabo, sharing his personal experience:

“I am a TH (traditional healer) who is into herbal medicine, specifically, the treatment of piles. I came to Aboabo in 1966 when they overthrew Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. We have different types of traditional healing in the community, like people who are into the treatment of the mentally challenged, traditional birth attendants, and bone-setters. For the traditional birth attendants (TBAs), they are not common now, but they used to be common. I was once a bone setter, but now, because of my age, I only treat piles and impotency, which may be caused by piles.”¹⁰

Osei Kofi and Nana Agyemang, two brothers, both residents of Aboabo, shared their thoughts on traditional medicine practices by saying: “The diseases treated at the hospital are no different from those treated by THs. For example, malaria, boils, fracture, knee dislocation, of which I had one and with the help of Alhaji Sidi, I’m recovering (sic). THs are able to treat boils that develop in the ear”.¹¹

In a notice issued to the public by Kojo Mainoo, a TMP, on behalf of Kofi Kyerematena, another TMP, in the first half of the 20th century, he stated:

“It is hereby notified for the information of the public that the undermentioned Kofi Kyerematena who holds *Nana Asantehene’s* native physicians’ license Vide C/E No. 47, possesses the medicine which can cure the undermentioned sicknesses; piles of any kind, pains during menstruation (dysmenorrhea), constant stomach pains, pains in the thigh after walking, chronic waist pain due to gonorrhoea, leanness due to chronic diseases, want of appetite, debility and stoutness through sickness, rheumatism and pains in bones, having bad blood on the eyes, weakness in penis (erectile dysfunction), miscarriage in women, etc.”¹²

Dr. Abdullahi Muntawakil, a bone setter, shared his experience and knowledge about traditional medicine practices in Aboabo by saying:

“The most dominant traditional healing here is the setting of bones and fractures, and that is what I do. We have a lot of people who are into the setting of bones. There is one man at the back of my house called Alhaji Sidi, he is also good at the setting of bones as I am, but I do not know whether he has any additional traditional healing methods. Some people treat boils, and I know one of them, and there are people who also treat the mentally challenged.”¹³

An anonymous military officer shared with the authors his thoughts on TM:

“As for THs, we have many. We have some of these healers as bonesetters and spiritual healers. For example, accidentally treading on spiritual items and resulting in

⁹ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, Correspondence between Malam Molo and the Asantehene, Native physician licenses, 30 January, 1947.

¹⁰ Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Salifu, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

¹¹ Interview with Osei Kofi and Nana Agyemang, Aboabo, 23 May, 2024.

¹² Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, A notice issued to the public by Kojo Mainoo on behalf of Kofi Kyerematena, Native Physician Licenses, Between 1934 and 1949.

¹³ Interview with Dr. Abdullahi Muntawakil, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

swollen feet could be treated by a traditional healer. There are many healing practices, and people choose to consult any of them based on the ones they are comfortable with.”¹⁴

Traditional Medicine Practices: Herbs, Rites, and Divine Help

Ampomah *et al.* define TM as the utilization of natural herbs, animal parts, mineral substances, incantations, divinations, and homeopathic techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases or ailments [Ampomah *et al.* 2015]. It encompasses the utilization of items and therapies that are not included in the curriculum or often used in medical schools and mainstream medicine. For example, in Ghana, malaria has been traditionally treated using a mixture of elephant grass, lime, pineapple, and neem leaves [Ampomah *et al.* 2015].

Gyasi *et al.*, who researched the attitude towards TM in different communities in Ghana, note that their respondents stressed the holistic nature of the traditional medicine. “Respondents’ positive attitudes to TRM are associated with the beliefs in holism and natural remedies. The ability of TRM to treat not just an aspect of the being and/or disease-specifics but a whole being, taking into account the importance of body, mind and spirit in health, is critical. Unlike scientific medicine, TRM deals with physical and spiritual and/or emotional problems towards a “whole health” restoration” [Gyasi *et al.* 2016: 9].

The same point is underscored by Adu-Gyamfi and Anderson, who aver that, in the context of West Africa, TM encompasses not just the use of herbal remedies for treating specific illnesses, but that it also incorporates the collective knowledge, customs, and values of the community, as well as the established practices and structures for providing healing and rehabilitation [Adu-Gyamfi, Anderson 2019].

Adu-Gyamfi and Anderson outline several factors important for the effectiveness of TM, according to its adherents. These factors include the healers’ understanding of the specific ailment, the patients’ knowledge of their illness, the compatibility of the medicine with the patients’ organism, the absence of contamination in the medicine, the absence of supernatural interference with the medicine, adherence to all taboos associated with the medicine, proper administration of the medicine, proper combination in case of using different medicines, the mental state of the healer, compliance with the traditional rules of payment to the healer, and the proper preparation of the medicine [Adu-Gyamfi, Anderson 2019: 78]. Essentially, the process of healing is not solely determined by the medication used, but rather by the overall healing experience that occurs between the healer, patient, and supernatural forces.

Therefore, in Africa, healing is a comprehensive social process that encompasses more than simply the healer and their medicine. It also incorporates social ties. Certain illnesses are attributed to deities or malevolent spirits and are perceived as ailments that necessitate divination and incantations. Consequently, community members are less likely to seek conventional medical treatments from hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies. Instead, they may opt to consult THs [Ampomah *et al.* 2015]. In addition, Abubakar *et al.* opined that there is a widespread notion among local population that the medicines employed in TM are both safe and more easily tolerated by the body [Abubakar *et al.* 2007].

¹⁴ Interview with anonymous military personnel, Aboabo, 23 May, 2024.

A letter of an early 20th century TMP, Kwasi Asamoah, to the *Asantehene* reads:

“I have the honour [to] most respectfully beg to apply to you for a native doctor permit to sell some herbs and barks of some important trees curing all kinds of illnesses”.¹⁵

Another healer, Shitor Ayikple, in his letter to the *Asantehene*, specifically stressed what today would be called the organic nature of his medicines: “I have the honour to apply to you for a physician license to enable me to sell native prepared medicine. My medicines are not noxious, they are prepared for curing *kooko* (piles), *sasanbro* (rheumatism), rapture, all kinds of stomach disturbances, purgative, etc.”¹⁶

The important psychological aspect of using TM can be illustrated by the bone setting techniques for the treatment of fractures and dislocations. In Ghana and Nigeria, a TH may address a fractured leg by intentionally breaking the leg of a fowl, ensuring that the fragmented segments align properly. The TH thereafter administers natural herbal remedies to the fractured areas, securely binds the broken limbs of both the individual and the bird, and performs incantations. According to a popular belief, when the leg of a fowl heals, it is thought that the leg of the man also recovers. [Ampomah *et al.* 2015]. It can be argued that the ritual of breaking and then mending the bird’s leg gives the patient extra assurance in the efficacy of the treatment, since both natural and supernatural methods are used, and, adding to his or her emotional peace, actually helps the recovery.

Historically, African tradition religions have also played a very important role in the practices of TM. In the first half of the 20th century, a healer named Kwesi Bediako wrote in his letter to the *Asantehene*,

“I have the honour, very respectfully to apply through you for your kind recommendation to all parties concerned and *Nana Otumfoɔ Asantehene* for permission to import into the town of Krappah a deity by name *Nengoror* from the Northern territories for curing and administering medicines to individuals, both men and women; curing barren women and men to breed, curing sicknesses of all kinds, betraying witches or witchcraft with evil charms on him to rebound on the actor.”¹⁷

Another healer, Kobina Acheampong, wrote in his letter: “I am a person who can tell fortune by means of private gods, *Adu* and *Buanie* and can cure any person also suffering from any other disease not above my powers”.¹⁸

Yet another healer, Kwasi Agyekum, wrote in his letter to the *Asantehene*: “The following are what my deity could perform, namely, [healing] barrenness in women, impotency in men, healing the sick, and generally its purposes are for the goodness of humanity”.¹⁹

¹⁵ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, Correspondence between Kwasi Asamoah and the *Asantehene*, Native Physician Licenses, 4 March, 1924.

¹⁶ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, Correspondence between Shitor Ayikple and the *Asantehene*, Native physician licenses, 5 March, 1947.

¹⁷ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/290, Correspondence between Kwesi Bediako and the *Asantehene*, Witch Finding Fetishes, 16 December, 1935.

¹⁸ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, Correspondence between Kobina Acheampong and the *Asantehene*, Native Physician Licenses, 6 March, 1947.

¹⁹ Manhyia Archives, Kumasi, MAG 1/1/22, Correspondence between Kwasi Agyekum and the *Asantehene*, Native Physician Licenses, 30 February, 1947.

As seen from the above, TMPs offer a wide range of therapies and remedies to the population, exercising a holistic approach and caring not only for the physical but also for the emotional and spiritual needs of the patients. Being deeply ingrained in the traditional African culture and worldview, TM remains a very important factor in the lives of Africans and not just the second-best option to the more expensive and less widely available biomedicine.

Mode of Transmission of Traditional Medical Knowledge in Aboabo

In terms of knowledge transfer, traditional medicine can be described as “the sum total of all knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in the diagnosis, prevention, and elimination of physical, mental, and social imbalance and relying exclusively on practical experience and observations handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing” [Adamtey, Oduro, Ocloo 2014]. Typically, in Asante culture, herbal knowledge, which is an important part of TM, was not obtained through formalized education. By the beginning of the 20th century, knowledge about herbs was limited to specific family groups.

The kin group possessed knowledge regarding the effectiveness and utilization of various types of herbs or plant parts, such as leaves, roots, stems, fruits, and seeds, for the purpose of treating specific maladies. Primarily, the elderly possessed this information, as it was transmitted to them by their parents and grandparents. The acquisition of this knowledge mostly occurred through the link and interaction between the younger and older generations, who possessed a wealth of traditional herbal knowledge that was not always readily shared with individuals they did not trust or have a deep bond with [Adu-Gyamfi 2016: 47].

Individuals do not pursue their job until they experience a spiritual calling. For example, they perceive an auditory sensation that gives them a sense of being summoned to become Traditional Medicine Practitioners. Following the call, they seek consent from their relatives and the community to engage in an apprenticeship under the guidance of an individual whose actions were sanctioned by the same authority. Oral transmission is the primary method by which African culture and history are passed down, including traditional healing methods. The duration of a typical training is a minimum of three years. After completing the programme, individuals are eligible to graduate and begin their full practice as a Traditional Medicine Practitioner [Ahenkan, Opoku-Mensah, Boon 2019: 26].

Dr. Muntawakil, a TMP, commenting on the mode of transmission of traditional medical knowledge, said in his interview:

“Like what you have been hearing, it is a family work. For mine, I learnt it from my father, who also learnt it from his father; so, it runs through the family. There are some unknown diseases people find it difficult to treat, but with the help of the herbs we use in treating broken bones and fractures, we will be able to treat such disease and the patient will be free. For instance, a person may have an accident and experience internal bleeding. When such a person is brought here, though these herbs are not supposed to be taken internally, I will allow him to take them internally, and such a person will either vomit or defecate all the blood that has accumulated internally after taking the herbs. So, aside from bone setting, there are other ailments you do not even know the

cause of or are unable to treat; you just have to bring such a patient here, and he'll be healed."²⁰

Alhaji Salifu, another TMP, confirmed this argument by Dr. Mutawakil by saying, "I learnt it from my father, who usually sent me to get herbs and roots from the forest. If I'm able to bring what he needs consistently, then I've qualified; he'll then teach me the kind of diseases what I brought can treat. That's how I learnt the work."²¹

It can be seen from the above that knowledge transfer in the field of African TM is also part of the traditional African culture, as it is based primarily on intergenerational interaction, not dissimilar to other traditional trades and professions that require a certain period of apprenticeship and rely on family ties and family-specific knowledge.

State of Medical Integration in Aboabo

Integrative medicine, as described by Kretchy *et al*, combines elements of allopathic medicine (biomedicine) with what they call evidence-based Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (T-CAM). The authors of the research conducted in 2016 claim that some of the T-CAM methods "have high-quality scientific proof of safety and efficacy, while emphasizing the importance of patient participation in health advancement, disease prevention and health management" [Kretchy *et al*. 2016: 381]. They also note that "although collaboration between TM-CAM and mainstream conventional medicine is increasing, TM-CAM remains poorly integrated into the current healthcare system of Ghana" [Kretchy *et al*. 2016: 381].

Alhaji Rufai, commenting on the state of integration, said: "People are doing it in their own ways; we can't say that they've integrated traditional medicine into the orthodox system, but I know during the 1950s, clinics and hospitals weren't common, but we had ways in which traditional healers maneuvered and treated people with different kinds of diseases and ailments. I know people have tried but have not been much successful (sic). During that time, we had only Manhyia and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, but we had herbalists who could do wonderful things. But I don't know whether they've been contacted for insights into the herbs they use or not."²²

Dr. Alhassan, a physician assistant, reflects on the state of integration: "I work at Manhyia, and I've seen that they advertise traditional medicine, so they ask whether the patient wants TM or orthodox medicine. So, there's a department for TM, and it's formal. The TMPs there are professionals who have studied herbal medicine at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)."²³

Kretchy *et al*. contend that the integration of T-CAM is heavily influenced by the attitudes of physicians and other medical practitioners. However, many biomedicine practitioners, including physicians, pharmacists, and nurses, possess limited knowledge and understanding of T-CAM, often labeling it as "alternative." The terms "unconventional" and "unproven" have been criticized for their negative connotations and their potential to hinder collaborative efforts aimed at integration [Kretchy *et al*. 2016: 381].

²⁰ Interview with Dr. Abdullahi Muntawakil, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

²¹ Interview with Alhaji Salifu, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

²² Interview with Dr. Alhaji Rufai Abdallah, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

²³ Interview with Dr. Alhassan Aboabo, 25 May 2024.

Users of traditional medicine, Osei Kofi and Nana Agyemang, shared their thoughts on the state of integration by saying, “If you are sick and sent to the hospital, you will realize that they try to condemn traditional healing, but the TM is very good for treating some diseases that orthodox medicine cannot. The local ones are quality and fast”.²⁴

Kretchy *et al.* further argue that Ghana has made efforts to include T-CAM within certain government institutions. However, these services are not covered by the national health insurance programme. Currently, it is uncertain if practitioners of conventional medicine support the merger of these two treatment systems. The preferences of conventional healthcare practitioners for integrating T-CAM will be greatly influenced by their attitudes towards these systems and how they align with their understanding of health and illness [Kretchy *et al.* 2016].

Ampomah *et al.* contend that a comprehensive examination of the implementation of integrated healthcare in Africa has revealed that the integration of TM in the majority of African nations is ineffectual [Ampomah *et al.* 2023]. In the Ashanti region of Ghana, conventional health practitioners and hospital administrators have identified several obstacles to the integration of traditional medicine. These include the high cost of traditional medicine products, inadequate promotion of integration, and subpar service standards in the traditional medicine field [Ampomah 2023].

Mrs. Eunice, a midwife at M.M.A Sufi Hospital, shared her thoughts on the state of integration: “[As] for traditional medicine, people like it too much; for instance, if you give them drugs from the hospital, they will still go in for TM; meanwhile, it is not helping us. It is difficult, but we are managing, and there is no integration. We mostly advise people not to combine both medications, but they go in for TM after visiting the hospital.”²⁵

Mohammed Abdul Rauf, a records keeper at the M.M.A Sufi Hospital, shared his thoughts on the state of integration: “Before I started working here, I had previously worked in different medical facilities, and I have never had any incident of any herbal [practice’s] integration in the formal system, so I don’t think there is any integration.”²⁶

In a study conducted by Ampomah *et al.*, TMPs expressed that they are more receptive to providing integrated treatment compared to orthodox health practitioners [Ampomah *et al.* 2023]. There is a belief that integrating the limited local TM healthcare facilities into the hospital system of WMPs could result in the creation of a comprehensive nationwide network of services. Indigenous medical practice encompasses various facets. Hence, when doctors trained in biomedicine are requested to provide their opinion on the feasibility of integration, they are evidently influenced by several variables. While certain individuals respond positively to herbal therapy and recommend its use to patients, others may be concerned about what they perceive as the unscientific or religious aspects of traditional treatments [Kwame 2021].

Similarly, the research by Gyasi *et al.* found out that Western-trained healthcare professionals currently harbor suspicion towards native doctors due to their lack of scientific understanding and relevant skills. The conversations of the authors of the research with TMPs and biomedicine practitioners demonstrated that there were no

²⁴ Interview with Osei Kofi and Nana Agyemang, Aboabo, 23 May, 2042.

²⁵ Interview with Miss Eunice, Aboabo, 25 May 2024.

²⁶ Interview with Mohammed Abdul Rauf, Aboabo, 25 May 2024.

officially approved patient referrals but rather unofficial and uncoordinated ones. The study found that Traditional Medical Practitioners have a lower rate of referring patients to conventional hospitals [Gyasi *et al.* 2016]. This is further confirmed by the results of the present research, as shown in the following section.

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL HEALERS AND THEIR COLLABORATION WITH FORMAL HEALTHCARE

Anshu Agbor and Naidoo note that the obstacles to collaborating have been ascribed to the mindset of biomedicine professionals who perceive THs as inferior and lacking adequate training in providing oral health care [Agbor, Naidoo 2016]. Kwame argues that full integration of TM into the formal healthcare delivery system is something that, in theory, WMPs would like, but when presented with opportunities to collaborate, WMPs are hesitant to acknowledge TMPs as equal partners because they view TMPs' practice as inferior to their own [Kwame 2021].

Dr. Muntawakil, a TMP, in his comments on the collaboration between THs and formal healthcare, makes the following example: "Sometimes someone may have a broken bone, and the bone will either break once or into pieces. In such instances, we have to refer the patient to the hospital where they will operate or insert a metal. So, we usually refer patients to the hospitals, but they do not refer their patients to us. Even if they do, they [first] let the patient waste time at the hospital, knowing well that they cannot treat such ailments, but referring them to a TH becomes a problem unless the patient insists on referral. Patients can stay in the hospital for about five to eight months but will not be healed of their ailments; but immediately, if such a patient is brought to a TH, within a month, the patient will be healed."²⁷

Alhaji Salifu, another TMP, also commented on the collaboration between traditional healers (THs) and formal healthcare. According to him, "Collaboration with the formal health centers is very low. For me, I've never experienced an instance where a patient has been referred to me for treatment from a scientific medical center, and vice versa".²⁸

Mrs. Eunice, commenting on collaboration between THs and formal healthcare, said: "Here, we are not working with traditional healers; the doctors here are not traditional healers, so I cannot tell if there is any collaboration. Even the doctors here, when I ask them anything about THs, would not mind me, because they do not accept THs. Though we are not accepting them, we are not condemning them. There is no serious collaboration between us. For the THs, they can refer patients to us, but for us, referring patients to THs will be very difficult. There was an instance where a traditional healer could not heal a patient, so he referred the patient to us, but because the case had worsened, we had to refer the patient to Okomfo Anokye [Hospital]. Sometimes, the THs refer patients to specific biomedical centers."²⁹

The results of the research by Agbor and Naidoo show that dual consultations are prevalent in many communities, even if most people choose biomedicine. Traditional indigenous medicine has always been around, and there are various reasons why people

²⁷ Interview with Dr. Abdullahi Muntawakil, Aboabo, 18 May, 2014.

²⁸ Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Salifu, Aboabo, 18 May, 2024.

²⁹ Interview with Mrs. Eunice, Aboabo, 25 May, 2024.

contact THs. Highly advanced biomedical health care coexists and even competes with traditional medical methods in today's African communities, which work under a pluralistic health system. Because of this, individuals can now choose whatever health systems work best for them [Agbor, Naidoo 2016].

In his comments on the collaboration between traditional healers and formal healthcare, Dr. Alhassan said "My issue is, I don't know whether their activities are being regulated or not, and even if they're regulated, I don't think the regulation is strict. For Manhyia, there's a formal collaboration between the two systems, but the other places are informal."³⁰

A user of TM, Fatimatu shared her thought on collaboration between TM and formal healthcare by saying; "I think there's some form of collaboration, but I can't tell if it is formal or informal. But I've never experienced a doctor referring a patient to a TH".³¹

Sodi and Olaniyi opined that the issue of unifying the two primary medical systems in Africa can be addressed from various perspectives. Western-trained practitioners are seen as a significant and formidable presence in any sincere endeavor towards collaboration and partnership. It is anticipated that physicians who have received training in WM will likely oppose significant efforts to combine the two healthcare systems [Sodi, Bojuwoye 2011]. Poudyal (2011) further added that indigenous healers exert considerable influence within healthcare systems, often operating outside formal structures and lacking recognition from governmental bodies. Despite this informality and lack of integration with mainstream healthcare systems, there exists potential for their formal inclusion [Poudyal 2011].

As Grishina notes, many African states have already undertaken legal steps towards integrating the traditional medicine into their healthcare systems. "In recent decades, the status of traditional medicine in different African countries has increased significantly, and in a number of countries, it is established at the level of modern European medicine. For example, in South Africa, the activities of traditional healers are regulated by the Health Professions Act of 1982. According to this document, traditional healers must have a license and appropriate qualifications. The work of healers in Mali (1980), Guinea (1984), Senegal (1985), Mauritius (1989), Namibia (1992), Benin (2002) and many other African states was also regulated by law" [Grishina 2024: 193].

Though the process of integration is obviously very complicated, it can be assumed that in future, the two systems will be gradually converging, and the necessary legal framework for the integrative medicine will be developed.

CONCLUSION

TM has traditionally been a crucial component of the healthcare system in Asante, with traditional healers addressing physical, spiritual, and social illnesses of the local population. At the same time, the process of its integration with the biomedicine healthcare system is either non-existent or lacking organized cooperation between healers and the biomedicine practitioners. It also almost always implies that it is TM that should

³⁰ Interview with Dr. Alhassan, Aboabo, 25 May 2024.

³¹ Interview with Fatimatu Ibrahim, Aboabo, 23 May, 2024.

be integrated into biomedicine system and that its position is by default inferior to that of biomedicine. THs often hold esteemed socio-political positions and regularly address matters pertaining to society. Gratitude is often given priority over financial benefit in terms of payment for the services of a TH. These tasks solidify their esteemed status in both cultural and political spheres. Community viewpoints support the perceived efficacy, flexibility, and cultural importance of TM, despite the difficulties in integrating it with distinct systems of operation.

The reasons for the preference of TM include its affordability, accessibility, and the firsthand experiences that confirm its effectiveness. The challenges to achieving deeper integration include negative attitudes among biomedical practitioners towards THs, lack of recognition, and inadequate regulation of dosage. This paper provided a detailed examination of how Asante, and Aboabo in particular, used traditional healing procedures in the past and modified these practices by passing on specialized expertise. Healer roles exhibited adaptability in response to various requirements.

The community has continued to embrace the effectiveness of interactive affirmation, even though there are challenges caused by operational separation. These challenges can be addressed by using cooperative strategies that consider the opinions of stakeholders. Identifying ongoing obstacles to improved coordination and recognizing the advantages of inclusive solutions can inform the development of policies and programmes to establish clear practitioner duties. The focus on standardized specialization zones, along with enhanced resources, emphasizes the potential for integration in certain areas of promise.

In Ghana, Asante, and throughout Africa, TM is expected to be officially acknowledged and incorporated into national healthcare systems in the future. According to this concept, biomedical professionals and THs collaborate within frameworks that respect one another's specialties and help provide patients with comprehensive care. In order for this to happen, attitudes must change in a way that promotes respect and understanding between the two systems.

It is imperative that THs participate in standardized training and certification programmes and do thorough research to confirm the safety and effectiveness of traditional treatments. Furthermore, ethical behavior and patient safety should be guaranteed by the creation of explicit regulatory frameworks. Incorporating TM ultimately presents a chance to improve healthcare affordability and accessibility, especially for people in underprivileged areas. Through the adoption of this comprehensive strategy, Ghana and other African countries may create robust healthcare systems that address the many demands of their citizens while protecting priceless cultural assets.

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Научная статья

ТРАДИЦИОННАЯ МЕДИЦИНА В СИСТЕМЕ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ АШАНТИ: МНЕНИЕ ВРАЧЕЙ И ЖИТЕЛЕЙ АБОАБО

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Аннотация. В исследовании представлен анализ интегрированности традиционной (или народной) медицины в систему здравоохранения народа ашанти, проживающего в центральных районах Ганы, главным образом на примере общины Абоабо. На протяжении многих лет традиционные методы лечения, уходящие корнями в культурное наследие

региона, составляли значимую часть системы здравоохранения. Несмотря на важность традиционной медицины, ее официальное признание и включение в систему здравоохранения затруднено.

В рамках данного исследования были проведены интервью с широким кругом участников, включая местных жителей, экспертов в области биомедицины и народных целителей. Были определены функции народных целителей, которые, помимо традиционной помощи при родах, лечат широкий спектр заболеваний – начиная с травм и до тяжелых хронических болезней. В исследовании уточняется отношение общины к народным целителям, объясняется доверие к ним и зависимость от них. Были выявлены препятствия для интегрирования традиционной медицины в официальную систему здравоохранения, в том числе негативное отношение врачей классической медицины, которые считают традиционные методы неэффективными. Отсутствие официального признания государственными органами здравоохранения и слабая нормативно-правовая база еще больше усложняют ситуацию по оказанию медицинской помощи населению народными целителями. Анализируя все вышеперечисленные факторы и взаимосвязи, авторы представляют обзор текущих дискуссий в области здравоохранения в Гане, что призвано способствовать разработке более инклюзивной стратегии, признающей ценность традиционной медицины и открывающей перспективу ее интеграции в официальную систему здравоохранения страны.

Ключевые слова: народные целители, интегрирование медицины, традиционная медицина, народная медицина, фитотерапия, первичная медицинская помощь, община Абоабо, Ашанти

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов: Аду-Гьямфи С.: концептуализация, обработка данных, методология, написание первоначального проекта, рецензирование и редактирование; Якубу Б.: обработка данных и написание первоначального проекта; Ньяба А.Я.: текст и рецензирование; Бемпонг Э.: текст и рецензирование; Бробби М.А.: обработка данных, текст, рецензирование и редактирование.

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-147-165

Для цитирования: Аду-Гьямфи С., Якубу Б., Ньяба А.Я., Бемпонг Э., Бробби М.А. Традиционная медицина в системе здравоохранения ашанти: мнение врачей и жителей Абоабо. *Ученые записки Института Африки РАН*. 2025. Т. 11. № 2. С. 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.31132/2412-5717-2025-71-2-147-165>