Policy Travel in Regionalization of Higher Education: the case of Bologna process in Africa

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1. Assumptions and Conceptualization of Policy Travel

A. Assumptions

- Higher education policies are in a constant state of change to meet socio-economic and political expectations.

- In the era of globalization, one can observe many commonalities in HE policy changes across many jurisdictions.

- Suggesting that national and regional governments not only do face common challenges but also learn from each other in search of opportunities.

- **Globalization – shared challenges & opportunities - commonalities in HE policies**

B. Conceptualization policy travel

- is embodied within the broader notion of globalization → interconnectedness & interdependence of variance.

- Interconnectedness and interdependence of variance leads to convergence of policy processes (Torres and Rhoads 2006).

- Convergence HE policy also implies a constant flow of technologies, information, knowledge, ideologies, values, policies, and models across many jurisdictions.

- Benjamin Levin calls ‘epidemic of education policies’ (Levin 1998).

Conceptualization …

- The BP is a manifestation of such interconnectedness, interdependence and convergence of variances

- **Policy travel** focuses on the movement of ideas, models, structures and institutions across various policy settings.

  - understanding the driving factors for policy travel,
  - the actors involved in the process and their dynamic interactions,
  - the way decisions are made and interests negotiated are central questions in policy travel research.
- Concepts used to explain includes - ‘policy transfer’, ‘policy diffusion’, ‘cross-national attraction’, ‘policy borrowing’ and ‘policy convergence’

Policy travel - policy transfer vs policy diffusion.

- **Policy transfer** implies the transfer of the policy content - goals, structure, instruments, institutions & ideology –
  - In a **top-down** manner without thorough discussions & negotiations among stakeholders at the bottom
- **Policy diffusion**, on the other hand, emphasizes on the gradual movement & spread of policies, ideas, practices through time
  - Mostly in **bottom – up** processes

2. How is the Bologna Process traveling to Africa?

- In the Post 1990s - Expiation of the HE sector -vocational, private, distance & online education, cross border education (eg. With the expansion of Privatization & ICT)

- The growing student mobility & institutional partnerships have also necessitated regional discussions on how to deal with recognition of qualifications & transferability of credits.

- Concerns - Recognition of qualifications, regulation of academic mobility, transferability of credits, & comparability of qualifications, issues of market & trade in higher education

- In the post 2000 - the issues have, however, not only been shared among HEIs across Africa but also demanded a collective endeavour in the process of addressing them

How is the BP traveling to Africa …

- African HEIs also felt the pressure to align their systems with European reforms as changes in Europe will have a direct implication on African HE for historical reasons.

- Ignoring European higher education reform could also mean isolation from their historical partners.

- Since the new AU is modelled after the EU the experience of the EU on different regional policy issues has also become a recurrent point of reference for regional policy initiatives in Africa.

- Long standing financial, technical and logistical supports from the EU Commission

3. Regional initiatives at the Continental level - Policy transfer ?

- **"Higher Education Harmonization Strategy"** (COMEDAF III) in 2007

  (i) Integrate African higher education systems

  (ii) Facilitate mutual recognition of academic qualifications

  (iii) Promote intra-African mobility of students and academic staff

  (iv) Provide framework for effective quality assurance mechanisms

  (v) Ensure competitiveness of African higher education in the international arena.

In terms of Objectives - Policy Transfer ?

Harmonization

- Recognition of qualifications
- Creating African higher education space
- Promote intra-African mobility of students and academics
- Regional quality assurance mechanisms
- Comparable degree structure
- Ensure competitiveness of African higher education institutions.

Bologna

- Recognition of qualifications
- Creating European Higher education Area
- Mobility of students and researchers
- Cooperation in quality assurance
- Two/three degree cycle
- Credit transfer and accumulation systems(ECTS)

In terms of functional instruments - Policy Transfer ?

Harmonization

- The Nyerere Mobility Program (Mobility)
- African Quality Rating Mechanism and Accreditation) (Quality)
- Pan African University Network
- Tuning Africa (Comparability?)

Bologna

- The Erasmus mobility program (Mobility)
- The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (Quality)
- Diploma Supplement
- The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) (Comparability)

Bologna Actors

- The Ministers of Education - Responsible for political decision like passing the Bologna Declaration;
- Council of Europe - which provides support for other actors;
- European University Association (EUA) - which represents Europe's universities in the Bologna Process;
- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE),
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA),
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and;
- BusinessEurop

AU Harmonization Actors

- The Council of Ministers - which has the mandate of political decisions;
- the African Union Commission (AUC) - which provides strategic directions;
- The Association of African Universities (AAU) - which is in charge of facilitating the implementation processes of the program;
- The UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa (UNESCO/BREDA)-which play advisory role
- The Association for the Development of Education in Africa working Group on Higher Education (ADEA-WGHE) - which provides support for the technical team; and
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Top-down approach

- Higher education institutions, university leadership, faculty members, students and professional association have not either significantly been consulted or communicated.

- No formal line of communication so far that links all stakeholders particularly at institutional levels

- Externally Driven ? As in most cases the process is funded, expert advised, in some cases process owned by external actors – Eg, EUC, Donors

- As a result, the harmonization process is still mainly floating at the AU level without being much felt at national and institutional levels.

4. Sub-regional levels - Francophone Africa - Policy diffusion ?

- Francophone Africa is the first to introduce the Bologna process because of its long and strong tie to French higher education system.

- The Maghreb region of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), were the first countries to implement the *'Licence*-M*aster*-D*octorat'* (LMD) degree structure

- Morocco was the first to start the LMD in 2003 followed by Algeria in 2004 and Tunisia in 2005

Sub-regional levels …

- Diploma Supplement, has also been introduced in Algeria and Tunisia since 2009/2010 and soon in Morocco.

- Tunisia has officially introduced a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) while the process is underway in Algeria and Morocco.

- Supported by various EU collaborative schemes- the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area, and Tempus programs

Sub-regional levels …

- Member states of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) have been adopting the LMD structure since July 2007.

- UEMOA allocated $5.8 million in February 2011 for a 3-year period

- The Network of Excellence in Higher Education in West Africa (REESAO) and the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) are also involved in the process.

- The process of policy travel at sub-regional, national or institutional levels is more of policy diffusion than transfer since the process is a step by step adoption of the Bologna components in a more bottom-up approach.

Sub-regional Levels …Anglophone

- Relatively it been less intensive as compared to that of Francophone Africa since the degree structures is largely compatible with the three-cycle degree structure.

- The main lines of reform here have been along the issues of quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition of qualifications

- SADC and EAC, have been playing a leading role

Anglophone

- SADC Protocol on Education and Training 1997
- The Treaty of East African Community (EAC) 1999
- The Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA)
- Lusophone Higher Education Area (ELES – Espaço Lusófono de Ensino Superior) since 2002.

5. Challenges of Fragmentation and Duplication of Harmonization Processes

Fragmented sub-regional HE Reforms	Fragmented sub-regional university associations
ECOWAS - Network of Excellence in Higher Education in West Africa (REESAO)	The Association of Arab Universities (AARU)
Francophone Africa - (CAMES) or the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education	The Organization of the Francophone Universities (AUF)
SADC - Southern African Protocol on Education and Training	Southern African Regional University Association (SARUA)
EAC- the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA).	the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA)
Portuguese speaking Africa - Espaço Lusófono de Ensino Superior (ELES) or Lusophone Higher Education Area	the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES)

Fragmentation and Duplication

Poor Functional Coordination among various Agents and Processes

- Implementing agents are not coordinated (AAU& RECs).
- Poor functional coordination among various Actors and Functional Processes.
- Duplications of Harmonization processes across sub-regional organizations that are not yet reconciled at continental level.
- No formal support structure that coordinates all processes and actors at continental levels (like for eg. BFUG of Europe)

- Missing enabling factors ... ***<u>On practical level</u>***

- Well structured common economic area,
- Harmonized immigration and security policies,
- Common citizenship rights,
- Regional framework for recognition of qualifications,
- Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS),
- Flexible entry mechanisms,
- Smooth visa procedures,
- Harmonized/comparable tuition policies

6. Conclusion

- There could be different lines of argument on taking the Bologna process as a model

1. Could be advantageous to newly emerging HE harmonization strategies since the models would have already been tested on another ground; thus, it is easy to adopt into the African context.
2. the notion of policy travel may perpetuate dependency of African policy processes on European models.
3. The policy travel itself could raise practical concerns as it may not necessarily accommodate the specific context of Africa and achieve the expected outcomes.
4. Indeed, the BP is slowly traveling to Africa - Slow implementation is due to: resource dependency, poor political commitment, less participatory nature of the policy and fragmentation and duplication of processes