# Policy Travel in Regionalisation of Higher Education: The Case of Bologna Process in Africa

**Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis**

## Introduction

Higher education policies continue to be in a state of change as governments are constantly re-examining many aspects of the sector so as to meet the socio-economic and political expectations of stakeholders. In the era of globalisation, one can observe many commonalities in the reform themes that emerge across countries, suggesting that national and regional governments not only do face common challenges across many jurisdictions but also learn from each other in search of opportunities. Studies of policy travel are embodied within the broader notion of globalisation as both rely on the basic concepts of interconnectedness and interdependence of variance. Interconnectedness also implies interdependence and convergence through a constant flow of technology, information, knowledge, ideologies, values, policies, expertise and ideas across borders (Torres and Rhoads 2006).

In the course of interconnectedness and interdependence of higher education variance, however, technologies, information, knowledge, ideologies, values, policies, and models travel across regions, a situation Benjamin Levin calls "epidemic of education policies" (Levin 1998). The Bologna process of Europe is a manifestation of such interconnectedness and interdependence of variances as a regional framework to recalibrate the institutional architectures of many higher education institutions in the region and create a common higher education area. This reform has, however, managed to draw the attention of many other higher

E. T. Woldegiorgis (✉)
Universität Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany
e-mail: emnet.woldegiorgis@uni-bayreuth.de

education systems, and the process has been travelling to different parts of the world, including Africa.

Explaining similar scenarios, a considerable volume of literature on the inter-regional movement of ideas and practices in public policy has been developed over the last twenty years through various concepts including "policy transfer", "policy diffusion", "cross-national attraction", "policy borrowing" and "policy convergence". This article explores the notion of policy travel through the conceptions of "policy transfer" and "policy diffusion" and addresses the underlying question of how the Bologna process of Europe travelled to the various sub-regions of Africa.

## Conceptualising Policy Travel in the Context of Higher Education

Studies on policy travel emerged within the broader field of comparative studies in public policy analyzing how different policies operate when they are implemented in different contexts. The concept originally developed in the United States of America as an instrument to explain the adoption of policies and how they spread or diffuse throughout the federal system (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996). Gradually, however, the notion of policy travel started to be taken as one of the instruments of comparative regional policy studies especially within studies of European integration (Haas 1970). This is because the concept of policy travel is embodied within the notion of globalisation since both are usually conceptualised in relation to their capacity to harmonise systems and embrace interconnectedness of variance across many jurisdictions. In this regard, there have been many works done on the movement of policies across different spaces (geographic, political, social or spatial) within or in comparison with other regions describing and analyzing the context of transfer or diffusion, efficiency, effectiveness, and the ethics of travelling policy (see Dolowitz and Marsh 1996; Wolman and Page 2002; Dolowitz et al. 2000).

Conceptualising the notion of policy travel has always been a challenge because of the complexity of the process and as policies carry socio-economic, political and ideological values while travelling. There is an ongoing debate on the conceptualisation of the term itself, and different scholars use different words describing the movement of policies. Among others, policy learning, borrowing, transfer, mobility, translation, diffusion, convergence, lesson-drawing, assemblage, travelling ideas, bandwagoning, emulation, harmonisation are some of the terms used describing policy movement. Policy travel is a catch-all, umbrella term, and the central idea of the concept focuses on the movement of ideas, models, structures and institutions across various policy settings. Dolowitz et al. (2000) for instance, define it as: "A process in which knowledge about policies, institutions, and ideas

developed in one time or place is used in the development of policies, institutions etc. in another time or place" (Dolowitz et al. 2000: 3).

Since policies move across different spaces within certain socio-economic and political contexts, 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. This article focusses on the two most important components of policy travel—*policy transfer and policy diffusion*.

Policy transfer focuses on the transfer of the policy content itself from one time or space to another, and the role of different agencies in the process. As thoroughly discussed by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 349–350), policy transfer constitutes seven interdependent elements: goals, structure and content; policy instruments or administrative techniques; institutions; ideology; ideas, attitudes and concepts; and negative lessons. Policy transfer usually happens in a structured and top–down manner without thorough discussions and negotiations among stakeholders at the bottom. It is more of an imposition of policies from a "dominant donor" of ideas and practices to the "subordinate recipients" without proper dialogue among the key players, for example—professors, higher education institutions, and ministries of higher education.

Policy diffusion, on the other hand, emphasizes on the dynamics of diffusion or the gradual movement of policies focusing on the timing and sequence of the spread of ideas and practices. It focusses on explaining why some states either adopt or adapt policies and practices more readily than others. Explaining the dynamics of diffusion, literature places the concepts within two polarized scenarios called *immunity and isomorphy*. The immunity scenario implies strong resistance of states or regions either to adopt or adapt policies and practices (Bache and Olsson 2001: 218). The isomorphy scenario, on the other pole, explains how ideas, concepts, and policies easily diffuse across different spaces through the forces of globalisation (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In the context of higher education, the key element in the concept of policy travel is the notion of adopting international values in the operations of higher education institutions through transfer and diffusion of policies.

## How Does the Bologna Process Travel to Africa?

Understanding the way higher education policies travel to Africa demands a comprehensive approach that utilizes the concepts of policy transfer, diffusion, and convergence. Since its inception in 1998, the Bologna process has managed to attract the attention of many higher education systems in different regions, including Africa, reshaping policies at national, sub-regional and continental levels. In spite of the varying reasons, the transfer and diffusion of the Bologna Process

occurred within the context of globalisation that facilitated not only the processes of policy travel but also the convergence of its variance. Thus, even though globalisation by itself does not lead to policy travel, it has facilitated the policy movement from one region to the other, including Africa, at different points in time. Many developments since the 1990s have pushed the higher education sectors in Africa to pursue different reform initiatives. The higher education sector in Africa has witnessed unprecedented expansions and developments since the 1990s. These expansions are not only in numbers but also in size and type of institutions. This period has also marked the development of privatization in the higher education sector and the expansion of ICT which facilitated cross-border, distance, and online education. These developments, however, came with different concerns/challenges over issues of quality and relevance. The growing student mobility and institutional partnerships have also necessitated regional discussions on how to deal with recognition of qualifications and transferability of credits. These issues have, however, not only been shared among higher education institutions across Africa but also demanded a collective endeavour in the process of addressing them since the nature of the concerns transcends national jurisdictions. Thus, the emergence of regional higher education policies and the efforts to harmonise them partially emanated from the nature and context of the challenges that African higher education institutions have been facing.

In the process of developing policy frameworks to address the above challenges, regional authorities, African governments, and higher education institutions considered the Bologna process as a potential experience to learn and adapt from. Apart from that, African institutions also felt the pressure to align their systems with European reforms as changes in the higher education system in Europe would have a direct implication on African higher education for historical reasons. The context of higher education policy travel to Africa in this regard is mostly related to the long-standing historical relationship of African institutions with European universities. Thus, ignoring European higher education reform will have implications for African higher education institutions as it may mean isolation from their historical partners.

Within the above context, the Bologna process travels to Africa both through policy transfer and policy diffusion processes. The African Union Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy which was introduced in 2007 to harmonise the diverse higher education systems of Africa, for instance, could be taken as a policy transfer process as it was adopted in a top–down manner without thorough discussions and negotiations among stakeholders at the bottom. The diffusion of the various components of the Bologna process—like the *Licence-Master-Doctorate* (LMD), regional quality assurance mechanisms and credit transfer systems—among governments and sub-regional communities, on the other hand, is a gradual movement of ideas and practices. The next sections discuss them in detail.

## The African Union Higher Education Harmonisation Strategy

Higher education policy and strategies developed by the African Union (AU) can be best understood through the nature of the organization itself. The transformation of the previous Organization of African Unity (OAU) to AU through the Abuja Treaty was actually done following the European Union (EU) model in 2001. Historically, the European integration process has passed through different stages from simple free trade area and customs union to a more integrated scheme of monetary union. The Abuja Treaty is also adopted with the same intention of leading Africa on a similar path, to create a stepwise gradual process of regional integration with the assumption that the integration of one sector would lead to the integration of another (African Union 2001).

The Abuja Treaty implicated that the experience of the European integration process is an ideal progression from which Africa could learn since it has already evolved to a monetary union passing through different stages of integration. Once the regional integration scheme and the organizational setting of the AU have been modelled after the EU, adopting other regional policies also became easier for the continent (see Babarinde 2007). As a result, since the transformation of OAU in AU along the EU model, the experience of the EU on different regional policy issues has become a recurrent point of reference for regional policy initiatives in Africa.

It was within this context that the Bologna process of Europe was considered by the AU as a benchmark for regional higher education reform in Africa. The first discussion to adopt the Bologna process in Africa took place on the Third Ordinary Session of the Conference of AU Ministers of Education (COMEDAF III) in Johannesburg, South Africa in August 2007. During the conference, the African Ministers of Education discussed and emphasized the need for regional higher education harmonisation strategy for the revitalization of the sector and for making African institutions competitive in the global knowledge system. It was clearly stated that creating a comparable higher education system in Africa is important to bring together the fragmented higher education systems in the region.

In doing so, the Ministers recommended taking the experience of the Bologna process to develop a higher education harmonisation strategy for Africa. In the report of the COMEDAF III, it is stated, "*The Minister cited the Bologna process that has led to a new higher education system in Europe from which Africa should learn.*" (AU/MIN/EDUC/Draft/RPT (III) 2007, p. 11). Thus, it was within this context that the AU took the experience of the Bologna Process of Europe and developed a higher education harmonisation strategy in Africa. The decision to launch the harmonisation strategy was approved a year later by the 10th Ordinary Session of Assembly of the AU in January 2008 (Assembly/AU/Dec.173 (X) 2008). The draft document for the framework of the harmonisation of higher education was then developed by the AU and, as recommended by COMEDAF III, in the process of developing the harmonisation strategy, the experience of the Bologna process was strongly consulted.

In terms of general objectives, for instance, the African higher education harmonisation strategy is more or less a duplication of the Bologna process, as both documents took the mutual recognition of academic qualifications, promotion of student and staff mobility, provision of a framework for the development of effective quality assurance mechanisms, and transferability of credits as their main objectives (see Bologna Declaration 1999; AU/EXP/EDUC/2 (III) Part II. 2007). These general objectives, however, are further stated more specifically, through various communiqués, in the Bologna process than in the African higher education harmonisation strategy. To accommodate the context and interest of Africa in the policy transfer, the African higher education harmonisation strategic document sets six principles as a foundation for the whole process, namely: (i) harmonisation should be an African-driven process; (ii) it should be a true, mutual partnership of all the key players; (iii) it should be enhanced with appropriate infrastructural support and funding; (iv) it should involve the mobilization of all stakeholders in governments, institutions, civil society, and the private sector; (v) it should not disrupt, but should enhance, national educational systems and programmes; and (vi) it should involve improvement of quality through appropriate funding and infrastructural provisions in each country (AU/EXP/EDUC/2 (III) Part II 2007). Even though the African higher education harmonisation strategy document clearly stipulates the principles of the process, however, there is no indication as to how these principles should be operationalized.

The way the Bologna model travelled to Africa through the harmonisation strategy could be best explained within the concept of "policy transfer" rather than "diffusion". First of all, in the case of the harmonisation strategy, it is the content of the Bologna policy that travelled to Africa, not the practical implementation of its components. The goals and objectives stated in both documents are more or less identical even though the principles of design and implementation are assumed to be accommodative to the African context. This is exactly how policy transfer happens through movement of the policy document itself by a decision made at the top-level without gradual diffusion of its components in the system. The other point is that the transfer of the policy happened in a top–down approach where actors at the bottom have not been consulted much in the policy process. Even though the very idea of higher education harmonisation process is intended to be implemented by higher education institutions, faculties, departments, and professors, the actors have neither been significantly consulted nor communicated in policy transfer process. It was stated in the AU report that, after the endorsement of the strategy, various consultative meetings were organized to brainstorm, understand and further develop the strategic plan of the harmonisation process. In those meetings, however, student associations, university leaderships, representatives of faculty members, employers, and business groups were not represented or brought on board in the policy process.

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

harmonisation initiative is known among the Ministers of Education of member states, African Union Commission (AUC) experts, and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) coordinators, African universities are not yet fully involved as stakeholders in the harmonisation process, and the strategy is not yet fully implemented. Here, it is important to note that one of the challenges of the non-participatory nature of policy formulation and implementation is its potential to be misunderstood and misinterpreted by stakeholders. If the harmonisation strategy is not properly communicated to African higher education institutions through various consultation forums, and if the very idea of the policy is not debated openly on the various media outlets, and feedbacks are not consulted through the proper channel, then the effective implementation of the policy to achieve its intended goals will be questionable.

Advancing its cause, the European Union Commission (EUC) has also been supporting the AU harmonisation initiatives through funding and consulting the various projects. The EU has involved in the AU higher education harmonisation process from the very outset initiating, funding, expert-advising, and in some cases process-owning the various functional elements of the harmonisation initiatives. The AU harmonisation document states that the process is owned by AU but it also indicates that it has many things in common with the Bologna initiatives. Despite the AUC's claim, however, it is hardly possible to state that the AU harmonisation process is a purely African process since there is a huge involvement of European actors throughout the functional processes. The Mwalimu Nyerere programme that promotes student mobility; Tuning Africa, which works towards harmonisation of curriculum; the Pan-African University Network, that established joint degree programmes; and the African quality assurance and rating mechanisms which are intended to set up common understanding on quality and recognition of academic qualifications are largely funded by the EU commission, the World Bank, and donor countries mainly from Europe (Woldegiorgis et al. 2015).

In addition to the regional harmonisation initiative of the AU, sub-regional economic communities and some African countries have also taken isolated actions of adopting certain elements of the Bologna process in their respective sub-regions. This 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. In the next section, we will see how the Bologna policy diffused to Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone African.

## *Bologna Process in Francophone Africa*

The higher education system of most Francophone African countries has been modelled after the French higher education system. This has been manifested

through their program curriculum, degree structure, and medium of instruction which have basically been along the French higher education model. This similarity in higher education structure has facilitated higher education partnership and student mobility between the two. That is one of the reasons, among others, for having more students from Francophone Africa in French universities than in any other region.

Moreover, there are many joint post-graduate programs established between Francophone universities of Africa and universities in France. When French institutions shifted their higher education system to the Bologna model, however, it became challenging for Francophone African universities to keep up with their long-standing partners while keeping the old system. Thus, higher education institutions in the former French colonies of North and West Africa felt the urgency of shifting their higher education systems to the 3-cycle Bologna structure along the French reform initiative (Woldegiorgis et al. 2015). In this regard, the impact of the Bologna process has been felt more in Francophone than Anglophone Africa since the Anglophone degree structure has already been in line with the 3-cycle Bologna reform.

Comparability of degrees has been the main discussion at that time since the Three-Cycle Degree Structure in France may pose a compatibility problem for student mobility and recognition of academic qualifications with France. Thus, since 2003, Francophone Africa started to implement the new degree structure proposed by the Bologna process. The Maghreb region of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), for example, were the first countries to implement the "*Licence-Master-Doctorate*" (LMD) higher education degree structure in their higher education systems. From the Maghreb region, Morocco was the first to start the LMD in 2003, followed by Algeria in 2004, and Tunisia in 2005 with the support of the French government, the EU and the World Bank. As of 2010, the Bologna 3-cycle degree reform at the Bachelor and Master levels has been widely implemented in most institutions and programs in the Maghreb region of North Africa.

The implication of the Bologna process in the Maghreb region of North Africa is not, however, limited to the introduction of LMD and the ECTS systems. One of the main instruments of the Bologna process, which is Diploma Supplement, has also been introduced in Algeria and Tunisia since 2009/2010 while the process is still under discussion in Morocco. Moreover, Tunisia has officially introduced a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for higher education and has already started implementing it while the process is underway in Algeria and Morocco. The policy travel of the Bologna process to the Maghreb region is not a one-time policy transfer act, rather a gradual diffusion of the instruments of Bologna process to address the challenges of compatibility of degrees and qualifications with their historical partners from Europe. In the course of adopting the Bologna process, decisions are made in a series of sequential phases, starting with the identification of a problem and ending with a set of activities to deal with it.

The adoption of the Bologna model in the Maghreb region has also been supported by various EU collaborative schemes. Among others, the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area, and Tempus programs are the major ones (Ruffio et al. 2010). The Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area was founded in 2006 after the Joint Catania Declaration of the representatives from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Spain, Italy, Malta, Egypt, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, Jordan and Greece to create a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education by 2010 (EACEA 2014). Since then, it has been providing strong support for the reform processes in the Maghreb region of North Africa. The basic idea behind the Catania Declaration is creating a higher education area among the Euro-Mediterranean countries by adopting the Bologna process in their higher education institutions. The Tempus program is also an EU initiative to support higher education reform initiatives along the Bologna line through promoting institutional cooperation that involves the EU and partner countries in the areas of curricular reform, governance reform and higher education and society from which the Maghreb region has been benefiting.

Other Francophone African countries have also adopted the Bologna process since 2007. Since the conference which was held in the Democratic Republic of Congo in July 2007, the member states[1] of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) have been adopting the Bologna process in their higher education systems. The LMD system, for example, was taken as a priority that needs to be adopted by member states to fix the incompatibility and incomparability of degrees among institutions. As a result, the UEMOA member countries officially adopted the LMD structure from the Bologna process in July 2007 through the Decision No. 03/2007/CM/UEMOA. Even though the LMD structure has been the main priority in the process of adopting the Bologna process, the issues of diploma supplement, regional quality assurance instruments, and qualification frameworks have also been gradually introduced among member states. To realize the implementation of the reform, the UEMOA allocated $5.8 million in February 2011 for a 3-year period, and the fund was mobilized by UNESCO.

Adopting the Bologna process has also been pushed by sub-regional organizations like the Network of Excellence in Higher Education in West Africa (REESAO). The REESAO was established by several universities from seven Francophone African countries[2] to make possible the smooth implementation of the LMD reforms and advance higher education co-operation as a mechanism of promoting academic mobility. Apart from that, the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) (The African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education) has also been playing an important role in the process of

---

[1]UEMOA member states are Togo, Senegal, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau Mali and Niger.

[2]Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

implementing the Bologna reform in Francophone Africa. The CAMES is made up of 17 countries[3] and has been working to enhance mutual recognition of qualifications, promotion of academic mobility and implementation of the LMD structure among its members since 2005. Moreover, it has been playing a leading role in the process of creating regional quality assurance mechanisms among member countries by coordinating national quality assurance and accreditation processes. If we look at the pattern of policy travel in the above cases, it follows pragmatic utilitarianism in a sense that taking or adopting the Bologna process is a slow diffusion process of ideas in a more bottom–up style.

## Bologna Process in Anglophone Africa

The policy travel of the Bologna process in Anglophone countries has relatively been less intensive as compared to that of Francophone Africa. This is because, unlike Francophone Africa, the degree structures of Anglophone Africa are still compatible with the Bologna reform as the three-cycle degree structure had already been in place in most Anglophone countries. However, higher education systems in Anglophone Africa still have differences in terms of the number of credits and years in each cycle, as some degrees take four years and others three. Moreover, along with the growing student mobility both within and out of Africa, concerns over quality, standardization, and recognition of qualifications started to become part of policy discourses at sub-regional levels. Thus, some elements of the Bologna process have attracted Anglophone countries of Eastern and Southern Africa to adopt and adapt part of Bologna reforms through diffusion. The main lines of reform in this region have been along the issues of quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition of qualifications. In this regard, sub-regional organizations, SADC and EAC have been playing a leading role in the process of adopting some elements of the Bologna process in Anglophone Africa.

The policy travel of the creating common higher education area in the higher education systems of the SADC region, for instance, started at the same time when European Ministers passed the Sorbonne Declaration in 1997. The discussion was not however provoked because of the European initiative at that time; instead, there were sub-regional higher education challenges that led to the policy debates. After the fall of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the higher education sector expanded not only in number but also in size and shape. The region has also witnessed the expansion of private higher education and growing number of distance education. The recent development in the fast-growing number of international students in the region, particularly in South Africa, has also made regional

---

[3]Members of CAMES are Cameroon, Rwanda, Guinea-Conakry, Togo, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal Benin and Côte d'Ivoire.

collaboration and policy harmonisation issues in higher education even more pressing. As students move across borders, the issue of recognition of qualifications, quality and accreditation processes, and the issue of tuition fees demand regional frameworks. Thus, the discussion started among SADC members with the intention of creating common understanding when it comes to higher education training and qualifications (Kotecha 2012).

Apart from that, SADC also has Portuguese-speaking (Angola and Mozambique) and French-speaking (République Démocratique du Congo and Madagascar) countries that have different higher education structures. In order to facilitate student mobility and recognition of qualifications among member states, these diverse higher education systems need to be harmonised. This disparity in higher education systems among member states has also necessitated the need to look into the experience of the Bologna process so as to establish a mutual understanding of the meaning of qualifications to facilitate free movement of students across all universities in the sub-region. In this regard, SADC has been the agent of change and policy travel in the Southern African countries when it comes to adopting some elements of the Bologna process. Here, it is important to note that there are 109 public universities in the SADC region, 10 in Lusophone countries, 42 in Francophone countries and 57 in Anglophone countries. With the exception of South Africa and DRC, most countries have only a few public universities but a large number of private institutions (SARUA 2014).

After recognizing the above challenges, the SADC sub-region issued a comprehensive legal protocol called "*SADC Protocol on Education and Training*" to revitalize education in the sub-region in 1997. The protocol emphasized harmonising quality assurance systems and creating a mechanism of recognition of qualifications among member states. At that time, there was also a parallel process in Europe, Sorbonne Declaration, which later became the point of reference for the Bologna process. The Lisbon convention and the discussions that followed were important inputs for regionalization of qualification frameworks in the consecutive years among the SADC members. Since then, the members of the SADC region have been working on creating regional qualification frameworks along the Bologna initiatives. The initiative was also strongly supported by UNESCO since it was in line with the 1981 Arusha Convention.

The other important policy travel process in Anglophone Africa is the experience of East African countries. The efforts of harmonisation of specific processes of higher education started in East Africa after the Treaty for the Establishment of the current East African Community (EAC) which was signed on November 30, 1999, the same year that the Bologna process was declared. The East African Community is a sub-regional intergovernmental organization established by Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania (EAC 2014). The EAC later incorporated the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) as a leading institution for higher education reform in the sub-region. Since then, the IUCEA has been mandated to lead the higher education reform

processes in the sub-region and took the responsibility of developing a sub-regional mechanism for quality assurance and qualification frameworks in Eastern Africa. Currently, IUCEA has a membership of 88 universities, both public and private, which are part of the reform processes.

The quest for the Bologna approach and the collective intervention on higher education at sub-regional level in East African countries stemmed from different reasons. Just like other regions, new developments in the higher education sector including expansion of the sector itself necessitated having a regional framework to deal with higher education policy issues. The proliferation of private universities since 1994, in particular, raised the concern over quality, relevance and accreditation mechanism in the sub-region. Even though member countries of the EAC have their own mechanisms for ensuring quality in their higher education, such quality assurance mechanisms were not comparable and the processes were also highly fragmented. Recognizing the challenge, IUCEA took the initiative to develop a regional quality assurance system that harmonises quality assurance processes among the higher education institutions within EAC countries through benchmarking the Bologna experience in 2005 (Hoosen and Butcher 2012).

In order to share the experience from the Bologna process, the IUCEA arranged a visit in 2006 to Germany and the Netherlands for Vice-chancellors from 24 universities of East Africa (Joseph 2011). Not only universities but also heads of the national commissions and councils for higher education and senior government officials were part of the benchmark process. The project was jointly funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and IUCEA. After subsequent meetings, the members decided to develop a regional quality assurance system in line with the Bologna process. Subsequently, in 2006, IUCEA in partnership with the Kenyan Commission for Higher Education (CHE), the Tanzania Commission for Universities, (TCU), the Ugandan National Councils for Higher Education, (NCHE), and DAAD forged a partnership that was aimed at the joint implementation of a regional quality assurance system for higher education in East Africa.

The diffusion of the Bologna initiative, however, is not limited to quality assurance structures. Especially after the enactment of the EAC Common Market Protocol in 2010 which gave expanded mandates to IUCEA to handle the issue of harmonisation of higher education in the region, more elements of the Bologna propositions were recommended by the IUCEA. Among others, the IUCEA has initiated the establishment of a regional qualification framework in collaboration with higher education institutions, the national councils and commissions for higher education, East African Business Council and other actors since December 2011. In line with the 2010 Common Market Protocol, Article 11 of the protocol particularly called for "*Harmonisation and Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications*" in order to ensure the free movement of labour within the region (EAC 2010).

Thus, if we look at the dynamics and patterns of policy travel in Anglophone Africa, it has been a voluntary diffusion of the Bologna process into the

sub-regions. Adopting some elements of the Bologna process is considered as advantageous for newly emerging regional integration schemes since the models would have already been tested on another ground; thus, it is easy to adapt to the African context. This notion of voluntarily adopting the policy of others is described as "policy shopping" (Freeman 1999).

## Bologna Process in Lusophone Africa

The other important development that can be observed as policy diffusion of the Bologna process in Africa is the experience of former Portuguese colonies of Africa, namely Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe. The Portuguese speaking countries of Africa have adopted the Bologna process in their higher education systems and have established a Lusophone Higher Education Area (ELES—Espaço Lusófono de Ensino Superior) since 2002. The Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) which was established in 1996 in collaboration with the Association of the Portuguese Speaking Universities (AULP) proposed the Bologna type of reform in the region at the 12th annual meeting of the AULP which was held in Luanda, Angola in 2002. At the conclusion of the 12th Annual Meeting of the AULP, it was proposed to use the experience of the Bologna Process to develop a special project within the AULP.

The reform is intended to change the higher education structures of the Lusophone countries in three major areas: mutual recognition of qualifications, student mobility, quality assurance and exchange through recognition of study periods. The above objectives are also included in a regional legal document signed at the 5th meeting of the CPLP Ministers of Education which was held in Fortaleza, Brazil in May 2004. At the end of the meeting, the member states passed a declaration called "Fortaleza Declaration" which was basically adopted from the 1997 Lisbon Convention of the EU (Declaração-de-Fortaleza 2004). The signatories of the Fortaleza Declaration agreed to work in the direction of building the CPLP Higher Education Area within four key action lines: working to build mutually acceptable and internationally recognized quality assurance structures; building solid relationships among the members of CPLP towards creating a regional higher education area; harmonisation of degree structures, promoting student and faculty mobility.

Just like the Bologna Process, the Lusophone Higher Education Area has also adopted a follow-up structure called a Follow-up Group which consists of representatives of each of the Ministries of Education and a representative from AULP. This reform has also enabled the Lusophone African countries to collaborate with Brazil in line with their own Bologna type reform practised in Latin America. In 2013, Brazil fostered collaboration with higher education institutions from the Portuguese speaking African countries and on May the same year, the

Lusophone African countries and Brazil had a conference entitled "*Education as a Strategic Bridge for the Brazil–Africa Relationship*" in which 20 Brazilian higher education institutions participated in launching the International Afro-Brazilian Lusophone University (UNILAB) in Africa.

Generally, the diffusion or transfer of the Bologna process in Africa is gradually impacting the higher education reform processes at all levels—national, sub-regional and regional. It is important to note that the Bologna process has not been considered as the ultimate remedy for the challenges of higher education in Africa but provided a policy path that brings various higher education systems together. The degree of policy travel among the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone African countries varies based on the extent to which the sub-regions comply with the Bologna process. For instance, the Bologna process has diffused more among Francophone systems than the others.

As noted above, transfers of policy can be voluntary or coercive or a combination thereof. Some recent works in education policy have also attempted to recognize trends towards policy convergence while acknowledging the constant effects of accommodating contexts (Lingard 2000; Ozga and Jones 2006). Policy travel is not necessarily a coercive act of imposing interests of one on another as it could also be a forum for the exchange of ideas, values, systems, and practices whereby interests are negotiated on a constant basis. Here, one should keep in mind that, even though interests are negotiated in the course of policy travel, the imbalance in capacity among the negotiating actors could shake the momentum of voluntary policy travel. Higher education policies from the North usually have more bargaining power in the course of interest negotiations since their financial and technical might would be used as an indispensable comparative advantage to impose interests. Poor infrastructure, lack of funding and the weak institutional setting in Africa, on the other hand, usually situates Africa in a vulnerable position in the process of interest negotiation since the capacity of actors to mould interests on policy process depends not only on the political constituency of actors but also on their financial, technical, and logistical strength. In the process of interest negotiation, therefore, regional actors from the South sometimes do not have much choice but to lean on and comply with the conditions of donors in the policy travelling process.

## Conclusion

Generally, there could be two lines of argument about taking the Bologna process as a model for regionalisation of higher education in Africa. The first notion could be that adopting the Bologna model may be advantageous to newly emerging higher education harmonisation strategies since the models would have already been tested on another ground; thus, it is easy to adopt to the African context. The

other line of argument, however, is more ideological and puts the notion of policy travel as instrument of neo-colonialism as it may perpetuate dependency of African policy processes on European models. But, the policy travel itself could raise practical concerns as it may not necessarily accommodate the specific context of Africa and achieve the expected outcomes.

Even though the Bologna process could provide many lessons worth noting in the course of higher education policy integrations, the difference in the context of the two regions makes the success of policy travels a challenge. The Bologna Process, from the very outset, has been created and implemented within the context of Europe which has the history of relative success in regional integration, unlike the African case. Moreover, prior to higher education integration, Europe as a region managed to create a well-structured common economic area which facilitated the development of other regional policy frameworks. Through the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, EU members even further redesigned their integration schemes to enhance European political and economic integration by creating a single currency, a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights. All these settings make not only the development of regional policy frameworks easy but also make student mobility and institutional collaboration flexible. Thus, the European higher education harmonisation process has evolved through time within the above socio-economic and political contexts in the region. The above structural context which abundantly favours the Bologna process in Europe does not however equally exist in the context of Africa.

Yet, on the positive side, there are progressive efforts to capitalize on the fact that harmonisation of higher education systems in Africa could facilitate an integrated knowledge system that informs socio-economic developments in the region. The AU and sub-regional economic communities are mobilizing their efforts to realize the effectiveness of African centres of excellence, regional and continental frameworks of collaborations to ensure the presence of common understanding among diverse higher education systems in the continent. There is no doubt that compared to 15 years ago, there is more student and staff mobility, partnership and collaborative initiatives, joint research and curriculum harmonisation, centres of excellences, integrated quality assurance processes and qualification frameworks now in Africa.

# References

African Union. (2001). *The Constitutive Act of African Union*. Lome: AU.

Assembly/AU/Dec.173 (X). (2008). *Decision on the Implementation of the Second Decade of Education for Africa–Doc. EX.CL/386 (XII)*. Addis Ababa: African Union.

AU/EXP/EDUC/2(III) PartII. (2007). *Harmonization of higher education programmes in Africa: A strategy for the African Union*. African Union.

AU/MIN/EDUC/Draft/RPT(III). (2007). *third ordinary session of the conference of ministers of education of the African Union (COMEDAF III) 6th to 10th August 2007 Johannesburg, South Africa draft report of ministers*. African Union.

Babarinde, O. (2007, April). *The EU as a Model for the African Union: The Limits of Imitation Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series, 7*(2).

Bache, I., & Olsson, J. (2001). Legitimacy through partnership? EU policy diffusion in Britain and Sweden. *Scandinavian Political Studies, 24*(3), 215–237.

Bologna Declaration. (1999). *The Bologna declaration on the European space for higher education: An explanation*. Bologna: Confederation of EU Rectors'.

Declaração-de-Fortaleza. (2004). *Declaração dos ministros responsáveis pelo ensino superior da omunidade dos países de língua portuguesa*. Fortaleza.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review, 48,* 147–160.

Dolowitz, D., Hulme, R., Nellis, M., & O'Neal, F. (2000). *Policy transfer and British social policy*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (1996). Who learns what from whom: a review of the policy transfer literature. *Political Studies, 44*(2), 343–357.

EAC. (2010). *Protocol on the establishment of the East African community common market*. Arusha: East African Community.

EAC. (2014, May 10). *Background on East African Community*. East African Community. Retrieved from http://www.eac.int/index.php?option=com_content&id = 1:welcome-to-eac&Itemid = 53.

EACEA. (2014, May 10). *Navigation path European Commission EACEA from About the intra-ACP academic mobility scheme.*

Freeman, R. (1999). *Policy transfer in the health sector, a working paper*. Retrieved from http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/research/working_paper1.html.

Haas, E. B. (1970). The study of regional integration: Reflections on the joy and anguish of pretheorizing. *International Organization, 24*(04), 606–646.

Hoosen, S., & Butcher, N. (2012). Quality assurance for distance education in sub-Saharan Africa. *Quality assurance and accreditation in distance education and e-learning: Models, policies, and research* (pp. 48–57).

Joseph, M. H. (2011). *Developing a regional quality assurance system for higher education in East Africa: Progress and experiences*. Inter-University Council for East Africa. Retrieved from File:///C:/Users/Samsung%20PC/Downloads/pGn4p5sf6n.pdf on.

Kotecha, P. (2012). *Higher education in the Southern African Region: Current trends, challenges, and recommendations*. The Extra-Ordinary Meeting of SADC Ministers of Higher Education and Training. Retrieved June.

Levin, B. (1998). An epidemic of education policy: (What) can we learn from each other? *Comparative Education, 34*(2), 131–141.

Lingard, R. L. (2000). *It is and it isn't: Vernacular globalization, educational policy, and restructuring* (pp. 79–108). Routledge.

Meyer, J., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology, 83,* 440–463.

Ozga, J., & Jones, R. (2006). Travelling and embedded policy: The case of knowledge transfer. *Journal of Education Policy, 21*(1), 1–17.

Ruffio, P., Heinamaki, P., & Tchoukaline, C. C. (2010). *State of play of the bologna process in the tempus countries of the Southern Mediterranean (2009/2010)*. A Tempus Study (03).

SARUA. (2014). *SARUA's aim is thus to strengthen the leadership and institutions of higher education in the southern African region*. Retrieved May 13, from Southern African Regional Universities Association www.sarua.org.

Torres, A., & Rhoads, R. (2006). Introduction: Globalization and higher education in the Americas. In A. Torres & R. Rhoads (Eds.), *The university, state, and market: The political economy of globalization in the Americas* (pp. 3–39). Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

Woldegiorgis, E. T., Jonck, P., & Goujon, A. (2015). Regional higher education reform initiatives in Africa: A comparative analysis with bologna process. *International Journal of Higher Education, 4*(1), 241.

Wolman, H., & Page, E. (2002). Policy transfer among local governments: An information–theory approach. *Governance, 15*(4), 501–577.