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**Transnational Circulation and Multilevel Governance of University Reforms:
What Higher Education Teaches about Policy Science**

**Transnational circulations of university reforms and models:
The policy-making of the LMD in Burundi**

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Introduction

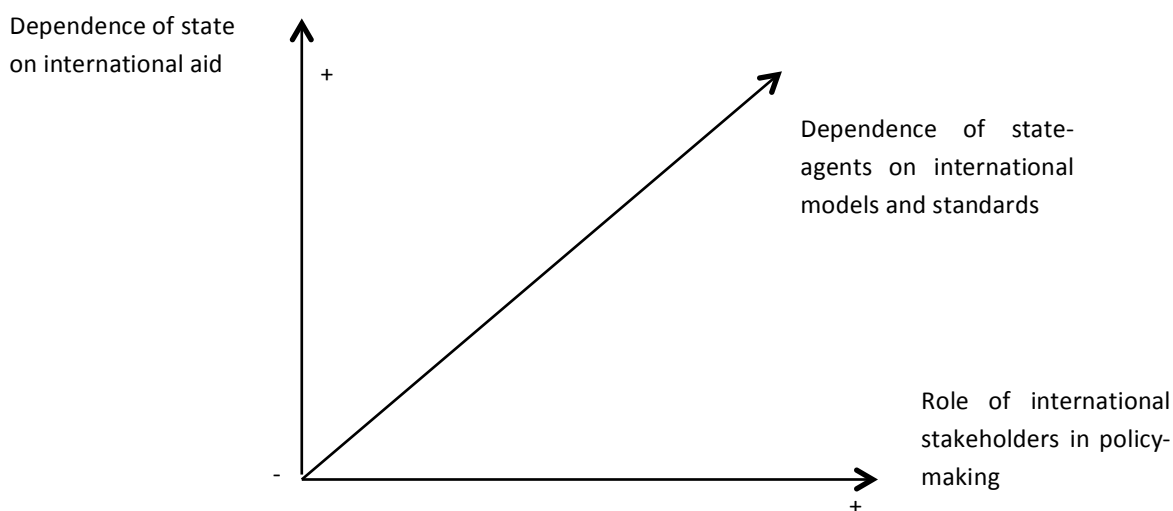
Since the 2000's, the scientific discussions on higher education in sub-Saharan Africa have been increasing significantly (Lebeau, Mobolaji 2000; Johnstone 2004; Charlier 2006; Marcucci et al. 2008; Berhanu et al. 2010; Pillay 2010; Tade 2012; Oketch 2016). This academic interest for tertiary education can be explained through the role played by international organizations, like the World Bank, which are gradually promoting public and private universities as leading institutions for the sustained economic growth. This international concern on higher education has stimulated an academic appetite for research on universities on the continent. Two main academic fields structure the literature on higher education in Africa. Firstly, numerous prescriptive contributions provide a package of recommendations to resolve some identified problems in the sector (Assie-Lumumba 2006; Makosso 2009; Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004). These studies are generally written by scholars, managers, deans or vice-chancellors involved in the university reform processes. Secondly, a rather critical literature insists on the social consequences of the marketization of higher education by denouncing the end of the public sector-based regulation (Mamdani 2007; Chouli 2009; Bugwabari et. al. 2012). Despite some argumentative differences, both approaches have two common results: i) the reforms of tertiary education would trigger a withdrawal of the state-agents from the policy process by promoting the intervention of private stakeholders in the sector-based regulation; ii) the higher education reforms are seen as the result of the incentives of international organizations, notably the World Bank with the coercive instruments of structural adjustment programs.

By underlining the dominant role of international stakeholders in a context where state-agents seem to be absent converge with the scientific literature on "fragile" states. This concept of "fragile" state is discussed in scientific as well as non-academic works (Kaplan 2008; Carment, Stewart 2010). According to Olivier Nay's (2013) synthesis of the concept the notion "fragile states" is used to characterize states, which do not have the capacity or the political will to answer for the essential needs of their population. The "weakness" of such states would be produced by wars, recurring institutional crises or extreme poverty (Nay 2013:141). Dominique Darbon advocates that authentic policy-making in "fragile" states is rare, given the "weak" capacities of state-agents as well as the consistent confusions between state and the society (Darbon 2015:1-5). According to this argumentation, the

category of “fragile” states would question several results of the literature on policy science, especially on policy transfer studies. In “fragile” states, policies would be dictated and oriented by international stakeholders. The policy process is delegated to external agents, who implement internationally manufactured and projected models and standards into national and local policy sectors. On the basis of this literature on fragile states, we can summarize a theoretical assumption, which establishes a relation between the political economy of a state and the capacity of state-agents to produce policies: the more a given state relies on international aid, the more policy-making within its different sectors depends on external models and standards. Whereas several scholars have demonstrated how policy transfers between “developed/industrial countries” are shaped by bargaining and compromising between international and national stakeholders (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; James and Lodge 2003; Stone 2003; Delpuech 2009; Hassenteufel and de Maillard 2013), the situation in “fragile” states would invalidate this result *a priori*.

The assumption in “fragile” state: the policy-making depends on international stakeholders and external models

Political economy of states	Role of international stakeholders in policy-making
High dependence of state on international aid	International stakeholders enforce their external models and standards on state-agents
Low dependence of state on international aid	International stakeholders do not have the capacity to enforce their external models and standards on state-agents



The aim of this paper is to discuss this assumption, namely the relation between the dependence of international aid and the circulation of public policy. Therefore, we use the empirical example of the implementation of the European higher education model LMD (“Licence-Master-Doctorate”) at the University of Burundi in Africa.

Burundi is generally ranked in scientific and non-academic literature as a “fragile” state (Specker et al., 2010), where policy processes would be controlled and shaped by international stakeholders. Since the 2000’s, however, some economic-growth indicators show positive results. For instance, the rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated at 4% in 2010 and 2011 (Tokindang et Gbetnkom, 2012, p. 2). These macroeconomic data are analysed as the result of the donor support, especially the aid programs provided by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2000, the official development assistance reaches 93 million US\$. In 2006, it totals 415 millions US\$. In 2011, even 53,5% of the national budget is supported by international aid (Tokindang et Gbetnkom, 2012, p. 2). It would be interesting to study the impact of this aid dependence on the policy process. Since 2012, several sectorial conferences are organised in Geneva (Switzerland) and in Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi. These meetings gather the international Burundian partners and some state-agents to regulate the policy agenda and the policy-making in the country.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the policy-making of the last higher education reform by discussing the literature on policy transfers. Therefore, we focus on the question, if the circulation of the LMD model from Europe to Burundi confirms the assumptions of the literature on “fragile” state, namely a top-down implementation of international standards and models on the national and local levels. Or if, inversely, our case study rather confirms the results of the literature on policy transfers studies, which demonstrate the bargaining and compromising between international and national stakeholders. In fact, by studying the process of the LMD policy at the University of Burundi we aim to reveal the key role of domestic actors (political actors and academic elite) in the renegotiations of policies and reforms. The transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity for political and academic stakeholders to reshape the system of elite formation, which is a core question in the Burundian post-conflict situation. Thereby, our proposal addresses a central assumption of the panel: although transfer studies, especially in African contexts, underline the

international dimension of policy-making, the example of higher education reforms in Burundi reaffirms the importance of domestic configurations in the negotiation of policies even in a “fragile” state.

This case study stems from a PhD dissertation in political science (Provini, 2015), which analyses the circulation of higher education reforms in East Africa (public universities of Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Makerere and Burundi) in a comparative perspective. The empirical data was produced during a two-months fieldwork, which was conducted between February and March 2013 in Bujumbura. We carried out 45 semi-directive interviews with various stakeholders of the implementation process (administrative staff, political leaders, funding partners, lecturers and students). A press review including different French speaking newspapers (Le Renouveau du Burundi and Iwacu) and covering the period between the 1980’s-2010’s completes our data.

The paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we discuss the thesis according to which the technical aspects of the higher education reform in Burundi would confirm the results of the scientific literature on “fragile” states and thus invalidate the conclusions of policy transfer studies. In “fragile” states, policy-making would be reduced to a top-down transfer of international standards, because the state-agents and university stakeholders do not have the capacity to negotiate the engineering of the Bologna model. The second part of the article focuses on the politicization of the LMD reform in Burundi. We demonstrate how, even in a “fragile” state, policy circulations are shaped by bargaining and compromising actors. The transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity for political and academic stakeholders to reshape the system of elite formation and the balance between Hutu and Tutsi, which is the core question of the higher education system in the Burundian post-conflict situation.

The circulation of policies in a “fragile” state: how the first steps of the LMD reform confirm the top-down transfer of higher education policies

Since the 1990s, the scientific discussions on the circulation of the Bologna process in European countries have been increasing significantly. This academic interest for the circulation of the notorious higher education model has been spreading from European debates to research work done about the African continent for some years now. This

accumulating research questions the international dimension of the policy-making of higher education in national systems and the impact of the European model on African contexts. In Europe, researchers stress the malleability of the Bologna model, which would result in significant differences between the European countries (Dewatripont *et al.*, 2002 ; Musselin, 2009). Thus, the transnational circulation of higher education reforms confirms the argumentation of the scientific literature on policy transfers. Researchers on policy circulation in the North demonstrate to what extent policies are constantly renegotiated by national and local stakeholders. Even if there is a regional approach of higher education systems in Europe, the outcome of the model implementation does not lead to homogenous policy configurations. The case studies in Africa, however, seem to provide new and diverging results (Charlier *et al.*, 2009; Charlier and Croché, 2010 and 2012). Specialists on higher education policies on the African continent witness a loss of the malleability characterizing the transfer of the LMD reforms in Europe, since this “flexible model [...] becomes rigid with transferring” (Charlier and Croché, 2012, p. 92). These researchers further argue that university reforms on the continent are the product of a top-down dynamic and rigid pressures given the predominant role of international organizations and donors enforcing their policy models. Thus, the policy process of higher education reforms in Africa would invalidate a central argument of the transfer studies, that circulating policies are always shaped and re-appropriated by a variety of bargaining and compromising stakeholders (Benson and Jordan, 2011).

The LMD model in Burundi: a reform engaged by the French bilateral cooperation

Since 2007, the Burundian higher education sector is involved in a reform process which is financed by the French cooperation. Through the implementation of the PARES programme (“Projet d’Appui au Renforcement de l’Enseignement Supérieur”), the Burundian government, with the assistance of the French donors, organizes a new tertiary system which has been widely destructured through the civil war (1993-2006)¹. During this period, most of the teaching staff of the University of Burundi left the country to continue their career abroad. The lack of recognition of Burundian university diplomas further led to the isolation of the institution. In order to rebuild a more performant sector, the French cooperation has committed 2 millions euros (without the technical support) to the

¹ Website of the French Embassy: <http://www.ambafrance-bi.org/Projet-PARES,828> (10/05/2015).

partnership with the Ministry of higher education in Burundi to “strengthen its capacities for the definition and monitoring of policies and sectorial strategies”². More precisely, the hidden aim of the French cooperation and the Burundian government is to implement the LMD reform throughout the whole territory including the private institutions (Tshitenge Lubabu, 2012)³ in order to improve the recognition of the university community.

This outside intervention leads to the creation of a steering group to supervise the reform on higher education (“Comité de pilotage de l’étude de la réforme de l’enseignement supérieur”) and engages a new collaboration between French and Burundian experts. The steering group is managed by Charles Nditije and Daniel Gouadain. Charles Nditije is a Burundian senior official of the higher education sector. He acted as the director for the academic activities of the University of Burundi between 1993 and 1997, was the general director of the “Ecole Normale Supérieure” between 1999 and 2005 and led the National School of Public Administration (“Ecole Nationale d’Administration”) between 2005 and 2008⁴. Daniel Gouadain is a French accountant and holds a PhD in management science. He is appointed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to lead the steering group because of his multiple experiences in the field of higher education policies on the African continent. In fact, Daniel Gouadain has been working as a special advisor of the Senegalese, Nigerian and Gabonese governments during the higher education reforms.

In a first step, the steering group proceeds a statement on the higher education system to elaborate an overview of the situation of the sector after the civil war. Several documents are published between 2007 and 2008 by Burundian experts who take advantage of the PARES as a professional opportunity to improve their social and economic resources (Ministère de l’éducation nationale et de la culture and Projet d’appui au renforcement de l’enseignement supérieur, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Ministère de l’éducation nationale et de la recherche scientifique and Comité de pilotage de l’étude de la réforme de l’enseignement supérieur, 2008). Most of these experts have hold positions as the Chancellor of the University of Burundi, in the Ministry of higher education and scientific research and the Ministry of education. The conclusions of the four reports are synthetized in the White Book of Burundian Higher Education in 2010 (Ministère de l’enseignement supérieur et de la

² Website of the French Embassy: <http://www.ambafrance-bi.org/Projet-PARES,828> (10/05/2015).

³ Interview with Laurence Ritter (12/02/2013, Bujumbura).

⁴ Interview with Charles Nditije (27/03/2013, Bujumbura).

recherché scientifique, 2010). The experts principally argue that higher education institutions “live self-sufficiently” and therefore claim that through the LMD model will better integrate the Burundian establishments in the global knowledge-based economy, for instance by contributing to an international recognition of the diploma (Ministère de l’éducation nationale et de la culture and Projet d’appui au renforcement de l’enseignement supérieur, 2008a, p.73).

The technical aspects of the reform: “we do not invent the wheel that’s turning”

The second step of the reform consists in an audit of the university curricula and different classes to develop new programmes in faculties and institutes of the University of Burundi, the only public university of the country. This review process leads to the resignation of Gilbert Midende, a Burundian member of the steering group. As an opponent of the way of proceeding of the reform process, he argues that the policy is not well prepared and would be the result of a top-down engineering from the North to the South:

“People [*the members of the steering group*] started saying in our faculties: “go for it, you are going to develop new courses and curricula, etc., but based on what is being done abroad... and perhaps according to the capacities and skills available locally [...]. We started to create new curricula. And you know what, I wrote to the Chancellor [of the University of Burundi] to explain to him: “You cannot say that I am disobedient, but I feel unable to pursue this reform process [...]. What we did not do and what we should have done, [is to ask the question]: “how do we adapt it to our local reality?”. Which would have given us the opportunity to engage a reflexion on our higher education system. However, we failed to do that exercise introspection”⁵.

This making of new curricula and classes for the University of Burundi is achieved by imitating the programmes offered in European universities, where most of the Burundian experts, lecturers and professors have pursued their university education. Pierre-Celestin Karangwa, the special advisor for the reform of the Chancellor of the University of Burundi, confirms this copy-and-paste practice:

“First, there is the task of doing literature research. Which means, for instance, at the Faculty of Law [of the University of Burundi], we use the example of the Faculty of Law of [the French University of] Nanterre. And we study the structure

⁵ Interview with Gilbert Midende (20/03/2013, Bujumbura).

of the organisation of the teaching units, the included teaching elements, and after that, depending on the needs and the priorities of the country, we then see which courses we have to adjust and which one we pick. That is the way we proceed. We do not invent the wheel which is turning”⁶.

Given the argumentation of these experts, the last higher education reform in Burundi engaged with the French cooperation seems to confirm the main assumption of the scientific literature: in “fragile” states, policy-making is reduced to a top-down transfer of international standards because state-agents and university stakeholders do not have the capacity to negotiate the engineering of the Bologna model.

An original result of policy circulation in a “fragile” state

The making of the university curricula and classes implicates discussions on numerous technical aspects, which are widely depoliticised in Burundi. Given this technical nature of the policy, experts play a major role in the reform process which can also explain the top-down circulation of the external engineering. Nevertheless, some elements of the LMD reform aggregate critical challenges, which involve political stakeholders and issues. The transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity for political and academic stakeholders to reshape the system of elite formation and the delicate balance between Hutu and Tutsi in the administration, which is the core question of the higher education system in the Burundian post-conflict situation. By discussing these political aspects of the reform processes, our aim is to demonstrate, firstly, that even in a “fragile” state, policy circulations are shaped by bargaining and compromising between actors and, secondly, that these re-appropriation processes can be highly politicized.

Bargaining and compromising the policy-making in a “fragile state”

Firstly, the re-appropriation and adjustment processes of the Bologna model are related to the capacity of the higher learning institutions in Burundi. A first institutional limit regarding the implementation of the LMD model is that at the University of Burundi, only undergraduate degrees are available : the few programmes and diploma which are currently available for master and PhD levels are supported by the Belgian and the French cooperation. Thus, the reform process underlines a considerable gap between the ambition

⁶ Interview with Pierre-Celestin Karangwa (27/03/2013, Bujumbura).

of the PARES programme, on the one hand, and the institutional capacities of the University of Burundi, on the other hand: the university only offers undergraduate degrees while the PARES programme would engage the establishment of two Doctoral Schools. Some lecturers and university professors are ironic about these empirical facts and underline that only the “L” of the “LMD” model is available in the Burundian higher education system⁷. The French cooperation also plans, through the PARES programme, to implement personalized supervisions of students, to organize small classes and to introduce informatics-based courses. Gilbert Midende, a resigned member of the steering group explains us with sarcasm the difference between the defined objectives and the local realities :

“When you imagine that we have one computer for three hundred students at the University of Burundi, it is not with these capacities that we come in the Bologna reform”⁸.

These two empirical cases stress some institutional and resource-related difficulties to adopt the Bologna model for the Burundian institutions.

Secondly, the bargaining and re-appropriation processes of the Bologna process can be observed during the discussions on the general law of the reform. In 2011, a new step of the policy-making process is launched with the vote for a law to officially reorder the higher education system according to the European LMD model. The voting process of this law reveals how the university policy is a politically sensitive issue in the country. The law is voted on November 30th 2011, but the implementation decree is ratified only one year later on October 18th 2012 (République du Burundi, 2012a, 2012b). The different steps of the reform process between 2010 and 2012 (for example the edition of the White Book, the vote for the law and the ratification of the implementation decree) are shaped by political stakeholders who bargain the transfer of the LMD model and outreach the framework of the PARES programme. The political issues of the higher education system, which stem from the history of the country and the regulation of the sector, structure the negotiations of the change and politicize the technical aspects of the reform.

For instance, the politicisation of the reform is reflected in the reorganisation of the steering group. Firstly, Laurence Ritter substitutes Daniel Gouadain. Before becoming an expert in

⁷ Interview with Nicolas Hajayandi, lecturer in political science (08/02/2013, Bujumbura).

⁸ Interview with Gilbert Midende (20/03/2013, Bujumbura).

higher education, Laurence Ritter was a journalist. She obtained a PhD from the “Ecole des hautes études en science sociales” of Paris before joining the French Foreign Affairs Ministry where she managed the Armenian reform of the higher education and the implementation of the LMD model. In 2011, she got hired for the PARES programme⁹. In Burundi, she works with Pierre-Celestin Karangwa, who substitutes a second member of the steering group, Charles Nditije. Pierre-Celestin Karangwa is Professor in physics at the University of Burundi. He is a former Dean of the Faculty of science and joins the Chancellor of the University of Burundi, Gaston Hakiza, as his special advisor in the reform process¹⁰. Unlike the first steering group managed by foreign and national experts on higher education, the newly formed steering group rather involved members of the Burundian government, in particular the Minister of higher education and scientific research, Julien Nimubona¹¹, as well as the General director of higher education and vocational training, Protais Nteziriba¹². At that moment of the reform process it becomes clear that the French donors gradually lose control over the policy-making. Not only the principal stakeholders of the policy process are increasingly replaced by political actors of the Burundian government, but also the French cooperation is affected by logistic constraints. International experts, like Laurence Ritter, join the policy negotiations at a time when the reform process is already in full swing and their impact is limited by short-time contracts¹³.

The politicisation of the reform: the question of the elite formation

The discussion of the law in the parliament constitutes the last phase of the LMD reform and is regulated by the Minister of higher education. Julien Nimubona is a member of the political opposition UPRONA (“Unité et Progrès National”), a political party which is regularly associated with the interests of the Tutsi. The Burundian president and the members of the government, however mostly belong to the CNDD-FDD party (“Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces de Défense de la Démocratie”), which is politically close to the Hutu. The appointment of Julien Nimubona, a member of the opposition, can be seen as a governmental strategy to facilitate the success of a sensitive reform. The highly political

⁹ Interview with Laurence Ritter (12/02/2013, Bujumbura).

¹⁰ Interviews with Pierre-Celestin Karangwa (27/03/2013, Bujumbura) and with Gaston Hakiza (28/02/2013, Bujumbura).

¹¹ Interview with Julien Nimubona (09/03/2013, Bujumbura).

¹² Interview with Protais Nteziriba (19/03/2013, Bujumbura).

¹³ Interview with Laurence Ritter (12/02/2013, Bujumbura).

character of the reform process, which overtakes the technical and expertise-related aspects, is reflected in the different policy debates, some of them focussing on the ethnic balance in the university administration and on the regulation of the private institutions of the higher education sector.

Firstly, the debates on the law of November 2011 question the norms regulating the appointment process in the university administration regarding the ethnic balance between Hutu and Tutsi occupying higher positions of political responsibility or in the public administration. Charles Nditije, one of the managers of the first steering group, reveals that the debates in the Burundian Parliament are essentially related to the issue of the appointments of Deans based on ethnic criteria rather than on technical aspects of the implementation of the LMD in the private and public institutions:

“The law was not well understood by the Assembly. I have to say that our Parliament is not like yours, the quality of debates is very poor [*he is laughing*]! [...]. We could see that the tendency was rather to consider only political aspects rather than academic and scientific aspects. The debates were related, for instance, to the appointment of Deans, it was rather that : of which ethnicity and of which political party must the Deans come from?”¹⁴.

Through the Arusha Agreement on August 28th 2000, the rule of creating an ethnically balanced composition of the public administration is enshrined in the Constitution. This norm of consociationalism and power-sharing (Lemarchand, 2007; Vandeginst, 2008) impact the day-to-day regulation of the University of Burundi insofar that the administrators have to implement this principle in the human resource management. The law of November 2011 strengthens the political and ethnical choices of the Deans of the different university departments. Firstly, by increasing the decision-making power of the central administration of the university, which are now able to appoint a non-elected member to the position of the Dean for political and ethnical reasons. Secondly, whereas the academic staff of the departments played a more important role in the appoint-process of their Dean, their votes have now become only consultative¹⁵. Thus, the political issues of the Burundian higher education sector have significantly changed the initial framework of the reform imagined by the French cooperation.

¹⁴ Interview with Charles Nditije (27/03/2013, Bujumbura).

¹⁵ Interview with Simeon Barumwete, lecturer in political science (25/02/2013, Bujumbura).

The second instance of the politicization of the higher education reform involves the regulation of the public and the private institutions of the country. The reform process is grasped by the government as a political opportunity to finally implement the National Commission for Higher Education (“Commission Nationale de l’Enseignement Supérieur”, CNES). The CNES’ function is to control the certification of the private institutions and the authenticity of their diploma for students. The CNES is launched on January, 10th 2008. At that time, the government is worried about the pressure of the directors and the managers of the private institutions, who have influential intermediaries in the Burundian Parliament. That is why the government does not sign the decree implementing the CNES. The law of November 2011 and the policy-making of the LMD reform are a policy window (Kingdon 1984) for the government to officially launch the CNES. This institution, which controls the certification of the private establishments of higher education, questions one decisive issue of the Burundian politics: the higher training of Hutu elite. Since the Independence period of the country, the state institutions are historically controlled by Tutsi elite. With the Arusha Agreement, the Burundian Constitution imposes a power-sharing based on ethnic and regional criteria for the enrolment in the public and parastatal organizations. The University of Burundi, located in the capital city of the country, Bujumbura, is historically enrolled by Tutsi students for regional and demographic reasons. The public institution has historically failed to train the Hutu elite. The private establishments, which have been increasing significantly since the 2000’s in the country, meet this growing demand of training. The creation of a new Hutu elite is necessary to occupy the public institutions, in order to respect the rule of consociationalism and to establish the manpower of the current CNDD-FDD government. Nevertheless, most of the members of the Hutu elite have not reached the secondary school certificate, which officially allows students to access to higher education. Julien Nimubona, Minister of higher education in charge of the reform, argues:

“You must know the ruling party is composed of members who came from exile and had interrupted their degrees at the University of Burundi in 1995 [...]. When they came back, when they arrived, they wanted to go back to University. That was not a problem. But some of them had not finished their secondary school however wanted to obtain a university certification to become minister or member of Parliament [...]. They wanted a professional or academic qualifications for their political ambition [...]. It is the reason why we had in private universities some people who had only a primary certification. They were

not allowed to access to higher education, because they did not have their bachelor degree. This situation concerns a lot of people here, a lot of members of MPs and senators [...]. With the corruption, they got a university degree and were the first to be employed”¹⁶.

Through the implementation of the CNES and the policy-making of the higher education reform sustained by the French cooperation, the political actors take control of the regulation of the sector. They decided that the state certificate, namely the bachelor degree, becomes the required condition to access to higher education. Establishments, which do not require the certificate as a criteria of admission, are converted in vocational and technical institutes (Misigaro, 2011; Shabani, 2011; Ndakoraniwe, 2012). Therefore, the transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity for political and academic stakeholders to reshape the system of elite formation and the delicate balance between Hutu and Tutsi in this post-conflict situation. The French experts, on the other side, are bypassed and their impact on the outcomes of the reform is finally quite limited.

Conclusion

The empirical study of the circulation of the LMD reform highlights two contrasting results. When focussing on the technical aspects of the reform, like the establishment of the curricula offered at the University of Burundi, we observe a top-down transfer. The local administrators of the institution imitate, copy and paste the programmes offered in European universities, where most of the Burundian experts, lecturers and professors have pursued their university education. This outcome confirms the general argument of the literature on higher education in Africa that the implementation of the LMD reform in Burundi is the result of a rigid transfer of the Bologna model unlike the European experiences, where the LMD model is constantly negotiated on the national and local levels. The latest higher education reform in Burundi supported by the French cooperation therefore seems to confirm the main assumption of the authors on “fragile” states. In this literature policy-making in “weak” states is reduced to a top-down transfer of international standards given the limited capacity of state-agents and university stakeholders to negotiate the European model.

¹⁶ Interview with Julien Nimubona (09/03/2013 and 19/03/2013, Bujumbura).

However, by switching the focus on the voting process of the law of November 2011, our paper highlights new and diverging results. The transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity for political and academic stakeholders to transform the system of elite formation and power-sharing between Hutu and Tutsi, which constitutes the core question of the higher education system in the Burundian post-conflict situation. The political challenges of the Burundian higher education sector have significantly changed the initial framework of the reform designed by the French cooperation. Two aspects of the higher education reform are highly politicized. Firstly, the debates on the law of November 2011 question the appointment processes in university administrations and address the balance between Hutu and Tutsi in the occupying higher positions of political responsibility and public administration. Secondly, the political debates on the LMD reform involve the regulation of the public and the private higher education institutions of the country. The reform is a political opportunity to implement the CNES in order to regulate the activities of the private institutions.

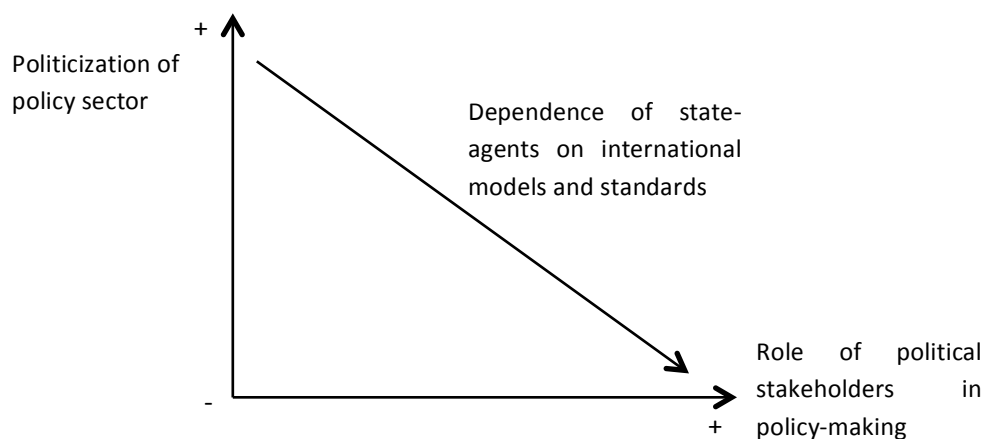
The analysis of the voting process of the LMD reform in Burundi thus confirms the results of the scientific literature on policy transfers and questions the nature of “weak” states. Even in a “fragile” state, which heavily depends on the financial support of donors and international organizations, policy circulations are shaped by bargaining and compromising between international, national and local actors. This result questions the scientific relevance of the concept of “fragile” state and the Dominique Darbon’s definition. More generally, we can discuss, through the theoretical framework of policy analysis, the adjectives describing and categorizing the capacities of states (as “fragile”, “failed”, “ghost”, “neopatrimonial”, “liberal” or “developing”). We also demonstrate to what extent policy analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of the state rather than restricting its shape to one characteristic.

Finally, our case study underlines that policy processes are shaped and oriented by political configurations and are imbedded in historical contexts. Thus, we can suggest a new assumption to discuss the main hypothesis of the scientific literature on African higher education (cf. introduction). Through our analysis of the LMD reform in Burundi, we establish a broader relation between the degree of politicisation of a specific policy sector and the capacity of the state-agents to produce policies in this sector: the more a policy sector is politicized, which means shaped and influenced by political and historical debates,

the greater is the influence of national and political stakeholders in the policy-making process.

A new theoretical assumption: the policy-making depends on the politicisation of policy sector

Politicisation of policy sector	Role of international stakeholders in policy-making
High politicisation of policy sector	International stakeholders do not have the capacity to enforce their external models and standards on state-agents
Low politicisation of policy sector	International stakeholders enforce their external models and standards on state-agents



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