

# T09P15 / Transnational Circulation and Multilevel Governance of University Reforms: What Higher Education Teaches about Policy Science

**Topic :** T09 / Governance, Policy networks and Multi-level Governance

**Chair :** Olivier Provini (Université de La Réunion)

**Second Chair :** Pauline Ravinet (Université de Lille)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel will discuss policy circulation through the lens of higher education reforms. Since the 1990-2000s and in the context of globalization, research on transnational policy transfer and circulation of policy models has become a very fertile field of study in public policy and public administration (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; James and Lodge, 2003; Stone, 2004). This branch of policy science has quickly become an enthralling approach shaped by several theoretical concepts and notions which grasp different configurations of policy circulation such as policy transfer, policy learning, policy borrowing, policy lending, policy diffusion or policy convergence. These contributions question the circulation of models and policies in contexts of intensifying transnational networks of actors and increasing international policies. Many authors have shown that studying transnational circulation of models is considered necessary when analysing national public policy. Yet, systematic analyses, which unpack, discuss, or even contest this general assumption on the basis of in-depth empirical work is still needed. A relevant approach for this agenda is certainly to focus on different forms and levels of transnational circulation within a policy sector, in order to cross, cumulate, and discuss observations on related objects. In this perspective, higher education represents a very interesting case. On the one hand, theoretical reflections on policy circulation have been stimulating the research in education science, since university systems in Europe, Asia, Africa and America have been built historically as privileged areas of international intervention (Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005; Ball, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow, 2012; Stromquist and Monkman, 2014). From the international point of view, higher education is also interesting because there is no sector-specific international organisation as a central forum for discussion, frame for rule making, or harmonising and standard setting. On the other hand, the sector is strongly anchored into national policy systems and cultures (cf. its functions of training national elites and high skilled manpower). In fact, one suggestion of this panel would be to shed light on the role of domestic dynamics in the success or even the failure of policy circulation. We will be interested in the role of domestic actors such as political elites, private stakeholders, academic and administrative staff as well as students influencing the evolution of the policy sector. Although transfer studies tend to underline the international dimension of policy-making, the example of higher education rather reaffirms the importance of domestic configurations in the negotiation of policies. By analysing the multilevel functioning of the sector, the aim is to clarify the blurry concept of "globalisation of higher education" through the methodological tools of policy analysis. This panel invites papers on the multiform and multilevel transnational circulation of policy models in the sector of higher education, which address the following questions (non exhaustive): Who are the transnational policy professionals in higher education? How do they network? How do policy models travel and how are they translated between the transnational, national and local levels?

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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- i) The role of international (governmental as well as nongovernmental) and regional political organizations in policy circulation seeking to harmonize the higher education systems;
- ii) The transnational networks of actors which participate in policy-making, build social linkages during

conferences and workshops and promote the circulation of good practices;

iii) The circulation of norms (cost-sharing), standards (quality assurance), instruments (new public management) and models (Bologna process) which promote international policies;

iv) The role of domestic dynamics in the success or even the failure of policy circulation. We will be interested in the role of domestic actors such as political elites, private stakeholders, academic and administrative staff as well as students influencing the evolution of the policy sector.

Contributors to this panel can propose comparative case studies or monographic analyses on Europe, Asia, America and Africa.

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## Session 1

Friday, June 30th 13:45 to 15:45 (Block B 5 - 3 )

### **Harmonizing Transnational Higher Education Policies: Implications of the Bologna Process Model on ASEAN and the Philippines**

Pilar Preciousa Berse (Waseda University (PhD Cand.)/ Ateneo de Manila University (Instructor))

Kristoffer Besre (University of the Philippines - National College of Public Administration and Governance)

This paper discusses how the Bologna Process model for harmonization of higher education systems is adopted and “translated” into ASEAN context as the region gears up for socio-cultural and economic integration. It addresses the issue at two scales. It first reviews the role of inter-governmental institutions and transnational non-governmental networks in Southeast Asia such as, but not limited to, ASEAN, UMAP, AUN and SEAMEO-RIHED, in the formulation and circulation, directly or indirectly, of policies that seek to promote regional exchange and

connectedness in higher education. It then traces the implications of the same on the higher education policies of the Philippines, highlighting the factors that facilitate and hamper their adoption at the national level. By and large, the study hopes to shed light on the adoption and circulation of policies in the context of higher education.

### **Politics and Policies of Higher Education: Policy Transfer and the Bologna Process**

Simona Torotcoi (Central European University (Budapest, Hungary))

Considered as one of the most successful recent examples of transnational reform but also as an ineffective policy mechanism in the presence of national higher education policies the Bologna Process is a voluntary agreed, collective and intergovernmental effort to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education by helping diverse higher education systems to converge towards more transparent systems and to create a harmonized European higher education area.

Notwithstanding its legally-unbinding and intergovernmental character, participating countries have implemented many elements of the Bologna, however, this does not imply full harmony with the overall commitments. Given the specific components of the Bologna Process, including the joint decision making process between and the integrated set of policies developed since its inception, it acts as a policy model which allows participating countries to jointly define common objectives for guiding national policy, to translate guidelines into national action plans and execute them, and lastly, to evaluate and benchmark national performances.

The Bologna Process can be considered a policy model which is used for the development of national policies. A first stage at the country level, is the adoption of the necessary legislation which provides a legal framework for addressing the policy issue at hand. Once the necessary framework is adopted, the next step for the competent authorities is to translate these policy provisions into operating guidelines, action plans strategies, etc. The implementation phase refers to the stage in which these policies are put into effect at the higher education institutions level.

By combining the policy transfer literature and the policy implementation literature, this paper aims to put forward a different approach in understanding the different levels and stages in implementation compliance. Differentiating between three levels of implementation namely: adoption, transposition and institutional implementation would reflect into a more appropriate approach for researching the different implementation outcomes, since Bologna relies on national and institutional elements (Sin et. al. 2016). In order to test the proposed approach, this paper uses the case of Romania and reflect upon the extent to which one of the Bologna Process proposed policies, quality assurance, has been translated at the national and university level.

## **How do international university rankings impact national higher education policy and institutional strategies in Hungary?**

Reka Tozsa (National University of Public Service, Hungary)

International university rankings provide easy and transparent information on performance and quality of universities. Despite the doubt on the methodology of these rankings, they have become a convenient tool for public policy decision makers as well. Rankings inform strategic planning and funding at national level. They also provide incentives for higher education institutions to adjust to indicators, implement reforms, develop new curriculum, and boost faculty research performance (Hazelkorn, 2008). However, it is scientifically proven, that rankings are favouring institutions in English language countries (Marginson 2007).

Therefore it is interesting to examine, how non-English speaking countries adjust their higher education policies to allow their institutions to successfully compete in this race for reputation, and how do universities adopt to indicators used in rankings.

This paper is examining how international rankings impact public policy making and university reforms in Hungary. How much are public policy makers influenced by rankings? How can universities in a non-English speaking country - within the European Higher Educational Area - respond to global competition? How are they transforming their strategies to fulfil indicators set by international rankings?

To answer these question the paper will select three popular rankings in Hungary (U-Multirank, THE Times Higher Education, QS World Ranking) and introduce the indicators they are using, relying on previous research (William YW Lo, 2014). Hungarian national higher education policy will be examined against these criteria and the level of “ranking responsiveness” will be determined. The institutional policy of five major universities in Hungary will be also examined. The paper will present, how did they respond to indicators used by rankings, to what extent did they adjust their strategies and KPIs to meet these indicators. Qualitative interviews will be carried out with heads of international offices at the universities, and with colleagues of the State Secretariat of Higher Education to validate the findings. The timeframe of the examination is 2011-2016.

The paper presents how Hungarian policy makers and universities were adopting to an international concept of excellence in the last 5 years. Hungarian lessons can provide best practices for other countries struggling to keep up in the international competition for excellence.

Ellen Hazelkorn, Rankings and the Battle for World Class Excellence: Institutional Strategies and Policy Choices, OECD IMHE 2008

Simon Marginson, Global University Rankings: Implications in general and for Australia, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management Vol. 29, No. 2, July 2007, pp. 131–142

William YW Lo, University Rankings: Implications for Higher Education in Taiwan, Springer Science & Business Media, 2014

## **Are inter-regional policy dialogues effective? The case of higher education**

Meng Hsuan Chou (Nanyang Technological University)

Pauline Ravinet (Université de Lille)

A lot has been written about the importance of transnational policy circulation. It is now commonly accepted that in order to understand the transformations of public policies and the public sector, as well as the impact and relative effectiveness of the diffused model or approach, it is crucial to study the role of transnational policy networks, international organizations, and policy professionals in these processes. Yet beyond this acceptance and the publication of several excellent studies on transnational actors, more in depth empirical studies are still needed to improve our knowledge of how to better conceptualise these processes, specifically, what exactly is being circulated, by which types of actors (what are the hats they wear? Do they wear multiple hats?), through which types of mechanisms (learning, coercion, mimicry, and so on), and to what effects (and are these effects intended or unexpected?).

More particularly, literature on circulation generally assumes that international/transnational networks and organizations' objectives to shape national and local policies are reached –that they are effective-. To address these issues, we argue in this paper that it is essential to unpack and re-conceptualise the notion of effectiveness in the policy design of global initiatives. Empirically, the higher education sector is a good example of where more empirically grounded research on transnational circulation would assist in improving our collective knowledge of the vast transformation that has taken place in this sector around the world. Many have acknowledged that global and transnational initiatives, projects, arenas, networks dealing with higher education are proliferating in the last

years, but more research is

wanting to illuminate higher education transnational policy circulation and fertilisation within these venues, as well as the resistance emanating from these exchanges. In this paper, we first unpack the meaning of policy effectiveness in a globalized public policy environment. We derive two definitions—effectiveness as achieving policy success, and effectiveness as exerting an effect—and apply them to studying a case of inter-regional higher education policy cooperation. Specifically, we examine the inter-regional higher education policy cooperation between the EU and ASEAN: European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (EU SHARE).

SHARE is a four-year programme (2015-2019) funded by the EU, seeking to strengthen regional cooperation in ASEAN across different areas within the higher education sector. The programme is divided into three result areas: (1) Policy Dialogues, (2a) ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworks, (2b) ASEAN Quality Assurance, (3a) ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS), (3b) ASEAN-EU Credit

Transfer Systems (AECTS), and (3c) ACTS & AECTS Student Mobility with Scholarships. This paper will focus on result area (1) Policy Dialogues. Using publicly available policy documents, participant observation of two sessions of policy dialogues (February 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand and October 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), as well as more than 55 in-depth interviews with participating actors, we will address the question: Are inter-regional policy dialogues effective? If so, what are the effects?

## **Transnational Circulation of University Reforms and Models: the Implementation of the LMD in Burundi**

Olivier Provini (Université de La Réunion)

This proposal deals with the implementation of the European higher education model LMD (“Licence-Master-Doctorate”) at University of Burundi in Africa. Basing on empirical data from fieldwork in Burundi, the aim of this paper is to analyse the implementation processes

by discussing the literature on policy transfers. Therefore, we ask the question, if the circulation of the LMD model from Europe to Burundi confirms the results of the policy transfers studies. Several scholars have demonstrated how policy transfers between “developed/industrial countries”, are shaped by bargaining and compromising between international and national actors (Delpeuch, 2009; Hassenteufel and de Maillard, 2013). The situation in “fragile” states which often depend on aid from the international donor community would invalidate this result a priori. Burundi is generally ranked as a fragile state (Specker et al., 2010) where policy processes would be controlled and shaped by international stakeholders (Darbon, 2015). However, the case study of the implementation of the LMD

model at the University of Burundi reveals the main role of domestic actors (national and academic elite) in the renegotiations of policies and reforms. The transfer of the LMD model in Burundi presents an opportunity to political and academic actors 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.

This case study stems from a PhD dissertation in political science (Provini, 2015) which analyses the circulation of higher education reforms in East Africa (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.