The Missing Link in Donor Prescribed Educational Reforms: Lack of Ownership (The Case of the World Bank in Ethiopian Higher Education)

Habtamu Diriba Garomssa[1]

[1]University of Tampere, School of Management, Higher Education Group, Pinni A, 4th Fl. (Kanslerinrinne 1), 33014 Tampere, Finland

Correspondence: Habtamu Diriba Garomssa, University of Tampere, School of Management, Higher Education Group, Pinni A, 4th Fl. (Kanslerinrinne 1), 33014 Tampere, Finland

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Abstract

The World Bank (WB) as an international policy transfer and diffusion agent has been actively involved in orchestrating and driving Higher Education (HE) reforms globally. Such impact of the Bank has arguably, been more evident in the context of loan recipient countries. By using a hard mode of influence (financial), and more subtle or soft modes of influence (knowledge based and symbolic), the Bank has been steering the HE system of loan recipient countries, to which Ethiopia is not an exception. The Bank justifies its involvement by illuminating on the capacity deficit that is widely prevalent in borrowing countries. Notwithstanding, the solid expert base the Bank has, this paper contends that, the Bank is not creating sufficient spaces for local actors to collaborate in. Even when the Bank creates avenues to stimulate discussion on proposed reform ideas, such platforms merely serve the purpose of legitimizing the predetermined reforms ideas of the Bank rather than giving national actors a genuine opportunity to critically challenge, the purported reform ideas of the Bank. This has resulted in, among other things; failure to capitalize on the HE expertise of loan recipient countries, the crafting of reforms that do not resonate with borrowing countries context and most importantly, lack of ownership of the proposed reforms and their sustainability. In line with that, this paper argues for a shift in approach from the current strong top-down approach to a balanced approach that gives sufficient spaces and most importantly recognition for bottom up actors, ideas and initiatives.

Keywords: Ownership, Reform, Policy transfer, Bottom-up initiatives, Symbolic-capital

1. Introduction

Amidst the move to knowledge-oriented global economy, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been undergoing significant reforms. Part of these reforms include, but are not limited to, strengthening research capacities, building and reinforcing national innovation systems and increasing societal engagements (UNESCO, 2009a, 2009b). Such global transformations have been greatly facilitated by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the WB, UNESCO and OECD (Samoff&Caroll, 2004, p.33). This is especially true in the context of developing countries that are heavily dependent on the financial and non-financial support of the aforementioned international institutions.

There is a plethora of research examining the impact of such donor induced reforms in loan recipient countries. While, part of the literature is written in justification of the involvement of IGOs (for instance, Chapman, 1999; Merisotis, 2003; Woldegiyorgis, 2014a), there is a significant number of contrasting research work that firmly criticiziesthe involvement of IGOs in the national affairs of loan recipient countries (for instance, Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Klees, 2008, 2012; Torres, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Verger, &Bonal, 2012; Anwaruddin, 2014). Also encapsulated in the research body is the explanation of the way the donor institutions go about trying to impose and/or legitimize their reform agendas (for instance, Ball, 2012; Molla, 2013). With respect to the last aspect mentioned above, most of the researchers did not go beyond the mere explanation of the nature of influence and evaluate the in/effectiveness of the process employed by IGOs to bring about change. Neither have they provided suggestions to improve the approach followed by IGOs for better impact. Bearing this in mind, this paper is mainly designed to evaluate the in/effectiveness of the approach followed by the World Bank (WB) to induce reforms in aid-recipient countries by using Ethiopian higher education as a case in point. Additionally, in an effort to provide a clear picture of the whole process, other pertinent questions such as why and how the Bank interferes with the education affair of borrowing countries will be discussed.

To this end, the paper is structured in to eight main parts including this introduction. The second section will briefly present the methodology and theoretical framework adopted, while the third section introduces the HE system of the country under consideration (Ethiopia). The fourth section will present the rationale for the involvement of the Bank in the HE affairs of loan recipient countries in general and Ethiopia in particular. Following that, the Banks mode of influence along with source of power will be presented. This will be succeeded by a practical example of how the Bank is inducing change in Ethiopian HE. Next to that, the seventh section will discuss the problem with the current approach followed by the Bank, along with its adverse consequences. Lastly, the essay concludes with a suggestion for improvement.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper rests on the analysis of relevant published work with respect to the research questions raised above. Accordingly, Ethiopian government documents (such as HE proclamation, ESDP, GTP) are evaluated along with World Bank documents which might have induced changes and reforms in Ethiopian higher education system (such as Sector studies, publications). Moreover, research articles examining the impact of the WB in the higher education systems of loan recipient countries in general and Ethiopia in particular are considered.

Where necessary, conceptual frameworks illustrating the role and impact of the Bank, (such as Newmark's (2002) integrated framework for policy transfer and diffusion; and Pierre Bourdieu's (1989) symbolic power, as adopted by Molla (2013), are used as analytical tools.

3. Ethiopian Higher Education: An Overview

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations of the world with a very rich culture and history spanning thousands of years. Deeply rooted in this rich socio-cultural history of the country is education, which has existed in various forms (Habte, 2010). Garomssa (2014) maps the evolution of Ethiopian education by classifying it in to five major stages. In the first stage, he speaks of the religious teachings which were widely practiced in the country, prior to the introduction of 'western like' secular education in 1900. Basically, this corresponds with Ethiopian orthodox-church teachings (since 4th B.C) and also the ancient Islamic teachings (Aschalew, 2012).

The second period (1900 -1915), corresponds to the establishment of the first modern education system during the reign of Menelik II. However, it is only during the third period (1915-1974) that the first higher education institution was established in the country. More particularly, the University College of Addis Ababa was established in 1950 (Yizengaw, 2007). This marks the beginning of HE in the country. However, its development was interrupted in the subsequent period (1974-1991). During, this period the development of HE simply lost momentum, if not, stagnated. Partly, the stagnation can be attributed to external influences. In that, consistent with the then dominant discourse of the World Bank, which claimed that investment in lower levels (primary and secondary) has a higher rate of return than investment in HE (Robertson, 2009), the HE languished, while remarkable results were achieved at lower levels.

The last period (1991- up to now) can be considered as the renaissance of Ethiopian HE. In this period an extraordinary improvement in terms of access to HE has been witnessed (West, 2015). While, the number of public higher education institutions rose from 6 in 2002/03 to 34 in, 2014, the number of accredited private HEIs increased, from just3 in 2002/03 to 59 in 2014 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015). Consequently, the enrollments rate in HE (public and private) reached a new high of 627,456. What is more, the construction of 11 new public HEIs is underway. According to the communications of the Ministry of Education, the aforementioned universities will be operational as of 2017 (Mideksa, 2015; West, 2015).

Amidst, the significant transformation that the country's HE system is experiencing, this paper, inquires the role of the WB and the in/effectiveness of the approach followed by the institution, in order to bring about the aforementioned changes. In this vein, the following section explores the rationale behind the Banks involvement in the HE affairs of Ethiopia.

4. Why? Rationales and Justifications for the Involvement of the Bank

One of the tenets of the World Bank as an international financial institution is the promotion of economic advancement and stability (Collins & Rhoads, 2008; World Bank [WB], n.d.). As such, the Bank has been actively involved in various initiatives and/or programs aimed at fostering sustainable socio-economic development throughout the globe. Although, the Bank is primarily a financial institution, it has evolved to become a knowledge institution with a solid expert base (Molla, 2013). Consequently, the Bank has been guiding, consulting, and prescribing national socio-economic reforms at a global scale (WB, 2003). Understandably, as a financial provider that wants to ensure a wise investment, the Bank has been broadening and deepening its involvement, not only in

terms of determining the type and nature of required reforms but also in terms of creating the enabling environment for the proposed reforms to take hold. However, such involvement of the Bank that goes beyond the mere financial support has been the subject of scrutiny by researchers and practitioners alike (Robertson, 2009). Taking this as background, this sub section discusses the rationales and/or justifications for the involvement of the Bank in the HE of loan recipient countries in general and the country in consideration (Ethiopia) in particular.

First and foremost, the solid expert base of the Bank can be cited. The Bank regards itself, and rightly so, as a "knowledge Bank" (Molla, 2013). With its long lived experience that spans across a wide range of country contexts, coupled with its financial strength and reputation, the Bank attracts some of the best minds in the planet, and maintains an indisputable position in public policy making and implementation (Berger &Beesen, 1998, as cited in Robertson, 2012).The second rationale, i.e. the prevalence of a capacity deficit in loan recipient countries, further reinforces the involvement of the Bank. Most loan recipient countries including Ethiopia are deprived of capacity problems at various levels (both in terms of quantity and quality) (Yizengaw, 2005).

Thirdly, when there is some capacity there often is a roadblock that hampers the country's ability to capitalize on it. This could entail lack of conducive enabling environment for the national experts to collaborate in or the existence of better opportunities elsewhere. Similarly, the existence of corruption, political partisanship and, lack of inspiration are the other major roadblocks. Coming to the country in focus (Ethiopia), most of the aforementioned road blocks were found to be present. For instance, TeshomeYizengaw (2005), the former Vice President of Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, reflecting on the existence of political partisanship states:

> Issues of political partisanship were overwhelmingly influencing academia. At its initial stage, the reform agenda was seen by many as a purely political issue, rather than as a development objective. The difficulty resided mainly in the silence and indifference (neither openly opposing it nor expressing support) of many in the higher education community towards the reform (p.6).

Additionally, a number of studies confirmed the prevalence of other road blocks, i.e. corruption (Woldegiyorgis, 2014a), lack of coordination in using national experts (Damtew, n.d.), brain drain (Gelaye, 2004) and lack of inspiration (Yizengaw, 2005).

With this daunting challenge in mind, the involvement of the Bank which paves the opportunity for cross fertilization of ideas is justified, at least in the short run.

5. The World Bank as an International Policy Transfer and Diffusion Agent: Source of Power and Mode of Influence

Although, the World Bank has been responsible for most of the reforms that took place in the higher education system of loan recipient countries, it was only when the century drew to a close that the Bank started to assume the role of policy and best practice spreading agent (WB, 2003). To shed a light on the above mentioned role of the Bank, Newmark's (2002) integrated framework for policy transfer and diffusion will be used. In this framework, Newmark attempted to bring together the two related policy spreading literatures (policy transfer and policy diffusion). According to Newmark:

> Policy transfer typically involves cases in which one nation or government imports knowledge of policies or programs that exist abroad.[On the other hand]Diffusion research focuses on how innovations, policies, or programs spread from one governmental entity to another […] Diffusion is a more general term, often encompassing cases where structural or modernizing factors account for policy adoption.(p.1)

Hence, in this illustration policy transfer can be considered as a sub-category of innovation diffusion. Meaning, among the several ways in which innovation and best practices spread, policy transfer is one formal mechanism where, deliberate and organized effort is invested to learn from the effective policy of another country, while developing one's own policy.

Newmark (2002) further asserts that policy transfer might be forced or voluntary. The latter mainly involves lesson drawing from the experience of other countries, which faced the same set of problems. The aim is "to *avoid reinventing the wheel where solutions to problems may already exists*" (Newmark, 2002, p.3), whereas, the former corresponds to policy enforcements through regulatory instruments. Lastly, the extent of learning from other countries can vary significantly from complete adoption (copying) to simply providing inspiration (see Table 1).

Table 1. Varieties of Lesson Drawing

Copying:	Adoption more or less intact of a program already in effect in another jurisdiction.
Emulation:	Adoption, with adjustment for different circumstances, of a program already in effect in another jurisdiction.
Hybridization:	Combine elements of programs from two different places.
Synthesis:	Combine familiar elements from programs in effect in three or more different places.
Inspiration:	Programs elsewhere used as intellectual stimulus for developing a novel program without an analogue elsewhere.

Source: Newmark, 2002

A close observation of the modus operandi of the Bank reveals the fact that it is involved in best practice diffusion in general and policy transfer in particular. As several of the Banks published documents attest (WB, 2003; 2009; 2010) it is actively engaged in various forms of lesson drawing, by bringing innovative polices/approaches that have shown their worth elsewhere to the attention of loan recipient countries. Additionally, both forms of policy diffusion (voluntary and enforced) are exercised by the Bank (see section 5.2 for detail).

Before proceeding further with a detailed explanation of the method of the Bank's influence, it is essential to address one presumption that has been implied throughout: the fact that the Bank has some sort of power over the loan recipient countries. Understandably, without it the Bank will not be in a position to exert influence. Accordingly, this section first addresses the Banks source of power before delving in to the method of influence.

5.1 Source of Power

Perhaps the most apparent source of the Bank's power stems from its financial strength. In that the Bank holds the much needed loan provision capacity and this has endowed the Bank with the ability to influence change. Stated differently, in an effort to secure the financial support of the Bank, the prospective loan recipients are more than willing to listen to and abide by the prescriptions and suggestions of the Bank (Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Robertson, 2009). Secondly, another financial related source of power worth noting is the Banks affiliation with other loan and/or aid providers, such as IMF, UNDP, UNESCO and OECD. In that the endorsement of the Bank is assumed to have a positive impact on borrowing country's likely hood of securing finance from the other providers (Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Molla, 2013; Woldegiyorgis, 2014a).

The third, source of power stems from the Bank's expert base. With its high caliber experts and long year of consultation and guidance experience, the Bank appears to be an influential entity (Berger &Beesen, 1998, as cited in Robertson, 2012). The Fourth source of power is framed as 'symbolic power' by Molla (2013) who draws from the classic work of Bourdieu (1989). According to Bourdieu (1989) cited in Molla (2013, p.170) "*symbolic power is a kind of power that exists in the form of recognition and legitimacy of other forms of power including economic, cultural and social ones*". Hence, symbolic power emanates from the acknowledgment and respect of the other types of power the Bank has, and it is essential in terms of legitimizing the reform ideas of the Bank.

To sum up using Pierre Bourdieu's (1989) Framework, the Bank has four principal sources of power at its disposal; economic capital (related to its loan provision capacity), social capital (related to its affiliation with the other key entities) ,cultural capital (related to its expert base)and symbolic capital (related to the recognition of the other three capitals).In line with that the following subsection discusses how the Bank makes use of the aforementioned capitals, in order to initiate reform in loan recipient countries.

5.2 Mode of Influence

As outlined above the most principal source of power the Bank has at its disposal is, loan provision capacity. The Bank makes use of its financial power in two important ways: policy subscription and conditionalities (Robertson, 2009). Both specify a set of requirements that should be satisfied by the borrowing country before the loan is approved by the Bank. More often than not, this entails undertaking change and reforms espoused by the Bank. As such the country in question is coerced in to the proposed reform for the sake of securing the financial support of the

Bank (Newmark, 2002; Samoff&Caroll, 2004). Policy subscriptions are usually more detailed and specify the how, why and what. Consequently, they provide little or no room to maneuver. In contrast, conditionalities, provide a little bit more room for the borrowing country in terms of how to implement the proposed reform, provided the preconditions of the Bank are satisfied (Woldegiyorgis, 2014a). However, both imply the 'hardest' mode of policy transfer and diffusion the Bank employs to bring about change in borrowing countries. A typical example of conditionalities is the structural adjustment programs (SAP) which first appeared in 1979. Structural adjustments refer to

> reforms that are required by developing country when seeking a loan by the IMF or World Bank,which ensure a free market where goods and services are bought and sold according to supply and demand (instead of governments determining the price of goods and services), Globalizatio*n* (WB, n.d., p.21).

In response to critics of SAPS, the Bank introduced Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) in 1990s, however, conditionalities still remain to be the mechanism through which the Bank exerts its influence in loan recipient countries (Woldegiyorgis, 2014a).

The other source of power the Bank taps in to is its experience and expertise in regards to higher education. The Bank makes use of this power source in three major ways: technical assistance, consultancy/guidance, and publications (reports, policy documents, and research outcomes). To begin with, , the Bank provides technical assistance on various reform issues of practical importance up on the request of borrowing countries (Merisotis, 2003). However, the technical assistance is contingent on two important pre conditions (the need and willingness to change). Provided those two conditions are satisfied in the loan seeking country, the Bank is more than willing to send its team of experts to guide and assist with the process of reform (Molla, 2013). This team of experts will then play the key role of infusing the Bank's approaches and ideologies in to the workings of the borrowing countries (Woldegiyorgis, 2014a). In the same fashion, countries, (including those that does not require the Banks financial support such as china), seek out the advice and guidance of the Bank on reforms they are intending to implement. This may extend from problem identification (which the Bank will assist by initiating a sector study/review) to devising a solution (Molla, 2013; Woldegiyorgis, 2014a).

The last knowledge based mechanism of influence the Bank utilizes is the dissemination of its ideologies and approaches through publication of reports, conference proceedings and research outcomes. The objective of these communications and publications is twofold. Firstly, the Bank intends to stimulate change and reforms in countries where such motivations are lacking. Secondly, the Bank uses the so called research based publications to legitimize its reform agenda (Molla, 2013).

Lastly, the Bank makes use of its symbolic capital to induce change in loan recipient countries. This entails activities the Bank undertakes to make the borrowing countries recognize and accept its three other principal sources of power: Economic, Social and Cultural. As, Molla (2014) states

> Symbolic capital of the WB manifests when other, agents confer recognition on its cultural and economic capital. In this sense, symbolic capital can be any form of capital insofar as it is represented symbolically. For example, it can be in the form of recognition that stems from the Bank's a) strong financial resource, and b) knowledge and expertise in its fields of engagement. *(p.172)*

The Economic (financial) power being more apparent does not require much effort from the side of the Bank. It is in utilizing its knowledge or expert power the Bank has been facing much difficulty. Especially with the number of researchers criticizing the neo liberal ideologies of the Bank growing by the day, this power is hanging in the balance. To exemplify, the Banks idea of rate of return and its adverse impact in the higher education system of developing countries can be mentioned (Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Robertson, 2009). Additionally, other neoliberal aspects such privatizations can also be cited (see, Klees, 2008; Torres, 2011).

Being well aware of this, the Bank declared itself as the 'knowledge Bank' in 1996 (Molla, 2013). Apart from this rebranding, the Bank has been organizing a series of thematic workshops and conferences and also producing a handful of publications, in justification of its ideologies. Additionally, the Bank usually sends its team of experts to undertake a sector study before providing any advice and/or prescriptions. The ultimate objective of such a study is to legitimize the ideology of the Bank by making it evidence based (Molla, 2013).

6. World Bank Induced Reforms in Ethiopian HE

The impact of the World Bank in the Ethiopian higher education system has been loud and clear. Understandably, being one of the primary loan providers, the Bank has had a strong influence in the HE system of Ethiopia (Yizengaw, 2005; Molla, 2013). The footmarks of the World Bank are especially evident after the 1990's where it

started to give sufficient recognition for the role of higher education in fostering global competitiveness in knowledge based economy (Robertson, 2009). Woldegiyorgis (2014a, p.96) traces the first World Bank loan devoted to Ethiopian higher education to 1988, where some financial contributions were made under 'project 01'. Ever since then, various financial and expertise based contributions have been made to steer Ethiopian higher education in the right direction. The major World Bank induced changes can be classified in to six main categories: HE Expansion, governance structure, financing, quality, institutional efficiency and disciplinary emphasis

To begin with higher education expansion, Molla (2013, p.182) contends that the '*knowledge intensivedevelopment discourse*' of the World Bank is the major impetus behind the unprecedented rise of the number of public and private HEIs (from 6 and 3 in 2002/03 to 32 and 59 in 2014, respectively) in Ethiopia. He justifies the above assertion by citing a series of the World Banks' publications that embody the significance of knowledge in the 21st century: *Knowledge for Development* (1999), *Can AfricaClaim the 21st Century* (2000), *Constructing Knowledge Societies: NewChallenges for Tertiary Education* (2002), and *Accelerating Catch-up:Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2009).

Such discourse of the Bank is also clearly translated in to the growth and transformation plan of Ethiopia which tries to create a synergy between development and educational plans of the country (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development [MoFED], 2010).

Similarly, Woldegiyorgis (2014a, p.100), attributes the mushrooming of private higher education institution in the past two decades to the Banks neo liberal discourse of privatization. To be more precise, following the Banks suggestion to bring private providers on board, 59 private higher education institutions entered the scene in less than two decades time.

The second major reform in Ethiopian HE has to do with the introduction of the first ever proclamation, which laid the legal framework for the governance of the higher education sector. The proclamation was introduced in 2003, and revised in 2009 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE], 2003; 2009). The touch and feel of the Bank in most of the reforms described in the proclamation is clearly evident. More particularly, the sector review that the Bank undertook in Ethiopia in 2003 and its subsequent publication "*Higher Education Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision*." (WB, 2003) has been the major driving force behind the reforms embodied in the proclamation (Yizengaw, 2005; Molla, 2013; Woldegiyorgis, 2014a). To shed a light on that, it is essential to discuss two of the major changes the proclamation brought about: change in governance structure and mode of financing.To start with the change in the governance structure, two institutions, i.e., the Higher education strategic center (HSC) and the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) were established to act as buffer institutions between the Ministry of Education (the sole lawmaker and enforcer of that time) and higher education institutions. Particularly, while the former is concerned with setting strategic directions for the higher education sector, the latter is tasked with undertaking external institutional quality audit (MOE, 2013; Deuren, Kahsu, Ali, and Woldie, 2013). Consistent with neo liberal discourse of the Bank the move was from strong and direct state control to steering from the distance, at least on paper (Molla, 2013).

In regards to financing, the introduction of cost sharing in the form of graduate tax is a major step. Especially, in light of the rapid HE expansion the country is undertaking, the cost sharing scheme is essential to helping ease the financial burden from the state. Like the previous reforms, this reform can be attributed to the Bank and its HE rate of return discourse. Molla (2013) traces the roots of the reform to the Banks assignment of a financial expert named Professor Bruce Chapman, in 1999; to evaluate the plausibility of such a scheme in Ethiopia. Following the professor's approval, and the Banks recommendation, a variant of the Australian Graduate tax was introduced in 2003 (Chapman, 1999; Molla, 2013).

Another major reform which has its roots in the neoliberal discourse espoused by the Bank is the use of business sector management techniques for the sake of improving quality and institutional efficiency. First was business process reengineering (BPR) which was implemented in all public institutions including all HEIs. Following that, balanced score card (BSC) was implemented and most recently, all public higher education institutions have turned their attention to the Japanese quality management technique: KAIZEN (Garomssa, 2014).

Lastly, the current higher education policy of Ethiopia that prioritizes natural science and engineering fields over social science education can be attributed to the World Bank ideology. Following, a series of publications and consultation by the world Bank experts that asserted the importance of national innovation systems ('*Innovation systems'*, 2004; '*Science & Technology: building capacity for development'*, 2007; '*Science, Technology, and Innovation: Capacity Building for Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction'*, 2008), the Ethiopian government announced its plan to change the proportion of higher education students in favor of science and technology fields in

2008. Currently, all public universities in Ethiopia allocate 70% of their study places for science and engineering students (Deuren et al., 2013; Michael& Connell, 2014; Schermutzki&Hensbroek, n.d.)

7. The Problem with the Current WB Approach and why it is a Dangerously Parochial Path?

In this section, I argue that the World Bank's approach in inducing reform in loan recipient countries is firmly vertical (top-down) and that it denies national stakeholders sufficient spaces and recognitions to critically challenge the reform agendas. I also wish to show why it is a dangerously parochial approach.

7.1 The Firmly Top-down Approach of the WB

True, the World Bank is actively engaged in creating platforms (such as, conferences and thematic workshops) to debate on contemporary issues of practical importance, including constructs that reflect the ideologies of the Bank. True, the Bank involves national delegates while undertaking sector studies and/or developing policy prescriptions. However, in practice, such avenues merely serve the purpose of generating acceptance and hence, legitimizing the predefined ideas of the Bank. Put differently, the room provided for national actors in the whole reform process remains to be merely symbolic. As Molla (2013) argues:

> In Principle the thematic conferences and workshops aim at bringing various stakeholders together to debate on policy agenda and alternatives, and thereby to build consensus on key carefully articulated policy options and priorities. In practice, most often, the terms of reference of thematic conferences and commissioned sector reviews are set by the Bank, and there is little or no space to accommodate emerging, divergent views and perspectives.(*P.182)*

More often than not, the Bank has a predetermined idea of bringing about change and improvements in the aid-recipient countries and systematically combines its financial, expertise-based, social and symbolic capitals to good effect to shield its major role in the reform process (Molla, 2013).

Even in the case of conditionalities, where the ideological requirements of the Bank are pretty vivid, it is presented as though the conditions are coming from the loan recipient country. The Bank claims that

> We have indicated what we think is necessary but it is the country that has recognized what must be done and assured us that it will take the necessary steps. These are not our terms …. But the country's terms (Samoff&Caroll, 2004, p.17).

Torres (2009), as cited in Molla (2013), states that the Bank is involved every step of the way, including problem construction, and subsequently, proposing a viable solution to address it. The Bank further shows interest to financially support the reform, should the country show sufficient willingness to reform. In this, unbalanced power relation the autonomy of the borrowing country in terms of modifying and/or replacing the proposed reform agenda with another viable alternative is clearly limited (Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Heyneman, 2012).

Moreover, the lack of sufficient room for national actors and their bottom up ideas is also clearly reflected in the homogeneity of the reform ideas implemented across a wide range of diverse country contexts. In that, despite the contextual differences of the loan recipient countries, the proposed solutions of the Bank commonly embody some aspects of neoliberalism, such as deregulation and marketisation (Molla, 2013; Anwaruddin, 2014).

To give a practical example in the context of Ethiopia, I wish to go back the World Bank sector study publication '*Higher Education Development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the Vision*' (WB, 2003) which arguably has had the most profound impact in Ethiopian higher education reforms (see the previous section). As often is the case, the Bank organized a team of national delegates trying to legitimize its reform agenda. However, the composition of the Ethiopian delegates as well their qualification has come under sharp critics from the country's most acclaimed scholars (Gelaye, 2004; Tefera, n.d.). Reflecting on that, one of the most prominent Ethiopian scholars, Prof. Damtewtefera, states:

> It is simply ironic--and even self defeating--on the part of the nation and the government to commit, to its credit, massive resources for the development of higher education in the country and yet isolate and disengage its high-level experts at home in shaping the development of the nation's higher education. (Para.9)

Prof. Damtew tefera further discusses the weak composition of the Ethiopian team by pointing out the exclusion of experts from Addis Ababa University, arguably the most reputable university in the country (Schermutzki & Hensbroek, n.d.)**.** Clearly, this shows the reluctance on the part of the Bank on valuing the potential contribution of the country's national actors, not only in the identification of the problem phase but also in terms of crafting context specific solution to address the problem.

7.2 The Perils of the Current Approach

The consequences of denying spaces and sufficient recognition for the ideas and suggestion of the key national actors in the whole reform process have had and will have a far reaching effect in the Ethiopian HE landscape. In line with that, three major adverse consequences, i.e., failure to account for contextual realities, misguided polices (at times) and lack of ownership and sustainability, will be discussed.

7.2.1 Solution-context Misfit

The World Bank as an international policy transfer and diffusion agent has been spreading best practices that worked in the western society to developing countries. However, there is a significant contextual difference between the two parts of the globe (Anwaruddin, 2014). In this vein, it can be argued that what worked in the western context might not fit with the reality of aid-recipient countries or may at least require some level of customization (Heyneman, 2012)In light of this, the Banks generic solution can be criticized (Molla, 2013). For instance, Gelaye (2004) accuses the Bank of infusing 'euro-centric' ideologies that does not resonate with the context of the country. He contends

> I have never understood the rationale for investing nearly 20 percent of the GDP on education system that trains selected few in the so-called "Modern Education" emphasizing to a large extent western philosophy of education developed for the culture, technology unrelated to Ethiopia's culture, level of development, value systems and aspiration of the majority of the population para.1.

In a similar fashion, Molla (2013) questions, whether, the WB induced expansion of higher education in Ethiopia, (where 40% of the adult population is illiterate) is suited to the country's reality.

Hence, one of the first consequences of not creating sufficient spaces for the national experts and acknowledging their opinion is, enforcing ' solutions' that do not fit with the countries context.

7.2.2 When the Bank Fails (Misguided Polices)

Secondly, Notwithstanding, all the positive contributions (financial or otherwise) the Bank made to steer the Ethiopian HE system in the right direction; at times, there have been reform discourses of the Bank that raised a lot of controversy. The rate of return logic of the World Bank and its adverse impact on the HE sector of borrowing countries in general and Ethiopia in particular, is a case in point (Samoff&Caroll, 2004; Collins & Rhoads, 2008; Robertson, 2009). For instance in Ethiopia, after the first higher education institution was established in 1950, the higher education system simply stagnated, until the world Bank changed its stand on HE in mid 1990s (Robertson, 2009).

Similarly, the other neoliberal aspects of the Banks suggestion such as the introduction of tuition fees and privatization have been criticized for exacerbating underrepresentation, dwindling quality, institutional inefficiency and the mushrooming of diploma mills in borrowing countries (Kless, 2008).

To recap, the solid expertise of the Bank and its contribution to a country like Ethiopia which has capacity deficit at all levels is indisputable (Yizengaw, 2005); however, as experience shows, the Banks reform ideas are not failure-proof. It is hence, of paramount importance to mobilize key national experts, and embody their critical reflections in the reform process to enhance the likelihood of developing an effective solution.

7.2.3 Lack of Ownership and Sustainability

Lastly, perhaps the most apparent but arguably most consequential risk of lack of real involvement of stakeholders is, lack of ownership of the change and ultimately its institutionalization. To shed a light on lack of ownership in Ethiopian HE, it is essential to analyze how the WB induced reforms in the HE proclamation of the country did fare in practice. In that, although, the proclamation (following the prescription of the Bank in 2003) included issues such as institutional autonomy, formula based funding, in practice, none of them got effectively implemented. For instance, as the work of Several Ethiopian researchers and practitioner testify (Abebe, 2012; Woldegiyorgis, 2014b; Garomssa, 2014), there is still a lack of institutional autonomy, in fact, the HE system of Ethiopia still remains to be state controlled. To be more precise, Contrary to the proclamation, several activities, including but not limited to, determining the goal and structure of institutions, assigning instructors and student's deciding curriculum and teaching methodologies are performed by the Ministry (Garomssa, 2014). Similarly, although the ideals of funding formula has been incorporated in the 2003 proclamation, it has not been effectively implemented as of yet.

To recap, the failure to actively engage local stakeholders; value and consider their opinions and suggestions has resulted in the acceptance of the reform ideas of the Bank merely for financial reasons, without believing, even at times, understanding what the reform entails. This has led to lack of ownership, manifested in the mismatch between the educational documents of the country and their practical implementation.

8. The Way Forward

As discussed in section-4, the involvement of the WB in Ethiopian higher education is justified at least in the short run. Apart from the much needed financial contribution, the experience and the solid knowledge base of the Bank are the major rationale for justifying its involvement. The Banks expertise is especially important considering the capacity deficit Ethiopia is facing at various levels and the major road blocks (such as, lack of conducive enabling environment; existence of corruption, and political partisanship) hampering the country's ability to capitalize on the knowledge of its national experts.

However, section-7 identified one major problem, with multifold consequences, in relation to the current approach followed by the Bank: Lack of real bottom up participation. Moreover, by giving practical examples(such as, the stagnation of the HE system from 1960's through to 1990's, and lack of ownership of the reforms), the major adverse consequences of the current firmly top-down approach (with symbolic bottom-up involvement) were discussed.

In light of this, I argue that it is essential to create real spaces (as opposed to the current, merely symbolic participation spaces used to legitimize the neoliberal discourse of the Bank) and most importantly recognitions for national experts' ideas and suggestions. This could either entail, allowing national experts to critically challenge, the reform ideas presented by the Bank in a constructive way and/or to present their own innovative ideas to help advance the higher education system of the country.

It is only through such a, two-way, critically discursive engagement that solutions consistent with the context of the country could be envisaged, implemented and subsequently, institutionalized.

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