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Globalization, the Bologna Process and African Universities: Limits and Contradictions of Market-oriented Higher Education Reforms

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Abstract

One of the greatest challenges posed by neo-liberal capitalist globalization is competitiveness. The birth of the Bologna Process in 1999 and the launching of the Erasmus Mundus in 2004 were serious attempts by Europe to make its higher education one of the most competitive systems in the world. Both initiatives were aimed at enhancing the compatibility and comparability of European higher education among its members as well as its attractiveness to other regions of the world. The implementation of the Bologna Process has, however, exposed the limits and contradictions of market-oriented higher education reforms. The experience of Europe has shown that neo-liberal higher education reforms under globalization can be manipulated as dictated by the exigencies of national interests. Europe has declared higher education a public good to be made equally accessible to all and to remain a public responsibility. This paper contends that Africa has a lot to learn from the implementation of the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the paper raises policy concerns about the implications of the implementation of the Erasmus Mundus so far from 2004 to 2008, as some evidence suggests that the students benefiting from the Erasmus Mundus programme may end up being part of the brain drain rather than brain gain for Africa. This would therefore hinder rather than promote African development, which the programme ostensibly aims at achieving. Consequently, the paper recommends that policy-makers in Africa should be weary of attempts to use the Bologna Process and the Erasmus Mundus programme as a subtle and new launching pad promoting the brain drain in Africa.

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The paper also calls on Africa political leaders to uphold the Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa (2004), a policy that would greatly help to check the excesses of neo-liberal higher education reforms under globalization.

Résumé

Un des plus grands défis posés par la mondialisation néolibérale capitaliste est la compétitivité. La naissance du processus de Bologne en 1999 et le lancement du programme Erasmus Mundus en 2004 ont été de sérieuses tentatives par l'Europe de faire de l'enseignement supérieur l'un des systèmes les plus compétitifs au monde. Ces deux initiatives visent à renforcer la compatibilité et la comparabilité de l'enseignement supérieur européen parmi ses membres, ainsi que son attrait pour les autres régions du monde. La mise en œuvre du processus de Bologne a toutefois exposé les limites et les contradictions des réformes de l'enseignement supérieur axées sur le marché. L'expérience de l'Europe a montré que les réformes néolibérales de l'enseignement supérieur en vertu de la mondialisation peuvent être manipulées comme dicté par les exigences des intérêts nationaux. L'Europe a déclaré l'enseignement supérieur comme un bien public devant être équitablement accessible à tous et relever de la responsabilité publique. Cet article soutient que l'Afrique a beaucoup à apprendre de la mise en œuvre du processus de Bologne. Par ailleurs, l'article soulève des préoccupations politiques au sujet des implications à ce jour de la mise en œuvre du programme Erasmus Mundus de 2004 à 2008, comme certains éléments probants semblent indiquer que les étudiants bénéficiant de ce programme peuvent à terme faire partie de la fuite des cerveaux africains plutôt que de servir l'Afrique. Cela donc entraverait, plutôt que de promouvoir, le développement de l'Afrique, ce qui est apparemment l'objectif que le programme vise à atteindre. Par conséquent, cet article recommande que les décideurs politiques de l'Afrique doivent se lasser des tentatives d'utilisation du processus de Bologne et du programme Erasmus Mundus qui sont un nouveau tremplin subtile promouvant la fuite des cerveaux africains. Il appelle aussi les dirigeants politiques de l'Afrique à faire respecter la Déclaration d'Accra sur l'AGCS et l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique (2004), une politique qui permettrait grandement de contrôler les excès des réformes néolibérales de l'enseignement supérieur en vertu de la mondialisation.

Introduction

Since the birth of modern universities in Europe and North America, Africa has remained essentially a consumer rather than a creator of knowledge. Universities in Africa have hardly been at the forefront of any reforms in the knowledge production process, as much of the changes taking place in them have trailed behind those in Europe and North America. One good illustrative case is globalization and its concomitant market-led reforms in higher education, which

has had its main driving impetus and motive from Europe and North America. And, as usual, developments in African higher education have remained essentially reactive than proactive. With particular respect to Europe, the Bologna Process and globalization constitute one of such driving forces impacting currently on African higher education.

Knowledge-based competition towards the end of the twentieth century has come to world focus with increasing globalization. This was engendered by the realization of the contributions of higher education to the productivity, competitiveness and economic growth of nations (Bloom, Canning & Chan 2006a). From the '*Magna Charta Universitatum*' in 1988, through the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), *Sorbonne Declaration* in 1998, and to the birth of the *Bologna Process* in 1999, and the launching of the *Erasmus Mundus* in 2004, Europe has for the past two decades been taking measures to create the most competitive higher education area globally in a bid to maximize the opportunities of globalization and minimize its challenges.

The 19 June 1999 Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education (otherwise known as *the Bologna Declaration* and more commonly called *the Bologna Process*) was primarily aimed at establishing an European area of higher education by the year 2010, as a key way to promoting citizen mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development (see Bologna Declaration 1999). It was also driven by the need to achieve greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education within the European area. And more importantly, it was aimed at increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education by promoting its higher education worldwide (Bologna Declaration 1999).

But in spite of the neo-liberal orientation of the Bologna Process, the 2001 Prague meeting of the European Ministers of Education declared higher education a **public good,** which should remain a **public responsibility**. This 'social dimension' of the Bologna Process (i.e., conception of higher education as a public good in this era of neo-liberal globalization) appears to us to expose the limits, contradictions and hypocrisy that usually underpin neo-liberal capitalist globalization, especially in their application to African countries. In particular, for example, the acceptance of the social dimension of higher education runs counter to the logic of listing of higher education as a tradable commodity under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Yet the listing of higher education as a tradable commodity is a brainchild of the West.

The implementation of the Bologna Process so far has raised a major challenge to African universities, particularly with respect to how Africa will relate with an established European higher education area after 2010. This challenge

is a critical policy issue, which our article seeks to examine through the following questions. First, what were the measures already taken at the African-wide level before the Bologna Declaration, that are consistent with the Bologna Process and how successful were such measures? Secondly, what are the measures that Africa is adopting at the continental-wide level to respond to the challenges of the Bologna Process? And thirdly, what are the lessons that African governments and universities need to learn from the Bologna Process?

In responding to these questions, the rest of this paper is divided into five sections. The first discusses the neo-liberal roots of globalization while the second examines the emergence of the Bologna Process. The third section discusses among others measures taken at the African-wide level to align its universities to the Bologna Process, while the fourth section focuses on an empirical analysis and discussion on Africa's participation in the Erasmus Mundus programme. This section also discusses the lessons that African universities can learn from the European experience under the Bologna Process. And finally, the last section presents our conclusion and recommendations.

The Neo-liberal Roots of Globalization

The term globalization came into common usage in the early 1990s, following the decline of Marxism, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kurth 2001). As Kurth rightly observes, the combination of these three factors meant the absence of 'any formidable ideological and political competitor to liberal democracy and the free market'. The end of the Socialist or Second World, he further said, meant that the Capitalist or First World could expand across the entire globe, hence 'globalization'. And also in the 1990s, he pointed out, 'new information technologies reached the critical mass where they became an entire information economy'.

Globalization refers to 'the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the modern world through increased flows of goods, services, capital, people and information. The process is driven by technological advances and reductions in the costs of international transactions, which spread technology and ideas, raise the share of trade in the world production and increase the mobility of capital' (DfID 2000). Hence, according to Stiglitz (2003), globalization is 'the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world, which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders'.

Globalization has come to be closely associated with neo-liberal capitalism, which is characterized *inter alia* by (a) the rule by the market; (b) privatization of state industries and services; (c) trade and agricultural liberalization; (d) cutting

public expenditure for social services as well as their marketization and elimination of the concept of the public good, (e) deregulation, including the labour market as well as 'flexibilization' of the wage relations; and (f) educational reforms geared to job training rather than to citizenship-building (Martinez and Garcia 2000; Santos 2001). Neo-liberalism is traceable to what Williamson (1990) termed the 'Washington Consensus', a phrase he first coined to refer to a summary of the lowest common denominator of policy advice addressed by the Washington-based institutions (including the World Bank) to Latin American countries as of 1989. But as Williamson later came to observe, the phrase *Washington Consensus* has come to mean neo-liberal or market-fundamentalist policies (Williamson 2000). The subsequent championing of the Washington Consensus by the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organizations (WTO) has ushered in a new era of capitalist globalization where educational services are being redefined as marketable commodities.

Globalization: A Driving Force of the Bologna Process

The Early Impetus and 'Basements' of the Bologna Process

One of the greatest challenges posed by capitalist globalization is competitiveness. In a highly competitive global market, the threat to organizational and national survival is real and daunting. This point was fully appreciated in 1988 in the Magna Charta Universitatum (Magna Charta Observatory 1988) and in 1998 in the Sorbonne Declaration in Paris (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998). Consequently, in June 1999, a more transformatory step was taken when 29 European Ministers of Education met in Bologna (Italy) and signed 'The Bologna Declaration' whose major purpose was the creation of European Higher Education Area by the year 2010. The Declaration has come to be widely known as a 'Process' given the evolutionary importance attached to its implementation.

One of the pillars of the Bologna Process is the Erasmus Mundus programme. This is 'a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education promoting the European Union as a center of excellence in learning around the world' (EUROPA 2007a). It also encourages the mobility of students and scholars from Third World countries into Europe and fosters structured cooperation with Third World countries' higher education institutions (Director General 2007).

Main Features of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

The ECTS, a major outcome of the Bologna process, is a tool for promoting comparability, harmonization and compatibility of European higher education systems. The ultimate goal of the ECTS is to promote the transferability and mobility of staff and students among European countries that are signatories to

the Bologna Process, and between European countries and other countries classified as a *Third Country* in the Bologna Process. Essentially, the 'ECTS is a credit system based on a definition of what constitutes a full-time academic course load, reflecting the quality of work each course requires of a student in relation to the total quality of work required to complete a full year of academic study at a particular institution. Credits are assigned to all academic work (lectures, laboratory work, seminars, examinations, private study and theses) that comprises an integral part of the program of study' (Clark 2005; WES Staff Members 1999). In specific terms, the ECTS requires that (a) each course is assigned a certain number of credits, with one credit representing 25–30 student study hours; (b) 60 credits represent the workload of one year of full-time study; (c) 30 credits are given for a semester and 20 credits for a trimester; (d) 60 credits stand for an average annual workload of around 1,500 hours, which corresponds to around 25 student work hours per credit or 1,800 hours for 30 student work hours per credit; (e) a bachelor's degree consists of 180 to 240 credits, while a master's degree has additional 60 or 120 credits (for one or two years of work) for a total of 300 credits (Clark 2005; WES Staff Members 1999). The doctorate degree is essentially defined as a research degree and there is no ECTS range of credit specified for it.

The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process: Higher Education as a Public Good

Of the four meetings of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education held in the cities of Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007), all of which now shaped the Process, it is the Prague meeting that is of special interest to us here. It was at the Prague meeting that the ministers adopted 'the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility**'** (Prague Communiqué 2001). The ministers' adoption is attributed to protests from academics and students, notably in France. It is important to note that the inclusion of a 'social dimension' marked a turning point in the neo-liberal character of the Bologna Process.

The controversial question of whether higher education should be considered a public or private good has been a big issue over the years. Singh (2001) argued that higher education should be a public good. According to him, higher education has 'multi-purpose' functions and its responsiveness to the economy is only one aspect of a broader conception of responsiveness. The public good function is no less important, as higher education should be socially responsive and be linked to an emancipatory and broad-based social and political agenda (Singh 2001). Consequently, the acceptance and inclusion of this social dimension in the Bologna Process was a turning point, since it was origi-

nally driven by the forces of new liberal capitalist globalization. The next section examines Africa's continental efforts at harmonizing its higher education systems.

Africa's Continental Efforts at Harmonization of its Higher Education

As we pointed out earlier, the implementation of the Bologna Process so far raises a major challenge to African universities, particularly with respect to how Africa will relate to an established European higher education area after 2010. This section therefore identifies and discusses the measures already taken at the African-wide level before and after the Bologna Declaration, as well as the measures currently being adopted to respond to the challenges of the Bologna Process.

The Arusha Convention (1981): Africa's Pre-Bologna Process Efforts at Harmonization of its Higher Education

Europe, writes Mohamedbhai (2007a), is not the first region to have felt the need for harmonization of its higher education system in order to encourage mobility of students and staff. Such harmonization, Mohamedbhai pointed out, has been discussed in Africa for decades. However, Europe is the first region to have done something seriously about it and has achieved remarkable results. Africa's serious efforts at harmonization of its higher education started with the adoption of the *Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Africa* in Arusha, Tanzania on 5 December 1981. Known as the 'Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States', the *Arusha Convention* (as it is popularly known) is Africa's foundation stone for the harmonization of its higher education, 'with a view to promoting regional cooperation through the academic mobility of lecturers and students' (Commonwealth of Learning 2008). The Convention has three implementation layers. The first is at the national level through national commissions for recognition of studies and degrees. The second is at the sub-regional level through such bodies like the Africa and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES), the SADC etc. And the third is at the regional level through the Regional Committee, which has had many ordinary sessions. But how far has Africa gone in achieving the provisions of the Arusha Convention?

As important as this Convention is, after well over a decade when it was adopted, only 19 African countries had signed it (Parsuramen 2003) with the number increasing marginally to 20 in May 2007 out of 53 African countries (Mohamedbhai 2007b). The slow process of ratification appears understandable as the French version of the document only came after the 2003 amendment.

It does appear that historically the major driving force of the Arusha Convention were universities from the Anglophone countries, which incidentally have had a long history of operating the three-circle system (namely Licence, Master's and Doctorate), a structure that is already consistent with the Bologna Process (Mohamedbhai 2007a).

Arusha Convention 2003 and 2006 Amendments: Africa's Harmonization Efforts Towards the Bologna Process

The efforts to amend the Arusha Convention (1981) had two major external influences that came before the Bologna Process. The first is the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) (see Working Group 2006; see also Lisbon Recognition Convention 1997). The second was the World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) (1998), whose declaration on the recognition of qualifications as well as on the 'accreditation and quality assurance for the purpose of widening access to quality higher education in the context of globalization' were notable (UNESCO Nariobi Communiqué 2006).

During the eighth biennial Regional Committee meeting in 2003, some amendments were approved and the decision was taken to translate the document into French and forward both the English and French versions to the African Higher Education Ministerial Meeting for approval (Mohamedbhai 2007b). The 2003 proposed amendments took into account of the experience of European countries under the Lisbon Convention. However, the Bologna Declaration greatly influenced the direction of the 2006 amendment of the Arusha Convention. The 2006 amendments focused on a number of issues including a reflection on external developments like the Bologna Process (Mohamedbhai 2007b).

It is noteworthy to observe that the ground for a smooth amendment was prepared at an *International Conference on Accreditation, Quality Assurance and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Africa* held in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2006 under the auspices of UNECSO. One of the recommendations of the conference under the category of what it called *Framework for Priority Action* was that based on the strength of the merit of the Bologna Process, the model should be adopted by the African region, as Africa would benefit from the adoption of the model especially in fostering regional collaboration in the three critical areas of accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications (UNESCO Nariobi Communiqué 2006). All these provided the background for the long awaited role of the African Union (AU) on the question of the harmonization of higher education in Africa.

The African Union, Arusha Convention and the Bologna Process

If the Arusha Convention is Africa's bridge for effective and fruitful collaboration with the rest of the world, particularly the European Higher Education Area after 2010, then its slow ratification process constitutes a major obstacle. At the meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Khartoum in January 2006, education was recognized as a critical factor in achieving the mission of the AU. Consequently, the Heads of State and Government declared 2006–2015 as the Second Decade of Education for Africa and adopted a Plan of Action for achieving its goals. According to Njenge (2007), higher education and the revitalization of African universities are priorities in the Plan of Action.

One concrete measure by the AU to implement its Plan of Action was the adoption of a Higher Education Programme (HEP) Harmonization Strategy for Africa. In furtherance of this, the AU signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Association of African Universities (AAU) to serve as a lead implementing agency on its behalf. Consequently, the AU Commission in association with the AAU 'embarked on a process of promoting quality assurance and developing a framework for harmonizing Higher Education Programme in Africa'. And thereafter, the AU 'appointed Neil Butcher as a consultant to assist in the development of a framework for the Harmonization of higher education programmes, and development of a quality Rating Mechanism for African Higher Education (Njenge 2007). The AU's initiative marked the beginning of continental-wide coordinated efforts on the harmonization of African higher education necessary for effective and fruitful relations with the envisaged European Higher Education Area after 2010.

The AU's Commission's draft version of the harmonization strategy for Africa is based on four key principles (Butcher 2007a). These are: (a) ensuring that harmonization processes focus specifically on solving African problems, but drawing appropriately from international experiences; (b) building explicitly on work being done already by key agencies such as the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UNESCO, CAMES, and many others; (c) using RECs as the key vehicles to coordinate harmonization efforts, rather than assuming central coordination (but ensuring that the AU Commission and AAU play a key role in aligning these regional processes); and (d) placing the initial focus strongly on building national capacity to set up and run national quality accreditation and assurance agencies and ensuring that these agencies are able to share information about higher education programmes in a transparent and common fashion. The purpose of the harmonization is to 'establish harmonized higher education systems across Africa, while strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to meet the tertiary education needs of African countries' (African Union 2008; Butcher 2007b).

The combined role of UNESCO and the AU in the harmonization process has generated the much-needed momentum at the sub-regional levels towards bridging the existing gaps between the Anglophone and Francophone countries. One notable action at the sub-regional level is the Licence/Master/Doctorate (LMD) Reform plan being carried out by the Council of Ministers of the Francophone West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEAMOA). The LMD Reform plans to facilitate comparability of academic programmes and mutual recognition of degrees between the Francophone and Anglophone countries beyond. It also aims at establishing 'a semester system, a credit transfer system, a diploma supplement providing information on a learner's academic records, national quality assurance mechanisms, and a regional monitoring system to ensure effectiveness and coherence in the process of transition to the new degree structure' (UNESCO Bamako Cluster Office 2008).

Challenges of the AU-driven Harmonization Process

This article adopts the view that harmonization of African higher education is desirable and long overdue. The involvement of the AU Commission in the harmonization processes has greatly boosted efforts at implementing the Arusha Convention by giving it a stronger political voice on a wider continental platform. This involvement has generated a number of positive developments. One example is the AU Higher Education Programme (HEP) Harmonization Strategy Discussion List, which has greatly widened the network of discussion activities towards the harmonization exercise. Some of the key issues raised by discussants relate to whether the adoption of a supranational approach on the harmonization exercise was the right strategy as against the adoption of a national (bottom-up) strategy. Discussants appear resolved to move ahead through the blending of both strategies in achieving the desired results.

However, there are a plethora of challenges along the way of achieving this laudable goal. The low number of signatories (fewer than half of Africa's 53 countries) to the Arusha Convention is a major challenge that needs to be addressed if the harmonization process is to succeed in the near future. Secondly, the absence of National Commission for Higher Education in many African countries is another serious obstacle. In the absence of strong regulatory agency, it would be very difficult for African countries to regulate private higher and cross-border education providers in this era of globalization. It is important to note that accreditation and quality assurance are at the heart of the Bologna Process.

Analysis and Discussion

The preceding historical and descriptive review demonstrates without doubt that Africa is making efforts to harmonize its higher education area as a necessary precondition for collaborating with Europe under the Bologna Process. The review, however, raises fundamental questions as to the type of collaboration that is in the best interest of Africa, a matter that touches on the way Africa should run its higher education system in this era of globalization. The second issue that needs to be addressed is whether African universities should operate strictly under the forces and rules of neo-liberal capitalist globalization or whether the forces of the market should be moderated by declaring higher education as a public good following Europe's example under the Bologna Process. The discussion uses Africa's participation in the Erasmus Mundus as an empirical point of departure.

Africa as a Third-Country in the Bologna Process

One of the driving motives of the Bologna Process is to increase the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The launching of the Erasmus Mundus programme in 2004 was one of the measures adopted towards achieving this primary objective. The countries that are in relationship with Europe under the Erasmus Mundus are classified as Third-Countries, and Africa has been part of this programme since it commenced. But how has Africa faired under this programme? Will the programme ultimately benefit Africa? This section examines how African countries have fared in the Erasmus Mundus Third-Country programme with respect to both students and academics. Given space constraints, we shall present data for the year 2004–05 in Tables 1 and 2, and for 2006–07 (in the Appendixes) for illustrative purposes. In Table 3, the overall data for the four academic years (2004–08) are summarized.

Table 1: Erasmus Mundus Third-Country students per country, [a] 2004–05 Academic year

S/NO	CountryNo students		S/NO	Country	No students
1	CHINA	12	27	JORDAN	2
2	BRAZIL	11	28	MOROCCO	2
3	RUSSIA	9	29	NEPAL	2
4	INDONESIA	9	30	NIGERIA	2
5	ARGENTINA	5	31	PERU	2
6	INDIA	5	32	PHILIPPINES	2
7	PAKISTAN	5	33	TURKEY [b]	2
8	MEXICO	4	34	BURKINA FASO	1
9	UKRAINE	4	35	CAMEROON	1
10	VENEZUELA	4	36	CHAD	1
11	BANGLADESH	3	37	CHILE	1
12	BELARUS	3	38	COTE D'IVOIRE	1
13	ETHIOPIA	3	39	ECUADOR	1
14	KENYA	3	40	IRAN	1
15	SOUTH KOREA	3	41	LIBYA	1

Table 1: Erasmus Mundus Third-Country students per country,[a] 2004–05 Academic year (Contd)

S/NO	CountryNo students		S/NO	Country	No students
16	USA	3	42	NAMIBIA	1
17	VIETNAM	3	43	NICARAGUA	1
18	ALBANIA	2	44	SENEGAL	1
19	ALGERIA	2	45	SERBIA MONTENEGRO	1
20	AUSTRALIA	2	46	SINGAPORE	1
21	CANADA	2	47	SOUTH AFRICA	1
22	COLOMBIA	2	48	TAJIKISTAN	1
23	GEORGIA	2	49	TANZANIA	1
24	GHANA	2	50	THAILAND	1
25	ISRAEL	2	51	UNITED ARAB EMIRAT	1
26	JAPAN	2	52	ZAMBIA	1
				Total	**140**

a Figures per country are subject to change owing to withdrawal and possible replacements from reserve lists.

b Turkish students were considered eligible under the first round but not under the following rounds leading to Turkey obtaining official status as a candidate country.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/nationality.pdf.

Table 1 shows that in the 2004–05 academic year, 21 African students from four African countries (Algeria, Ghana, Senegal and South Africa) benefited from the programme out of a total global list of 140 students. In the same year, Table 2 shows that four scholars benefited from the same four countries out of global list of 28 scholars. The selection in 2004–05 academic year represents 15 per cent of students and 14 per cent of scholars of the total applicants to the programme that year (see also EUROPA 2007c).

Table 2: Erasmus Mundus Third-Country scholars per country, 2004–05 academic year

1	BRAZIL	6	9	COLOMBIA	1
2	CHINA	3	10	GEORGIA	1
3	RUSSIA	3	11	GHANA	1
4	INDIA	2	12	ISRAEL	1
5	UKRAINE	2	13	KOREA	1
6	USA	2	14	SENEGAL	1
7	ALGERIA	1	15	SOUTH AFRICA	1
8	CANADA	1	16	VIETNAM	1
				Total	**28**

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/nationality.pdf

The Overall Picture (2004–08)

From the 2004–05 to the 2007–08 academic years, a total number of 541 African students and 60 scholars have participated in the Erasmus Mundus mobility programmes (EUROPA 2007c, but figures were calculated by us from various Erasmus Mundus tables for each academic year). In the 2005–06 academic year, 102 African students and 14 scholars from 26 African countries (out of a global list of 808 students and 133 scholars) were selected in the programme. These represent 13 per cent and 11 per cent respectively of the total number of those selected under the programme. Also in the 2005–06 academic year, Asian countries were offered additional 353 spaces under what

Table 3: Africa's participation as a Third-Country under the Erasmus Mundus Programme (2004–08)

Academic year	No. of students selected & % in Relation to global list	Global list of students selected	No. of scholars selected & % in relation to global list	Global list of scholars selected	No. of African countries that participate
2004–05	21 (15%)	140	4 (14%)	28	4
2005–06	102 (13%)	808	14 (11%)	133	26
2006–07	135 (18%)	741 (Excluding Asian Window category)	20 (9%)	231	25
2007–08	283 (17%) (including ACP Window category)	1,710	22 (8%)	273	

Source: Calculated by the authors from Erasmus Mundus data for the 2004–05 to 2007–08 academic years.

was called the 'Asian Window' with funds specifically earmarked for targeted Asian countries. This means, therefore, that the percentage of Africans that benefited was considerably reduced.

With respect to the 2006–07 academic year, 135 students and 20 scholars from 25 African countries participated from a global list of 741 students and 231 scholars. This represents 18 per cent and 9 per cent respectively of the total list of participants. However, from the additional Asian Window category, 636 students were offered spaces in the 2006–07 academic year, which means that the African figure pales into insignificance in relation to the global figure.

Lastly, during the 2007–08 academic year, a total number of 162 African students and 22 scholars from 35 African countries participated in the programme. Again, under what is called the ACP Window student participation, 121 African students were additionally selected under the programme, thus bringing the total number of African students for that year to 283. But in relation to the global list, Africa's figure of 283 represents only 17 per cent of the total global figure of 1,710 students, which is a marginal decrease from the 2006–07 academic year.

The Implications of Africa's Participation

Table 3 reveals that students and academic staff from African countries are increasingly participating in the Erasmus Mundus programme. The participating rate may convey different meanings to different people depending on whether one is for or against this cooperative programme. For example, proponents of an effective collaboration between Africa and Europe under the Bologna Process may contend that the rate is low in relation to other regions like Asia, North America and Latin America whose students and scholars are currently dominating in the programmes.

However, critics of the Bologna Process may argue that the Erasmus Mundus programme has imperialistic undertones since it is promoting the profile, visibility and accessibility of the European system of higher education globally. Furthermore, it could be seen as a subtle process of recolonization of some developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as a brain drain pipeline. The concerns of critics may be heightened given the fact that (a) the English language is the imperial tongue that dominates the academic industry (Altbach 2007); (b) that the colonial experience of Africa is Europe-based; (c) there is continued domination of financial globalization, being informed by the colonial linkages (Mauro and Ostry 2007), and lastly (d) the drive by the WTO to marketize higher education knowledge.

More importantly, critics may argue that the students benefiting from the programme would end up being part of the brain drain rather than brain gain for Africa, thereby hindering rather than promoting development in Africa. Some

available evidence seems to support these fears. For example, an ongoing survey of African students benefiting from the Erasmus Mundus programme in Sweden revealed that about 98 per cent of the 162 students already surveyed expressed the desire to remain in Europe for more than three years, after completing their studies (Olutayo, work in progress). This preliminary finding raises the fears that many of beneficiaries may be using the opportunities offered by the programme as a launch pad to realize their ultimate desire to migrate to different parts of Europe and North America. This is because some of the respondents claimed that being a cleaner in Europe and North America is better than occupying a top position in Africa. In actual fact, 62 per cent of the respondents were already engaged in one job or the other in Africa, having graduated almost a decade ago. This group considers living abroad as a 'greener pasture', where there is a better standard of living than in Africa. These preliminary findings raise the issue of how the Erasmus Mundus programme would be of ultimate benefit to Africa if the majority of those already participating desire to remain in Europe and not return to Africa. Regardless of these fears, the need to harmonize higher education in Africa in terms of the Bologna Process cannot be over-emphasized. The next section therefore examines the strength and challenges of the ongoing AU-driven harmonization process.

The Bologna Process: Some Lessons for Africa

Efforts to harmonize African universities along the lines of the Bologna Process raises the crucial question as to the ideological content and direction underpinning the entire reform process. The implementation of the Bologna Process by Europe has exploded the myth that commercialization of higher education is a necessity under neo-liberal capitalist globalization. The declaration of higher education as a public good under the Bologna Process is one of the boldest attempts so far to expose the limits and contradictions of market-led higher education reforms, especially as propagated by the World Bank and IMF in Africa. As Teferra (2005) rightly observed, 'at a time when globalization and its values are running amok, such recognitions from one major global player, as powerful as Europe, is especially important to enhance the suppressed voices of other marginalized forces crying for similar cause'. Yet it is ironic that he notes that the very countries that were imposing the policy of cutting higher education funding to public institutions and cost-sharing measures as well as promoting private institutions in developing countries are themselves providing free higher education to their citizens (Teferra 2005). This raises the need for African leaders to uphold the *Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa* (2004), as this would greatly help to check the excesses of globalization (Altbach 2001), as

well as restore the fast-collapsing common good in higher education (Altbach 2002). But more importantly, the implementation of the Bologna Process holds positive lessons for Africa towards moderating the excesses of market-led reforms in its higher education.

The conception of higher education by Europe as a public good in this era of neo-liberal capitalist globalization offers the first fundamental lesson for Africa. This is that the liberalization and privatization of higher education does not mean that African governments should abdicate their responsibilities in the funding and regulation of higher education (see Obasi 2007a & b for this and other lessons). As the European Council of Ministers emphasized at its Berlin meeting, the need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of higher education, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and at continental level.

The second lesson is that globalization does not and should not take away the sovereign rights of African governments to check and regulate (for example) rogue and highly commercialized but low-quality cross-border higher education providers in the continent. Globalization does not imply that African countries should have an unregulated, borderless higher education system, which many commercial international higher education companies would want through the WTO/GATS regime.

The third lesson is that African governments should not erode the institutional autonomy of universities in the name of globalization or public sector reforms. At the Berlin meeting, for example, the European ministers committed 'themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level' and stressed 'the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance'. They equally stressed 'that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality assurance framework'.

The fourth lesson is that African policy-makers should be critical of ideas that tend to underplay and undermine the importance of research in national development. They should reject ideas that urge African governments to concentrate mainly on the production of middle technical and vocational manpower because, according to the proponents of these ideas, higher education is a luxury that is both expensive and irrelevant to the practical needs of African societies. As Bloom, Canning and Chan (2006b) rightly observe, the World Bank's lack of emphasis on tertiary education in Africa from 1995 to 1999 resulted in the absence of higher education from the Poverty Reduction Strategies in all but

a few African countries. As they rightly said also, the World Bank reduced its funding from 17 per cent (1985 to 1989) to just 7 per cent from 1995 to 1999. Africa therefore needs higher education as much as it needs technical and vocational tertiary education. As the European Council of Ministers pointed out at the Berlin meeting, research is an important element of higher education, as it constitutes a strong pillar of the knowledge-based society.

The fifth lesson is that the offering of financial assistance to needy students through repayable loans is not antithetical to the neo-liberal capitalist globalization principle of privatization or liberalization of higher education. The experience of the United States and Europe demonstrates that both are compatible, and hence African governments should not buy into the IMF/World Bank restricted idea of cost-sharing in higher education. Cost sharing is compatible with financial assistance programmes to needy students. The social dimension, the ministers stressed, 'includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counseling services with a view to widening access'.

The sixth lesson is that Africa should reject the idea that the humanities, social sciences and allied disciplines are irrelevant in the globalized world of a knowledge-based economy. As the European ministers rightly observed at the Bergen meeting, higher education is an important instrument for 'preparing student for the labour market, for further competence building and for active citizenship'. The ministers' recognition of the important role of higher education in the preparation of students for life as active citizens in a democratic society is a loud and bold statement that Africa should not be deceived any longer by those who jettison the continued production of graduates in the humanities and social sciences. While prevailing national policies and incentives that favour science, engineering and technology are good and should be encouraged, a policy that undermines the importance of the humanities and social science disciplines should be jettisoned.

Conclusion

Globalization has definitely heightened knowledge-based competition, most fundamentally in the twenty-first century. Ironically, this competition seems more manifest in the developed regions of the world, competing for both the control of world ideas as well as 'followers' in the acceptance and spread of these ideas, as it had been before the incidents that led to the colonization of Africa. It is against this backdrop that one can see the emergence of the Bologna Process. Interestingly, it seems, African universities had pre-empted the importance of this process with the Arusha Declaration of 1981. But, unfortunately, after over two decades, the Bologna Process that came after it has become a major influence on its implementation. This is part of Africa's colonial historical legacy.

Consequently, the question of independent development comes to the fore in Africa. At every point in the continent's history, the course of its development has had to be determined by outside forces, perhaps because its formation itself was externally determined. Indeed, under globalization, all aspects of development in Africa are externally determined and dominated by colonial linkages. Yet it is a truism that education is germane to any meaningful development in any nation and continent. And for such development to be sustainable, education has to be home-grown, reflecting the political and socio-economic circumstances of each nation and continent. Regrettably, this is not true of Africa where the dominant and prevailing divisions are along the lines of Anglophone and Francophone countries.

Granted the important fact of cross-fertilization of ideas, each stakeholder ought to define the limits of what is tolerable in establishing its external relationships. For Africa, this has not been the case, as the neo-colonial situation seems to hold sway in perpetuating dependency. And this is made easy by the ruling elite group – itself a creation of the colonial experience – that continues to ape the colonial benefactors. This is equally true because, as Prah (2002) rightly observed, the inherited educational experience as well as its perpetuation is a status, both an economic and a power-enhancing phenomenon. Consequently, in so far as knowledge is controlled from the outside, the brain drain is an inevitable trajectory regardless of whether the point of migration presents motivating factors or not. And again, in so far as the space and pace of education is externally driven, the ability to 'catch up' is dependent on the need to refabricate along externally changing requirements. Unfortunately, these changing requirements are informed by the political and socio-economic circumstances in the latter nations.

Perhaps of most signifiicance is the fact that neo-liberalism, as Erasmus Mundus has shown, is not limited to economic considerations and the free-market economy. The Bologna Process has therefore exposed the limits and contradictions of market-oriented higher education reforms. The experience of Europe has shown that neo-liberal higher education reforms under globalization can be manipulated as dictated by the exigencies of national interests**.** The question, however, is whether Africans can be given the chance or even have the confidence and audacity to manipulate such neo-liberal reforms, especially in the light of the marketization drive of the WTO/GATS.

Consequently, the paper recommends that policy-makers in Africa should be wary of attempts to use the Bologna Process and the Erasmus Mundus programme as a subtle process of heightening the brain drain problem of the continent. The paper also calls on Africa political leaders to uphold the Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa (2004), a policy that would greatly help to check the excesses of neo-liberal higher education reforms under globalization.

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Appendix 1

Erasmus Mundus students per country selected under the general Erasmus Mundus category[a]

Academic year 2006–07

	Country	F	M	No students
1	CHINA	43	38	81
2	BRAZIL	23	20	43
3	RUSSIA	17	19	36
4	INDIA	13	18	31
5	ETHIOPIA	2	28	30
6	USA	15	13	28
7	MALAYSIA	16	9	25
8	MEXICO	9	15	24
9	COLOMBIA	10	11	21
10	PAKISTAN	2	19	21
11	CANADA	11	7	18
12	UKRAINE	11	7	18
13	NIGERIA	2	15	17
14	VIETNAM	7	9	16
15	IRAN	7	7	14
16	TAIWAN	7	7	14
17	THAILAND	12	2	14
18	KENYA	8	5	13
19	ARGENTINA	5	6	11
20	AUSTRALIA	3	8	11
21	BANGLADESH	2	9	11
22	CHILE	5	6	11

	Country	F	M	No students
23	GHANA	2	9	11
24	INDONESIA	2	9	11
25	NEPAL	1	8	9
26	PERU	4	5	9
27	PHILIPPINES	7	2	9
28	UZBEKISTAN	3	6	9
29	CAMEROON	2	6	8
30	EGYPY	3	5	8
31	ISRAEL	3	5	8
32	SINGAPORE	5	2	7
33	ARMENIA	4	2	6
34	NEW ZEALAND	2	4	6
35	SOUTH AFRICA	2	4	6
36	ZIMBABWE	2	4	6
37	ALGERIA	2	3	5
38	ECUADOR	3	2	5
39	GAUTEMALA	3	2	5
40	MOLDOVA	4	1	5
41	MOROCCO	1	4	5
42	UGANDA	3	2	5
43	VENEZUELA	2	3	5
44	ALBANIA	4		4
45	SOUTH KOREA	2	2	4
46	FYROM	4		4
47	BOLIVIA	1	2	3
48	GEORGIA	1	2	3

	Country	F	M	No students
49	JAPAN		3	3
50	KOSOVO		3	3
51	LEBANON	1	2	3
52	NICARAGUA		3	3
53	KYRGYZSTAN	2	1	3
54	IVORY COAST		3	3
55	SERBIA MONTENEGRO	1	2	3
56	BELARUS		2	2
57	CAMBODIA	1	1	2
58	LAOS	2		2
59	MADAGASCAR	1	1	2
60	MALAWI	1	1	2
61	BURKINA FASO		2	2
62	WEST BANK & GAZA STRIP	2		2
63	TUNISIA	1	1	2
64	ZAMBIA	1	1	2
65	AFGHANISTAN		1	1
66	BHUTAN		1	1
67	BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA	1		1
68	CHAD		1	1
69	D. REPUBLIC OF CONGO		1	1
70	COSTA RICA		1	1
71	CUBA	1		1
72	ERITREA	1		1
73	FIJI		1	1

	Country	F	M	No students
74	GRENADA	1		1
75	GUYANA		1	1
76	HONDURAS		1	1
77	MONGOLIA		1	1
78	NAMIBIA		1	1
79	BOTSWANA	1		1
80	HONG KONG		1	1
81	LESOTHO		1	1
82	TAJIKISTAN		1	1
83	BAHAMAS		1	1
84	SEYCHELLES	1		1
85	REPUBLIC OF YEMEN	1		1
86	TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	1		1
87	OMAN	1		1
88	RWANDA		1	1
89	EL SALVADOR	1		1
90	SRI LANKA		1	1
91	SYRIA		1	1
92	TANZANIA	1		1
	Grand Total	**326**	**415**	**741**

a Figures per country are subject to change owing to withdrawals and possible replacements from reserve lists.

Appendix 2

Erasmus Mundus scholars per country[a]

Academic year 2006–07

	Country	F	M	No students
1	USA	7	35	42
2	CHINA	12	26	38[b]
3	INDIA	1	14	15
4	CANADA	4	9	13
5	RUSSIA	4	9	13
6	BRAZIL	4	6	10
7	SOUTH AFRICA	3	6	9
8	AUSTRALIA	1	7	8
9	CHILE	1	7	8
10	MEXICO	1	7	8
11	ISRAEL		6	6
12	ARGENTINA	1	4	5
13	JAPAN		5	5
14	UKRAINE	1	4	5
15	MOROCCO	1	2	3
16	COLOMBIA		2	2
17	FYROM	1	1	2
18	HONG KONG	1	1	2
19	INDONESIA	1	1	2
20	MALAYSIA	1	1	2
21	NEPAL		2	2
22	PAKISTAN		2	2