

Policy Movement and Technical Assistance

International development assistance is characterised by unequal power relations between donors and recipients. This is clear owing to the simple fact that those who can offer financial and technical assistance reside in an elevated structural position compared to those in receipt. The movement of development policy between involved parties is thus necessarily defined by inequality and in practice exhibits the tension between coercion and consent. This chapter explores these unequal power dynamics by, first, examining the policy transfer and policy mobilities literatures and, second, analysing technical assistance as a concept, as a debate, and as defined by the World Bank. In doing so, it offers an analytical framework for understanding the four pillars of World Bank technical assistance.

POLICY MOVEMENT

Drawing upon the work of Rose (1991, 1993), Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 344) provide the seminal definition of policy transfer: ‘a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc., in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, and institutions in another time and/or place’. An important field of study ‘because transfer is a common phenomena’ (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 357) between national governments, international organisations, and special interest groups, the term is used to describe a wide variety of activities conducted by a broad range

of actors, though all focusing upon the shaping of ‘policy that addresses a particular policy issue/problem’ (Dolowitz and Marsh 2012: 340). Put simply, transfer networks are significant social artefacts ‘because without them other policies might be adopted’ (Evans and Davies 1999: 376). While other public policy literatures analyse policy effects, the policy transfer model focuses on the policy process: the interaction between policy transfer agent and recipient (Bulmer et al. 2007: 14; Stone 2012: 487); the emphasis is on the processes through which policy travels.

The policy transfer literature asks several questions in studying policy movement (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 7–9): Why do actors engage in policy transfer? Who are the key actors involved? What is transferred? From where are lessons drawn? What are the different degrees of transfer? What restricts or facilitates the transfer process? How is it related to policy ‘success’ or ‘failure’? These seven questions have together formed the basis of policy transfer research since the early 1990s. Significantly, Evans (2010b: 157) comments that policy transfer is ‘best concerned with the study of discernible and remarkable features of contemporary policy change not otherwise explained’. This book regards World Bank technical assistance as a ‘discernible’ and ‘remarkable’ feature, it being a formal, institutionalised tool used to transfer policy from the international to the domestic.

Various motivations exist influencing policy transfer, including altering policy goals, structure, and intent, introducing policy instruments or administrative techniques, shaping institutions, transmitting ideology, influencing ideas and attitudes, and cautioning negative lessons (Bennett 1991: 43; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 350). In the context of these motivations, there exist differing degrees of transfer, including copying (when an actor adopts a complete program from elsewhere), emulation (when an actor alters a best practice program from elsewhere to fit local conditions), and hybridisation (when an actor combines elements of programs from multiple actors) (Rose 1991: 22; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 351). To provide examples, the UK has directly copied a working family tax credit system from an American earned income tax credit system and has hybridised welfare program designs from initiatives in Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, and the USA (Evans 2009: 246). Following Evans (2009: 246), copying is the rarest form of policy learning, emulation is more prevalent than copying, and hybridisation is the most common form, particularly within the machinations of global governance and transnational policy movement.

Elected officials, political parties, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs, and supranational organisations are all policy transfer agents (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 345). Global governance actors delivering technical assistance are both policy entrepreneurs and supranational organisations. Policy entrepreneurs are actors able to build networks of contacts to broadcast their ideas and practices by virtue of their expertise on a given subject matter (to illustrate, ‘economists are likely to know other economists working in universities, government, the private sector, non-profit institutions, and often in intergovernmental or international organisations’ (Rose 1991: 15)), while supranational organisations—for example, the United Nations, IMF, and World Bank—are actors capable of spreading ideas, programs, and institutions between governments and non-state groups due to their specialisation and perceived legitimacy, with such movement occurring directly (through policy conditions attached to lending operations) and indirectly (through conferences and publications) (Rose 1993: 105; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 346; Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 11; Stone 2004: 549). As Rose (1991: 5) concludes, ‘In policymaking circles, experience has a unique status as a justification of effectiveness; it shows that a proposal is not just based upon “head in the clouds” speculation’.

Three processes distinguish policy transfer: direct coercive, indirect coercive, and voluntary transfer. Direct coercive transfer refers to instances ‘when a government is compelled by another government to introduce constitutional, social, and political change against its will and the will of its people’ (Evans 2009: 245). While rare between national governments (although there are examples of American regulators forcing European countries to implement American anti-cartel laws (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 348)), direct coercive transfer has been regularly identified in the activities of supranational organisations, notably as prescriptive conditions attached to IMF and World Bank loans; financial leverage used to compel policy change (Killick 1998: 10; Larmour 2002: 249; Marsh and Sharman 2009: 280). In this vein, Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 348) advance that supranational organisations ‘have played a crucial role in the spread of Western monetary policies to Third World countries. World Bank loans are much cheaper for these countries, but in return the IMF will stipulate certain economic policies that have to be implemented if the loan is to be granted’. While policy loan conditions are inherently coercive, the World Bank exercises capacity beyond

direct coercive transfer, particularly since coercive development practices are either prone to failure or, at the very least, unlikely to be sustainable.

Indirect coercive transfer concerns situations where externalities compel actors to adopt new policies. To illustrate, when the ‘international community defines a problem in a particular way, and even more when a common solution to that problem has been introduced by a number of nations, then nations not adopting this definition or solution will face increasing pressure to join the international “community” by implementing similar programs or policies’ (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 349). Employing Ikenberry’s (1990: 102) concept of ‘bandwagoning’, Evans (2009: 245) contends that ‘indirect policy transfer can be identified when governments introduce institutional or policy changes due to a fear of falling behind neighbouring countries. For example, Japan’s economic miracle in East Asia proved inspirational to neighbouring countries such as Singapore, South Korea, and Malaysia’. Even though indirect coercive transfer is applicable to many aspects of World Bank operations, particularly its normative influence on the issues of poverty, private sector-led growth, and sustainable development (Goldman 2005: 182–183; Blackmon 2008: 186–191), there remain elements of its activities that cannot be listed as indirectly coercive. The literature often regards global governance actors as ‘predatory agents of policy transfer’ (Evans 2010a: 19), which is accurate in some respects, but does not account for the full picture.

Voluntary transfer, linked to the idea of ‘lesson-drawing’ popularised by Rose (1991, 1993), refers to ‘the notion that transfer is a voluntary process undertaken by civil servants and politicians seeking to emulate “best practice”’ (Stone 2012: 485). Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 346) contend that ‘the primary catalyst of voluntary transfer is some form of dissatisfaction or problem with the status quo ... Only when routines stop providing “solutions” is it necessary to search for lessons’. A somewhat ‘benign view’ of policy transfer (Stone 2012: 485), the literature identifies that ‘British agents of lesson-drawing are more inclined to look towards North America, the [European Union], and certain parts of the Commonwealth for their lessons. This arises for reasons such as habits of mind, the “special relationship”, the historical legacy of empire, or the ease of looking towards other English speaking countries’ (Stone 1999: 57). While not disregarding the coercive potential of World Bank lending operations, technical assistance can often (although not always) be cautiously identified as an illustration of voluntary policy transfer,

to the extent that such assistance is regularly presented and packaged persuasively as best practice solutions to development problems, often being directly requested or sought out by national governments.

The World Bank has the capacity for direct and indirect coercive transfer and voluntary transfer, depending upon the type of activity observed. While there is ample evidence to reinforce the view of the institution as exercising direct coercive transfer through the attachment of conditions upon loans and credits and as practising indirect coercive transfer via norm-setting leadership, technical assistance exhibits characteristics between coercion and voluntary consent; in practice, ‘very few studies see coercion as a leading [transfer] mechanism’ (Marsh and Sharman 2010: 35). Dolowitz and Marsh (2000: 11) comment that the presence of

international consultants makes less clear the distinction between voluntary and coercive transfer. For example, while consultants may “force” a uniform model of market reform upon developing nations, if they are hired by a government, either as the agent of an international aid agency or “independently”, such a situation clearly has elements of both voluntary and coercive transfer.

Technical assistance, of which consultation is one facet, reveals the complexity of policy movement (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 11). Stone (2004: 554) similarly comments that

coercion is not the only (or even the favoured) approach of international organisations to promote “best practice” or adherence to international standards. Institutions such as the World Bank, the [World Trade Organisation], and the [IMF] have set up research departments or hold conferences and consultations to advocate the “scientific” validity of their objectives, and have engaged in various outreach activities, data-gathering, and monitoring to promote awareness and educate the public.

Such non-coercive instruments are designed to promote voluntary policy compliance through the guise of technical legitimacy (Stone 2012: 491). This point reinforces the main thesis of the book, the intertwined importance of technical process and recipient perception to the effective and ongoing transfer of policy. Subjective perception has been recognised (although not explored) by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 357)—a critical yet overlooked element in the movement of policy concerns the ‘role

subjective perception and judgments play in the definition of problems and solution’—and Rich (2004: 75)—‘quite contrary to the predictions of some, the intentional efforts of experts appear to affect how they are viewed and how their work is received by policymaking audiences’. As one illustration, Park et al. (2014: 399) discuss the impact of different forms of communication to increasing the chances of successful policy transfer: ‘communicative processes not only shape decision-makers’ understanding of policies in other contexts, but also the ways in which they attempt to reconstruct those policies in a new location’. The Operations Evaluation Department (OED), the World Bank’s independent evaluation group, similarly recognises that development assistance ‘is inescapably political. The best technocratic designs can wither in infertile political soil’ and that persuasion and consensus building are prerequisites to effective, sustainable policy transfer (World Bank OED 2005: 22). In this context, the constant tension between coercion and consent shapes policy outcomes.

Despite its analytical strengths in understanding the who, why, what, and from where of policy movement, there are limitations constraining the policy transfer literature, particular as it relates to global governance and transnational policy networks. In context, the majority of policy transfer research focuses upon interactions between liberal democratic governments, when one government coercively or voluntarily receives policy reforms from another government. While supranational organisations are often referenced in the literature, analyses of such organisations are largely presented in generalities as ‘globalisation forces’ (Parsons 1996: 234; Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 6–7). The literature has a ‘tendency towards “methodological nationalism”,’ despite the fact that the transnationalisation of policy results commonly occurs above the state level (Stone 2004: 549). As Stone (2012: 496) remarks, ‘Policy transfer not only takes place in international domains but can also be considered one constitutive element of transnational governance ... [It] can be said that important forces behind policy change, innovation, and reform originate from outside the state’. And yet the complex machinations of global governance remain under-theorised by much of the literature. This is problematic, for the international movement of ideas and practices ‘does not always occur in a simple bilateral exchange between sovereign states but can be complemented and/or bypassed by transnational transfer networks. Few studies have addressed the key role of international organisations in policy transfer’ (Stone 2004: 546). Even with Stone’s (2004, 2012) exceptional work on transnational policy

movement, Evans' (2009) analysis of policy networks, and Evans and Davies' (1999) study on multilevel policy transfer is the literature that would benefit from a more rigorous appraisal of the complexities of global governance, it being different from the mainstream focus on the transfer of policy lessons within and between federal and parliamentary systems. Although 'the locus of policy transfer activity has shifted away from its original government-centric emphasis to encompass multiple sites and actors' (Benson and Jordan 2011: 372), it is here maintained that 'policies are not internally coherent, stable "things" but must be understood as social processes' that 'are assembled in particular ways and for particular interests and purposes' (McCann and Ward 2013: 8).

The main critique of the transfer literature comes from the scholarship on policy mobilities. This alternative body of work draws upon critical geography and sociology to critique the more conservative and orthodox 'political science' policy transfer model advanced by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000, 2012). Adopting a post-positivist/constructivist lens, in contrast to the positivist/rationalist approach of the orthodox model, the mobilities literature synthesises the policy transfer framework, the mobilities approach in sociology (which deconstructs assumed 'spatial binaries like global/local or near/far and [emphasises] the importance of connections'), and the geographical conceptualisation of scale (which examines the hierarchy of divisions between the local, national, regional, and global, thereby disrupting 'common conceptualisations of states as territorially, politically, and socially bounded entities') (Temenos and McCann 2013: 345–246). Its main critique is that the policy transfer model has a 'tendency toward narrow typologies, [an] adherence to one or two scales, and [a] tendency to fall into a literalist trap of assuming that little happens to policies "along the way", or "in the telling" as they are moved from place to place' (McCann 2011: 111). In order to address the shortcomings of the political science model in understanding the machinations of global governance, this book supplements its analysis by drawing upon the policy mobilities literature.

The mobilities scholarship challenges the orthodox model through four main critiques, with the central contention being that the policy transfer literature 'black boxes' much of the dynamics and complexities involved in moving policies across space and time (McCann and Ward 2013: 6–8): too much focus is placed upon categorising the actors and institutions involved in policy transfer, and not enough is placed on the agency of policy actors; too much attention is directed to the national

level, and not enough is directed to inter-local circulations within national contexts; too much emphasis is given to discrete territories, and not enough to the notion of scale as assembled relationally by interested actors; and, too much analysis assumes that actors are rational optimisers, and less on the structural conditions shaping options for actors.

In sum, the mobilities literature claims that the political science model downplays the social processes and political dimensions of policy movement (McCann and Ward 2012: 326; Temenos and McCann 2013: 346). Rather than simply identifying policy as transferred from points A to B, the mobilities scholarship regards policy transfer as a site of social interaction and conflict. This becomes apparent when recognising that the movement of policy through international development assistance involves national and sub-national governments, international organisations, academics, think tanks, for- and non-profit foundations, civil society, and the media all ‘peddling reform’ (Weller and Singleton 2006: 84–85); ‘the number of actors involved in mobilising policies is much greater than might be first expected’ (Temenos and McCann 2013: 348).

A ‘rolling conversation rather than a coherent paradigm’ (Peck 2011: 774), the policy mobilities literature addresses the ‘ephemeral spaces of knowledge production and circulation, including the Internet and social media, conferences, mega-events, and sites of protest ... These are sites of encounter, persuasion, and motivation’ (Temenos and McCann 2013: 346). Constructing a relational understanding of governance and policy, the literature emphasises the importance of structural forces and actor agency in drawing together and reconfiguring policy options. ‘There is no cloud of free-floating policies hovering in the ether, waiting to be selected on the basis of “perfect information”,’ McCann and Ward (2012: 327) argue, ‘Rather, there are conditioning fields and institutions, existing pathways and trajectories, which structure the conditions under, and the economies within, which transfer agents operate’. Such structures are key given the increased global movement of policy products. As Temenos and McCann (2013: 344 original emphasis) advance,

policy models do not exist everywhere in the same form. While they are familiar, they are strangely familiar: they are estranged from – partly foreign to – the context in which we encounter them, even as they are being actively embedded and made familiar, normal, or desirable by local politicians and policy actors. Furthermore, while traces of these popular strategies and models appear in many places at once and while they are always presented

by their proponents as the best solutions to pressing problems, we should not assume that the policies themselves, or their proliferation, are somehow “natural” or teleological. They are not naturally or unproblematically good or “best”, and what is important about them is not so much that they move around in some abstract sense but that *people move them around* for particular purposes. New planning and design strategies, economic development models, etc. are social products, built up from the ground over time and bearing the imprint of the interests involved in producing them.

Adopting the term ‘mobilities’ in the attempt to overcome the ‘flatness’ of the term ‘transfer’, the mobilities literature highlights ‘the social and spatial complexity’ of policy movement (McCann and Ward 2013: 9). Relational and power dynamics become important here, as Peck (2011: 791–792 original emphasis) outlines in-depth:

What might be called the “objects” of policy transfer – policy ideas, innovations, technologies, and models – do not float freely in some unstructured universe, to be picked over selectively by a faceless elite of continuously learning policy-*makers*. Rather, the field of policy transfer is itself socially and institutionally constructed, being populated by a wide array of actors and institutions; it is sharply contoured and striated, in the form of shifting landscapes of conjunctural openings and preferred channels; it is structured by relatively enduring policy paradigms, which establish intersubjective frames of reference and institutionalised centres of authority; and, perhaps above all, it is saturated by power relations. These intensely contested and deeply constitutive contexts, which have their own histories and geographies, shape what is seen, and what *counts*, in terms of policy innovations, preferred models, and best practices. They also frame those narratives of “policy failure” that establish the premises and preconditions for policy experimentation, and which variously animate and constrain the search for new institutional fixes.

Policy movement is therefore argued to be inherently built upon social interaction, relational dynamics, and conflict, with the complexity of such movement complicated further by the interconnections between the international and domestic (Gotham 2014: 1173; Fisher 2014: 157).

With the main contribution of the mobilities literature being to better understand policy ‘as dynamic, relational constructions that emerge, not from specific policymakers and places of invention, but rather from the articulation of these people and places with audiences and places

elsewhere' (McCann 2013: 6–7), Baker et al. (2016: 461) divide the motivations of policy mobilities studies between conceptual commitments (to constructivist approaches, to policy as powerful and productive technologies, and to analyses of policy assemblage, mutation, inertia, and barriers) and methodological commitments (to qualitative investigations, to multi-sited case study analysis, and to empirically tracing policy pathways). Reiterating the major contestation of this book, Longhurst and McCann (2016: 111) comment that the

policy mobilities approach understands policy to move among places through the work of a range of “policy actors”, including politicians, bureaucrats, and activists. These actors engage in various forms of learning, comparison, translation, and education as they identify, package, and promote particular policy models through persuasive narratives about their capacities and effectiveness. Through this process, policy ideas and models are drawn from elsewhere or from global information “clearing houses” and reshaped to address particular definitions of local problems.

In contrast to the positivist/rationalist approach of the political science model, Peck and Theodore (2012: 23) contend that ‘Policy designs, technologies, and frames are ... complex and evolving social constructions rather than as concretely fixed objectives. In fact, these are very often the means and the media through which relations between distant policymaking sites are actively made and remade’. The mobilities literature thus highlights the social construction and relational dynamics of policy movement; it ‘problematizes politics of knowledge and practice’ (Peck 2011: 775). This book draws upon the orthodox policy transfer model to understand and label the actors, motivations, degrees, and processes of policy movement, but supplements it by drawing upon the policy mobilities approach to conceptualise the socially constructed nature of that movement. Despite their ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences, both approaches offer important and complementary questions that together provide strong insights into policy movement.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance entered the lexicon of development assistance in the 1940s, following the creation of the United Nations system. American President Harry Truman’s Four Point Program, outlined in his January

1949 Inaugural Address, gave the concept impetus, specifically the call for making ‘available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge’ (Truman Library 2015); the ‘whole United States effort in the field of technical assistance ... culminated in the Point Four program’ (Blelloch 1952: 52). The United Nations General Assembly approved the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance shortly thereafter in November 1949—‘launched with great fanfare and a modest budget’ (Wilson 2007: 183)—and was designed to support the appointment of technical experts to decolonising countries, the underlining purpose of which was to develop industrial and agricultural sectors and promote economic and political independence (Jolly et al. 2005: 40; Rist 2008: 88). Importantly, the inherent nature of technical assistance placed developed countries in a privileged position intellectually. From the 1940s onwards, the mainstream discourse held that the developing world had to adopt the ideas and practices of the developed (Escobar 1992: 224–225).

While technical assistance since the Second World War has undergone gradual conceptual changes, there are examples of its provision dating back centuries. Peter the Great contracted French engineers to build St. Petersburg during the seventeenth century, Japan sought assistance from the USA and Western Europe to industrialise during the Meiji Restoration, and the Western colonial powers sent survey missions to Africa, Asia, and Latin America during the nineteenth century (Johnston 1991: 155–159). As a more colourful historical example, the French Governor of Milan, Charles d’Amboise, commissioned Leonardo da Vinci in 1506 to conduct ‘a feasibility study with regard to linking Milan to Lake Como by way of a navigable canal that would also provide the city with fresh water’ (Strathern 2010: 374). It was not until the establishment of the United Nations system, however, that technical assistance became oriented towards development assistance, modernisation, and the transference of ‘manpower aid’ (to use the gendered terms of the era).

As a concept, technical assistance has evolved alongside the changing dynamics of development orthodoxy. From the Bretton Woods era of the developmental state (1940s–1970s), to the ‘hardline’ neoliberal era of the Washington Consensus (1980s and 1990s), to the current era of the post-Washington Consensus (2000s until today), technical assistance has constantly evolved (Wilson 2007: 184; Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson 2013: 344). Defining it is difficult, for it is heterogeneous and ‘is not

a “thing” or a commodity that can be reduced to a set of ingredients for a universal recipe prescribing “how to do it” (Eade 2007: 632).

Various definitions of technical assistance abound. Defining the concept is contingent upon its historical and geographical contexts; it is a social construction (Walker et al. 2008: 529). One of the earliest and most cited definitions emerges from the Twelfth International Congress of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences held in Vienna in July 1962 (cited in Mathiasen 1968: 205):

Technical assistance consists in the transmission of learning, knowledge, and techniques or material and human resources in order to help those who receive it to solve specific problems in a more suitable manner in keeping with their needs. It is an external contribution which assumes a very wide variety of forms: visits of experts and technicians, receiving fellowship holders, organising courses and seminars, exchanging or disseminating information or documents, and supplying material and equipment, and occasionally financial means.

At its simplest level, technical assistance refers to ‘the provision of donor-funded personnel to supply missing skills and train local people’ (Arndt 2000: 124). Such assistance necessarily involves the movement of ideas and practices from at least one actor to another. While this study acknowledges the 1962 definition, it supplements it with a simplified definition drafted by the 1991 World Bank TARTF: the ‘transfer or adaptation of ideas, knowledge, practices, technologies, or skills to foster economic development’ (cited in McMahon 1997: 2). The concept thus involves the movement of ideas and practices between locations and their socialisation and local adaptation.

Technical assistance exists as components in development loans, stand-alone projects, survey missions, training institutes, and related advisory services, including consultancy work, feasibility studies, research publications, and online databases. Also referred to as technical cooperation, capacity building, and human resource development, technical assistance draws ideas and practices from one context and copies, emulates, or synthesises them into another, shaping policy, transmitting ideology, and influencing mindsets with the aim of ‘developing the capability of performing functions more effectively’ (Sobis and de Vries 2009: 567). It has been broadly recognised that weak institutions and the inadequate capacity to analyse and formulate policy ‘lie at the heart

of the development problem' (Arndt 2000: 121). The critical issue here is: who decides what are valid ideas, knowledge, practices, technologies, and skills? Technical assistance is capable of socialising recipients into accepting and adopting common institutional and policy frameworks (Adler and Bernstein 2005: 313), making it a powerful tool in the movement of policy.

The technical assistance literature dates back to the 1950s, with consistent critiques evaluating approaches to its provision, legitimacy issues, donor/recipient relations, and success rates published in the decades since. The early 1950s literature focuses upon its practical and technical dimensions: how to transfer technical know-how from developed to developing countries and what technical content should be transferred, all of which occurred in the context of Cold War geopolitics (see Métraux 1951; Blerloch 1952; Martin 1952). Robb (2004: 22) highlights the geopolitical context by remarking that during the 1950s and 1960s 'institutional foundations and relations were laid for an aid system that focused more on Northern governments' foreign policies than reducing poverty'; bilateral development assistance was directed mainly to countries of strategic importance. In terms of technical know-how, technical assistance came 'to refer to skill transfers to foster modernisation' (Shaffer 2006: 644), with development largely understood as a technical process, of applying skills A, B, and C to problems X, Y, and Z. An optimistic (and perhaps naïve) understanding of development, technical assistance was expected to bring 'back "one hundred fold" the modest outlays required' (Higgins 1969: 34). The relational and power dynamics of technical assistance were downplayed in the early literature, ironic given the pervasiveness of Cold War geopolitics.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the literature had moved to question the optimism of the early 1950s, critiquing lessons learnt over two decades. Case study analyses often explored the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which arose as a merger between the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the United Nations Special Fund (UNSF), and the widespread problems undermining bilateral and multilateral aid (see Wolfle 1965; Blasé 1968; Loomis 1968; Higgins 1969). Technical assistance evolved in response to these challenges, with the literature increasingly recognising the difficulties in 'transferring and absorbing knowledge across socio-cultural contexts' (Wilson 2007: 183). As Mathiasen (1968: 207) notes,

Donors have learned the hard way that the cultural and value changes technical assistance seeks may prove evanescent unless they are institutionalised in the local setting. If no local institutions exist to which new concepts of change can be grafted, donors have sought to stimulate the growth of innovative institutions capable of keeping the change process reinvigorated. Donors also attach increasing importance to human resource development and emphasise education and training to create a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of change.

As the practice of technical assistance entered the 1960s and 1970s, the focus turned to ‘changing the behaviour of individuals and institutions’ (Loomis 1968: 1330). It was during this period that development agencies and the literature both came to recognise the importance of socialisation to the effective transfer of ideas and practices. Moreover, academic scholarship identified the significance of recipient perceptions: the ‘effectiveness of our technical assistance effort is frequently reduced or nullified because of resistance to acceptance on the part of recipients’ (Loomis 1968: 1335), particularly since individuals ‘who are in some degree products of a paternalist colonial administration are frequently suspicious and resentful of foreign technicians’ (Higgins 1969: 39). In this way, Loomis (1968: 1335) regards technical assistance as a person-to-person ‘art form’, with the ‘motivations, interpersonal skills, and attitudes of technical assistance personnel and host personnel [being] equally crucial to effectiveness’. After 2 decades, the lesson emerged that successful transfer was more than just an issue of technical know-how.

During the 1980s and 1990s, technical assistance transformed fundamentally, becoming unrecognisable to previous decades as the dictates of the Washington Consensus encouraged institutional development to embed neoliberal policy reform (see Buyck 1991; Berg 1993). As mainstream development assistance shifted from project- to policy-based lending, epitomised by the introduction of IMF and World Bank structural and sectoral adjustment programs, technical assistance changed to institutionalise neoliberal economic practices. Such measures included privatisation, deregulation, and trade and financial liberalisation, as well as limiting government expenditures. Consequently, there was ‘a move away from the provision of physical assets and hardware, and a trend to put the primary emphasis of assistance on increasing the knowledge, skills, and ability of people at various levels to be more effective in their work’ (Franks 1999: 51). As an example, in order for the emergent

neoliberal orthodoxy to be successfully embedded in a bureaucracy, recipients had to be trained to accept and adopt a neoliberal mentality and new institutions had to be established to ensure the long-term maintenance of neoliberal reforms.

Beyond the neoliberal turn, it was also during the 1980s and 1990s that both development agencies and the literature increasingly emphasised the importance of ‘ownership’ to successful technical assistance programs (Berg 1993: 246). The asymmetrical relationship between donor and recipient has consistently been identified as a significant obstacle affecting the successful movement of policy from one actor to another (Malik 2002: 35; Fukuda-Parr et al. 2002: 10–11; Singh 2002: 47; Watson and Khan 2010: 24). This asymmetry not only presented challenging relational and power dynamics, but also worsened the scepticism (and even hostility) directed by developing countries to neoliberal policy loans. For this reason, the 1990s literature ever more highlighted the importance of ‘country ownership’ to the design, delivery, and implementation of technical assistance.

Within current research, consistent interest has focused upon the practical implementation and ontological shortcomings of capacity-building initiatives (see Kaplan 2000; Denning 2002; Eade 2007; Girgis 2007; Wilson 2006; Smith 2008; Brinkerhoff 2010; Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010; Morgan et al. 2010; Watson and Khan 2010); ‘How and what knowledge for development is produced, who controls is, and how it is used have been focal points of much debate’ (Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson 2013: 345). Since the early 2000s, the academic literature has reflected upon training and education at the individual, institutional, and societal levels, recognising that the transfer and adaptation of ideas, knowledge, practices, technologies, and skills involves multiple actors in unequal relationships (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2002: 9; Sobis and de Vries 2009: 568). The role of consultants as knowledge producers and brokers has received substantial attention, with a focus ‘on the production and role of knowledge in development and on how expert knowledge is produced and reproduced for and by development agencies’ (Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson 2013: 344), identifying and analysing the historical, relational, and power dynamics involved in the donor–consultant–recipient triangle.

The relational and power dynamics of technical assistance have come to the fore in current research. This is an appropriate turn, since development assistance ‘is a manifestation of inequality ... Being poor usually

means being powerless; but the aid system is dominated by the interests of the powerful, as opposed to the powerless' (Robb 2004: 21). The transfer of ideas and practices from the international to the domestic concerns not just technical soundness, but also the power relations that surround the movement of knowledge. As a quick review of the literature: Morgan (2002: 8) notes that 'disparities in power and influence among the participants and the intrusion of non-development agendas [leads] to deforming and inverting key ... relationships'; Cooke (2004: 607) remarks that the term 'technical assistance' helps development agencies represent themselves as 'technocratically neutral, with the words "assistance" or "cooperation" implying a non-existent parity of power between the technical helpers and helped'; Girgis (2007: 354–355) speaks about the influence of financial, knowledge, and experiential power in unbalancing relations between developed and developing countries, and that capacity building 'is about the exercise of power, because the practitioner requires power in order to undertake capacity-building work, which in turn is about change and transformation'; Baser and Morgan (2008: 20 and 31) comment on conflict, bargaining, and elite accommodation in building local capacity, remarking that 'capacity development is about altering the access of people to authority, resources, and opportunities. It privileges some groups and individuals and not others. Coalitions with power either inside or outside the organisation must, in some way, either directly support or tacitly accept these altered patterns and the implications for their own interests'; Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010: 2) argue that 'capacity issues are intimately entwined with technical assistance policy and practice, and donor-country relations, which complicates sorting out content and process'; and, Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson (2013: 345) regard technical assistance not as 'knowledge transfer' ('a product or good that can simply be transferred') but as 'knowledge production' ('a process in which social relations and communication between actors play a central role'). This book builds upon recent discussions on the relational and power dynamics of technical assistance by recognising the importance of presentation and packaging to the effective transference of development policy.

In contrast to the coercive nature of loan conditionality, the World Bank presents and packages technical assistance as a value-free approach to development. Yet, technical assistance can never be value-neutral. As Shaffer (2006: 650) contends, 'who defines the purpose of technical assistance and capacity building, and who oversees how funding is used,

can shape programs towards different ends'. Similarly, Smith (2008: 238), concluding that development agencies regard the development process as a mathematical problem requiring the application of the correct algebraic formula, argues that analyses of technical assistance

as a medium for the exchange of knowledge reveals a distinct hierarchy of just what kind of knowledge is promoted and demoted. The process of providing technical assistance places the development consultant as the primary agent in setting up this hierarchy by conducting an inquiry that frames and defines a problem that is amenable to a tool kit of recommendations so that the institution/consultant can become the provider of solutions.

This is an important assertion, because technical knowledge is not found; it is constructed by professionals (Smith 2008: 238–239). Drawing upon evidence obtained in review of South Africa's relationship with the World Bank, Smith (2008: 249–250) outlines that while the World Bank 'failed attempts to establish policy advice through lending programs' (due to the country's 'anti-loan' position), the national government was far more receptive to policy products transferred through a voluntary and consensus-based technical assistance program, even though the normative outcomes were identical. Technical assistance therefore becomes a tool 'to exercise power at a distance' (Smith 2008: 250). In this way, World Bank technical assistance, premised upon dialogue, collaboration, and consent, came to 'dictate' less and build 'discourse' more (Smith 2008: 250). Given the inequities of power that exist between donors and recipients, technical assistance can be interpreted as a tool to improve the perception of the legitimacy of transferred policy options.

WORLD BANK TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Since the commencement of its lending operations in 1947, the World Bank has used technical assistance. This is curious given that no terms for its use are listed in the *Articles of Agreement* of the IBRD. Yet, as early as the *Third Annual Report to the Board of Governors, 1947–1948* (IBRD 1948: 18), it was argued that 'successful development depends in most cases just as much upon the provision of technical assistance from abroad as upon the availability of foreign capital'. Mason and Asher (1973: 5) further comment that although 'the *Articles of Agreement* of the Bank say nothing about technical assistance, the Bank soon discovered

that, in applying for loans, its less developed member countries were not likely to present well-prepared project proposals without Bank assistance'. Inseparable from the institution's history, the World Bank classifies technical assistance in two main ways: 'hardware' and 'software'.

Prior to the mid-1970s, the World Bank mainly provided engineering-related hardware, or 'hard' technical assistance: feasibility studies, engineering design, and construction supervision in the sectors of agriculture, education, industry, infrastructure, telecommunications, transportation, and urbanisation. Under the label 'hardware', technical assistance includes the appointment of advisors and technicians to draft, shape, and then implement development plans (Higgins 1969: 48). As a hypothetical notion, hard technical assistance involves the assigning of engineers, first, to determine the feasibility of constructing a dam and, second, to supervise the construction of that dam (Walker et al. 2008: 529–530). As a real-world example, the IBRD *Railway Project* to Pakistan in 1952 contained provisions to send Pakistani technicians to railroad and diesel manufacturers in the USA for training in the repair and maintenance of diesel locomotives (Pakistan 1952: 5). An 'inexpensive seeding operation,' hard technical assistance produces 'a large impact for a relatively small cost' by ensuring the technical soundness of lending operations (Wharton 1958: 126). While somewhat affecting public policy (Morgan 2002: 1), hardware is aligned more towards loan feasibility than towards policy movement. It was not until the arrival of soft technical assistance that the transfer of policy became more apparent.

Symptomatic of the introduction of policy-based lending and the rise of the neoliberal Washington Consensus in the 1980s (Walker et al. 2008: 530), there arose institution-building software, or 'soft' technical assistance: policy studies, management support, and institution and human resource development in the financial, governance, legislative, regulatory, and trade sectors. Replacing engineers were bureaucrats, economists, and policy experts supervising the economic and political restructuring of developing countries; the locus shifted from building physical infrastructure to increasing human capital (Rose 2005: 60). To illustrate, Togo received the IDA *Structural Adjustment Loan Project* (02) in 1985. Accompanying the loan was the *Technical Assistance Project* (03), designed to help the national government implement its adjustment program through financial management support, policy formulation, and state enterprise restructuring (1985: 10).

With the classification ‘software’ first officially noted in the *World Bank Annual Report 1984* (World Bank 1984: 64), the expansion of soft technical assistance saw a greater role for transferring and shaping policy in the recipient developing countries.

In a significant analysis of the IMF and World Bank, Woods (2006) introduces the concept of ‘sympathetic interlocutors’, an idea relevant to soft technical assistance. Woods (2006: 72) remarks that the

Fund and Bank have significant bargaining leverage in the face of crises, which force governments to supplicate for assistance. But this does not give either institution the power to impose a Washington-prescribed medicine. Rather their mission has to begin by seeking out sympathetic policymakers or persuading existing leaders that specific reforms should be undertaken.

Woods (2006: 10) concludes that these ‘sympathetic’ national or sub-national actors, capable of exercising power and authority to implement policy reforms, are necessary for the effective movement of policy from the IMF and World Bank to their developing member countries:

The institutions can successfully deploy this power only where they find and work with sympathetic interlocutors who are both willing and able to embrace the priorities preferred by the institutions. Willing policymakers are produced by circumstances as well as ideology and training.

In this way, through institutional development, capacity building, and training, the World Bank employs soft technical assistance to both reshape domestic environments and find or create sympathetic interlocutors.

Broome (2015) and Broome and Seabrooke (2015) draw upon Woods’ construct to understand the role of socialisation in the movement of policy from international organisations to recipient governments. Broome (2015: 149) contends that ‘policymakers may be more sympathetic to the IMF’s advice if they share a common framework of understanding with IMF staff based on similar experiences of professional training and policy socialisation,’ and Broome and Seabrooke (2015: 961) conclude that the ‘diffusion of global policy norms by [international organisations] often depends on domestic reformers who push for changes in their institutional environments’. Baser and Morgan (2008: 20)

similarly conclude that for technical assistance to successfully transfer policy, ‘Coalitions with power either inside or outside organisations must, in some way, either directly support or tacitly accept these altered patterns and their implications for their own interests’. However, Broome and Seabrooke (2015: 961–962) recognise that the ‘concept of the sympathetic interlocutor is under-theorised in existing scholarship,’ with it ‘black boxing’ the ‘process through which national officials become sympathetic interlocutors for [international organisations]’. This book attempts to expose this ‘black boxed’ process by contending that soft technical assistance not only identifies sympathetic interlocutors but also creates them via training and socialisation.

In sum, while hardware ensures the technical quality of lending operations through feasibility studies and engineering and construction supervision, software furnishes recipients with the resources necessary to enact new policies through institutional development and capacity building. While hardware remains common today, soft technical assistance became relatively more prevalent in World Bank operations as a result of the neo-liberal turn and the rise of the Washington Consensus during the 1980s. To illustrate, despite being far more difficult to use successfully (in terms of design, implementation, supervision, and outcome), software grew from being all but non-existent prior to the 1970s to account for 70% of the World Bank’s technical assistance portfolio by 1990 (Wallace 1990: 27). Importantly, however, the shift from hard to soft technical assistance led to new difficulties affecting success rates. Of all policy-based technical assistance projects approved during the 1990s, only 65% were deemed successful (World Bank 2000: 116). In contrast, hardware projects during the same period achieved success rates 10% above that average. Institutional change and policy reform are far more difficult to pursue and achieve compared to engineering design, particularly since—even within one World Bank loan or project—some items may be successfully transferred while others are not transferred at all. As Arndt (2000: 122) concludes, ‘Quantifying increases in institutional capacity is, by itself, exceedingly difficult. Disentangling the exact role of technical cooperation in generating the increase from other factors is next to impossible’.

From the broader literature, several prominent issues affect the provision of technical assistance (Wallace 1990: 27–28; McMahon 1997: 4–5; Arndt 2000: 130; Hilderbrand 2002: 20; Sobis and de Vries 2009: 569): it is often donor-driven, with little recipient input; objectives,

and consultant terms-of-reference often lack clarity; short-term support goals (measurable) often receive precedence over longer-term institutional development goals (indeterminate); the sensitive nature of economic policy and financial prescriptions often lead to conflict between the public and private sectors and civil society; training programs are often insufficient, too complex, and interim; an overreliance on temporarily appointed expatriate advisors often leads to mistrust and antagonism, as even low-ranking expats receive salaries several times higher than local officials; and technical assistance can lead to ‘knowledge dependence’, whereby extending the scope of public sector activity can move it beyond local capacity. These issues reveal problems common to hard and soft technical assistance, problems arising even before considering the ideological assumptions behind the transferred ideas, knowledge, practices, and skills. They concern the tension between recipient needs and donor desires. Notably, however, even failed projects can still communicate new ways of thinking about development. Despite pervasive success rate problems, technical assistance remains ubiquitous within the field of international development assistance (Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson 2013: 343). One reason for its continued use has been ‘a succession of makeovers and newly defined measures to reassess, reform, and rehabilitate its operation’ (Walker et al. 2008: 531). The adoption of a more voluntary, persuasive, and collaborative approach by the World Bank is an expression of such a makeover, particularly the recognised importance of ‘country ownership and motivation [as] the single greatest determinants to technical assistance effectiveness’ (Morgan 2002: 8); the ‘level of technical assistance seems to be less important for a successful [policy] reform than the overall fragmentation of aid flows and the ways in which technical assistance is delivered’ (De Janvry and Dethier 2012: 24).

SUMMARY

The policy transfer and mobilities literatures have contributed to the academic discussion by analysing how policy is constructed and moved between actors and across locales. The role of global governance actors has been notably reviewed in the coercive and voluntary transfer of policy products. There have been significant commentaries, both brief and long, on the World Bank’s role as a policy transfer agent. Many of these commentaries have linked the development institution with directly and

indirectly coercive practices, particularly in terms of the prescriptive imposition of conditions upon loans and its normative influence on development orthodoxy (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 348, 356; Larmour 2002: 259–250; Evans 2009: 245; Marsh and Sharman 2009: 272; Stone 2010: 271). In contrast, a smaller (though no less influential) body of research has highlighted its non-coercive instruments, including consultancy work, research, and online platforms (King 2002: 322; Wilks 2002: 42; Stone 2004: 554; Evans and Barakat 2012: 561; Stone 2012: 491).

Technical assistance—classified as either hardware or software—resides in the grey area between coercive and voluntary transfer. Despite its portrayal as non-prescriptive, collaborative, and value-free, it cannot be regarded as an example of purely voluntary transfer, just as it cannot be said to be entirely coercive. Technical assistance is not entirely coercive for it is often voluntarily requested by recipients and can be rejected; there are no punitive enforceability mechanisms comparable to adjustment loans. Yet, it has not been wholly voluntary either, given the unequal power relations and knowledge hierarchies that exist between the World Bank and its developing member countries (Smith 2008: 238). When considering the four pillars of World Bank technical assistance, the tension between coercion and consent becomes a decisive factor for whether recipients regard the transferred policy as legitimate.

In this regard, the policy transfer model is useful in understanding and labelling the actors involved and the motivations, degrees, and processes of policy movement, while the mobilities literature offers insights into conceptualising the socially constructed nature of that movement, notably the ‘fuzziness’ of policy lessons, choices, and pathways. Both literatures combine to draw insights into the movement of policy from the international to the domestic, exploring the operationalisation of non-material influence in global governance, with the former recognising the ‘who, why, what, and from where’ and the latter conceiving policy movement as a site of social interaction and conflict. In this way, the process and relational dynamics of technical assistance affect the success of policy transfer. Advisory services cannot be neatly divided into technical and political components, for both are mutually reinforcing. Understanding the social and political relations and conflicts involved in the movement of policy becomes important when recognising the significance of how policy is presented, packaged, and transferred; the mechanisms, methods, and approaches used to grant legitimacy to that which is a social construction.

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