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Tertiary Education in Africa and the Transformation of Neo-liberalism: The World Bank's *Accelerating Catch-Up*.

ABSTRACT:
This paper provides a critical discussion of the World Bank's 2009 publication "*Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*". The World Bank is an influential generator and broker of development knowledge – in 1981 *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* heralded the period of structural adjustment lending, while in 1989 *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* introduced the concept of good governance. Both of these publications amounted to reconstruction of the World Bank's conception of the role of the state in development. *Accelerating Catch-up*, it is here argued, envisages state functions beyond that of providing good governance. This is not to imply a non-neoliberal view of the relationship between the state and market. The paper argues instead that a more nuanced understanding of the role of the state in Africa's neo-liberal transformation is being presented in this publication.
In *Accelerating Catch-up*, the World Bank's policy narrative concerning tertiary education in Africa clearly focuses on core neo-liberal concerns: macro-economic stability, productivity growth, flexible workforces, and, by building knowledge economies, "accelerating" economic growth as means to development in a transnational context. The drive towards privatisation and liberalisation in tertiary education is clearly apparent, and the fundamental role of the market within neo-liberalism remains unchallenged. However, this paper argues that the underlying argument of *Accelerating Catch-up* is in fact one of building 'national innovation systems' (NIS), an approach derived from comparative political economy that engages directly with national structures of innovation and policy incentives. This approach is more congruent with the developmental and interventionist but 'market friendly' model of the state controversially defended by the World Bank in 1993's *The East Asian Miracle* – a document which thus far has had little influence on the World Bank's view of African development. Consequently, whereas most research on neo-liberalism in Africa focuses upon contestation by African states and societies, this paper raises the prospect of the transformation of neo-liberalism *within* the World Bank.

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Introduction:

When the World Bank publishes key policy documents on sub-Saharan Africa attention should be paid: at least two previous such documents – *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (1981) (also known as the Berg report) and *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (1989) – have had a significant impact on mainstream development thinking, and a concomitant effect on development strategies in practice (Berger and Beeson 1998: 487-90; Clapham 1996: 811-5; Williams and Young 1994: 85-6). Although *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* is narrowly focused (as the sub-title suggests), the underlying logic of building 'national innovation systems' must be interpreted in the broader framework of the transformation of neo-liberalism and debates within the World Bank, which remains a key institution of neo-liberal practice. As a disclaimer, it must be recognised that World Bank policies towards tertiary education "reflect divergent perspectives and shifting alliances, shift between stronger and weaker support for education, especially higher education, and periodically are not entirely consistent with the World Bank's own lending" (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 55). Nevertheless, debates even within *Accelerating Catch-up* concerning the role of the state in higher education provide insight into the transformation of neo-liberalism.

The paper is structured as follows: first, a backdrop of the rise of knowledge economies and the prospects for their promotion by the World Bank in sub-Saharan Africa is provided. Second, the global best practices for tertiary education reform are outlined, as the framework through which World Bank policy linked development to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa is to be understood. Thirdly, the paper engages with the national innovation systems (NIS) literature, and how this line of argument is developed in *Accelerating Catch-up*. Finally, the import of *Accelerating Catch-up* and the NIS approach is explored in the context of the transformation of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism mediates the adaptation of sub-Saharan Africa's tertiary education sector to the rise of knowledge economies: but the NIS model implies a role of the state which is greatly enhanced compared to that set out in the good governance framework, and which by promoting national distinctiveness, is fundamentally contradictory with the neo-liberal global best practices.

Knowledge Economies, Tertiary Education and the World Bank.

Marxists (Jessop 2002: 32-6) and non-Marxists alike (Cerny 2010: 279-84) recognise that a fundamental shift has occurred in the nature of global capitalism, and in associated forms of state intervention. This is a result of the rise of knowledge economies, wherein global industrial production is increasingly based on a set of scientific, technical, computerized and network-based processes relating to the management of information (Collins and Rhoads 2008: 180). This rise is part-and-parcel of the rise of post-industrial economies, based on high-tech production and services, linked through the global division of labour. Within these economies, problems of coordination caused by extreme structural differentiation have necessitated the new forms of state intervention, as well as higher levels of state funding for scientific and technical research. States are required to adapt on governance, coordination and networking fronts. First, it is necessary to provide a governance framework - an environment to support systems of innovation. Second, the state is required to coordinate investment in research and development ‘catalysts’, through tax breaks or subsidies, or by making public investments in infrastructure or organisations for scientific research. Third, the state must promote forms of connectivity that will allow for collective learning and innovation, such as networking researchers and research institutions with the private sector (Collins and Rhoads 2008: 193; Chaminade and Edquist 2006: 150-4; Meeus and Hage 2006: 6-15; Mohrman *et al* 2006: 196; Finegold 2006: 398-400; Santos 2006; Peters and Besley 2006). Indeed, one of the most robust findings in a broad literature on innovation, technology, creativity, science and management is that complexity and diverse research teams are more likely to innovate. The need for networks of inter-organisational research and mechanisms for knowledge sharing and coordination, and managing research for diversity, across both horizontal research links (across research centres) and vertically through the value chain (with production organisations) is therefore critical (Jordan 2006: 183-4-5; Mohrman *et al* 2006: 211).

The tertiary sector is key to these developments, with universities in particular serving as forums for research and product/process innovation entanglements as industry-university interaction increases, serving as outsource centres for industrial research and development, and meeting basic research needs that the private sector undersupplies (Meeus and Hage 2006: 15; Chaminade and Edquist 2006: 143; Smith 2000). Tertiary education organisations are not only a crucial ‘ecology’ to private sector innovation, they are more durable than the resulting innovation systems, such that policies to promote knowledge economies in practice revolve around maintaining these organisations, and encouraging collaboration through reduced transaction costs (Metcalfe 2006: 119). OECD countries provide evidence for the positive economic effects of tertiary education. In the United States, California Institute of Technology (Caltech), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of California and the University of Florida have spun-off numerous start-up technology-based innovative enterprises with a high-skill employment base, in what is a billion-dollar industry (Jensen and Jones 2011). Evidence for the contribution of the United Kingdom’s universities to economic growth is also available (Universities UK 2006; Kitson *et al* 2009).

State attempts at research competence building are primarily focused on the university sector, both in organisational and human capital terms (Chaminade and Edquist 2006: 150-4). While the public-private division of labour regarding actual research remains ‘unclear’ (Chaminade and Edquist 2006: 150-4), the promotion of public-private partnerships allows states to avoid hard and fast answers on such questions. Tertiary education is being reconstructed as an engine for promoting international competitiveness, and hence economic development, revolving around the promotion of entrepreneurialism, flexibility and innovation, linked to the market directly through spin-offs, start-ups, and patents, and delivered through new technologies of learning (Robertson 2008: 3-4; EC 2005; DIUS 2008). As much as the knowledge economies approach is grounded in neo-classical economic theory, however, the practice reflects neo-liberalism. The process of promoting knowledge economies transforms tertiary institutions into neo-liberal institutions, which charge student fees, seek private sector funding, and are internationalised in linguistic, recruiting and franchising terms, while the tertiary sector as a whole is marked by the growth of private institutions (Robertson 2008: 3-4).

This knowledge economy is largely a phenomenon of the developed world, however, with both the enrolment ratio and the quality of universities in sub-Saharan Africa relatively low, with poor research outputs and a lack of necessary resources and infrastructure (Mohamedbhai 2011: 20-1; Sall and Ndjaye 2008: 47; Samoff and Carrol 2004: 1-2; Sawyerr 2004; Berk 2002; Banya and Elu 2001: 2; Ade Ajayi *et al* 1996; World Bank 1994). Furthermore, all four types of the research provision and utilisation failures Livny *et al* (2006: 6-7) identify are found in sub-Saharan Africa. First, 'supply failure' is evident, such that sub-Saharan African states require greater investment in and higher quality of both research and researchers. Second, 'information failure' occurs, requiring strategies to improve communication and provide structured forums to integrate research and policy makers. Third, there is 'demand failure' on the side of policy-makers, requiring an increase in the capacity of politicians and bureaucrats to engage and network with the research community. New organisational forms such as specialised government research units are needed to 'bridge' the gap. Finally, there is 'governance failure', where the policy research that does take place is designed to promote pre-ordained ends or policy objectives, effectively forming part of state-orchestrated legitimisation strategies (2006: 6-7). The image is one of African research outcomes controlled by African Ministries, with independent researchers shut out of the policy process (Livny *et al* 2006: 15-6). Strategies promoting the internationalisation or regionalisation of knowledge-production are necessary to promote non-partisan knowledge, and would also improve the prospects for critical oversight from non-state actors (Livny *et al* 2006: 6-7).

The failure of sub-Saharan African states to diversify their economies has been brought into even greater relief by the current global economic crisis and associated commodity slump (G20 article). If the rise of post-industrial economies in OECD states is linked to the global division of labour, then a global division of labour in knowledge production can be seen to exist. OECD states build their economies around the start of the product chain – research engineering and design – and the end of the product chain – marketing, standards and services – while leaving the actual production/manufacturing to second-tier countries in the global division of labour (Van Waarden and Oosterwijk 2006: 461). Sub-Saharan Africa however is composed of third-tier states, producing cheap primary commodities and largely excluded from this global division of labour: how such states might be integrated into knowledge economies at a more complex level remains an unanswered question.

Nevertheless, from the mid-1990s, the World Bank began to recognise the shift towards knowledge economies, resulting in key policy changes regarding tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa. Tertiary education becomes critical to human capital formation. In theory, human capital directly promotes the production of the technologies that drive knowledge economies, as well as serving to transfer resources to more dynamic sectors of the economy and contributing to states' ability to adapt to these knowledge economies. In turn, this promotes global competitiveness and hence higher levels of both economic growth and rates of income growth (World Bank 2009; 2006; 2003; 2002; 2000: 12; 1999; 1998-9; 1995; 1994; see Salmi 2009; Sall and Ndjaye 2008: 45; Collins and Rhoads 2008: 180-90; Robertson 2008: 2-7; Gyimah-Brempong *et al* 2006: 512-3; Finegold 2006: 391; Godin 2006; Samoff and Carrol 2004: 32-3; Sawyerr 2004; 1999; Archibugi and Lundvall 2001; Banya and Elu 2001: 28-9; Verspoor 2001; Hunter and Brown 2000; Castells 1996; Birdsall 1996; Barro and Sala-i-Martin 1995; Romer 1989; 1986; Psacharopoulos 1988; 1973). Furthermore, the pursuit of this strategy would likely engender positive externalities for other aspects of human development, including health, primary and secondary education, the promotion of equity, social integration, and political stability (Gyimah-Brempong *et al* 2006: 525; Jordan 2006: 176; Samoff and Carrol 2004: 16; World Bank 2002: 65).

The main document analysed here, the World Bank's *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2009) defends the strategy of promoting knowledge economies in sub-Saharan Africa on three fronts. First, human capital is held to the basis for any development strategy, which all hinge on the implementation capacity of skilled professional (World Bank 2009: 1; see literature on Asian rapid development; H-J Chang for example? Wade?). Second, economic growth is held to be increasingly tied to high levels of education and technical skills, and dependent upon information technology (World Bank 2009: 6). Finally, whereas states in sub-Saharan Africa usually do not view tertiary education as integral to their development strategies (World Bank 2009: xxv), high returns to skills due to Africa's skills shortage creates its own incentives for this approach to be adopted (World Bank 2009: 7-8). As the World Bank continues to link tertiary education to development, additional donor funding for this sector in sub-Saharan Africa may become available (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 56-7). However, this is likely to go hand-in-hand with enhanced conditionalities, thus greater external impact on the development of tertiary education in Africa and on African society in general. African universities' pursuit of donor funds may lead to "the internalization of their accompanying values, assumptions, and precepts, entrenching their own and national dependence" (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 56-7)

Global Best Practices for Tertiary Education Reform

The framework for understanding these values, assumptions and precepts is the global best practices policy narrative for tertiary education reform, promoted by the World Bank as a set of standards or benchmarks for developing states to follow. Policy narratives are useful tools for promoting policy transfer (Simmons *et al* 2004: 18; Stone 2002; Kjær and Pedersen 2001; Hay 2001), which is defined as processes whereby "knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting" (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 5). The World Bank's global best practices policy narrative can both explain the inefficiencies of developing state tertiary education sectors, and provide a set of solutions. This policy narrative constitutes the sum of tertiary education sector-specific neo-liberal policy knowledge. However, with like any one-size-fits-all approach such as a global systems of standards or benchmarks, global best practice(s), in any policy sector, are subject to the prospect of policy transfer failure (Levi-Faur and Jordana 2006: 9; Keating 2006). As with all policy transfer processes, reforms based on global best practices are contingent, with forms of adaptation and learning necessitated in practice, and the likelihood of outcomes that differ from the intent of the reform process exacerbated in developing states (see Simmons *et al* 2004: 31-5; Rodrik and Subramanian 2003: 33; Levi-Faur 2002: 8; Stiglitz 1999; 1999a; Stone 1999: 53-7; Turner and Hulme 1997: 52-3).

In general terms, critics still point to the World Bank's tendency to construct Africa in its discourse a single place to which, implicitly if not explicitly, a single solution to development problems might apply (Harrison 2010: 17). In this light, the World Bank uses neo-liberal global best practices policy narratives across a set of policy areas in a way that recreates the oft-criticised problems of one-size-fits-all development strategies. Godolphin (2011) argues that the World Bank operates one-size-fits-all development strategy by proxy in the education sector, despite the recognition of the Bank's own culpability in advocating failed one-size-fits-all strategies in education in the past (World Bank 2006). Furthermore, Carroll (2010: 15) finds that within the World Bank's promotion of knowledge economies is embedded the normative assumptions of neo-liberalism, portrayed as "best practice" solutions. Specifically focused on tertiary education, Samoff and Carrol (2004: 36) find that "best practices" for tertiary education are an obstacle to progress, as an effective education sector in developmental terms must be "continually modified to suit unique and local circumstances". Samoff and Carrol (2004: 46-7) point to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), where it is evident that in response to what developing state perceive as the World Bank's preferred development strategies, different states produce an almost universal document in terms of both language and policy recommendations. The PRSP process further facilitates the significance of global best practices for tertiary education reform (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 46-7). Other scholars note that the World Bank's approach to the promotion of knowledge economies do not follow the imposition model of the past, but rather encourage 'emulation', or 'normalisation' around a given standard (Robertson 2008: 9: Dale 1999).

Indeed, Samoff and Carrol (2004: 35-6) point to an enduring "standard set of recommendations" being promoted by the World Bank, based on neo-liberalism, which is commonly presented as "best practice". These are: a reduced role for government, including lower funding; fee-paying students; privatisation; a 'more relevant curriculum' (i.e. more science and less humanities); and enhanced sector sensitivity to labour market expectations and changes (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 35). This paper offers a revised version of these global best practices, better reflecting changes in neo-liberalism's relationship to the state over the last 30 years, though in fairness to Samoff and Carrol their position may reflect World Bank politics, rather than policies. Some of these revisions can also be derived from Samoff and Carrol (2004: 37), who do argue that in these best practices, the role of government is limited to facilitating the market and preventing market failure, but recognise that in practice this involves an enhanced role for the state, including creating an 'enabling environment' and managing 'incentives' (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 16; World Bank 2002: 72). This includes state provision of "a safety net for the most disadvantaged" (Samoff and Carrol 2004: 37). The revised global best practices for tertiary education reform are:

1) A transformation of the role of the state in tertiary education based on the provision of governance, coordination and networking.
2) Private sector participation, public-private partnerships, and privatisation.
3) Fee-paying students with a system of public support (through loans) for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
4) Mechanisms to promote the teaching and learning of science subjects, and scientific research.

5) Enhanced sector sensitivity to labour market expectations and changes.

This paper concerns itself with these global best practices for tertiary education reform by addressing a recent World Bank document regarding tertiary education in Africa: *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2009). This document states that "country conditions will matter in the design of the reform package", yet on the same page advocates for "country strategies that are informed by global good practice" (World Bank 2009: x). Problems with and contradictions within the promotion of these global best practices are elucidated, however, the main focus is on the first of these best practices, which addresses the transformation of the role of the state regarding tertiary education. This is of particular significance because it involves both an explicit transformation of the role of the state *per se*, and an implicit transformation of the role of the state within neo-liberalism. This paper concerns what global best practices for the tertiary education sector tell us about neo-liberalism as much as vice-versa. What is most interesting about *Accelerating Catch-up* is the use of the "National Innovation Systems" or NIS framework to engage with the transforming role of the state. Explaining NIS within a neo-liberal framework is a challenge this paper takes up, after providing a general overview of *Accelerating Catch-up* in the light of these global best practices, and the problems of promoting knowledge economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

National Innovation Systems (NIS)

Accelerating Catch-up argues that the emergence of a "globally competitive, knowledge-based economy" has resulted in the increased importance of "networked national innovation systems" (World Bank 2009: 51). The capacity expansion of the tertiary education sector in sub-Saharan Africa, then, is central to the emergence of a "national innovation system", as well as to "technological catch-up" (World Bank 2009: xxv). The idea of building national innovation systems (NIS) as a development strategy finds both theoretically and empirical support in the literature (Chaminade and Edquist 2006; Freeman 1987: Lundvall 1992). Much of the findings of comparative political economy scholarship, especially those grounded in the rapid development of East and Southeast Asia, can be expressed in these terms (source). National innovation systems are comprised of both actors – individuals and a range of organisations – and institutions – the formal and informal rules, norms, laws and regulations that govern the relations and interactions between actors (Chaminade and Edquist 2006: 141-2; North 1990).

John Zysman (1996: 167-70) argues that national innovation systems have survived the globalisation of markets. States do not converge: they engage in technological specialisation, even within industry sectors, and the source of innovation remains national in character, decisively reflecting distinct national technological capabilities (Zysman 1996: 167). These capabilities remain entrenched in national institutional and social arrangements – networked systems of individuals and organisations, limited by the supply of resources and finance (Zysman 1996: 167-8). They induce behaviour by generating incentive structures, determining the costs and benefits of particular forms of behaviour, and creating "nationally specific patterns of industrial adjustment and economic development" (Zysman 1996: 169; 178). Nelson (1993) also uses the NIS framework to explain disparities between investment, innovation and economic outcomes across states. This is not a static analysis however: Zysman (1996: 177-8) explains systemic change through 'punctuated equilibrium' – where institutions and rules can shift to new paths, changing incentives and behaviour, and hence political and economic dynamics. Organisations can easily be changed, but institutions are more difficult to address, such that punctuation of this equilibrium requires either a crisis, widespread capacity mismatches, or changes in national production profiles, which in turn change the kind of actors and their interests (Zysman 179-80).

The idea of national innovations systems as an approach to underpin development strategies in Africa is appealing to comparative political economists for several reasons. First and foremost, such systems will obviously be adapted and suited directly to national political economies – whereby the availability of different resources, human, physical and financial capital, and a range of social and political institutions ensure that 'one size fits all' development strategies were flawed from their inception (Stiglitz 2008: 53; Clapham 1996: 819). Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980 were seen to fail (Clapham 1996: 811-5; Williams and Young 1994: 89-90; World Bank 1989), as were the political reform programmes of 'good governance' during the Asian economic crisis (Higgott 2000: 277; Feldstein 1998: 31; Wade 1998: 1542-5). Sector by sector emulation of global best practices must also be seen as inherently problematic: the national innovation systems (NIS) approach accepts the view that convergence is not necessarily desirable, let alone feasible.

Rather, competitive advantage hinges on the divergence between states in their national innovation systems, reflecting the different strengths that can be brought to bear through this national political economy. While lessons may well be learned (such as from tertiary education sector links to business), emulation of another states national innovation system is likely to be less fruitful than capitalising on an existing institutional base to build such a system. Sub-Saharan African states, in building their own national innovation systems, need to promote organisations and form beneficial linkages between them in ways that reflect their particular, national configuration of resources, capital and institutions. Indeed, Robert Wade's classic *Governing the Market* draws very similar lessons from the East Asian 'miracle', as applied to states with far less institutional capacity, such as are found in sub-Saharan Africa (Wade 1990: 377-81). Consequently, support can be found for NIS as an innovative development strategy, beyond the tertiary education context. As suggested in the introduction, NIS implies wider changes in the way in which neo-liberalism conceives of and promotes development policy. Most fundamentally, NIS implies an enhanced role for the state, a broader conception of what the role of the neo-liberal 'enabling' state actually entails.

The first of the global best practices for tertiary education sector reform is a transformation of the role of the state, based on the provision of governance, coordination and networking. *Accelerating Catch-up* approaches this through the framework of nation innovation systems (NIS), defined as "a melding of institutional capacities, coordination mechanisms, communication networks, and policy incentives that fosters innovation-led gains in economic productivity" (World Bank 2009: 69). NIS are constituted by complementary institutions, facilitated by coordinating mechanisms, with innovation and adaptation (institutional learning) able to occur anywhere in the system (World Bank 2009: 81). Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the World Bank, is developing NIS: multi-sectoral policy frameworks to promote science, technology and innovation, linked to enhanced human capital (World Bank 2009: 70).

According to *Accelerating Catch-up*, in the NIS approach, the state becomes 'merely a facilitator of funding' (World Bank 2009: 51). However, *Accelerating Catch-up* also argues for increased state expenditure on research and development (World Bank 2009: 55). Furthermore, *Accelerating Catch-up* uses the NIS approach to highlight the need for the state to create "incentives for tertiary institutions and firms to collaborate in garnering technological capability", and for cooperation between the tertiary sector and business, industry and non-government organisations, such as has occurred in Asia, as well as policies to link universities to science parks (World Bank 2009: xxix-xxx; 6; 54). Certainly, efforts in this direction are accelerating in OECD states, but deciding which incentives will work, and which can be emulated or adapted to sub-Saharan Africa requires serious and detailed consideration, as the literature on policy transfer (cited above) suggests. Even more problematic is the idea of "setting up institutions for disseminating and commercializing the fruits of research" (World Bank 2009: xxx). From the perspective of the 'bridging research and policy' literature this is a positive step forward, but it must be recognised that building bridging institutions is a problem, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where once again widespread adaptation would undoubtedly be needed (Livny *et al* 2006; Stone *et al* 2001).

In regard to the coordination role of the state, the World Bank's proposed strategy in fact transcends the state, and calls for inter-state cooperation at a regional level. *Accelerating Catch-up* hinges on the establishment of economies of scale in education, achieved through specialisation of different sub-Saharan African states university systems, avoiding investment overlaps. The World Bank recognises that no single sub-Saharan African state can meet its own technical training needs for the development of knowledge economies, yet alone the needs of the entire continent. However, with appropriate coordination or regional partnerships, these needs could be provided (World Bank 2009: xxiv). Furthermore, in theory at least, structural differentiation would allow greater choice and flexibility, allowing tertiary education providers to specialise and adapt quickly to a globalised education marketplace as well as to changing labour market conditions (World Bank 2009: 94-5), which is the fifth global best practice for the tertiary education sector.

However, this is not a standard approach in tertiary education, and could clash with accreditation requirements (World Bank 2009: 94-5), to which flexibility is somewhat contradictory. Furthermore, coordination of investments is a difficult proposition anywhere, as bio-tech investment agreements between different states of Australia might demonstrate (source). It might be necessary to start with communicative forums out of which cooperation could grow. These could also emulate existing systems of cooperation in Africa (Sall and Ndjaye 2008: 50-2), such as East African Central Banking where annual conferences and meetings allow learning to take place (source). Furthermore, some of the European tertiary education cooperation models (Marie-Curie or Erasmus) are necessary responses to the small size of national markets, and could be emulated (Sall and Ndjaye 2008: 50-2).

Conclusion: The World Bank and Neo-Liberalism in Transition.

The idea of neo-liberalism as an ideology in transition (Cerny 2010: 129-36; Carroll 2010) rather than a fixed and monolithic approach is not particularly controversial. As the transition from structural adjustment in the 1980s to good governance in the 1990s demonstrates, neo-liberalism has changed before. It is the role of the state that is in transition, while the neo-liberal view of the market remains central, and largely unchanged (Carroll 2010: 2; Cerny 2010: 146-7). On top of the rise of good governance, another key World Bank document – *The East Asian Miracle* (1993) – can be seen as a key step in the changing conception of the state (Berger and Beeson 1998: 495-7; Jomo 1994: 647-8) in the 1990s that was solidified in the World Bank's 1997 World Development Report *The State in a Changing World*. Contemporary scholarship however points to post good-governance changes in neo-liberalism, variously referred to as 'socio-neo-liberalism' (Cerny *et al* 2005: 201), 'neo-liberal regulationist' (Cerny 2010: 128; Plehwe *et al* 2006) or 'socio-institutional neo-liberalism' (Carroll 2010: 2). As with good governance, these aim at avoiding the legitimacy crisis that earlier neo-liberal reforms faced, prevent political backlashes, and so 'lock-in' neo-liberalism (Gamble 2000: 112; Gill 1998: 23; Polanyi 1944). New constitutionalists and regulatory governance scholars see a form of 'regulatory capitalism', characterised by the 'regulatory state', emerging from these posts-good governance forms of neo-liberalism (Cerny 2010: 145-7; Levi-Faur 2005; Jordana and Levi-Faur 2004; Jayasuriya 1999; Gill 1998; Majone 1997). Carroll (2010: 8) sees no role at all for the neo-liberal state in redistributive policies able to address market injustices. However, this does not fit with either World Bank tertiary education policy or practice, where educational support for poorer citizens is clearly supported, but within a neo-liberal framework of promoting greater levels of competitiveness.

Neo-liberalism is the framework through which knowledge economies are translated in to sub-Saharan Africa. Robertson (2008: 2-3) critiques the World Bank's knowledge economy model precisely because it fails to constitute a progressive ideal that can put adequate distance between the World Bank's neo-liberal past and its current tertiary education policy matrix, and thus will exacerbate global inequalities. This paper seeks to go beyond the critiques and defences of the World Bank's neo-liberal, global best practices policy matrix for the tertiary education sector, to examine how this matrix reflects upon changes within neo-liberalism itself. *Accelerating Catch-up*, in promoting the national innovation systems (NIS) framework for the delivery of these global best practices, implies a further transition in the role of the state beyond that of good governance.

The global best practices approach, whatever its merits, it clearly in tension with the NIS framework through which the first global best practice – the enhanced role of the state – is being understood. The NIS model, following Zysman (1996), seeks to develop competitive advantage based on differences between national systems of political economy, and this would be undermined by attempts to conform to a system of standards or benchmarks such as global best practices. Rather, states build on their existing institutional systems to develop something innovative and original to differentiate themselves from their neighbours. This also create tensions for Africa-wide cooperation, unless this cooperation (like in Australian bio-tech investment agreements between states) – is to differentiate national economies. One of the perverse outcomes of the global best practices approach is that while differentiated tertiary education structures in sub-Saharan Africa is explicitly supported by the World Bank, as well as in the broader literature (Mohamedbhai 2011: 20-1), this is not the outcome of reform processes in practice.

My overall reading points to this NIS approach as the interesting, core political economy of the tertiary education strategy advocated in *Accelerating Catch-up*, though this is far from clearly set out in the executive summary. The World Bank's tendency towards single pathways to development remains evident. *Accelerating Catch-up* needs to decide whether the approach it advocates is the 'only' feasible strategy through which sub-Saharan Africa can achieve its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets (source) (World Bank 2009: xx), 'possibly the only' approach (World Bank 2009: xxii), or an approach sub-Saharan Africa states 'may be able to' adopt (World Bank 2009: xxi). This document would do better to recognise the multiple pathways to development, but nevertheless, a strategy which promotes human capital and seeks to generate high-skill industrial sectors is one that African states may prefer to past World Bank policy matrices.

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