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## **EVALUATING THE CROSS-NATIONAL TRANSFERABILITY OF POLICIES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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When seeking to harness entrepreneurship and enterprise culture, governments often seek to transfer policy measures successful in another country to their own. Until now however, governments have often lacked a practical evaluation framework for selecting policy measures and then appraising the feasibility and transferability of such measures. The aim of this paper is to fill that gap. Reviewing the literature on cross-national policy transfer, this paper provides a pragmatic evaluation framework for selecting policy measures and appraising their feasibility and transferability from one country to another. This details how successful policy transfer and cross-national policy learning must be informed by prospective policy analysis and testing the features of the specific policy initiative against the specifics of the national context and circumstances, and then establishes the criteria and processes through which potential policy adopters can identify promising policies used elsewhere to tackle similar problems in their own country and assess their 'goodness of fit' prior to transfer to national realities.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; enterprise culture; policy transfer; policy appraisal.

### **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, there have been many calls for a process of mutual learning between countries with regard to establishing an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish (Engle et al., 2011; Gupta et al. 2012; Hudak, 2012; Munemo, 2012; Nguyen et al 2009). This process of mutual learning has commonly involved governments seeking to identify successful policy initiatives in other nations that can be transferred to their own country (Heinonen et al., 2010; Leitão and Baptista, 2009; Ribeiro-Soriano and Galindo-Martín, 2012; Robson et al., 2009). Indeed, the selecting of policy measures from other nations for transfer to other countries has been widely and variously used in recent years to foster not only women's entrepreneurship (Dodescu et al 2011; Rabbani and Chowdhury, 2013), but also entrepreneurship education (Akpan et al, 2012; Berglund and Holmgren, 2013), social entrepreneurship (Katzenstein and Chrispin, 2011) and the formalisation of informal sector entrepreneurship (Williams and Nadin, 2012a,b, 2014; Williams et al., 2013) to name but

a few. Reinforcing this tendency to seek best practice in one country for transfer to others, supranational organizations such as the World Bank have played an active role in facilitating this mutual learning and encouraging the transfer of policies from one nation to another, not least through its Doing Business Surveys which often pinpoint successful policy initiatives in specific countries that other nations might replicate in their own (World Bank, 2013). Until now however, governments seeking to appraise the feasibility and transferability of policy measures to their own country have often lacked a practical evaluation framework for selecting and appraising policy measures. The aim of this paper is to fill that gap by providing a pragmatic evaluation framework for selecting policy measures and appraising their feasibility and transferability from one country to another.

To commence therefore, section 2 defines what is meant by policy transfer and outlines the different forms such policy transfer can take. Section 3 then reviews both the obstacles and factors for success of policy transfer followed in section 4 by an overview of the process of prospective policy evaluation. This is then followed in section 5 by a review of the methodological aspects related to the prospective evaluation of policies for potential transfer, and the development of a practical framework for assessing the applicability and transferability of policy measures to a target country. The outcome in section 6 will be firstly, to reveal that successful policy transfer and cross-national policy learning should be informed by prospective policy analysis and testing the features of the specific program against the specifics of the national context and circumstances and secondly, it establishes criteria and processes through which potential policy adopters could identify promising policies used elsewhere to tackle similar problems and assess their 'goodness of fit' prior to transfer to national realities. Section 7 then briefly draws some conclusions about the way forward for governments seeking to appraise the feasibility and transferability of policy approaches and measures from one country to another.

## **2. Forms of policy transfer**

Policy transfer is traditionally defined as "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" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 344). The subjects of transfer from one country to another can be "almost anything", including "policy goals, structure and content; policy instruments or administrative techniques; institutions; ideology; ideas, attitudes and concepts; and negative lessons" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 349-350).

Cross-national policy comparisons and drawing lessons from foreign experiences can contribute to innovation and improving the quality and rationality of domestic policy-making. In that sense, policy transfer is often associated with rational approaches to policy-making, based on the notion that decisions should be based on evidence of "what works", instead of a particular ideology. Numerous scholars therefore view cross-national policy transfer as a form of policy-oriented learning and lesson-drawing, where a lesson

is “a detailed cause-and-effect description of a set of actions that government can consider in the light of experience elsewhere” (Rose 1993: 27). However, the extensive literature on policy transfer and lesson-drawing recognizes a number of problems associated with the process of extrapolating “lessons” and best practices and applying them to a different context, as will now be briefly shown.

The motivations underpinning the decision to borrow policies from other countries can be positioned on a continuum from “want to” at one extreme to “have to” at the other (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000: 9). On the one hand, voluntary policy transfer draws on the assumption that policy actors rationally choose to search for solutions from other countries for potential utilization in their own country, aimed at innovation or optimization of existing policies (Rose, 1991). This can be catalyzed by dissatisfaction with local circumstances, uncertainty about the course of action during a crisis or legitimization needs (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). On the other hand, coercive, conditioned or obligated policy transfer implies transposing external rules under “external inducement” or compulsion to conform. Typical examples of the latter are firstly, when structural adjustments policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund impose courses of action on countries and secondly, and in particular with reference to the European Union (EU), when EU rules are transposed onto potential EU candidate countries. Indeed, Randma-Liiv (2005) distinguishes between demand-oriented and supply-oriented policy transfer. In the latter case, the availability/supply of solutions determines what will be transferred upon the initiative of external actors, while the “importers”, often under pressure, do not necessarily consider any alternatives and display different degrees of participation in co-designing policies. A typical example is the post-communist welfare transformation in Eastern European countries in line with models prescribed by international financial organizations, or obligated transposition of EU rule.

Rose (1991, 1993, 2005) explores the different modes of policy transfer in terms of the extent to which a certain model is adapted during the transfer and how it is used to shape domestic policies. As Table 1 displays, he distinguishes between five broad categories of lesson-drawing, ranging from copying the original program without much change to using a foreign idea as an inspiration for designing one’s own program.

Table 1. Types of lesson-drawing

Type of lesson-drawing	Description
Copying	Enacting more or less intact a program already in effect in another jurisdiction
Adaptation	Adjusting for contextual differences a program already in effect in another jurisdiction
Hybridization	Combining elements of programs from two different places
Synthesis	Combining familiar elements from programs in a number of

	different places to create a new program
Inspiration	Using programs elsewhere as an intellectual stimulus to develop a novel program

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Source: adopted from Rose (1993: 30).

While some of the earlier research on policy transfer focused on what motivates policy transfer (the “why” factor), as discussed above, more recently there has been a turn towards studying in more detail the process of “how” lesson-drawing occurs or should occur, by addressing the question: “Under what circumstances and to what extent can a program that is effective in one place transfer to another” (Rose 1991: 3). Rose (2004: 9) suggests ten steps policy actors can follow to extrapolate lessons from foreign experience in the process of adjusting beliefs and redefining policy approaches:

- (i) Learn the key concepts: what a program is and what a lesson is (and is not);
- (ii) Catch the attention of policy-makers;
- (iii) Scan alternatives and decide where to look for lessons;
- (iv) Learn by going abroad;
- (v) Abstract a generalized model of how a foreign program works;
- (vi) Turn the model into a lesson fitting your own national context;
- (vii) Decide whether the lesson should be adopted;
- (viii) Decide whether the lesson can be applied;
- (ix) Simplify the means and ends of a lesson for greater chances of success; and
- (x) Evaluate a lesson’s outcome prospectively and as it evolves over time.

This process may lead not only to transfer in any of the five different forms outlined above, but also to policy termination based on negative lessons learned.

Systematic lesson-drawing in this model therefore entails scanning alternatives, and deciding where to look for lessons, understanding how a foreign program works, abstracting generalizable models and mechanisms and assessing their applicability and transferability to the domestic context. As Robertson (1991: 55) points out however, “the degree to which a population of polities adopts a particular lesson will be a function of the program’s economic and political feasibility”. Indeed, as the following section shows, such a systematic prospective evaluation and adaptation is rarely possible in reality due to a number of intellectual and political challenges which are associated with attempting to do so.

### **3. Obstacles and factors for success of policy transfer**

Success and failure of policy transfer have been widely discussed in the literature, although the differentiation, as well as the casual nexus, between transfer outcomes and policy outcomes is not always clear (Stone, 2012; Evans, 2009). It is argued that transfer involving more complex conceptual forms of learning through deeper understanding of foreign models would produce more successful domestic policy solutions. However, the

processes of searching for policies to transfer, identifying promising models and assessing their feasibility pose a number of challenges (Page and Lawson, 2007; Dwyer and Ellison, 2009).

The political and economic resources of the “borrowing” country to implement the policy are crucial for the success of transfer (Robertson, 1991), as well as its bureaucratic size and efficiency (Rose, 1993). The borrowing of an idea or model “does not mean it can bypass the complexities of policy making including the need for policy makers to mobilize political support” or “make compromises with affected interests” (Page and Lawson, 2007: 49). This is why patterns of policy borrowing tend to follow (prior) ideological alignments: “policy models that affirm and extend dominant paradigms, and which consolidate powerful interests, are more likely to travel with the following wind of hegemonic compatibility or imprimatur status” (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 170; Robertson, 1991).

The transferability of a particular program from one setting to another is mainly affected by its complexity (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Rose (1993: 132-4) suggests six hypotheses in this respect:

- programs with single goals are more transferable than programs with multiple goals;
- the simpler the problem the more likely transfer will occur;
- the more direct the relationship between the problem and the ‘solution’ is perceived to be the more likely it is to be transferred;
- the fewer the perceived side-effects of a policy the greater the possibility of transfer;
- the more information agents have about how a program operates in another location the easier it is to transfer; and
- the more easily outcomes can be predicted the simpler a program is to transfer.

According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000: 17) there are three major factors for policy transfer failure. “Uninformed transfer” occurs when the borrowing country has insufficient information about how the policy operates in the donor country. Another form of potentially unsuccessful outcome is “incomplete transfer”, when key features of what made the policy successful in the original setting are not transferred. When there is a limited fit between the social, economic, political and ideological contexts of the transferring and borrowing settings, an “inappropriate transfer” is likely to occur.

Policy-makers willing to learn and borrow policy models from other countries have at their disposal an ever growing “market” of best practices and benchmarking measures. International organizations such as the World Bank, OECD and EU have a significant role in the “soft” diffusion of such instruments (e.g., Williams, 2014a,b). While “best practice” research widens the potential range of solutions to problems and provides “shortcuts” to often demanding and time-consuming scanning exercises, it is also the case that best practice studies often contain methodological problems (Bardach, 1994: 260), especially because they tend to blend out contextual variables. Radaelli (2004) views critically the growing popularity of the “identifying best practices” model in EU and OECD circles. He notes that they are highly attractive from a political point of view as

they grant legitimacy and are expected to address a need to deal with uncertainty, yet at the costs of efficiency and genuine policy learning. Indeed, Radaelli (2004: 726) warns of the risks and limitation of the method of benchmarking based on a synthesis of the experiences of several countries and the “labelling” of certain models as “best practices” or success-recipes with total “fungibility” potential. This can have the negative effect of “de-contextualizing” the problem to be solved, and inhibit “a real forum for learning from different, context-sensitive national experiences”. Institutional legacies, state traditions and dominant legal cultures are easily neglected in this way (Radaelli, 2004: 726). He concludes that policy success is a holistic phenomenon with a complex explanation, depending on the particular “alchemy” of a wide range of factors. From this perspective, the lesson-drawing approach should be preferred over the “best practices” (or success-oriented) model, as the former recognizes the obstacles and limitations of cross-national learning and emphasizes the importance of contextualized learning.

Evans (2009: 247-8) develops a framework of factors that constrain policy transfer, distinguishing between cognitive and environmental factors. Cognitive obstacles refer to “the process by which public policy problems are recognized and defined in the pre-decision phase, the breadth and detail of the search conducted for ideas, the receptivity of existing policy actors and systems to policy alternatives and the complexity of choosing an alternative”. Environmental obstacles, on the other hand, can be structural (socio-economic, political, institutional) and technical, as well as the ability to mobilize elites and public support. Technical constraints in implementation include “the incorporation of an adequate causal theory of policy development; the sensible allocation of financial resources; hierarchical integration within and among implementing organizations; clear decision rules underpinning the operation of implementing agencies; the recruitment of program officers with adequate skills/training; sufficient technical support; and the use of effective monitoring and evaluation systems including formal access by outsiders” (Evans, 2009: 248).

In practice nevertheless, the process of systematically drawing lessons is often limited to the availability of information and existing awareness of examples/countries to consider, while finding out how policies work elsewhere is time-consuming and intellectually challenging. The main difficulties with the first phase of searching for prospective policies used elsewhere include: the lack of information about how foreign programs work and how they achieve their objectives; the absence of formal impact evaluations that would allow assessing their success; the lack of time and resources to engage in systematic analysis of alternatives; the high degree of uncertainty about desired policy outcomes in the borrowing setting, and imprecise problem definition. Furthermore, the political “windows of opportunity” to place an idea on the agenda presents an additional constraint (Page and Mark-Lawson, 2007). Policy-makers and analysts therefore often apply “shortcuts” and “heuristics” when using foreign evidence or experiences to react to local contingencies at the expense of deeper cognitive learning that would trigger a change in perspective. Some commonly applied strategies are to consider “smart ideas”, basic and loosely defined concepts as inspiration for developing

or complementing their own programs (Page and Mark-Lawson, 2007). Some common messages from the literature regarding the success factors of policy transfer have been synthesized by Stead et al. (2009) as follows:

- Inspiration from several examples is better than from just one. Looking across several examples can help to identify the useful and constructive elements of each of them and allow the various policy actors to enter into a process of negotiation regarding appropriate policy options.
- Making a literal copy of one example is unlikely to succeed. Such an approach is not generally conducive to generating locally suitable solutions or implementation mechanisms.
- Strong domestic champions and change agents (or “policy entrepreneurs”) are often necessary to achieve policy change. Their creativity and agility in dealing with other (sometimes more powerful) policy actors can make a big difference to policy outcomes.
- Transferring policies from legally and culturally kindred nations should in principle be easier to achieve than from countries that are very different. However, even similar countries have subtly different preferences, circumstances and institutional arrangements, which are often not well anticipated.
- Policy ideas, solutions, models, programs or instruments invariably have to be incorporated in the existing institutional structure of the recipient constituency. Adopting generic ideas or instruments provides leeway for making refinements that are appropriate to the formal and informal institutional environment.

#### **4. The process of prospective policy evaluation**

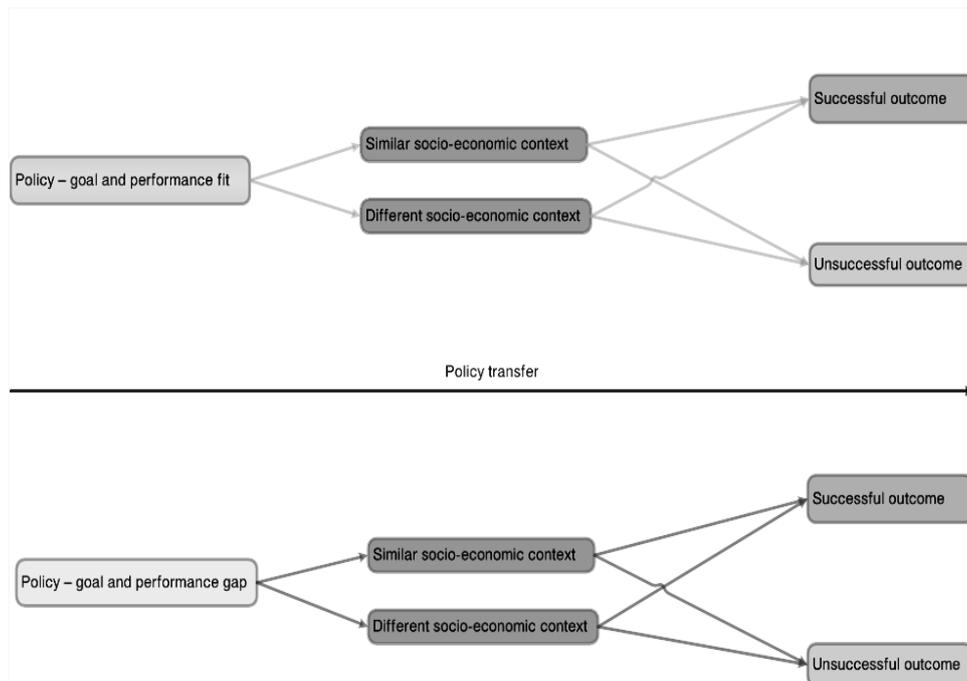
Mossberger and Wolman (2003) suggest a framework of rational criteria for assessing the process of policy transfer as a form of prospective policy evaluation. The first stage is information gathering or awareness, whereas the scope and accuracy of the information are variables impacting on the ability to assess its utility. Study visits and consultations with local experts are a common way of gathering first-hand information. Case studies of transfer of more complex programs (e.g., the transfer of the US welfare-to-work programs by the Thatcher government in the UK) show that borrowers disposed of very detailed information from a wide range of sources (Dolowitz, 1998). Information diffusion is facilitated by expert communities and networks and can contribute to broader awareness of policy options from several countries. Decision makers can improve their selection of examples through a process that Etzioni (1967) calls “mixed scanning”. The idea is to conduct a broad survey of the field as a first step, then to select one or a few models for reasons that are important to the potential borrower. Filtering criteria may include: the similarity in problems; policy performance, or the proximity in socio-economic and political development. This selectivity is a necessary “heuristic” to quickly narrow down the scope of options available, as opposed to systematic scanning. This is also the approach adopted by our project team.

The second phase of policy transfer is policy assessment, where the following need to be considered (Mossberger and Wolman, 2003):

- Similarity in problems and goals;
- Policy performance (including lessons from “failure”), and
- Differences in settings.

Mossberger and Wolman (2003) note that that even if differences in problems and goals exist with respect to certain policies, a transfer may still be considered. As Figure 1 displays, even if this type of transfer does not reduce uncertainty over outcomes, the policy in question may bear innovation potential even if considerable adaptation is required.

Figure1. Policy transfer: possible theoretical scenarios



Indeed, it is often the case that what is transferred are a few general similarities or ideas rather than specific policy designs. However, vague policy labels “invite application to a number of different problems” and can be fitted to numerous purposes which in turn presents difficulties in making a precise judgment about the policy’s feasibility. When looking at how such vague concepts have been applied in practice in different settings, one can discover a wide range of policy designs, which makes it difficult to generalize how the core mechanism works. One example is the “voucher scheme” in the field of formalizing informal sector entrepreneurship, which has been applied in a number of EU member states with large disparities in terms of concrete implementation features, target groups, types of work covered, objectives and outcomes (Williams, 2014c). In fact,

evaluating policy performance is the most challenging feature of the prospective evaluation, especially when program goals are unclear and there are a number of designs operating under the same label (Mossberger and Wolman, 2003: 433). It may prove difficult to assess the objectivity of different types of evidence and testimonies, especially (but not only) in the absence of formal systematic performance audits.

The last category of factors to be examined – differences in settings – captures a variety of contextual variables, such as political, social, and economic institutions, political culture, public opinion, available resources, and the existence of other policies that affect efficacy. The crucial role of these factors cannot be over-emphasized as they may potentially affect the effectiveness and the political viability of the prospective policy. A common criticism in case studies of policy transfer is the lack of sufficient understanding of how the policy interacts with the domestic policy infrastructure, culture, belief systems and norms (Dolowitz, 2000; Mossberger and Wolman, 2003). Based on a review of previous case studies of policy transfer, Mossberger and Wolman (2003) offer a number of practical recommendations for practitioners engaging in policy transfer and evaluation, acknowledging that bounded-rationality heuristics are more likely to be used than systematic methods. For example, seeking expert consultations in the absence of formal evaluations may be a viable option when evaluating the prospective policy, or identifying criticism and evidence of implementation problems when quantitative impact data is lacking.

Given this identification of what is meant by policy transfer, the obstacles and success factors involved, and the provision of a framework of rational criteria for assessing the process of policy transfer as a form of prospective policy evaluation, attention now turns to looking in more detail at how the numerous variables related to the policy's characteristics and its context, as outlined above, can be operationalized to evaluate the transferability and applicability of prospective policies after an initial scan and selection of candidates for transfer has been made. The intention here is to derive from the literature a practical framework of analytical questions which can be applied when appraising policy measures that establish an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish.

## **5. Approaches to assessing policy transferability and applicability**

One of the key problems with extrapolating (transferable) lessons from foreign experience about what to do in order to establish an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish is to strike a balance between de-contextualization and over-contextualization of potential foreign policies. This tension is widely recognized in broader policy evaluation research, where the trend increasingly is to use mixed approaches of summative and formative evaluations of complex policy interventions. The first option of de-contextualizing potential policies for transfer has been found to prevail in those studies which focus too much on outputs, results and impacts, which result in a blending out of the contextual variables. Meanwhile, the second option of over-contextualizing potential policies for transfer has been found to

prevail in those studies which over-emphasizes the narrative regarding the 'how' of the success or failure of a certain intervention (Pawson, 2002). If one continuously considers interventions to be too contingent upon the context in which they are put into practice, one would never be able to make any generalization about their potential utility in another context. However, if one fails to understand the variables that make it unique to the context in which it operates, one risks adopting and adapting a policy that is unsuitable for the context in which one wishes it to be implemented. There is thus a need, to reiterate, to strike a balance between the de-contextualization and over-contextualization of potential policies that might be transferred.

In order to assess how successful or not a policy is, one thus needs to ask not only is it working (what are the outcomes), but also "what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and how" (Pawson et al, 2005, 21). The same rationale applies to the quest for "best practices" cross-nationally. Asking "How does this system manage to work at all?" should be replaced with "Given that it works in thus-and-such a way, how can we make it work better and/or prevent it from breaking down, backfiring, or falling victim to distortion and abuse?" (Bardach, 2004: 263). This is well-rehearsed within the policy evaluation literature, where these two sets of questions are at the core of the two major evaluation types: summative evaluations (which are focused on outputs) and formative evaluations (focused on processes). Table 2

Table 2 Summative and Formative Approaches to Policy Evaluation

Type of evaluation	Evaluation question	Methods
Summative (impact- and outcome-focused)	Does it work?	Quantitative methods (meta-analysis, systematic review and synthesis, micro-simulation, experiments, piloting, impact assessments, statistical controls)
Formative (process-focused)	How does it work? (in what respect, for whom and under what circumstances)	Qualitative methods (narrative review, interviews, focus-groups, case studies, observation, Delphi consultations, etc.)

Source: adapted from Walker and Duncan (2007) and Walker (2004).

The policy evaluation literature suggests that policy programs should be viewed and analyzed as the product of how core mechanisms interact with context (Pawson et al., 2005):

$$\text{Mechanism (M)} \leftrightarrow \text{Context (C)} = \text{Outcome (O)}$$

According to Pawson et al. (2005), realist evaluations of complex policies need to make a synthesis of these two questions, by first making “explicit the programme theory (or theories) - the underlying assumptions about how an intervention is meant to work and what impacts it is expected to have”. This theoretical understanding is then combined or juxtaposed with the empirical evidence, in order to explain “the relationship between the context in which the intervention is applied, the mechanisms by which it works and the outcomes which are produced”. In this manner, the evaluation allows account to be taken of the program’s theory (causal mechanism) and its embeddedness in the social system.

This formula (Mechanism + Context = Outcome) can be rendered useful when foreign programs are being considered for potential adoption in another setting. Since one needs to de-contextualize the policy in order to render it feasible for another national context, what is key is to understand the core mechanism through which it works, and then to analyze what context-specific factors lead to particular outcomes, since if one only looks at outcomes, the main factors for its success are missed that can be made transferable. Mechanisms are not the same as policy measures or programs. One program can have several mechanisms (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). Mechanisms are “the triggers of the change in (the motivation of) actors’ behaviour derived from some sort of reflection about the new situation they find themselves in” (Buseti et al., 2013: 4). Hence, when assessing the transferability and feasibility of programs within efforts to replicate their success elsewhere, Pawson and Tilley (2004) suggest looking at a number of indicators, starting from the salient features of the innovation in the original setting, and then working through a number of contextualizing factors such as resources, people, institutional and environmental factors, procedures, and finally outcomes, identifying observed and prospective mismatches between the donor and target settings.

Tizot (2010) explores the problem of over-contextualization with respect to the transfer of social policies, which often are deemed barely transferable as they are considered too “idiosyncratic”, ideological and context-dependent to be adequately described and sufficiently understood by foreign observers, let alone adapted to another setting. He argues that one needs to “distinguish between the context-specific elements and the more adaptable ones within each policy programme” (Tizot, 2010: 316) by “looking for ‘contextualization effects’, and then comparing them between countries. The transfer of more adaptable, less context-specific variables and parameters in the compared policies may be supposed to be easier than whole policies”. This entails identifying “functional areas” of the policies, or mechanisms through which they operate (Tizot, 2010). Bardach (2004), in a similar vein, suggests that the foreign policy intervention evaluated for transfer should be broken down into two types of elements: basic causal mechanisms and contingent features, as Table 3 displays.

Table 1. Examining how programs work: key elements

Causal mechanisms	Contingent features	Effects, vulnerabilities
Basic mechanism (causal power, transferable)	Support or directly implement the basic mechanism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing features</li> <li>• Optional features (no essential functional role)</li> <li>• Supportive features (budget, infrastructure, etc.)</li> </ul>	Intended effects (effectiveness and cost-effectiveness) Secondary benefits and costs

Source: adapted from Bardach (2004).

The idea is that what is variously referred to as basic casual mechanisms (Bardach, 2004; Pawson and Tilley, 2004), functional areas (Tizot, 2010), generic concepts (Rose, 1993) or ‘smart practices’ (Ongoro, 2009), are those elements of a policy that are generally more transferable, as opposed to contingent features which are not. Ongoro (2009: 7) concludes that the analysis of the contextual factors enables the identification of the “domain of applicability” of the practices. Smart practices are generalizable (in the sense that they apply beyond the specific situation), but at the same time they work under specified conditions, termed “context factors”. In this sense, policy learning is not about assessing effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, but about understanding “the ‘basic mechanisms’ underlying effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of what a source site has done – assuming, of course, that what they have done is indeed effective and cost-effective” (Bardach, 2004: 218.). The idea is that such basic mechanisms would work in a similar way in different settings, although they can be triggered by “different institutional contrivances” (Busetti et al., 2013: 4).

## **6. Towards a practical framework for evaluating policy transferability and applicability**

Considering the above, we here conclude by suggesting a practical framework for the rapid appraisal of prospective policy measures. This practical framework incorporates the concepts of causal mechanisms as well as contingent/contextualizing factors, as outlined above. These are here translated into two sets of indicators: transferability and applicability. The approach of using rapid appraisal is not intended to entail a full-blown evaluation of policy effects, outcomes and processes because in the field of fostering entrepreneurship and enterprise culture, proper impact assessments that would tell us how programs have performed in the original settings are more often than not notable by their absence. Instead, the goal in this practical framework is to focus on appraising the core ideas behind policy measures and how these fit with the current needs in the recipient country, as well as the possible implementation and enforcement obstacles and opportunities. In that sense, this conceptual framework is extrapolating the more general ideas and inspirations for innovation and improvement in harnessing entrepreneurship and enterprise culture, instead of comprehensive policy designs. The two main categories

here, namely transferability and applicability, capture well the above discussed notions of causal mechanisms and contextualizing factors. The transferability question assesses the generalizability of the hypothetical policy goal and intended effects in the original context and asks if its “core mechanisms” are suitable for solving identified problems in the target setting. Meanwhile, the applicability question controls for the contextualizing factors of a prospective policy in the local setting, assessing factors such as political and social climate and acceptance, resources, administrative and institutional capacities, as well as other structural constraints. In other words, the fit between policy objectives/goals and the fit between contexts can be operationalized for assessment in this way.

Buffet et al. (2007), who explored methods to assess the transferability of evidence and interventions in the field of public health policy, noted that there is no empirical evidence to support the definition and selection of particular criteria for such an appraisal. Based on a comprehensive literature review, nevertheless, they developed a framework of criteria/questions to be asked when assessing the applicability and transferability of policy. Most studies reviewed by Buffet et al (2007) highlight the following broader concepts that need to be considered within such an evaluation:

- 1) Transferability (generalisability) criteria (see also Wang et al., 2006) refer to whether the intervention can achieve the same outcomes in the local setting (goal/objective versus need). Attributes of transferability include the: magnitude of issues in the local setting; magnitude of the reach or coverage; the cost-effectiveness of the intervention, and target population characteristics.
- 2) Applicability (feasibility) assessment (see also Wang et al, 2006) refers to whether it is possible to provide the intervention in the local setting (contextualizing factors). Attributes of feasibility include: the political climate/leverage; political barriers; social acceptability; locally tailored intervention; available essential resources and identified organization(s) to provide intervention; organizational expertise, and capacity.

Here, this conceptual heuristic framework is adapted for the purposes of evaluating prospectively policy measures that can be transferred to establish an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish. The conceptual framework, derived from Buffet et al. (2011), provides a set of relevant questions to be asked when selecting prospective policies from elsewhere and assessing their applicability and transferability to other national contexts. The factors can be given different weight and priority, and ideally discussed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, before a final judgment is given regarding each criterion. The goal should be to consider as many of these questions as possible, although it is recognized that it is often the case that in the preliminary stages such judgments will be preliminary and informal, based on expert and analogical appraisal and available secondary evidence. In considering such questions, therefore, the intention is only to identify “smart ideas” for possible cross-national transferability, map possible variables and hypothesize potential scenarios for later more rigorous empirical testing.

Table 4. Framework for evaluating transferability and applicability of policy initiatives

Construct	Factors/criteria (may be given different relevance/weight)	Questions to ask
Transferability and adequacy (“generalisability”)	Magnitude of issue in target context	Does the need exist? Is it already addressed by other policies? What is the prevalence of the issue in the local context? What is the difference in the risk status/issue prevalence between the donor and target setting?
Can we expect similar results?	Objective of the intervention	Is the measure targeting the same priority objective in the donor and target context?
	Magnitude of “reach” vs. cost effectiveness of the measure	Will the intervention broadly “cover” the target group? Is it proportionate to the costs involved?
	Target group characteristics	Are they comparable to the country of origin? Will any differences in characteristic affect implementation in the target setting?
Applicability (feasibility) and enforceability in local context	Political acceptability	Does the objective of the measure match with political priorities? What are the government’s indicators for success of the measure? Is there political opposition in the current climate?
Can it work for us?	Social acceptability	Will the target population be interested in the intervention?
	Impact on other affected interest groups / stakeholders: winners and losers	Does the measure contradict the interests of any important stakeholders / interest groups? (trade unions, etc..)
	Existing institutional / policy infrastructure	Is the measure’s potential impact contradicting/ cancelling out /overlapping with existing policies? Is the institutional and legislative infrastructure in place?
	Available resources	Financial, human resources, training required? Administrative/enforcement capacity in place?
	Other local barriers and implementation risks (structural constrains)	Risk of deformities in implementation due to other structural/cultural constraining factors, inefficient institutions, immaturity of the economic/financial system, political volatility.

Source: adapted from Buffet et al. (2011).

## **7. Conclusions**

This paper has addressed the issue of policy transfer which refers to the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place. Recently, there have been many calls for a process of mutual learning with regard to establishing an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish, which has commonly involved governments seeking to identify successful policy initiatives, administrative arrangements and institutions in other nations that can be transferred to their own country.

Until now however, governments seeking to select and appraise the transferability and applicability of particular measures to their own country have often lacked a practical evaluation framework for selecting and appraising such measures. The aim of this paper has been to fill that gap by providing a pragmatic evaluation framework for selecting policy measures and appraising their applicability and transferability from one country to another.

This has revealed that successful policy transfer and cross-national policy learning must be informed by prospective policy analysis and testing the features of the specific policy initiative against the specifics of the national context and circumstances, and has then established the criteria and processes through which potential policy adopters can identify promising policies used elsewhere to foster entrepreneurship and enterprise culture in their own country and assess their “goodness of fit” prior to transfer to national realities. If the conceptual framework developed in this paper is now employed to select policy measures and appraise the applicability and transferability of particular measures to their own country, then this paper will have fulfilled its objective. If it also encourages further research on the issues involved in selecting and appraising the cross-national transferability of policy to establish an environment in which entrepreneurship and enterprise culture can flourish, such as undertaking case studies using this framework to learn deeper lessons regarding the selection and appraisal of policy applicability and transferability, then it will have fulfilled its wider objective.

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