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Editorial

Decolonising Education Leadership Knowledge and Practice: What direction for Sub-Saharan Africa?

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Much of the literature that has contributed to school leadership being widely accepted as the second most important school-based factor to classroom teaching that correlates to student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2006; 2020) is based on knowledge produced in the Western world (Khalifa et al., 2019). Although this mono-cultural dominance of the discipline is slowly being reversed by a growing diverse global knowledge base (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger, 2020), the quantitative increase only begs the question about the qualitative decolonising direction that should shape the body of knowledge being produced. In response, the collection of articles in this issue offers a promising overall decolonising agenda for educational leadership and management particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa without claiming to prescribe a single definitive path as doing so would be counterproductive to the spirit of diversity that triggered this enquiry in the first place.

The first linked article by Jean Pierre Elonga Mboyo, therefore, sets the tone for cross-context comparative research as one of the ways to decolonise educational leadership research and practice. The author

argues for Comparative Research Concept (CRC) as a paradigm to help to ontologically, epistemologically and culturally ground future multicultural and cross-context (Africa and West) educational leadership research and practice capable of offering authentic decolonising alternative approaches to school leadership. While various researchers using CRC may elect to take different research approaches, Jean Pierre's discussion rehearses the viability of a narrative research approach to realise a decolonising agenda in rather non-impervious contexts.

In the second linked article, Jean Pierre operationalises CRC through leadership (narrative) conversations with two urban primary school headteachers based in Kinshasa (the Democratic Republic of the Congo's [DRC] capital city) and two others based in South Yorkshire (in the North of England). The author notes that, like their English counterparts, the DRC's headteachers displayed an awareness of how objectively or subjectively structured the local and/or national contexts could be before deploying their personal, professional and, ultimately, comparative values in order to develop what they deemed, at a time, to be effective decolonising school leadership approach for their settings.

Linking school leadership with the achievement of set educational goals is crucial, and Colleen Loomis and Abdeljalil Akkari explicitly analyse school readiness, numeracy and literacy test results of 2,304 children in four regions (Antananarivo, Tuléar, Sava, and Betioky) of Madagascar and 242 children in the same region to evaluate progress over time. They note a positive contribution that preschool has on school readiness and attribute some of the success to their proposed decolonising multilateral model to school leadership which they discuss in greater detail.

For his part, Vuyisile Msila draws from his earlier research to add to the decolonising agenda in Africa that should arguably bring what he calls 'conscientious leaders' to consider some level of hybridisation of knowledges and approaches to school leadership. This is made possible through his proposed five-stepped TURNS (Thinking, Unthinking, Rethinking, Nurturing and Solidifying) leadership empowerment model. With TURNS model shaping leaders' behaviours, Vuyisile hopes to ground educational leadership in Africa on a value system that not only decolonises the practice itself but also pursues a transformative social justice agenda for the wider community.

The paucity of African school leadership knowledge base within the literature may, according to Pontso Morrosi, have something to do with the deficiency model that has often been used to characterise the continent. In response, Pontso undertakes an analytical discussion of various mis/representations of the field in Africa and proposes a post-colonial reading that, among other features, includes promoting indigenous knowledge while remaining true to the multiplicity of histories that are an integral part of the continent's legacy.

Although the articles in this issue offer various theoretical and empirically based perspectives to decolonising school leadership in Africa, they nevertheless converge on the need to integrate various perspectives and knowledges in order to lead effectively. Such a stand presupposes a unique understanding of context in educational leadership. To that end, Jean Pierre Elonga Mboyo concludes with a discussion that seeks to frame context from a critical realist relational perspective and acts as a contextual launchpad for the proposed and future educational leadership and management theorising and practice that subscribe to this decolonising agenda.

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The Viability of Comparative Research Concept as a Paradigm for Decolonising Educational Leadership Theory and Practice

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Abstract

The dominance of Western research methodologies and epistemologies has come under intense scrutiny. However, the recognition that knowledge is produced and packaged differently cannot override its fluid, unbounded and comparative nature. That said, researchers are yet to outline the case for a decolonising comparative educational leadership knowledge base. This first linked article, therefore, introduces 'comparative research concept' (CRC) as a viable paradigm to navigate ontological, epistemological, and cultural messiness when carrying out cross-context (educational leadership) research. In particular, the article discusses and provides a repertoire of arguments on how CRC can be operationalised through a narrative research approach that cultivates difference out of amalgamation and vice versa through given research methods, constituencies and analytical perspectives.

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Introduction

Colonisation is regarded as a turning point heralding an imperial project that systematically sought to foreground Euro-centric mono-cultural perceptions of reality, knowledge and methodology on the African continent and around the world. This, arguably, on-going 'incursion into the mind' (Samier, 2017) leading to an 'epistemicide' (Khalifa et al., 2018, p. 8) undermines the importance of context (Harris & Jones, 2017) and the plurality of epistemologies (Tesar & Arndt, 2017) that are not, in themselves, immune to 'the reality of locally engineered tyrannies' (Elonga Mboyo, 2018, p. 122). Although the recent upsurge in educational studies in Africa, particularly in the area of leadership and management, may constitute an encouraging exercise of reclaiming lost ground and overturning the Eurocentric ideology of domination, Hallinger's (2018, pp. 374-375) initial systematic review does 'not seek to synthesize substantive findings reported in [his] corpus of [selected] studies'. The subsequent systematic review (Hallinger, 2019) of South African dominant literature on school leadership on the African continent highlights a focus on normative and traditional themes, such as shared, instructional and transformational leadership, among others, while noting the need to develop quantitative conceptual research models in order to yield more conclusive claims. While quantitative and qualitative methodologies are as important and the superiority of one over the other should be relaxed (Punch & Oancea, 2014), the conclusiveness of a more potent decolonising ontological and epistemological nature of the body of educational leadership knowledge to be developed is equally important. Scholars are, however, divided on which approach to take. Dixon (1977), for example, has argued for clear-cut and incommensurable ontologies,

epistemologies, methodologies between the northern and southern hemispheres. Smith (1999), instead, does not see decolonisation as a rejection of Western notions. These stances can be reframed through the territorial, sentimental, symbolic and instrumental approaches to leadership and management research in Africa as uniquely discussed by Zoogah and Nkomo (2013).

The territorial approach aims to advance a uniquely different and bounded (African) stance to leadership and management. Khalifa et al.'s (2018) review highlights some distinctively indigenous ways of leading schools and adds to a territorial educational leadership chorus that more or less exclusively explores how the 'socio-cultural context of African education impacts leadership, management and school processes' (Hallinger, 2018, p. 371).

The sentimental approach seeks to underline the similarities while overlooking the differences with Western approaches. The symbolic frame is not concerned with a unique approach and emphasises neither African nor Western/ global identities. Arguably, the unfiltered expansion and acceptance of enduring western theoretical and methodological orthodoxy lend themselves to both the sentimental and symbolic approaches and consequently not viable decolonising strands of educational leadership research and practice.

The instrumental approach, recommended by Zoogah and Nkomo (2013), differs from Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) instrumental knowledge domain which is concerned with transferable tried and tested educational leadership knowledge. Zoogah and Nkomo's reading of instrumental approach concurs with Smith's (1999) view on some degree of compatibility between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge and is the focus of these initial linked articles of the special issue, which seek to do much more than juxtaposing territorial

research approaches in order to compare and contrast both the differences and similarities in research and leadership practices in Africa and outside of it. A theorised synthesis of trends emerging from an empirical comparative educational leadership research carried out in both northern and southern hemisphere contexts will be given in the second linked article. Before then, a clear comparative conceptual framework outlining methodological hybridisation capable of eliciting indigenous cultural and educational values and approaches (Poloma & Szelényi, 2018) is required. In other words, the case for researching 'the cultural preferences and practices of *some* [my italics] African people' (Higgs, 2012, p. 37) and *some* [my italics] European ones, for example, in a single comparative research project needs to be made to validate the place of cross-context comparative or instrumental educational leadership knowledge. Here, outright rejection and dismantling of (un)documented historical systems that perpetuate dominance is not the starting point but rather a possible outcome among other discernible possibilities following contextual ontological, epistemological and cultural analysis of unique but non-impervious contexts.

This initial linked article, therefore, I attempt to coin and discuss in the next section 'comparative research concept' (CRC) as a methodological paradigm to foreground the development, in the second linked article, of a cross-context (northern and southern hemispheres) comparative educational leadership theory and practice framework drawn from empirical research. As already stated, this is a legitimate decolonising approach in the sense argued by Smith (1999), where Western notions are not rejected but configured with local ones in a way that brings out and recognises contextual differences emerging from shared commonalities and vice versa. Individually and/ or together, the two linked articles will form the basis for

contributions from other invited scholars whose commentaries and/ or empirical research input on not only the volume but also the nature of decolonising educational leadership knowledge and practice may (or not) fall within different approaches, as outlined by Zoogah and Nkomo (2013), and particularly the one chartered by this first linked article. That said, the rest of this first linked article explores key ontological, epistemological and cultural features of CRC as paradigm and specifically discusses narrative as a possible research approach alongside consistent methods, composition of research constituents and analytical processes.

Comparative Research Concept (CRC): A Paradigm

Decolonising studies, that do not necessarily have to reject Western notions (Smith, 1999), require a philosophical and conceptual approach of a paradigmic shift beyond binaries particularly for international and comparative purposes (paraphrasing Simier, 2017 cited in Crosley and Watson, 2003; Dabashi, 2013). This section, therefore, discusses what is understood by CRC paradigm by defining it and exploring how a CRC researcher can navigate through compartmentalisation of ontology, epistemology, and culture that not only impounds knowledge but also fails to recognise inherent amalgamation that the decolonising exercise must creatively engage with, particularly in cross-context comparative research, without compromising the singularity of context and run the risk of neo-colonisation.

What is CRC?

CRC is a philosophical and methodological worldview, mind-set or paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) that looks beyond compartmentalisation in order to remain open to various possibilities including the amalgamation of ontologies, epistemologies, methods, analyses and

research outcomes: multiple perspectives. Viewed in this way, CRC bears some resemblance to Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) bricolage, which 'signifies interdisciplinary' (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 680). This is the case if one considers the view that, like bricolage, CRC is multi-perspectival, cultivates difference in both methods of inquiry and philosophical notions that, in turn, shape our worldviews. Although different as shall be explored below, but like CRC, bricolage argues for research to be an elastic (shifting) conversation that opens knowledge possibilities rather than promoting procedural rigidity to suit specific contexts.

While CRC is all of the above, it is different from bricolage in the sense that the latter has had to overcome the charge of being superficial and devoid of bases for specialised knowledge production (Kinchelo, 2001). CRC, on the contrary, departs from the depth of multiple ontologies and epistemologies in order to generate context specific approaches to engaging (with) reality. Inclusivity and divergence are two key characteristics to bear in mind when thinking about CRC. Its doctrine arguably centres on promoting the (inevitable) way of being in (ontology), knowing the (epistemology) and engaging with (methods) the world that is based on creating shifts (Springgay & Truman, 2017) that unify in order to triangulate binaries and plant/ identify differences in unique decolonising authorship of contextual school leadership theories and practices. In cross-context studies then, CRC is not a choice to eschew but an obligatory research exercise that is based on shifts and perspectives, the validity of which must be defended. A broad range of ontological, epistemological and cultural arguments that align with CRC can then be developed.

How Can a CRC Researcher Frame Ontology?

Ontology 'is the philosophical study of the nature of existence or reality, of being or becoming, as well as the basic categories of things that exist and their relations' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). To grasp ontology within CRC paradigm, one has to consider how ontology has been framed thus far. Reviews of organisational literature (Slawecki, 2018 based on Burrell & Mogran, 1979; Guba & Lincoln 2005), educational leadership literature (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014; Grogan & Simmons, 2012; Ribbins & Gunter, 2002) and the wider body of educational research (Creswell, 2009) have documented a variety of single research traditions or paradigms that produce single knowledge domains. These different traditions have well defined and, arguably, incommensurable ontological assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) that researchers need to know and apply in their empirical studies.

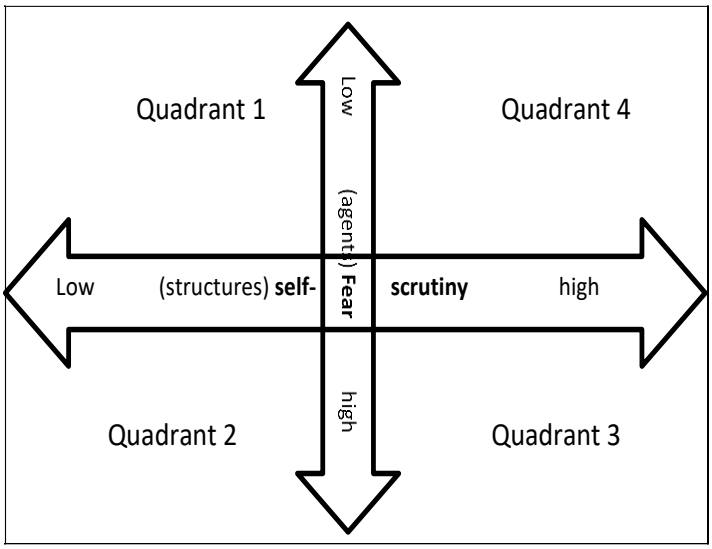
Educational (leadership) researchers involved in cross-context studies can overcome the above ontological compartmentalisation by drawing on insights from, for example, critical realist traditions (Bhaskar, 1989), relational sociology (Eacott, 2019), methodology of Ubuntu (Elonga Mboyo, 2016) and even integral psychology (Jaroken, 2009). In an effort to overcome ontological binaries, critical realist depth ontology (Bhaskar, 1989) stratifies reality that can be reflected in different layers of education policies that can move from being objectively internationalised to being subjectively experienced in different contexts. The causality principle in critical realism can also be flipped and framed through the (in)completion criteria within nuanced critical realism ontological thinking (Elonga Mboyo, 2019a; 2019b). Eacott's (2019) relational approach also seeks to overcomes ontological binaries by focusing more on agents' or *auctors'* ability to generate *spatio-temporal conditions* through *organising activity*. Jaroken's (2009) integral theory is another viale ontological possibility. İt not

only recognises but also combines the validity of diverse zones of being and by implication of knowing which are objective, inter-objective, subjective and inter-subjective.

These possibilities for overcoming ontological compartmentalisation are not without critics one of which being the suggestions that they are dominated by theorists from the northern hemisphere and, despite their multi-perspectival stance, could be seen by those in the south as non-indigenous and, therefore, territorial. The contentious claim of the lack of a coherent African-based sociological worldview (Carroll, 2014), let alone a comparative one, should not mean attempts are not being made to that end. Although communalism is foregrounded as a distinctively defining feature of African social reality, Letsheke (2012) acknowledges there being individualism in communalism and vice versa. The methodology of Ubuntu (Elonga Mboyo, 2016; 2018), therefore, broadens the scope to illustrate how, even in Africa, fear and sel-scrutiny driven communalism and individualism (structure and agency) binaries insect in order to create four multi-perspectival ontological spaces within which interactions can be conceptualised. This contribution opens up the possibility for reflecting around contrasting similar and other forms of emergent epistemologies.

Figure 1.

Fear and Self-scrutiny Methodology of Ubuntu/ Structuration framework (see Elonga Mboyo, 2016; 2018)



How Can Epistemology Be Understood?

'Put simply, in research, epistemology is used to describe how we come to know something; how we know the truth or reality' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Epistemological pluralism is the affirmation of the 'existence of multiple knowledge or multiple ways of knowing and being' (Tesar & Arndt, 2017, p. 666 cited in Andreotti et al., 2011). Such diversity has had an enduring tradition in educational leadership research. For example, instrumentalism as a type of research paradigm (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014), with its specific methodologies and methods, has enabled the development of instrumental knowledge (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002). Ribbins and Gunter's review suggests other knowledges such as conceptual, humanistic, evaluative and critical. The body of literature on critical stance (Grogan & Simmons, 2012) also

speaks of variations such as critical race, feminism and decolonisation aimed at developing context-specific epistemologies.

As already stated, CRC subscribes to the diversity of knowledge. What remains to be articulated, however, is the shift from monolithic to pluralistic epistemologies without ascribing an impervious status to local epistemologies that cannot be divorced from de-compartmentalised ontologies. This is echoed when leadership practice is framed as consisting of valuing how 'social conditions or value postures that appear to share the same shape or meaning in different countries but actually consist of quite different elements' (Begley, 2000, p. 23). CRC knowledge is primarily subjective and although this would be portrayed by postmodernists incorrect as it takes away objectivity (Boghosssian & Lindsay, 2018), human subjectivity in CRC is an unavoidable mediator/interface that turns common/specific (objective/ subjective) ontology into specific/common (subjective/ objective) epistemology and vice versa. The epistemology emerging from CRC then seeks to overcome the objective/ subjective binary by highlighting the shared situated-ness of human subjectivity in the ongoing production of context-specific epistemologies.

In this perspective, 21st century technological advancements provide a viable avenue to reconsider the 'shared situated-ness' of human subjectivities. New forms of technology have propelled researchers and subjects of research (of any country) into a global web of different forms of subjectivities that do not only have to negotiate multiple identities and epistemologies but also adapt and use any of them to suit particular contexts. A CRC researcher's role therefore is to articulate processes of being, knowing and researching (as this article does) and demonstrating how professionals operationalise this

paradigmic way of leading schools (second linked article). Other than 21st century technological advancement, the shared situated-ness of human subjectivities as an epistemological interface can also be defended from the view that 'thinking [or knowing] without comparison is unthinkable' (Ragin, 1996, p. 74). Arguably, subjectivity as an embodied rationality generates knowledge through 'the other' and the wider phenomenon (Ozbilgin & Vassilopoulou, 2018).

This means recognising that unlike in the territorially compartmentalised epistemologies when, for example, emotions were predicated to Africans and regarded as lower than objective knowledge compared to Western epistemologies (Lupton, 1998), emotions and feelings encapsulate knowledge even in western epistemologies (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2013), and even calling into question Hallinger's (2019) privileging of particular quantitative research methods rather than multi-perspectival for conclusive research claims. 'All knowledge is developed through the body' (Lupton, 1998, p. 36) which is also seen through the rise in emotional leadership literature (Crawford, 2007; Mills & Niesche, 2014; Sachs & Blackmore, 2010). It is essential that comparative research remains culturally sensitive to various embodied selves. Being attuned to evolving human subjectivity means that CRC researchers need to pay attention to shifts not only in the production of but also in the nature of the knowledge produced, in order to identify changing commonalities and differences.

How Does a CRC Researcher Frame the Concept of Culture?

Researchers opting for CRC from the outset will have to offer a rigorous discussion on issues related to conceptualisation about culture, the need to decolonise cultural dominance and essentialism while recognising the fluidity of human subjectivity.

Although culture is complex and difficult to define, there is unanimous agreement that the concept refers to 'terms such as behaviour, values, norms, and basic assumptions' (Groseschl & Doherty, 2000, p. 14) that arguably configure a *unit*'s approach to knowing (epistemology) (Stephen, 2012) and the nature of reality (ontology). A *unit* here represents geographical boundary terms such as national and regional cultures, or distinctive patterns of behaviour within an industry, occupation or corporation (Pizam, 1993). Several layers and subcultures have also been identified among the geographical boundaries and within social units (Ofstede, 1994; Schein, 1985). Martin (1992), for example, makes a useful classification of group dynamics of culture as being about homogeneity, difference and ambiguity. For his part, Weiburst (1898) argues that culture can be taken as a historical entity, interpreted and manifested in contemporary times.

Despite the diversity of cultures, 'dominant research epistemologies have developed methods of initiating and assessing research in Africa where researchers fail to acknowledge the cultural preferences and practices of African people' (Higgs, 2012, p. 37). The radical move away from being 'cultural sabirs' (Bourdieu and Sayad 2015) has resulted in some writers (Dixon, 1977 for example) arguing for clear-cut cultural stances between Africans and Westerners with regard to axiology, time, activity, epistemology and logic. The adoption of this essentialist view of culture has the potential to reproduce a certain dominant insularity that the marginalised cultures were seeking to decolonise in the first place (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009). As already argued when making the case for CRC ontology, there are elements of individualism in community cultures and vice versa (Letseka, 2012). This should bring a researcher adopting CRC to prioritise unique cultural fluidity, that is ontologically and

epistemologically embodied in a unique way in a given time and space (field), over substantive and intransitive cultural stereotypes (Collard, 2007). Far from considering everything about people's cultures as provisional and therefore negligible, CRC advocates for sensitivity to people's ongoing narratives about how they perpetuate and/ or redefine reality in their fields that can be meaningfully be described as 'zones of incompletion' (Elonga Mboyo, 2019a).

Such framing of subjectivities should lead to a position that does not favour one ontology, epistemology and culture over another. Doing so could translate into undue bias, which could lead to concealment of certain perspectives and voices that could be discordant with a chosen one-sided ontological and epistemological view. That means proceeding with one's research without making it either an exclusively objective or subjective ontological and (positivistic, phenomenological, critical theory and postmodern) epistemological enterprise. This is consistent with the experience of the world for many as a messy amalgamation rather than 'uncontaminated bundles' (Morrison, 2012, p. 25) of epistemologies. The call for 'a third methodological movement' (Gorard and Taylor, 2004) is particularly imperative in comparative studies. This sensitivity has to be demonstrated in the way that difference is cultivated (Kincheloe, 2001) in the choice of research approach(es) and other processes.

Research Approach: Narratives

Although CRC is an un-constraining attempt to de-compartmentalise research, for practical purposes, it is likely that specific choices would need to be made with regard to research approach. Focusing on narratives here, among other approaches such as ethnography, grounded theory, visual research to name but a few (Briggs et al., 2012), the question that first emerges is: how can a single

approach meet the CRC paradigm that is about bringing together various ontological, epistemological, cultural, etc., perspectives? Hence, the necessity to focus the discussion on the (comparative) validity of narratives within the overall paradigm. This section, therefore, discusses the multi-perspectival status of narratives in cross-context (Europe and Africa) research that is exemplified in the second linked article.

Contextual History

Although postmodernism seems to have signalled a shift from meta or 'grand narratives' of humanity's cultural and technological progress, otherwise known as life histories (Loytard, 1984), to 'small-scale' personal narratives (life stories and auto-biographies), 'it is true that narratives and stories are part of the common currency of the day' (Goodson, 2013, p. 10). It is assumed that humanity started narrating and storytelling from time immemorial (Murray, 2008), with genres that 'deeply affect the shape and course of human thought' *and action* [our emphasis] (Bruner, 2012, p. 10). As a field of research inquiry into grand or small-scale narratives, a narrative approach to research is rather a recent enterprise (Clandinin et al., 2007). In Europe (West), the explosion of interest in narrative, in the last two decades or so, can be traced back to the works of Freud, Levi-Straus etc. and changing conceptions about language and text (Hyden, 2008). In Africa, its traditions have been long associated with storytelling (VanZanten, 2012). With a rich history in both continents, within which the research contexts of the second linked article are set, narrative research is arguably a comparatively consistent approach to study the two settings.

Definition

Narrative research, in its simplistic form, can be viewed as a recital of facts (Allen, 2006). Beyond a supposedly disinterested transmission of factual accounts is the rational, emotional, subjective and intersubjective sense-making in which the person engages. On that basis, narrative research can be further regarded as concerned with accounting for and theorising on people's perspectives on their personal and professional lives (Newby, 2010). Hence, the attitude to narratives here is that which sees in them the generation of stories that are 'a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his (her) experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful' (Caduri, 2013 cited in Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

CRC and Narratives

Concepts such as 'small-scale' narratives and 'personal perspectives and meaningfulness' leave narrative inquiry open to the criticism that it is focused on 'the individual rather than on the social context' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153). It is not surprising that to overcome such a limitation some researchers would opt for a (multiple) case study approach that would enable diverse respondents' data triangulation, among others (Scott, 2007), and ultimately be able to compare. That said, a narrative research approach is understood to have multiple functions, including 'remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience' (Riessman, 2008, p. 8). Besides the above functions of narratives, what has also received less emphasis is the reality that narrators use their narratives for comparative purposes. Narratives cannot be thought of outside comparison, which, as already stated, is fundamental to the sociological project (Smaje, 1997). Commenting on the nature of research in Africa, Higgs (2012, p. 44) advises researchers to take

account of 'the double role of individuals in African societies' to highlight a certain degree of oscillation from subjective to objective (individual to collective), and vice versa, ontologies, epistemologies and cultures in order to generate critically decolonising perspectives on educational practices.

The danger then of reducing narratives to the linguistic act is that of missing out on other communicative media, such as facial expressions, gestures, postures, pauses and so on (Heslep, 2001). Despite the failure to capture everything, researchers and readers can find consolation in that an exact record will remain elusive even to practitioners and, as Bold (2012) argues, we must look at the stories as tentative (comparative) representations. Such representations, according to Lewis (2011), are powerful enough to shape identity, self and practice without necessarily being the sole author of life experiences that depend on many other factors (Murray, 2008).

This is almost saying that we can study the habitus of school leadership practice without pretending to capture experiences 'in the very movement of their accomplishment' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 3). It does not mean doubting the authenticity of informants' stories but perhaps ensuring that the conditions are right to engage with participants in the (co-)authorship of identities and practice and give some epistemological credence to the study's findings (Caduri, 2013). Above all, what this section has highlighted, whatever the research approach adopted, is the need to recognise, discuss and apply cultural idiosyncrasies of a single (or more) research approach within the CRC paradigm. This has implications for cultivating difference in the deployment of methods for data gathering.

Methods

Whether one is engaged in a narrative approach or not, there are two main possibilities that a CRC researcher can rely on to augment multi-perspective: multi-method and mix-and-match or mixed method. A multi-method approach means engaging in 'data collection using two *or more* [our emphasis] methods from the same paradigm' (Hickman, 2015, p. 42). A mix-and-match approach, however, employs qualitative and quantitative methods in an effort to overcome a distinctive paradigm approach to research (Morrison, 2012). Hence, statistical survey data may be combined with data from interviews and/ or focussed group discussions. This also shows the need to move 'away from the perhaps more traditional approaches to educational (leadership) research to 'alternative methodologies and methods' (Todd, 2018, p. 50) that are 'slightly riskier alternatives' (Showunmi & Fox, 2018, p. 3).

It could be argued, however, that it is not an absolute necessity to use either multi-method or mix-and-match, if difference can be cultivated elsewhere during other research processes. In other words, procedural flexibility needs to be compensated by a degree of diversified elasticity, so that the freedom to deploy a single method may constitute a middle shift to diversify analytical processes that ignite other research methods in future development of a given research project. For example, the second linked article uses only narrative interviews (better described as 'leadership conversations') regarded through different dimensions or layers of data analysis that cultivated 'difference'. As shall be discussed in the second linked article, the analysis delivered both 'objective' and 'subjective' knowledges and how participants overcome those binaries. This result is testament to CRC approach. While it starts off with an all encompassing beyond binary approach, its outcome may show traces

of dualism and other ontological features determined by specific and cross-context stories of actions that give rise to theories of context. This, in itself, is a middle shift for future research in the sense that it is now possible to scale up the research with a larger sample using a survey tool to build levels 1 - 4 statistical tests about 'objective' school leadership knowledge as recommended by Hallinger (2019), to be followed up with interviews in order to extract the sense making or subjective knowledge that explains the objective data within CRC paradigm.

That said, a CRC researcher must demonstrate how cultural preferences in eliciting epistemological pluralism are embedded in a chosen method, multi-method or mix-and-match, whether traditional or its (riskier) alternative (Showunmi & Fox, 2018; Todd, 2018).

Constituencies

Various groups of people

The need for research validity requires that data be triangulated theoretically, using various research methods and/ or participants (Bush, 2012). Floyd (2012) argues that validity in a narrative research approach is better measured by looking at the complementarity instead of the triangulation of narrative extracts. This can be verified using a grounded theory tool called 'goodness of fit' (Payne, 2007, p. 84) to see how thematised stories of different individuals within a single constituency of participants fit to develop a contextual and cross-contextual narrative/ theory.

On the educational leadership conceptual side, underpinning the view that research findings need to be triangulated by different constituencies of participants is the growing recognition that school 'leadership is more than the exercise of a *positional* [my italics] role' of one person (Todd, 2018, p. 51), and that it is a shared and relational

activity. Hence, Day et al. (2001) used a multi-perspective methodology that consisted of collecting data from different stakeholders (constituencies), such as head teachers, teachers, students and parents, to build a 'wider picture' of a school leader, as an alternative to autobiographical studies focusing only on head teachers' views.

That said, part of the sensitivity required by a CRC researcher is understanding what the perspectives of multiple constituents mean from a given cultural setting. For example, the triangulation argument (Bush, 2012) seems to convey a cultural assumption where multiple perspectives corroborating a given finding are a cross-examined subtotal of views of different constituents. However, the idea of community (as in individuals with multiple perspectives) is not simply a subtotal of individuals in some cultures. For example, the 'double role of individuals in Africa' (Higgs, 2012, p. 44) means that multiple perspectives can be obtained from a single individual. Higgs makes the affirmation without providing the clues to aid analysis. The research on which the second linked article is based exemplifies this double role of individuals when a participant said, 'my school is the X (country in question) in miniature' and 'unlike other schools where teachers go in with begging bowls, this school works hard aiming for ethical excellence'. A CRC researcher is encouraged to tap into this form of triangulation, that is arguably not exclusive to (African) community-oriented cultures, and meet the complementary criteria (Floyd, 2012) for narrative validity and develop contextual, national and even cross-context theories of action (Goodson, 2013).

Analytical Perspectives

A CRC study can also be described as multi-perspective, based on the analytical approaches it cultivates. A single thematic approach

can be used to identify multiple perspectives of different constituents on a single issue. However, different layers of analytical strategies can be used on data from one kind of constituent, in order to uncover different voices and meanings. Within the narrative approach, and consistent with CRC, Goodson (2013, p.5), for example, calls for the need 'to embrace stories of action within theories of context'. Vandermause et al. (2014) demonstrated this by starting off with a postpositivist analytical approach to abstract similarities and differences in the texts they analysed. This level of analysis resulted in establishing themes that defined the actions and behaviours of research participants.

Using 'an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to identify overlapping patterns in the texts in a search for ontological meaning', Vandermause et al. (2014, p. 674) delved further into extracted themes to provide a different kind of knowledge. While the extracted themes are subjective knowledge based on stories of action, the ontological meanings (derived through IPA) can be referred to using Ponte's (2010) terminology as 'objective' mediated knowledge.

The exercise of weaving themes 'together for a coherent *cross-contextual* narrative' (Saldana, 2009) or 'goodness of fit' (Payne, 2007) and revaluating them to distil ontological meanings (Vandermause et al., 2014) or theories of context shaping various stories of actions (Goodson, 2013) is not an attempt to create incommensurate ontological and epistemological binaries (of educational leadership practices). Whatever the onotological and epistemological theories of contexts, they remain contextually unique and become the basis for undertading further practice-based analysis to establish how practitioners rise above binaries in order to develop context-specific decolonising stories of school leadership actions.

Conclusion

The decolonising approach to research in educational leadership theory and practice of indigenous people (Africans in this case) has been the focus of this initial linked article. While others might elect the territorial approach (e.g. Khalifa et al., 2018), this article has sought to explore the viability of an instrumental/comparative research approach consistent with Smith's (1999) view that decolonisation is not a rejection of Western notions. CRC has, therefore, been proposed as an ontological, epistemological and cultural cornerstone for research initiatives that can take different approaches including the narrative one whose multi-perspectival design has been demonstrated and rehearsed here. The second linked article takes this further to theorise on how specific researched headteachers have attempted to operationalise this decolonising comparative approach to educational leadership in a given African context as compared to another in the West.

The commentaries and (possible) empirical research studies in reaction to this initial linked article could take several approaches that may (or not) include a critique and/or defence of CRC as a viable approach to decolonising educational leadership research in Africa. They may, however, take the form of literature reviews as well as empirical studies that subscribe (or not) to one of Zoogah and Nkomo's (2013) territorial, sentimental, symbolic and instrumental/comparative approaches to leadership and management research in (a given context in) Africa while bearing in mind the pertinence of decolonising educational leadership theories and practices.

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A Comparative Leadership Approach for Decolonising Educational Leadership in Africa: The Case of Two Headteachers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in England

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Abstract

This research compares the accounts of two experienced urban primary headteachers based in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo-DRC) with two others based in Sheffield/Doncaster (England), in order to make sense of their leadership pathways, challenges and approaches. Engaging these school leaders through leadership conversations within a narrative research tradition, the extracted data were analysed thematically and using phenomenological interpretive analysis. Despite differences in their stories of actions regarding the researched themes, a comparative theory of context(s) emergences which adds to how school leaders can think and act locally and globally and, in the case of African school leaders, decolonise their practice of any dominant normativity as they define what is best for their schools. This involved headteachers being attuned to their personal, professional and comparative dimensions of 'the gospel according to the headteacher' metaphor and ultimately deploying their connect comparative core values to rise above the subjective or objective scope of one's context in order to bring about change that primarily benefits children.

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Introduction

A Call to Action

Ten years ago, Townsend (2010) urged scholars in the field of educational leadership to help headteachers and other school leaders to think and act locally and globally. Despite an increase in nationalistic discourse, particularly in the political arena, the common demographic, technological, environmental, cultural, wealth and health concerns that societies across the world were going through that prompted such a call remain pertinent. Dimmock (2012, p.202) also notes some cross-context organisational issues such as:

> *Greater parental power and influence on schooling, more specialisation of school curricula, broader diversification of school types, continuing decentralisation of responsibilities to school-site leaders, increased acknowledgement of teacher professional development and professional learning communities, and of leader preparation and development…*

This second-linked article uses data from a comparative study carried out between 2012-2016 to exemplify how headteachers can think and act locally and globally and, arguably in the case of African school leaders, decolonise educational leadership practice. However, the way that not only ontologies, epistemologies and cultures have been compartmentalised, as discussed in the first-linked article, but also the way the field of educational leadership has been fragmented militate against any attempt to develop theories and practices that deconstruct

various normative enclaves without compromising evolving contextual uniqueness and identities.

Compartmentalised Field

Townsend's call cannot, in my view, fully blossom within compartmentalised, bounded and essentialist theoretical approaches to thinking and acting as a school leader in both northern and southern hemispheres. For example, the territorial leadership approach which focusses exclusively on African leadership and management practices (Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013), as previously discussed in the first-linked article, is testament to the compartmentalisation of context, research and practice. Despite the urgency to think and act locally and globally and rise beyond (think through and/ or reframe) models of leadership, knowledge domains, the western educational leadership discourses have been described as partial (Bush, 2011), singular (Ribbins & Gunter 2002), and fragmented (Eacott, 2015). This is pertinent reminder to rethink the field, particularly in its (international) comparative education, enmeshed in diversity that requires inclusion, or rather, reframing of local and global realities and approaches so that successful school leaders that 'embody most or all [leadership] approaches in their work' (Bush & Glover, 2014, p.565) think and act from a professional mindset that is reflective of the reality of our contexts.

State of Play in Comparative Educational Leadership Theorising

Although theory development, particularly of fragmented approaches, has kept a pace with increasing interest in school leadership in the last two or three decades (Bush & Glover, 2014), the theoretical basis of its comparative branch is still lagging. Without discounting the multiple published and ongoing comparative research projects, some pioneering literature-based attempts to theorise on

multicultural comparative school leadership (Collard, 2007; Dimmock & Walker, 2000) have lacked in their empirical basis. To bridge that gap and bring the global to our local contexts and vice versa, Day and Gurr's (2014) notable empirically-based contribution in international leadership literature rather contains individual approaches of headteachers across the world assembled in one book publication without reflecting on their wider comparative significance (Schweisfurth, 2001). Put differently, it is not clear how local school leadership practices, in increasingly diverse contexts, offer a theoretical and professional basis for (global and local) school leadership. This study is unique in that it compares the leadership practices from an African local context with a European one in order to propose an empirically-based global/local comparative theory and practice of school leadership. It is particularly pertinent as it exemplifies how Africans are reimaginig how to decolonise school leadership in a way that opens them up to global perspectives without compromising and jeopardising its own African (emancipatory) identity.

Framing the research

Without revisiting arguments already outlined in the first linked article, this study responds to Townsend's (2010) call by framing the research from a Comparative Research Concept (CRC). As already argued above, some comparative theories of context have been advanced (Collard, 2007; Dimmock & Walker, 2000). They, however, lack the emparical basis. The CRC theoretical framework for this study is, therefore, unique in that it does not impose theoretical assumptions that would determine the development of an empirically-based comparative theory of context. On the contrary, CRC only advances underpinning theoretical safeguards to engage in cross-context

comparative educational leadership research that would result into data-driven (grounded) theory (ies) of context. The underpinning theoretical safeguards, arguably, involve honouring 'localised thinking yet [moving] beyond it to see multiple possibilities, multiple influences and multiple perspectives' (Sackey & Mitchel, 2002, p.909). Put differently, decolonising (African) leadership practices from both western oppressive normative practices and 'locally engineered tyrannies' (Elonga Mboyo, 2018, p.122) 'brought about by, [for example], a lifetime of immersion in one [own] culture' (Lumby & Heystek, 2011, p.7) that prevent us from seeing things afresh involves recognising 'both the differences and interconnectedness of the world and […] challenge accultured limitations' (p.7).

In this mindset, educational leadership researchers and practitioners strive to ontologically, epistemologically and culturally emancipate the elements that constitutes their local school contexts while configuring them within broader shared and/ or differing global meanings. Such school leaders are able to look 'comprehensively across leadership frameworks *or experiences, cultures* [my italics] (Reed & Swaminathan, 2015, p.1120) and adapt the art and science of leadership in their respective contexts of leadership. The reader is, therefore, invited to bear this, and the ontological, epistemological and cultural argument for CRC made in the first-linked article, in mind whenever reference is made to 'comparative leadership' hereafter.

Context and Methodology

This study is focussed on school leadership experiences of two urban primary head teachers based in Sheffield/Doncaster within the Sheffield City Region (SCR) in England and two others based in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The contrasts in

the experiences of the two sets of head teachers (Bafote and Lokuli for DRC and Fiona and Donald for England) and the contexts within which their schools are located could be described, as do Brock and Alexiadou (2013, p.131) when referring to educational landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa, as unparalleled. Two examples relating to budget and staff competency suffice to illustrate the differences. While Bafote's school of over 740 fee-paying children ran with an estimated budget of an equivalent of seventy thousand British pounds, Fiona had, at her disposal, over one million Pounds for 320 pupils. Only 7% of Bafote's teaching staff had received a university education while the rest were secondary school leavers. Fiona's staff had a university qualification beside/alongside the professional training as teachers. Despite the few contrasts among many others, there were some converging features that are worth noting about the two sets of heads and their respective settings. The heads' schools were situated in urban contexts serving people from different cultural, linguistic, national and ethnic backgrounds; they are experienced and happen to be all Catholics three of whom leading Catholic schools.

To capture the experiences of the above head teachers in two contrasting settings yet similar in terms of diversity, the research employed 'leadership conversations' (Riessman, 2008) within narrative traditions (Bold, 2012) as a way of extracting data and therefore subscribing to the CRC as described in the first linked article. After a convenience sampling of participants on the basis of the location of their schools being in an urban city and being experienced, between 2-3 conversations for each participant lasting between 40-55 minutes were recorded, transcribed, translated and analysed in two phases. Goodson (2013) argues that stories of actions should be understood within theories of context. The first level of analysis, therefore, thematically interprets and contrasts accounts of school

leaders' journeys/pathways to school leadership, their leadership challenges, how they respond to those challenges and their views about good school leader. The second level of analysis, inspired by Vandermause et al.'s (2014) interpretive phenomenological analysis to work out ontological underpinning structure behind data themes, sought to understand and/ or develop a theory (theories) of contexts from the thematic stories of actions. A combination of lengthy excerpts and brief ones was used to represent the themes and concepts abstracted.

Findings and Discussion

As shown in Table 1, the first level of analysis which thematically sought to understand various narrative stories of actions returned notable contrasting features between the DRC and English head teachers in response to research questions focusing on pathways to leadership, leadership challenges and actions.

Table 1.

Data theme summary

DRC data themes	Research objectives/ questions	English data themes
Innate vocation, no formal training, on the job-learning	How are journeys/pathways to school leadership described?	Exploratory, formal training and on-the-job learning
Societal moral decay, poor working/life conditions, staff/students' educational competencies	What are the leadership challenges that DRC/England head teachers face as they go about their work?	Cross and intra-schools social, curriculum and professional dysfunctionalities; and the functionality of extreme practices
Administration, pedagogy and finance; Humanistic leadership: Ubuntu; Collegial; Servant.	**How do they go about responding to those challenges?** Emerging eclectic/ comparative leadership theory of context as headteachers in both settings worked through an apparent adjectival array of leadrship constructs.	Self-improving; Egalitarian; systemic; dialogical; Instructional; distributive; collaborative; humanistic; Middle-ground leadership

Pathways

The contrasts between the DRC and English headteachers on this subject were striking. For the DRC headteachers, teaching and leadership were innate qualities as summed up by the following extracts:

> *I had a soft spot for teaching (j'ai un faible pour l'enseignement)]; I loved my teachers who initially spoke very well. It is they who have led me to love this job. Then gradually I did my studies in applied education, I was hired right after my studies (Bafote)*

Lokuli put it more vividly with the following:

> *For me it is an easy profession, I [easily] find my way through, headship is an easy profession for me, and it was in my blood …' (Lokuli)*

In the absence of professional and academic programmes to develop school leadership, becoming a head teacher is the result of on-the-job learning across (rigourous or fast-tracked) performance-based stages that add to the above claimed innate nature of leadership:

> *You begin as a teacher before you are promoted to exercise the functions of a sur-école (surnuméraire, meaning an additional number), deputy head and then head. You must also have passed through all the stages of primary school to allow you to manage them. I started as a teacher for 6 years, after which I was promoted as deputy head and 5 years later, I became head. There is a mechanism, although I didn't go through it all. (Lokuli)*

By contrast, the English counterparts' narratives portray school leadership as the result of exploration and discovery as opposed to an innate attribute.

> *When I became a teacher, I didn't think I'm going to become a head teacher. I wanted to see what this world of teaching was going to be like really…then you begin to think maybe I could do better; I could give more, and I can only give more if I'm in a higher position. (Fiona)*

This exploration happened within a life-long career in education and sometimes outside of it:

> *I left teaching altogether and worked for an insurance company but that lasted for two years then the market crashed and returned to teaching and worked my way up to becoming a headteacher. Donald*

The uncertainty around the need for professional qualification for headship reflects the changing direction in the political landscape in the United Kingdom:

> *They made it compulsory to have national professional qualification for headship, which is run from the national college. You can get a deputy leadership qualification through there as well. They did it at one point and then they scrapped it but I think they [the government] are bringing it back again. (Fiona)*

Despite the changes, Fiona asserted the importance of on-the-job learning when referring to a situation with her former head early on in her career and therefore privileging the combination of formal training and on-the-job learning rather than mainting a false dichotomy between the two:

> *So he [the head] really left the running of the school to me [deputy] while he went in the cellar to smoke a pipe, or did whatever he did. So I actually did five years of getting to know what the school was about, running finances, running the classes as well and most of all, the really, that even though you are a teacher, if you get the parents on side you can do anything' (Fiona).*

The differences in these head teachers' pathways to leadership are stark but they are not absolute and that while these dominant contrasting features are pertinent, they only give us an indication within the limits of the small-scale nature of the study.

Challenges: The DRC school is primarily portrayed as representative of the (dis) values of its overall national environment:

> *My school is the Congo in miniature. Everything you see there [in terms of moral, economic, and educational challenges] is happening here. (Bafote)*

The societal challenge of poverty is then reported to have permeated all layers of society, including schools. This manifests itself in the scarcity of resources:

> *Because a teacher is a perpetual learner, I tell the authorities that I need this…, give me the means/resources. You do not get those means/resources… and when you have a fault due to lack of resources you are blamed for it. (Bafote)*

Within an overall environment of poverty seen through poorly resourced schools (De Hert et al., 2012; Shapiro & Tambashe, 2001), poorly paid professionals are reported to engage in corrupt practices:

> *You will go in some state schools: when a teacher arrives, he puts a money-collecting basket in front and the students give what they can and the teacher keeps a list of contributors for recompense when awarding marks. He takes a notebook and asks a student to copy something on the board and at the end of the year the child passes to the next class with an empty head having learnt nothing. (Bafote)*

For various reasons, including poor resources as mentioned above, the educational competencies of pupils, particularly literacy skills as also reported elsewhere (UNESCO, 2012), were a major concern:

> *The big problem we face at the moment is with reading. Many students cannot read. (Bafote)*

Bafote also made reference to teacher incompetence illustrated by the deficiencies of a trainee teacher:

> *We had a trainee teacher who was teaching the wrong things, imparting the wrong kind of knowledge that even the pupils disagreed [student teacher was teaching the conjugation of the verb 'to be']. (Bafote)*

By contrast, the challenges the English counterparts articulated were more of a systemic nature. Two key ideas that stood out from

their narratives pointed to cross and intra-schools social, curriculum and professional dysfunctionalities and school leadership extremes (policy and people centred) encountered in the course of their careers.

Social fractures depicting the urban nature of setting in the two sampled schools in England and impacting on the intra-school cohesion were summarised in the following extract:

> *It was really weird because we started getting Polish children into the school and I don't know the background and history, but travellers don't like Polish people. And this Brendan's mum said once in a meeting: I'm just fed up with these Polish coming over here and getting all the jobs. I said, actually the Polish parents we've got are electricians and they are really skilled people and to be perfectly honest if nobody is fitting the job why shouldn't they work? I said 'why don't you train to be an electrician?' (Fiona)*

The symptoms of cross-school fractures were evident. Fiona noted with the following as she observed how high educational standards and engagement with tasks diminish as children move from primary to secondary schools:

> *You do so much with them and the moment they move to secondary, it just evaporates. We had a year 13 (secondary) and year 2 from our primary) link programme as part of the buddying process. The year 13 from x secondary went on a trip with our year 2s and at the end of the process they were meant to record thoughts. We handed them with an A3 sheet, and our children go on with their writing straight away whereas the year 13 looked on and first asked; 'what? You expect us to write on that and fill it up with information? (Fiona)*

The intra-school professional dysfunctional fractures that concerned the participants were voiced as follows:

> *…also, I have been in situations where there have been little enclaves of staff talking in their little spaces and I'm thinking I can't stand that (Fiona)*

As well as the dysfunctionality between various educational entities, Donald noted the functionality of what he deplored as extreme

leadership approaches. On the one hand, he described a top-down approach of the head teacher under whom he had worked and which, for Donald, was problematic:

> *It was meticulously planned, and policies were the policies and they were tinkered with but they were never massively overhauled because once she decided that's how we've got to do it, that's how we were going to do it. Every time there was an issue, it was referred to the policy: handwriting for example, everybody had to write your crossbar had to be at the right height, if you had two letters with a crossbar together, you use one crossbar. If you had fractions and you were in the infants, you had larger squares…so you knew exactly …thus affected everything. If you had a policy, you had a policy. (Donald)*

In another school he went on to work, Donald noted a different collegial and post-modern leadership approaches (Bush, 2011) he favoured but still noted the problematic extreme it represented:

> *It was absolutely the opposite. It was, you know, where is the policy? Do we have a policy on this? It was a very small school; staff meetings were very good, creative and loud sometimes. I loved the passion of the teachers in this second primary school. You didn't have the passion in the first school. It didn't feel like your voice was being particularly heard. (Donald)*

Overall, these thematic findings for the first two research objectives uncover new contrasting leadership pathways and challenges as well as reinforce literature-based claims about, for example, innate and learnt leadership traits (Northouse, 2016), poorly trained staff and school leaders as well as the uncertainty for optional or compulsory leadership training (Bush, 2013; Higham et al., 2015; Mokonzi, 2010; Zame et al., 2008) echoeing the overall need to tackle an ongoing global shortage of school leaders (Chapman, 2005; MacBeath, 2011). The foregoing findings combined with issues of poverty, pupils' poor outcomes, and other intra and cross-schools systemic challenges bring to the fore Jha's (2007) intricate external and internal barriers to

learning and schooling that affect both students and staff. It is understandble that, as a reader, you may be left with a sense that these themes could have been further discussed and framed differently. However, this study's primary purpose for capturing the essence of participants' narratives on their leadership pathways and challenges was instead to understand how these headteachers responded to these challenges as presentd and discussed below.

School leadership actions as a response to challenges. DRC participants were first of all mindful of the official policy that calls on all head teachers to develop their leadership anchored on three constructs mainly administrative which is akin to managerial and bureaucratic leadership advanced both in the West and Africa (Beugré & Offodile, 2001; Bush, 2011), pedagogical which focuses on teaching and learning or instructional leadership, and financial leadership:

> *All the head teachers are called to be good administrators, develop good pedagogical practices and manage well the finances of the school. If you apply these [meaning administration, pedagogy and finance], your school will be the best.*

In the face of extreme poverty affecting all stakeholders particularly teachers, the DRC participants were prepared to stray from orthodoxy of the above prescripte ladeship approachs and take the initiative to act with humanism or Ubuntu leadership which is extensively discussed elsewhere (Elonga Mboyo, 2019).

> *I do my work with authority but also with humanism. By humanism I mean I understand the discomfort of others. There are times when a teacher comes to me and says: look Mr head teacher, I am in need of money to deal with this emergency, then I say take this much [ussually from the school's fund], you will reimburse at the end of the month. When I respond like this, it injects a feeling of friendship and humanity and it makes them accept you as a leader beause you understand their situation. (Bafote)*

The foregoing sample of leadership approaches to be seen against Bafote's admission that '…to update our [their] practices, we [they] also inform oursleves [themselves] using what is being done in other places/lands' in order to grasp the fundamental drive to work across various leadership frameworks and incorporate non-local ideas (hence, be comparative) and hopefully be effective when leading urban schools.

On their part, the English headteachers focused, among other approaches (see Table 1) on mending internal and external fractures between different entities as well as finding the middle ground between extreme practices of leadership. The concept of 'bridger' (Bruce-Golding, 2019) captures the role of these headteachers who sought to be inclusive by bringing all into an heterogenous cohesive whole:

> *Our school governing body is made up of members who are varied: we've got some strong church goers, a person who is a strong Muslim active but aware of this being a Catholic school where his children go, aware of the ethos, but it brings a very interesting dimension to the discussions because he is trying to broaden what we are doing without diluting it. (Donald)*

The above apparant democratic or participative approach to school leadership, that also characterised Fiona's approach, was coloured by elements of rationality that is associated with managerial leadership while also deploying other skills in order to navigate the complexity of managing human beings as suggested by the extract below:

> *So, when I came for my first headship, I said I need a bit of the management side from that head and a lot of that people skills from that head. I could do with the consistency in that... (Donald)*

The reference to school leaders' people's skills became more apparant when Fiona advocated for the need for what could arguabky termed

as emotional leadership, to deal with pupils' emotional fractures in her school and when they move on to scecondary school:

> *...the psychologist I employ allows the staff to observe her so that they can see strategies that work with her and she then gives them advice…She gives them [teachers] information that they can work on over a period of time. I think if you have a professional body that's working in and around the school and it's like on tap, I think that would alleviate many issues high schools. (Fiona)*

When consumed by the administrative role, they were able to switch and adopt other approches that they felt were also needed and the case of instructional leadership, among others, illustrates their ability to work across frameworks which in essence is a comparative exercise:

> *...the last two months I have been dealing with pay policy with all these changes, and I just think why do I want to do that, I actually want to be in the classroom and look at teaching and learning. (Fiona)*

The teaching and learning is seen as the primary mission that the head teacher and senior staff must model for the othr staff members to emulate:

> *…the thing for me is that I can teach, I can go into a classroom tomorrow and I can get the very best out of children because if you love teaching in the first place you never lose sight of why you were there in the first place. So as long as they know that you can do what you are asking them and bring in mentoring and coaching and it stems from the head and your senior leaders. (Fiona)*

The individual strands of leadership approaches adopted by the English and DRC headteachers in this study are arguably different and similar at the same time. Limited space precludes an elaborate discussion about the complexity of each approach as illustrated elsewhere in the case of an arguably local african reimagined Ubuntu leadership in the DRC (Elonga Mboyo, 2019). What is strikingly of interest here is that both sets of head teachers displayed an eclectic style of leadership which is essentially comparative by virtue of its

attempt to look across different leadership approaches and settle for this or that approach at a given time and space. The pertinent issue of exploration for this special issue, therefore, is to establish how these DRC head teachers and others in Africa (Maringe and Moletsane, 2015) can decolonise educational leadership while working comparatively across a wide range of local and non-local leadership frameworks.

The second phase of analysis, therefore, sought to identify overlapping patterns in the above thematised analysis and other narratives, in order to establish the underlying principles behind, in this case, eclectic/comparative leadership (Vandermause et al., 2014). From the stories of actions about pathways to leadership, leadership challenges and eclectic leadership approaches, the second analytical phase aimed to develop an underlying (northern and southern hemespehere's) theory of context(s). This would hopefully explain how the sampled school leaders navigated various power structures in order to think and act locally and globally and, arguably, in the case of DRC school leaders, decolonise educational leadership practice. In so doing, it became clear that 'scope', leadership metaphors and leadership values are the conceptual elements that contributed immensely to the comparative leadership behaviours they exhibited. The remainder of this article will attempt to construct a data-driven and at the same time literature-informed complex theory of context underpinned by constructs such as scope, leaders' identity layering metaphor and values that enabled them to comparatively look across leadership frameworks and decolonise educational leadership in the DRC.

Scope

There was a consistent theme running from pathways to headship, through the framing of leadership challenges to good leadership behaviours. It is called 'scope'. This concept is too crucial to over-philosophise. 'Scope' is quite simply freedom or 'room for manoeuvre' as well as the constrains that these sets of heads did or did not have in their respective environments and what they were able to do as a result of it. 'Scope' is neither agency nor structure although both are essential components that can be polarised, overcome, bracketed, flattened, stratified, relationalised... depending on the nature of practitioners' actions rather than adhere to a researcher's predetermined ontological stance. As shall be explored next, the engagement with 'scope' is frought with power dynamics, deeper questions about head teachers' (cultural, religious...) identities and the values spurring them on to be comparative and decolonise educational leadership despite or because of an enabling or constraining nature of scope.

This study's data point to a relatively contrasting ontological environment that is either more restrictive (in the case of the DRC) or more open (in the case of England). Restrictive scope is more centralised, top-down and vertical (more objective and less subjective), while open scope is more decentralised and horizontal (less objective and more subjective). When scope is vertical, it is objective and like Hooge et al.'s (2012) vertical accountability which seeks to comply with normative realities, laws and regulations. Horizontal scope, by contrast, depicts the subjective nature of room for manoeuvre and similar to Hooge et al.'s (2012) horizontal accountability which take account of the input of students, parents, communities, and various other stakeholders.

It can initially be hypothesised (see Table 2), therefore, that the less rigid/pervasive or more compressed is the vertical accountability (scope), the more extensive becomes the horizontal accountability and hence giving headteachers more room for manoeuvre and be more comparative. In the same vein, the more rigid, expanding and pervasive the vertical accountability (scope), the less comparative the school leadership, even though that was negated here by DRC heads who circumvent the system. As shall be shown in subsequent sections, these ontologically predetermined assumptions about the two contexts can be overcome by the agency of more comparative school leaders. Table 2.

Increased/Decreased Vertical and Horizontal Scope

Increased horizontal scope (more room to be comparative)	Decreased vertical scope	Increased horizontal scope (more room to be comparative)
Decreased Horizontal scope; less comparative	Increased vertical scope (expanded/rigid)	Decreased Horizontal scope; less comparative

More Objective/Less Subjective Scope – More Centralised (DRC)

The evidence here is consistent with research from Greece (Kaparou, 2013; Kaparou & Bush, 2016), West Africa (Bush & Glover, 2016) and Rwanda (Kambanda, 2013), which prompted Bush and Glover (2014, p.565) to suggest that African countries and Eastern and Southern European contexts were more centralised, in the sense that the 'principal's role often remains that of implementing external imperatives with little scope for local initiatives'.

The two DRC primary school heads who were part of this study appear to imply that the environment was ontologically objective and,

therefore, subjectively restrictive. This can be traced back to the 'pathways to headship' section, where the sense of headship was perceived to be innate and seemingly aspiring to maintain an established order. Besides, the framed leadership challenges lent themselves to direct policies that would only perpetuate an existing order rather than change it. Similarly, when discharging their leadership responsibilities, Bafote, for example, operated within two spaces (the religious space to which the school is affiliated and the state space), echoing views that pointed to the existence of objective structures that defined school leadership. His religious space had what he called a 'disposition'. However admirable the disposition may be, it was what was expected of him and of all the heads who had worked in that school, as the following comment shows:

> *They [all head teachers at Baf] came from elsewhere and as soon as they arrive [at Baf] ... they find a certain disposition. Bafote*

When referring to the state's space, both Bafote and Lokuli's converging accounts were quite revealing. For them, good school leadership consisted of 'paying attention to the administration, pedagogy and finance …' of the school as prescribed in the official documents and believed to be the formula for success:

> *If you apply these [meaning administration, pedagogy and finance], your school will be the best. Bafote*

As already stated, this is in line with reports of highly bureaucratic, mechanistic and autocratic leadership in Africa (Beugré, 1998; Blunt & Jones, 1997; Jones et al., 1996; Kiggundu et al., 1983). What is intriguing, however, is that Bafote said 'your school will be the best' instead of 'you will be the best headteacher'. This confirms his apparent oscillation between his school living up to what was required of it to be 'the best' (in administration, pedagogy and finance) in the eyes of

inspectors, for example, and his comparative authoring of, an arguably decolonising, school leadership (through humanism that led to eclecticism and comparative approaches). The humanism and other leadership approached required, in part, more agency in the way of circumvention and openness to 'knowledge from other lands' showing that comparative leadership is a disruptive practice leading to new practices, through interrogation of orthodoxy (Eacott, 2013; Thomson, 2010) to gain more scope as shall be discussed in detailed later.

Less Objective/More Subjective – More Decentralised (England)

Having more room for manoeuvre is one thing, using it as a springboard for substantial change is another. Instead of maintaining the status quo, Fiona and Donald expressed their drive to explore and change; they framed their challenges in such a way that overcoming them would require systemic change. Unlike Bafote, who had to circumvent to be more creative, Fiona, for example, used the power she had to take various initiatives as she saw fit, as the following extract capturing the experience of being appointed a confederation head shows:

> *They [the diocese] couldn't tell what it was that they wanted me to do. I said what do you want it to look like in a year's time, three years' time and they couldn't tell me. And I said, are you saying to me that I am to create this federation and strategically manage it and put the layers of staffing in that I think is required? And they said yes. I said and if it goes all wrong, I am to blame? […] I said, well I like a challenge. (Fiona)*

All these elements point to more subjective, decentralised and less rigid scope.

However, it is argued that the educational landscape in England has been subject to constant policy change (Glatter, 2012). A view that is confirmed by Donald in the following extract:

Things are constantly changing, and they have never stopped changing. (Donald)

It may, therefore, be argued that the less rigid and autonomous rhetoric characterising Fiona and Donald's narratives is, in fact, an echo of the autonomy they would assume to implement continuous and constraining government policy change (Glatter, 2012; Hammersley, 2015), especially in aligning public sector bodies, such as schools, to the private sector's principles of choice, accountability etc. (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008). Simkins (2003, p.215), however, problematises the term 'autonomy' and sees in it 'a degree of freedom which few if any organisations in the modern world can achieve' absolutely and that scope, both in its vertical and horizontal dimensions, is a dynamic concept.

It is, therefore, argued here that, in comparison to the experiences of Bafote and Lokuli, Fiona and Donald acted within an environment with a greater degree of scope and autonomy which is consistent with previous reports about the educational environment in England (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hooge et al., 2012; Kaparou & Bush, 2016).

From Scope to Action: Exploring Missing Links

Having a limiting or open scope is one thing but taking action thanks to or despite the nature of one's scope is another that conveys (comparatively decolonising) agency. More autonomy and deregulation, in the case of England, can imply more regulation (Glatter, 2012; Hammersley, 2015) that some headteacher have attempted to circumvent (De Angelis et al., 2007; Michalak, 2012) and more objective scope in the DRC does not automatically imply conformity as professionals have agency and in a broken system where communication is hard, if not non-existent, some heads may not even

be aware of government regulations; hence, headteachers' agency becomes the norm. The centrality of headteachers in the future direction of the school community is captured by Donald who suggested that leading schools is 'the gospel according to the headteacher'. Whether the system is centralised or decentralised, it is about how and why one (the head and the whole school) responds to the challenges. In analysing the different layers embedded in the above metaphor, one is struck by, not only the similarity in the layered way that these sets of headteachers operated but also the values that propelled them into action.

Metaphor: 'It's the Gospel According to the Head Teacher'

Educational leadership and organisational theories have a variety of metaphors too (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Morgan, 2006). The DRC head teachers, in this study, did not explicitly advance any metaphor to make sense of their leadership actions, unlike Donald who summarised his experience as being about:

The gospel according to the head teacher. (Donald)

The above metaphor could be taken to signify the crucial role head teachers play in the success of their schools (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hargreaves, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1994; Southworth, 2003). It exemplifies, as shall be discussed shortly that being an effective school leader is about navigating through a multi-layered response repertoire that adds further complexity to traditional normative and fragmented doxas about successful school leadership. When theorising comparative educational leadership, Dimmock and Walker (2000), for example, have offered a multi-dimensional approach to cultures (national, regional, local community, system level, school boundary and organisational cultures) that head teachers in multicultural settings can engage with. However useful Dimmock

and Walker's analysis is, it is unlikely that headteachers would engage in such an elaborate analysis of cultural contexts in the immediacy of practice. It is, therefore, essential to grasp head teachers' self-styled way of sifting through complex layers of cultural, ontological and epistemological diversity.

The above metaphor is therefore a practice-based entry point into head teachers' stepped identities leading to a point when they define themselves as agents that will overcome any barrier and look comparatively across an array of frameworks for the good of the children under their care. Initially, Donald gave the metaphor a double meaning: the literal and the professional, although, on the basis of their narratives, I advanced a third meaning - the comparative which all together is reminiscent of Epitropaki et al.'s (2017) the personal, relational and collective selves of leaders' identity formation.

Literal Meaning

In its literal sense, the above metaphor is manifested through personal internalised convictions based on one's historical, cultural and religious, among others, trajectory. Bafote and Lokuli spoke of their experiences growing up in the Belgian Congo as follows:

> *'The Belgians taught us to work with rigour and deliver success and I expect that from my staff and children under my care'. (Bafote)*

Fiona and Donald made reference to their Irish roots as having shaped their personal worldviews around race, wealth, poverty and other issues that provided into the way they operated.

> *'I came from a poor home but we were taught to work hard so I always give everyone a chance. I don't discriminate'. (Fiona)*

While this stock of experiences can arguably be valuable in shaping leadership character (Schuttloffel, 2013) and developing the personal values/vision needed for problem solving, organisational

learning, especially in diverse contexts and at a time of rapid change (Hallinger & Heck, 2002), these personal beliefs '…may present a serious barrier…' (Reed, 2008, p.221) particularly for those who have internalised discriminatory views along the lines of race, sex, religion, ethnic origin etc.

Professional/Organisational Meaning

Donald's explanation of the meaning of metaphor at the 'professional' level amounted to describing more or less the crucial role that a head teacher plays in mediating organisational mission or culture (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hallinger and Heck, 2002) that may or may not correspond with the literal meaning of the metaphor. Below is Donald's response to the clash of values after a school fight, that illustrate this clearly:

> *…So this was our first test of the gospel according to me as head teacher, to us as governors. Because the school governors set the strategic boundaries and as a church school, I said we cannot put those things in clearly and give them some sort of a reference and the other element was forgiveness. We do expect children to forgive. I said this is my interpretation of the gospel and I want your backing and it worked well. Gospel messages are quite simple and clear but just very difficult to follow. (Donald)*

The religious and moral case that could be made to opt for forgiveness rather than retribution (or being punitive) is not being disputed here. The point, however, is that, in terms of the scope that heads in this study narrated, the established (catholic) order became the norm. '…her [referring to a headteacher under whom he worked] way became the HMI's way' (Donald) and 'if you apply these (meaning administration, pedagogy and finance as prescribed by the state), your school will be the best' (Bafote) are indications of how school leadership was framed in line with prescriptive organisational/establishment goals.

The Comparative Dimension

'Leaders are expected to ground their activities in clear personal and professional values' (Bush, 2011, p.6). The foregoing literal and professional meanings of this metaphor are ways in which these four leaders drew inspiration from their personal and professional (cultural, ontological, epistemological…) selves that would have been shaped by their personal trajectories and professional affiliations. The comparative self (or dimension of this metaphor) is a subversive self. Although subversion can be negatively interpreted, its value is also known to enable head teachers 'to engage in a certain amount of deviant behaviour and express their desired identities within a role without risking too much role sanction' (Wang, 2018, p.542).

> *We turned certain things on their heads… (Fiona)*
>
> *...This is the timetable that inspectors get to see when they come. It's in line with what they expect to see but my teachers are operating from a different timetable and teaching other subjects not prescribed because we know what is good for our children to excel in this world. (Bafote)*

Rising beyond the (local) literal/personal and organisational values/knowledge involves creativity when filtering insights, research knowledge and leadership practices, as this representative extract illustrates:

> *…we update knowledge according to what is being done in other places/lands; …and we are always on the lookout for new ideas whether on the bus or when listening to the radio...; I ask my teachers to research and share any new ideas they may have come across. (Bafote)*

They take that risk of, for example, 'turning things on their heads' and having unofficial timetable as shown in the extracts below, to arguably 'seek the good of the pupil' (Hammersley, 2015). This approach to

leadership can lead to engage with a whole array of leadership behaviours (hence, comparative) that are deemed appropriate in a given time and space. The already published Ubuntu strand of leadership emerging from this research (Elonga Mboyo, 2019) is just one example among many other possible eclectic approaches that could be explored separately in future research projects. What is the focus here is the emergence of an empirically inspired theoretical template for comparative leadership that school leaders, especially those in Africa as this study reveals, un/knowingly engage in when eclectically leading (and decolonising) leadership in their diverse settings.

Successful school leaders possess certain core values: willingness to take risk, academic optimism, emotional resilience, hope and moral purpose (Day et al., 2011). The same can be said of comparative school leaders in this study. While headteachers operating at the literal/personal level of the metaphor privilege their personal convictions and values and those at professional level champion what is good for the organisation, comparative school leaders in this study are, arguably, motivated by 'what is good for the students/pupils' even if it means going against personal and organisational values. Headteachers in this study showed the following pattern of values: risk taking, inclusivity, integrity (derived from honesty, transparency, humble learning, trustworthiness and tolerance) and success-mindedness (both academic and human).

Limited space precludes an extensive discussion here about the complexities in deploying these cores values as experienced by the headteachers in this study. Suffice to note that these comparative school leaders who were prepared to circumvent were primarily driven by the sense of risk taking. They took the risk to, for example,

have parallel timetables (in the case of Bafote) or turn things on their heads (as stated by Fiona). Contrary to thinking and acting in a compartmentalised way, these headteachers unanimously underlined the need to be inclusive in a racially, culturally, epistemologically diverse world. This social justice core value was exemplified by, for example Bafole, who sought to consider knowledge from 'other (foreign) lands' or when Fiona and Donald attempted to combine or find the middle ground between fractured systems. A third core value that propelled these headteachers to think and act comparatively is the sense of integrity that they conveyed through a set of other qualities as exemplified by Bafote:

> *You have to be a morally correct …honest and transparent man, have moral integrity. (Bafote)*

In taking risks, privileging inclusivity and acting with integrity, these headteachers were ultimately success-minded and in the case of the DRC headteachers. Success can be understood in different ways, for example, success was much more than pupils' outcomes that improve the standing of a given school but rather seen in th elong term for the greater good of the country:

> *Everything we do is geared towards boosting the competence of our children, provide and teach them information technology and life skills… so that they can come back as 'cadres' for this country. (Bafote)*

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has sought to compare leadership pathways, challenges and approaches of urban headteachers based in the DRC and England. The ultimate goal of the research was to understand how, in order to decolonise their schools from Western and local tyranies, DRC head teachers, in particular, were able to look across

(compare) different leadership frameworks and develop a (diverse) context specific approach to school leadership. Using a narrative approach within a broader comparative theoretical framework, the study has not only identified similar and different thematic stories of (leadership pathways, challenges and leadership approaches) actions, it has also enable the development of an empirically-based comparative theory of context. The empirically-based leadership theory of context emerging from the study anchors comparative leadership approach on making sense of the ontological scope to which a leader would respond by going beyond his or her personal and professional selves and deploy his/her 'gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor comparative self fuelled by the set of values identified here. Navigating through these dynamics, it is argued, enabled (RDC) school leaders to decolonise theory, practice and policy by comparatively authoring their own brand of leadership for a specific time and space whether or not that their leadership behaviours are similar or different to pre-existent local or global leadership approaches.

Figure 1.

Comparative Leadership Framework

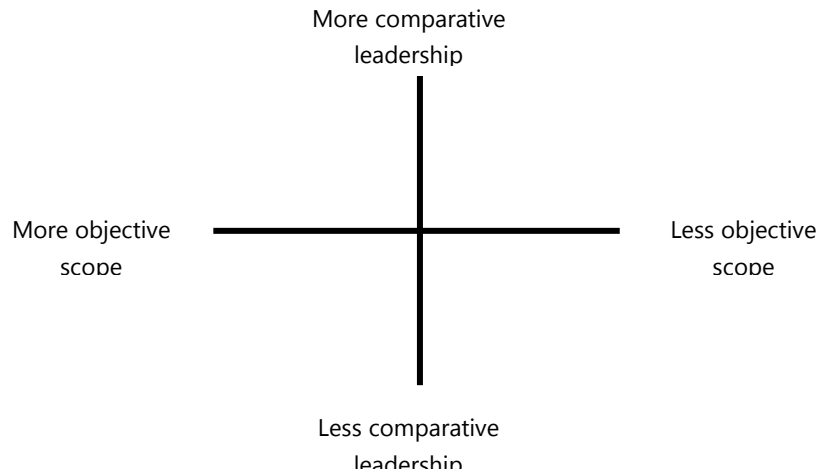

Figure 1 offers a visual illustration of the above cross-case discussion which shows that in an either more objective or subjective scope, school leaders can, as it was possible for both sets of headteachers, be more comparative rather than less comparative. More studies with bigger sample sizes are needed to not only reaffirm or not claims made here but also explore how school leaders act less comparatively in both objective scope and subjective scope. In the case of headteachers in this study, however, the comparative case could not be overstated. While recognising their different pathways, challenges to school leadership, they shared a common sentiment to be eclectic and comparative that delivered an underpinning theoretical theory of context(s).

It is posited that the diverse contexts that permeates into schools bring various ontologies, epistemologies, cultures, beliefs and assumptions that configure scope as either objective or subjective. While it is possible for headteachers to keep working within the bounds of a strictly objective or subjective scope and less comparative approach, these headteachers responded to their contrasting scopes by being more comparative. Whether the scope was more objective or not, the metaphor 'it's the gospel according to the head teacher' set the scene for identifying these headteachers' agentic responses which varied from literal through institutional to comparative interpretations. Headteachers can analyse the extent to which the literal and professional dispositions enable or hinder them to think and act locally and globally. However, in order to make comparartive leap, headteachers in this study drew from the core values of risk-taking (through circumvention, being creative…), inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness that they applied in their respective objective and subjective contextual scopes.

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A Multilateral Model for Decolonising African Educational Leadership: Addressing Conceptual Problems and Integrating the Past-Present Continuum across the Local-Global Axis

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Abstract

In studies on educational leadership across African countries, researchers are using different concepts that do not have the same meanings or similar histories, including variations in involvement by local, national, and international leaders. In the first part of this article, we problematize conceptualizing globally minded school leadership in Africa and attempt to understand the way local and global actors apply these concepts to and from within African contexts. In the second part, we present research working at the intersection of the NGO-Postcolonial border working with educational leaders in Madagascar. The findings show that early childhood education makes a difference on school readiness and that quality matters. In the third part, we propose a multilateral model for decolonising educational leadership in Africa by working on the past-present continuum and holding the tension between "border-specific" and "cross-border" perspectives.

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Introduction

Problematizing Conceptualisations for Globally Minded School Leadership in Africa

How to decolonise education in African countries is one of the most pressing questions in educational leadership. Border-specific approaches or cross-border approaches seem to stand at odds, forcing leaders to choose one over the other. Embracing border-specific tactics has the promise of rendering educational processes and outcomes immediately accessible and relevant to learners but with the likelihood of closing off opportunities to participate in and benefit from social, political and economic resources mobilizing globally. Border-specific education is also insufficient to contribute to development and sustainable solutions that have global impact such as on quality education, poverty, gender equality, and the environment. Cross-border leadership practices address global concerns through multilateral agreements of exchange of human and material resources for the purpose of advancing educational outcomes for more than one nation. Cross-border leadership has been criticized for not valuing and incorporating local languages and traditions and for extracting individuals from resource poor regions (see also brain drain) (Serpell, 2010). Despite tensions between the two approaches, we think that border-specific and cross-border perspectives can coexist and Africanize education, developing quality education and contributing to reaching some of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the

United Nations (2015) to achieve by 2030. However, transforming educational leadership in Africa by considering both border-specific and cross-border perspectives requires addressing certain conceptual struggles.

Conceptualizations of Educational Leadership across African Countries

The old version of Western schooling in colonial times: The establishment of schooling in Africa can be situated between the rise of the slave trade and the beginning of the domination and colonial exploration of the African continent. Two important remarks about colonial schooling: it is intimately linked to power and control meant to create docile and non-subversive colonies. Colonisation has an ancient and modern history with a multitude of actors who imposed value systems, languages, education and more on African peoples. According to the famous expression of Cheikh Hamidou Kane published in 1961, the African's contact with Western modernity, especially in schools, can be qualified as an ambiguous adventure. Adventure in the sense that the Western school opens up new perspectives in terms of knowledge, skills and therefore power. But at the same time, as the African ventures into this Western modernity, he loses his soul, he is lost, he is only a shadow of himself. He no longer has the opportunity to have leadership.

The contemporary version of Western schooling in Africa—international organizations and imported/imposed solutions: From 1950s to 1970s, most African countries became independent. The fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa ended the European colonisation of the African continent. Can we, therefore, say that African countries have regained leadership in their education and schools? Not really. On the one hand, decolonisation was not an opportunity to rethink the

colonial school. The latter has been maintained with superficial (cosmetic) modifications. Colonial languages of instruction were now in most countries. The most painful episode was arguably the period when the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank (World Bank) put in place budgetary austerity policies, which resulted in the weakening of African education systems (Van de Walle, 1991). More recently, we can observe that the orientations and the reforms undertaken in the African education systems have most of the time an exogenous origin and do not allow the African school to become more relevant. Examples of this problem include reforms based on the competency-based approach in which the competencies are imported and consequentially decontextualized (Anderson-Levitt, 2017; Lauwerier & Akkari, 2013).

On the other hand, international cooperation has taken up the initiative to orient African education policies. Certainly, it can be animated by a real commitment to help Africa build its education as evidenced by UNESCO's campaigns in favour of literacy or the work of Paulo Freire with a goal of consciousness raising (i.e., conscientization, Freire, 1970/2009) in the ex-Portuguese colonies. But the record of international cooperation has been disastrous in terms of African leadership. Asuga, Scevak and Eacott (2016) suggest "the lack of African grounded theory means that while researchers may base their work in an African context, the intellectual resources are overlaid – a form of epistemic imperialism" (p.392-393), which could be explained as "double decontextualization" meaning that both the theories and the practice are from external contexts (e.g., practitioners unaware of the colonial roots of a practice and apply it as though it is African) (Elonga Mboyo (2016, p.79). In a way, we can say that the colonisation by the military occupation of Africa by the European colonial powers is a much less pernicious process than mental or

cognitive colonisation. The latter passes through the elites and the domination of thought.

The colonisation of the mind remains active in many African countries. For example, parents living in poverty in Madagascar desire for their children to learn the French language at school so they may gain jobs in policing and governing (Loomis & Akkari, 2012). Driven by colonial power, French remains the official language despite the fact that it is not spoken on a day-to-day basis among these professions (Loomis & Akkari, 2012). De Sousa Santos (2018) believes that the Western school form or what he calls the cognitive empire is on the decline and we are seeing the emergence of Southern epistemologies, particularly in the call for international organizations to base interventions in the philosophy of Ubuntu (or communalism) (Piper, 2016). One of the cornerstones in the process of being laid in African educational leadership and management is generating leaders with the power to innovate from within as well as 'from without' colonised minds in order to engage in conceptual blockbusting.

As Elonga Mboyo (2016; 2019) has articulated clearly, educational leaders and managers often find themselves at a crossroads applying a Western conceptualisation of time that is linear and divisible (Dixon, 1977) to recapture the precolonial African ideals (Obiakor, 2004) or to consider chasing an exogenous postcolonial vision. A third position, Elonga Mboyo (2016) argues, is to work from an African sense of time fusing and feeling simultaneously pre- and post-colonial ways of knowing with all the challenges wrought by double-decontextualization (2016). From this perspective, African educational leaders can work to address the imbalance of external actors by drawing from their experiential bases while also deriving actions for school improvement from a larger knowledge base of high-

quality rigorous research, of which there is a dearth, conducted from various paradigms in Africa.

An examination of educational leadership and management published 1960 through 2018 found that prior to the year 2000 African literature is nearly non-existent with only 5% of publications before that date (Hallinger, 2019). Since then, the body of research has grown with most contributions (74%) from South Africa (Hallinger, 2019). A narrower review on educational management and leadership during 2008 through 2014 in three prestigious international journals found only 4.92% from Africa (36 of 731 articles) and of these 36 articles 15 (or 41.7%) were from South Africa (Asuga, et al., 2016); the remaining studies with 2 to 6 per country represented seven countries and two were across Africa (Asuga, et al., 2016). In addition to the need to increase the number of studies and the regions represented in Africa, reviews of the literature show several other aspects to develop research. The corpus of African research needs to be broadened in terms of ontological and epistemological assumptions, methods used (most are qualitative), sample sizes (most are small), and concepts with meanings that vary across contexts (Asuga, et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2018 & 2019).

Revisiting Concepts

Gaining competency in the leadership of schools in Africa is not something you can obtain only through training or professional interactions without immersion into and understanding of culture, tradition, and what empowerment means in the African context. In the following paragraphs, we discuss these concepts in order to break existing ambiguities in education systems in Africa and foster border-specific and cross-border decolonising innovations when leading schools.

Ubuntu (communalism) community, culture, and ethnicity. The concept of Ubuntu is held up as a foundational pan-African philosophy (Etieyibo, 2017). The community, the village, the ancestors are truly the bearers of the soul and of African epistemologies. Communal life and personhood are inextricably linked (Mkhize, 2004). Some have defined the term as kindness and others as collectivism and communalism. Narratives from three women educational leaders in South Africa have identified spirituality, interdependence, and unity as the essence of Ubuntu (Mogadime, et al., 2010). The term has varied meanings across African contexts so taking a cross-border perspective is critical. For example, a recent study of how Ubuntu is realized by educational leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) found a circular relationship between individual and collective needs: "'doing' Ubuntu in an urban school context in Kinshasa/DRC has been framed as following the pattern of understanding others' needs, negotiating and prioritising needs, assessing available resources, attending to others' needs, and raised expectations and commitment to organisational goals" (Elonga Mboyo, 2019, p.218). This finding from the DRC is from a context in which teachers' pay is insufficient to raise them out of poverty. Whether a context is impoverished or plentiful in school resources, school managers and leaders practise Ubuntu within a conceptualization of community or multiple communities.

In addition to the reference above, in South Africa the term community has been applied in at least two other ways. One way is to refer to disadvantaged groups as a community to avoid addressing racialized privilege (Sigogo & Modipa, 2004, p. 317), though this use is not always the case. In another use, African legal scholar Sunelle Geyer (2010) argues that the *Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Bill of 2010* proposes the following definition of *indigenous community* be inserted

into four related legal acts of the Republic of South Africa: "indigenous community" means any community of people currently living within the borders of the Republic, or who historically lived in the geographic area currently located within the borders of the Republic." He criticizes the Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Bill:

> *Unregimented use of the word 'community' in the said definition and its apparent inconsistency with the meaning of the phrase 'indigenous community' in other South African legislation... [and] is further contrasted to the much narrower understanding and/or defining of indigenous communities in Malaysia and the Philippines, as well as the United Nations (Geyer, 2010, p. 128).*

Related terms with similar conceptual issues are culture and ethnicity. Ironically, the representations of 'African' leadership and management' found in Western texts as well as the alternative, African management philosophy, show a tendency to essentialize 'African' culture. Whether it is descriptions of Africa's national culture in the management literature or the alternative conceptions of 'African' culture by mostly African scholars, 'African culture' is portrayed as a homogeneous concept (Nkomo, 2011, p. 377). In this article, we use a pluralistic view because "Africa" is comprised of 54 countries (on the continent and islands) with thousands of cultures and ethnic groups.

Ethnicity should be seen as one of the important identities/affiliations in Africa, but it is not the only one. When relevant, educational leaders need to address the experiences of systemic inequality by ethnicity and language in school systems while also working with and understanding interethnic alliances in Africa. These alliances can provide a means of resolving conflicts in which ethnicity seems to play a role, however and importantly, not all problems in Africa have to do with ethnicity. It is clear that more action and research is needed to reinvent Ubuntu (Elonga Mboyo, 2019) or

return to various African conceptualizations of community, culture, and ethnicity and to understand it in each and every African country.

Tradition. While Africa is full of traditions, the concept of tradition is often connoted as from the past, from archaism, connoted as a brake on modernity. But modernity, including education, is not built in a vacuum. Contemporary education has been influenced mostly by relatively young colonial traditions (Anderson-Levitt, 2001). The challenge facing African educational leaders is disentangling colonial pedagogy from northern concepts of progress and acknowledging that the African traditions have a longer history of preserving their societies and knowledge, often this was accomplished through spirituality that took form in many different religions and philosophies (Mbiti, 1989). There are two further comments regarding the notion of tradition. First of all, it is not necessary to see tradition as the perfect opposition to modernity (i.e., development or progress). Tradition and modernity exist in a dialectic. Second, it is impossible to construct appropriate education systems within a vacuum, that is to say without a link with the past and the oral tradition.

Knowledge. To talk about knowledge, we can develop two points: (a) the importance of orality in the transmission of knowledge in Africa and (2) the absence of African languages at school is a major obstacle to the transmission of knowledge. For example, oral transmission of culture has long been an effective method for intergenerational transmission of languages and preserving the environment. Prior to colonialization, African languages persisted thousands of years, whereas after it, the number of languages decreased (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2021). Similarly, African traditions have protected indigenous plants and species. The extraction and destruction of African resources has mostly occurred

through exogenous actors from the global north. We see one of the biggest challenges facing African educational leaders is the integration and the prioritization of African languages that provide access to African ways of knowing. All types of knowledge (scientific, academic, informal, social, traditional, religious, etc.) must be invested in order to solve the problems a society faces. We note in particular that school knowledge in Africa, however, struggles to contribute to solving the continent's challenges.

Indigenous: Debating the global use of the term indigenous. We debate the global use of the term indigenous because meanings vary across countries. We observe that in North America (Mexico, the U.S., and Canada) and South America people are saying they want to use the concept of indigenous to fight for rights; whereas in Africa after decolonisation, the concept of indigenous was used to push individuals into slavery-like positions (De L'Estoile, 2000; Warren & Jackson, 2003). All African people do not feel indigenous and many South Americans do not identify as indigenous. Some authors prefer the terms autochthonous or endogenous (Bellier, 2012). In short, all these terms (indigenous, autochthonous, endogenous) highlight the need to decolonize education systems but also the need to develop the appropriation and local production of education – in other words ownership and empowerment.

Empowerment through education. Empowerment is critical in the development and growth of children and learning across the lifespan. Educational experiences that are empowering result in students with enhanced self-esteem, confidence, ability and motivation to succeed (Cummins, 1986). Yet, empowerment is an ambiguous concept to the majority of individuals as it is often used differently in numerous contexts. This term is embedded within various institutions such as

community development, management, political organizations, therapeutic-wellness groups and the education system (Cummins, 1986; Perkins, 1995). When individuals consider the definition of empowerment, it often involves the interconnection of people, organization, and communities functioning together in order to control or overcome certain adversities (Saegert & Winkle, 1996). Empowerment, a multilevel construct (Rappaport, 1995), occurs through "intertwined changes in behaviour, self-concept, and actual improvements in the conditions of the individual, the group, and the community" (Saegert & Winkle, 1996, p.518). Researchers argue that the most powerful definitions and descriptions of empowerment originate from social change movements rather than research or the policy because empowerment is linked to concrete action rather than theorising (Perkins, 1995). Empowerment includes actual control and influence as well as constituents of personal control (Riger, 1993). The goal of empowerment is to recognize and give a voice to individuals in order to sustain their lives in an affirmative way (Rappaport, 1995). For these reasons, we see the empowerment of administrators and educators/teachers as a critical component of decolonising African educational leadership.

A Multilateral Model for Decolonising African Educational Leadership

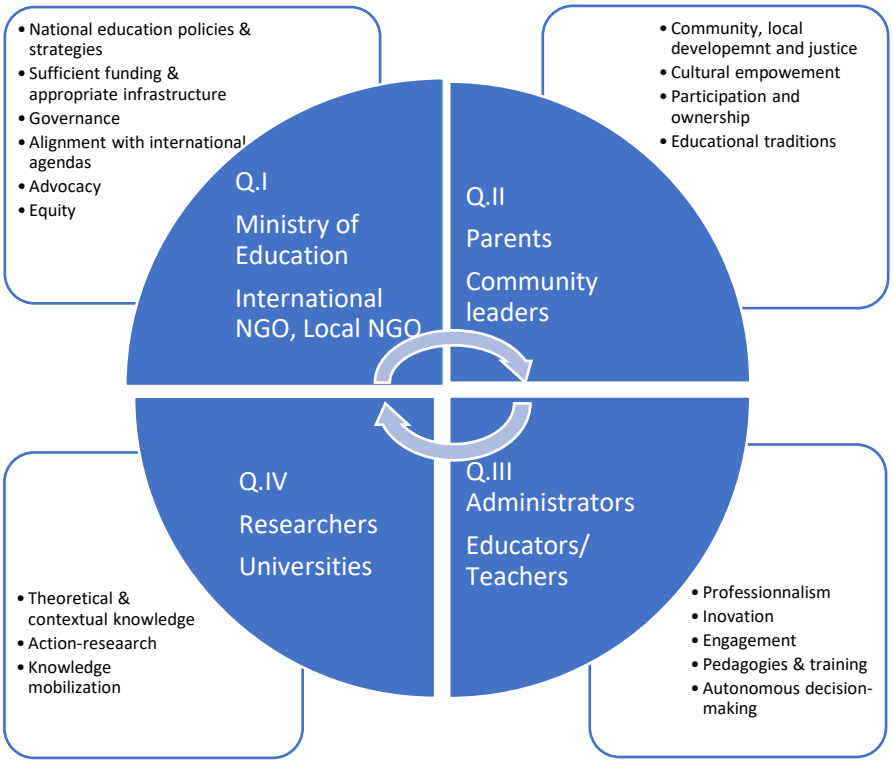
Existing strategies in some African countries suggest decolonising with various actors and responsibilities that are multilateral. As Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) suggest, leadership influences the work goals and strategies of a group or organization. It allows the implementation of strategies and the achievement of objectives. Ultimately, it transforms the functioning, identity and culture of an organization. The impact of educational leadership is

particularly marked in African contexts, which confront educational actors with particular challenges such as poverty, malnutrition, alienation, violence. Educational leadership can bring actors together to address these issues and to resolve their differences, drop their power struggles and unite around a common project for the development of quality education, the design and implementation of which are coordinated by a set of capable people. Miller (2018) suggested that school leadership has four dimensions: social (focused towards society), personal (leader's agency), environmental and relational. Taken together, conceptual problems and the literature lead us to propose that in order to decolonise African educational leadership we need a multilateral model (see Figure 1) that describes an organizational structure in which historically unequal powers negotiate with each other from positions of equal power. These shift in power require individuals to work with historical positions of subjectivity and to assume positions when leading.

The multilateral model for decolonising African educational leadership works on the past-present continuum (inner most arrows) circulating across four dynamically interacting core groups of actors (inner quadrants) to generate and ensure several responsibilities (outer quadrants). We resolve conceptual fights by offering suggestions for analysing educational leadership policies and research that will decolonise educational leadership in post-colonial African countries. In particular, we navigate the past-present continuum across conceptual frontiers and multiple groups of actors. We argue for practices that hold the tension between "border-specific" and "cross-border" perspectives and by doing so build decolonised collaborations.

Figure 1.

Multilateral Model of African Educational Leadership



In quadrant I, there are six domains that a Ministry of Education, local and national non-governmental organizations are primarily responsible for developing and sustaining: national education policies and strategies, sufficient funding and appropriate infrastructure, governance, advocacy, alignment with international agendas, and equity. In quadrant II, the four domains of parents and community leaders are development and justice, cultural empowerment, participation and ownership, and educational traditions. In quadrant III, administrators and educators/teachers provide educational leadership within the following five domains:

professionalism, innovation, engagement, pedagogies and training, and autonomous decision making. In quadrant IV, researchers and universities contribute to educational leadership by achieving responsibility in action-research, theoretical and contextual knowledge, and knowledge mobilization.

One of the pressing issues to address is the strong geographical imbalance in the knowledge production on educational leadership and management with small but growing production from the Global South (Hallinger, 2020). These contexts are very different from those in many other parts of the world and it is important to be aware of the dangers of 'policy borrowing' – applying models from Western contexts to very different settings (Bush, 2014). Developing the dimensions of the Multilateral Model for Decolonising African Educational Leadership requires building on the strengths and addressing weaknesses of African leaders. One example is the strength of leaders to collaborate and mobilise both material and financial resources. One threat to this strength is that within public and private institutions corruption among African leaders is pervasive (Uzomah, 2018). There are other threats so having a risk assessment and management plan is essential to risk identification and mitigation. There are cases that illustrate our proposed model in varying degrees.

A Study of Early Childhood Education in Madagascar

The present study in Madagascar used a repeated measures research design with a purposeful sampling strategy. Data were collected with an average of 40 weeks between assessments. Four regions of the country were chosen by Aide et Action International (discussed in Section 4) because of the limited number of pre-primary education options available: Antananarivo, Tuléar, Sava, and Betioky. Within each region, 2,304 children were assessed in 20 communities;

children attending preschool on the days data were collected were randomly selected.

Students were assessed on school readiness, numeracy and literacy. All assessments were administered in the Malagasy language and adapted to the cultural context. School readiness was assessed using the School Readiness Index (SRI) a tool used previously in India with children ages 5 to 6 (Early Childhood Education Program Evaluation Package, The World Bank India, not dated). The SRI is based on the following 10 concepts: pre-number, space, sequential thinking, classification of fruits and vegetables, following instructions, number/object matching, reading readiness (identifies beginning sounds), pattern making, sentence meaning, and relative comparison (number – greater/lesser). This measure is representative of a global assessment. Items were scored and summed ranging from 0 to 40 with higher scores reflecting greater school readiness.

To explore literacy exclusively, the following two concepts of the SRI were used: reading readiness and sentence meaning. Reading readiness was assessed by a child's ability to identify beginning sounds and to indicate pictures with a similar beginning sound. Children's knowledge in speaking meaningful sentences was tested by asking a child to describe two pictures, and scores reflected the correctness and completeness of a sentence that was also a test of active vocabulary. Item scores were summed and the literacy raw score ranges from 0 to 12.

A separate assessment of numeracy was conducted. This test was based on a student's ability to count from 1 to 10 and 1 to 20, combined with performance on seven addition tests of magnitude comparison (Lee & Schell, unpublished). Children had to distinguish between two piles of physical objects separated by different magnitude

(e.g., showing a pile of 3 objects and a second pile of 8 objects and asking students which pile has a greater number of objects in it). Children received a score of 1 for correctly counting from 1 to 10 and 1 to 20 respectively, and one point was scored for each correct response on the seven items of magnitude comparison for a maximum numeracy score of 9 with a possible score range of 0 to 9. For ease of comparison across all three measures all scores were converted to 100 percentage scores.

Study 1 Findings: A Snapshot of Children's Abilities

Results. Summary information for all 2,304 children who were assessed in the four regions of Madagascar is reported in Table 1. Information is presented by educational level.

Table 1.

Demographics and Assessment Scores by Educational Level for all Children (N = 2,304) Assessed in Antananarivo, Tuléar, Sava, and Betioky, Madagascar

Educational Level	Not Attending School	Preschool	Grade 1
Gender			
Girl	234	465	434
Boy	251	461	459
Total	485	926	893

Table 1. (continued)

Demographics and Assessment Scores by Educational Level for all Children (N = 2,304) Assessed in Antananarivo, Tuléar, Sava, and Betioky, Madagascar

Average Age or Score, (Standard Deviation) and Number of children	*Mean* (*SD*) *N*	*Mean* (*SD*) *N*	*Mean* (*SD*) *N*
Age	5.58 (1.86) *N* = 485	4.70 (.85) *N* = 742	6.74 (1.32) *N* = 582
School Readiness	24.42 (17.08) *N* = 478	37.80 (20.71) *N* = 923	53.18 (21.65) *N* = 893
Literacy	25.50 (22.23) *N* = 463	36.54 (25.74) *N* = 920	47.18 (29.09) *N* = 893
Numeracy	42.72 (40.00) *N* = 471	55.47 (44.28) *N* = 918	84.04 (22.72) *N* = 893

* Sample sizes vary because of missing information. For example, age was not obtained for all children tested in schools.

Does attending preschool make a difference on Grade 1 Outcomes? In all four regions 893 students in Grade 1 were tested and 761 of these students had an indication of attending preschool (public or private). For this research question, students who had attended a public or private preschool attendance were analysed together. Across all four regions on average 35 % of students previously attended school before entering Grade 1. The percentage of students who had attended preschool was similar in 3 of the 4 regions (ranging from 36 – 44 percent), but only 13 % of Grade 1 students in the region of Tuléar had attended preschool.

Does preschool attendance reduce the likelihood of repeating first grade? Of the 761 children tested in Grade 1, 21.6% (*n* = 164) repeated Grade 1. Of these students 4.5% (12 of the 266) had attended preschool whereas 30.7% (152 of the 495) had not attended preschool. It is clear

that attending preschool acts as a protective factor and decreases the likelihood of repeating Grade 1[1].

What is the impact of preschool attendance on course grade, school readiness, literacy and numeracy in Grade 1? Of the 761 children tested in Grade 1, comparing the 266 children who had attended preschool (public or private) with the 495 who had not attended showed attending preschool is significantly positively related to teacher rated report card grade in Grade 1 and school readiness. No significant differences were found on scores of literacy and numeracy. Although statistically significant differences were found on two indicators, course grade and school readiness, it is important to consider what the practical significance of these differences is. Specifically, how meaningful is a 0.35 difference in course grade on a scale of 0 to 10? What is the practical meaning of a 3.3% difference on school readiness? The mean scores are reported on a 10-point scale and the other three measures are on a scale of 100 percent. Concerning Teacher Assigned Course Grade, those with no attendance at Preschool had a $M = 6.05$, $n = 355$, $SD = 1.67$, whereas attendance at Preschool was observed with a $M = 6.35$, $n = 266$, $SD = 1.83$ ($F = 3.76$, $p = .053$). On School Readiness: No attendance at Preschool; $M = 51.13$, $n = 495$, $SD = 21.78$, whereas Attendance at Preschool; $M = 54.50$, $n = 266$, $SD = 22.01$ ($F = 4.10$, $p = .043$).

Do scores of Grade 1 students differ by whether they attended a private or public preschool? This analysis tested the effect of attending a private preschool. This information was gathered from 78 students in Grade 1, 29 who had attended public preschool and 49 who had

[1] A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between preschool attendance and repeating Grade 1. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi 2$ (1, $N = 761$) = 70.23, $p < .01$.

attended a private preschool. All three measures were statistically significant. Scores on school readiness, literacy and numeracy differ by type of preschool attended; those who attended a private preschool score significantly higher than those who attended a public preschool.

Do children in preschool score higher than non-schooled counterparts? This analysis tested whether children attending preschool score higher on learning tests than non-schooled children? This two-group design required the use of all cases across all regions, excepting children in Grade 1. The age of children ranged from 3 to 8[2]. In a test of more than 1,000 children on average the nearly 730 pre-schoolers scored higher on all three measures tested than the 425 children who do not attend any school. (Note: the numbers of students vary slightly depending upon the test because of some missing test scores—e.g., SRI 1,179, Literacy 1,162, and Numeracy 1,169). All three measures were statistically significant. Children attending preschool score higher than children not attending school on school readiness, literacy and numeracy. Statistical notation:

School Readiness: No-Schooling: *Mean* = 22.53, *n* = 439, *SD* = 15.08; Pre-schoolers: *mean* = 36.96, *n* = 740, *SD* = 20.84 (*F* = 159.76, *p* = .000).

Literacy: No-Schooling: *Mean* = 23.94, *n* = 425, *SD* = 22.72; Pre-schoolers: M*ean* = 35.95, *n* = 737, *SD* = 25.55 (*F* = 66.21, *p* = .000)

Numeracy: No-Schooling: *Mean* = 39.47, *n* = 433, *SD* = 38.94; Pre-schoolers: *Mean* = 54.98, *n* = 736, *SD* = 38.94 (*F* = 34.19, *p* = .000)

[2] The pre-school sample (N = 742) age ranged from 3 to 8, with a Mean = 4.70 (Standard Deviation = .85), Mode = 5, Median = 5. In the pre-school sample 184 children did not have an age indicated so they were excluded from this analysis.

The non-schooled sample (N = 485) age ranged from 3 to 13, so it was restricted to 3 to 8 for this statistical test. The measures of central tendency for this group follow: Mean = 5.21 (Standard Deviation = 1.39), Mode = 4, Median = 5.

How do scores of students in Grade 1 attending a school that is partnered with Aide et Action compare to those attending a school not affiliated with AEA? This analysis tested the effect of attending a school affiliated with Aide et Action (AEA). This information was gathered from 817 students in Grade 1, 323 students in an AEA school and 494 a school not indicated as being connected with AEA. Students differed on the measure of School Readiness, but not on literacy and numeracy.

Tests for Regional Differences. Regional differences were examined on all three tests, school readiness, literacy, and numeracy across three cohorts. The first cohort tested was comprised of children who were not currently attending school. The second and third cohorts were preschool and Grade 1 students, respectively.

Regional differences exist among children not attending school. Children aged 3 to 8 years who were not attending school showed regional differences on test scores. On school readiness Betioky (average score, $M = 17$, $n = 81$) scored significantly lower than Tuléar ($M = 25$, $n = 198$). Even though the score in SAVA ($M = 25$, $n = 35$) was that same as Tuléar, this difference was not statistically significant, most likely due to the differences in sample sizes. Children not attending school in SAVA scored significantly higher on numeracy compared to non-schooled children in all the three other regions. Among this group of children, literacy scores in Betioky were significantly lower than in Tuléar.

Regional differences were found among preschool students. Preschool children in the region of SAVA scored significantly lower on school readiness and literacy than all three other regions. Among this group numeracy scores were similar across regions (i.e., differences were not statistically significant): statistical notation – the Tukey HSD, $p < .01$. Regional differences were also found in Grade 1. Grade 1

children in SAVA score lower than children in the three other regions on all three measures. Statistical notation for regional tests is that the Tukey HSD, $p < .01$

Test for Gender Differences. No gender differences were found among children not attending school. Testing for gender differences among children who do not attend school can inform us about between gender socialization outside of school and scores on school readiness, literacy, and numeracy. No significant gender differences were found among children not attending school on assessments of school readiness, literacy and numeracy. No gender differences were found among preschool students. This test compared the scores of 464 girls to 459 boys, from all regions on school readiness, literacy and numeracy. On average for literacy scores calculated with a maximum of 100% boys scored 38% and girls scored 35%. This difference of three percentage points is not statistically significant. Girls, on average, scored three percentage points higher than boys on measures of numeracy, which was not statistically significant. In preschool, there were no significant differences in boys and girls score on school readiness, literacy, or numeracy. No gender differences were found among children in Grade 1? Another analysis was conducted to test whether gender differences were observed in Grade 1. Scores on assessments of children in Grade 1 do not vary systematically by gender.

Study 2 Findings: Progress of Pre-schoolers Over Time

Case study 2 reports on lessons learned from assessing 242 children two consecutive years from nine schools across all four regions researched. Of these 242 preschool students 140 students were promoted to Grade 1 and 102 remained in preschool. Overall, the changes in scores on all three outcomes increased significantly from

Time 1 testing to Time 2 testing, but there are some important differences. School readiness was positively impacted more so than numeracy and literacy. Statistical notation: Among children who were not attending school the change in numeracy and literacy scores from Time 1 to Times 2 were not statistically significant. The 10% change in literacy scores was not beyond the level of chance for this sample, although it was approaching significance with p = .06 (statistical significance is determined at p < .05). There are several factors that affect statistical significance – e.g., sample size, standard deviation.

Study limitations. Every study has limitations and strengths. One limitation of this study is that the test of literacy is comprised of two items from the measure of school readiness. Any measure with few items is subject to criticism in terms of construct validity, meaning that too few questions may not accurately (or fully) reflect what be measured (Glenn, 2021). Interpretations related to literacy outcomes should be made cautiously. Future research will lead to stronger findings by using a more in-depth assessment of literacy that will require more questions (e.g., speaking, reading, and writing as defined by the local school and relevant education governance).

Discussion and directions for future interventions and research. The overall finding is that preschool contributes to higher levels of school readiness. It also makes a difference in some cases on numeracy and literacy. The rate of preschool attendance observed in 3 of the 4 regions studied (Antananarivo, Tuléar, Sava, & Betioky) is approximately 35%; notably only 13% of children in Tuléar have attended preschool. Given these numbers, investing in outreach to families and making pre-primary education accessible is needed. At the same time, attention is needed for the quality of pre-primary education. Children in private preschools are scoring significantly higher than children from public

preschools. That finding withstanding, public schools are making a positive impact. In this study, children attending pre-primary education score higher on school readiness, literacy and numeracy compared to children not attending school. Importantly, attending preschool is related to greater success in Grade 1. Findings show that 95.5 percent of children who attended preschool do not repeat Grade 1, whereas only 30.7 percent of children who did not attend preschool are successful in completing Grade 1 the first time around. In other words, 69.3 percent of children who did not attend preschool repeat Grade 1 and only 4.5 percent of those who attended preschool repeat it.

A standard in educational testing is to examine gender differences. In looking at a snapshot of children's learning among those in all four regions combined, no gender differences exist on school readiness, literacy, and numeracy. Fairly even numbers of girls and boys were tested in all regions, though there are more boys in the sample from Antananarivo. Future research may want to examine if there are gender differences within these regions.

Finally, a rigorous way to examine change is to assess the same group of children at two points in time. In this study we found that overall pre-primary education in Madagascar is increasing children's readiness for school, literacy and numeracy. All children in pre-primary education who were promoted to Grade 1 show higher scores on all three tests. Among children who stayed in pre-primary education (probably because of age), across schools they have increased scores on school readiness, whereas differences on literacy and numeracy vary by school. It may be possible that the lack of change in some cases was related to age or school curriculum and teaching methods. Future research may consider examining these

factors more closely. From this research in Madagascar, an important question is whether the observed effects will endure. Will children who attended pre-school continue to outperform those who did not in Grades 2 and 3? Following children from pre-primary through Grade 3, at a minimum, will be important to understanding the impact of pre-school education in Madagascar; providing comparable international data is also needed.

In closing this section, pre-primary education in Madagascar is showing a positive difference on some outcomes for children and shows promise for further development of early childhood education by educational leaders from many sectors. The finding that literacy and numeracy were not different by a school supported by Aide et Action suggests that more work is needed on curriculum development and teacher education for Aide et Action schools in particular, and for all schools in general. This study's finding that schools affiliated with Aide et Action had a more positive effect on children's school readiness than unaffiliated schools lead us to consider ideas for educational leaders to partner with non-government organizations, managing border-specific and cross-border practices.

Ideas for School Administrators' Practice within the Multilateral Model for Decolonising African Leadership

In this section, we explore how school administrators can enhance their practices by re-considering key concepts (presented in section 1) by using the model multilateral model for decolonising African educational leadership (presented in section 2). We illustrate the complexity of these practices with the case studies of Madagascar and Ghana.

A cross-border issue is that many African countries rely on financing from external powers that may create a dependence not only on funds but also on knowledge (Eacott & Asuga, 2014). School administrators have to choose carefully which organizations to engage with and determine if a potential partner is working from a neo-colonial or decolonising framework. Referring to our proposed model, this is a point in quadrant 3 where educational leaders and administrators execute autonomous decision-making. Key indicators of neo-colonialism are imposing decontextualized competencies or providing curriculum materials in colonial languages. Local African administrators need to hold on to the understanding that their ability to work in the colonial language is simultaneously privileging and oppressing. It is providing the privilege of bringing in from the outside much needed resources. It is oppressing because the next generation of teachers and administrators witness the power the colonial language has with outsiders and desires to retain it and the conceptualisations inherent to the language, further de-contextualizing education. School leaders can stop the cycle of decontextualization by embracing international partners who do not come with ready-made solutions but rather rely on the leaders to provide them.

In the case of Madagascar, the research reported herein was initiated and funded by UBS Optimus Foundation when it decided to fund an NGO, Aide et Action International, for the development of formal preschools in Madagascar. Aide et Action International grew from a French non-governmental organization Aide et Action founded in 1981 with a mission of supporting access to education for children in India. Since then, the organization has continued its focus on education, broadened its reach to 25 countries, and implemented an approach that mobilizes and develops human and financial resources.

This shift in approach to "horizontal solidarity" came in 2007 when Aide et Action International was established and UNESCO published a report "Strong foundations Early childhood care and education" (2007). Aide et Action International works with local governments, community stakeholders and parents "at the service of the great cause of education for all" (Aide et Action International, 2014). The focus of the approach used was on capacity building.

In the case of Aide-et-Action International, the approach is to create initiatives for, with and by local governments, school administrators, parents, external funders and researchers is an exemplar of collective effort in the multilateral model. Hence, decolonising educational leadership cannot be the business of school administrators only. The international organisation attempts to engage educational leaders at all levels of government and to provide-funding and share the international knowledge on the effects of investing in early childhood education. This is where the 'engagement' domain in quadrant III is critical. The goal is for school administrators to determine what, if any, of that knowledges and resources will resolve educational challenges that leaders face. In the case of Madagascar, the educational leadership and management literature show only one study published from this country that is indexed in SCOPUS from 1960 to 2018 (Hallinger, 2018); the study that student test scores do not vary by whether a teacher is on a limited term contract or fully employed (Glewwe & Maïga, 2011). The dearth of literature means that leaders must engage researchers (quadrant IV) to rely on and generate contextual knowledge.

Ultimately, educational leadership is about ensuring quality education for students (Bush, 2020). In the study of Madagascar presented above, educational leadership in developing early

childhood education may be defined as the influence on a commitment of any educational actor in a decision-making situation in the education system concerned with developing or stimulating knowledge and practices in the early childhood sector. Here again, leaders' decision-making is a critical. The intervention and study on child outcomes illustrate a fusing of global north resources with present local-centric interventions in the global south. Working from a model to empower local schools, Aide-et-Action International, with support from the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) Optimus Foundation, invested in and evaluated a pre-primary initiative in Madagascar to better prepare children for school. One of the limitations of the initiative in Madagascar is that the partnership mostly addressed quadrants I and IV of our models to decolonise leadership practices. Also, it was only three years, which is not enough time to make a lasting impact. The decolonisation of African educational leadership can be realized through multi-year, multi-sectoral partnerships.

Another example of decolonized African educational leadership that approaches realising the work on the past-present continuum with language (quadrant II) and teacher training (quadrant III) is evidenced in Ghana's national education strategy for establishing literacy in a mother-tongue language before receiving instruction to read in the English language. To accomplish this goal, the government, specifically the Ghana Education Service, partnered with two international organizations (the Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the Education Development Centre) with funding from USAID and developed the project, Education Quality for All (EQUALL). Informed by the Ghana Education Service, CAL developed milestones and standards for teaching and assessing children as they learn to read 1 of 13 Ghanaian languages illustrating

how innovation and training can lead to professionalism as important components of quadrant III. The success of this program relied on the leadership from the Ghana Education Service working with school administrators and teachers, and then schools working with parents to reverse cultural norms that privileged English over the mother-tongue language. Following EQUALL which operated in 20 districts, Ghana Education Service with funding from USAID developed the National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP) that now supports children nationwide in learning to read in 1 of 11 Ghanaian languages (Khepera, 2020).

Globally, the context of the COVID- 19 pandemic places new pressures on educational leaders, and particularly in already poorly functioning corrupt African states (Arowosegbe, 2021). School administrators working within these systems can find strength in working from a social justice framework particularly when working with international and non-governmental partners. Within an already stressed educational system in which leaders have developed the skills to mobilize resources from government and non-governmental organizations, they must now attend to health risks.

Another critical issue for educational leadership in African is the need to develop progressive policy frameworks and induce culture shifts conducive to women leaders thriving. Educational leadership is impacted by government policies. For example, the South African Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 prohibits discrimination by race and gender and other social characteristics (Republic of South Africa 1998), and as a result, more women have been appointed as school principals in post-apartheid compared to before. This progress brought cultural resistance into schools with women principals

reporting experiencing insubordination and sexual harassment by male colleagues (Khumalo, 2021).

Our proposed multilateral model still needs to be tested and we invite readers to conduct research on it in Africa from perspectives valuing the importance of rethinking leadership from a marginal perspective (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018). We agree with Nkomo (2011) that "Instead of searching for or imagining 'African' leadership and management, it may be worth-while to engage in more descriptive research that examines how leaders and managers in schools and the ministries of education in Africa are responding to the dual pressures of globalization and local needs" (p.377). Conducting research on educational leadership in Africa is critically needed and must be done in ways that are very careful with the use of concepts and epistemologies using a comparative approach because knowledge generated in this way will move educational (leadership) practice in Africa from slavery-like positions to cross-border perspectives.

In Africa, school administrators and managers have (or may develop) the competencies that render them specialists of the complexities inherent in decolonising leadership approaches. They are uniquely positioned to work with all agents in both a top-down and a bottom-up manner within and across borders to fulfil their responsibilities in an open system in which communication and collaboration flows easily along the past and present continuum.

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Rethinking Education Leadership through Self-Reflection: Examining the TURNS Model

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Abstract

With the policy windows open for decolonial practices, educational leaders in Africa have much to ponder on as they examine and transform their leadership practices to suit the current climates. All progressive leaders seek to lead institutions where they could motivate followers, enhance performance as they utilise relevant leadership qualities. Conscientious leaders in Africa would be eager to know what it means to combine Western epistemology and indigenous knowledge to achieve the institution's goals. Arguably, today's institutions require leaders who will be able to study their contexts and utilise leadership strategies for effectiveness.

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Introduction

The new generation of African leaders face a number of challenges, not least the overall substandard, poor and malignant nature of leadership (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012; Naidoo, 2019; USB-ED, 2018) and the inability to confront its own leadership weaknesses (Wafawarova, 2015), affecting the search for (new) Afrocentric leadership identities in institutions. The need for leadership in Africa to evolve and look inwardly as well as outwardly calls for a critical examination of the practice of leadership. Igue (2020) points out that new leaders in Africa need to be capable of facing challenges such as fragmentation of the region, history and knowledge, promotion of human rights and democracy. This article, therefore, underscores the need to question the idea of leadership in African institutions of education. It examines two central issues: on the one hand, it explores why effective leaders need continuous self-reflection whilst, on the other, it examines the inclusion of non-Western knowledge in a time of evolving organisational cultures.

It is important to bear in mind that leadership in Africa is not homogenous. Like elsewhere, leadership is complex and is influenced by several factors, including contexts and values that define such settings (Hallinger, 2018; Murphy et al. 2016). All diligent leaders seek to inspire others as they lead with meaningful values. Effective leaders will learn from a number of factors such as personal experiences, as well as through their followers' experiences. In an age of decolonisation in the Global South, leaders would need to 'rethink' and find ways of enabling their organisations to be adaptable to new, innovative leadership approaches.

I use the term 'rethink' to refer to new ways of looking at leadership and use the TURNS model (see Fig 1), to demonstrate how

leaders can employ self-reflection to enhance their strength for effective leadership. Rethinking underscores the role of the leaders in Africa to consciously utilise effective but marginalised indigenous epistemologies as well. New perspectives need to be developed to enhance leadership for diversity and social justice and this must start with the self-empowerment of the leaders themselves. The article examines how leaders can use models such as the TURNS (leadership empowerment) model to transform their organisations. The article starts with a brief literature review which reveals how colonialism skewed leadership practice in Africa as well as how leaders who aspire effectiveness should constantly search for practices that would help develop their organisations. Lorri Santamaria's (2014) seminal work *Culturally Sustaining Leadership* is used to explore ways of rethinking leadership utilising eclectic approaches.

The discussion begins by examining why leadership fails in Africa. African intellectuals over the years have highlighted the negative role of colonialism in this regard (Mazrui, 2002; Khoza, 2012; Okeke, 2018; Wa Thiong'o, 2007). This then compels the African societies in particular, to investigate what needs to be done to build effective organisations. The TURNS model is put forward as a viable model that can engender school leaders' self-reflection whilst it underscores values that would enhance social justice principles for effective leadership practices in Africa.

How Leaders Fail African Institutions

Leadership failures that mar organisations hinder effectiveness: Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2007) attributes many of the leadership failures in Africa to "blacknisation of colonialism." In explicating this concept, Wa Thiong'o argues that colonisation stripped Africa of its cultural identity and left behind challenges that

included corruption and bad leadership. As the colonisers forsook the colonies, they also left behind institutions and governments that were fraught with leadership anomalies (such as patriarchy, colonial hierarchy in institutions). The postcolonial African leaders have struggled, unable to shirk off the exclusive Western practices as they emulated the former colonial models of leadership.

There is a strong realisation that current leadership theories used in organisations reflect only Western ideas and marginalise indigenous worldviews (De Padua & Rabbitskin, 2017). This calls for an ecology of which foregrounds diversity, multilingualism and recognition of varied identities. Leaders who marginalise and segregate within institutions are unlikely to succeed in steering efficient institutions that need diverse values that would be pivotal in igniting commitment. When talking about globalectics, Wa Thiong'o (2012) puts forward an ambitious theory where he argues that there should be interconnectedness as well as equality of parts. In African educational leadership, globalectics would mean the combination of Global South and Global North identities. Stewart and Warn (2016) point out that many indigenous leaders need to straddle between two worlds as they work across boundaries combining western strategies and indigenous knowledges to enhance their leadership practice.

The combination of Global South and Global North identities is an attempt to build a strong epistemic granary. Ali Mazrui (2000) argues that knowledge is critical and that Africa's poverty emanates from a weak knowledge base. Furthermore, Mazrui argues that it matters how people are predisposed epistemologically hence leaders with the necessary knowledge will be able to consciously lead successful institutions. The success of African (educational) institutions today arguably rests on having a wider knowlegde base as

well as thinking and rethinking relevant strategies. Since the advent of decolonisation in educational institutions such as schools, scholars, policy makers and practitioners have talked about the rethinking of organisations that are supposed to decentre exclusive Eurocentric values as they bring marginalised African values to the centre to create an ecology of knowledges (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). This is an idea Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1993) accentuates when he talks about moving the centre. Moving the centre is about emphasising cultural freedoms and social change and this implies liberating the restrictions imposed upon world cultures by imperialism. Furthermore, moving the centre is about the quest for social justice in society demonised by epistemic violence and marginalisation of African values. Colonisation has always had a negative influence on authentic leadership in Africa (Okeke, 2018). Yet even more important, Africa is attuned to leadership which enables leaders learn to unlearn destructive colonial leadership practices.

In 1961, Julius Nyerere pointed out that it is a deceptive half-truth to say that leaders are born not made for "there is no man living whose qualities cannot be improved and developed by training" (Nyerere, 1970, p.124). In the same vein, Reuel Khoza (2012), in his book *Attuned Leadership*, explains that leaders are not just born into their roles, they are made. Leaders need to constantly learn to improve their practice to gain strong followership. Most importantly, a leader who is not attuned to his followers soon becomes irrelevant and will fail. Values such as connectedness, compassion, empathy, integrity, humility, reasonableness and determination are key to attuned leadership (Khoza, 2012). Furthermore, according to Khoza, attuned leadership uses African humanism which encompasses reason and empathy and is the basis or yardstick for decolonised ethical leadership in Africa.

Hence, understanding African cultures is critical in understanding the dynamics of all organisations. Culture encompasses values (Mbigi, 2005) and these would include Western, African and other values that are part of any African setting. An effective leader would then need to embrace eclectic approaches when decolonising (African educational) institutions that Ali Mazrui's thought encompasses above. The engagement of consciousness plays a critical role in understanding and learning to unlearn the traditional approaches encapsulated in many colonial approaches. All the ideals of decolonisation would hardly work without a meaningful engagement of the consciousness echoing Paulo Freire's conscientisation (1970). It refers to an in-depth understanding of the world and being able to identify the oppressive unjust practices. Progressive leaders who have been conscientised would follow values that are legitimated by liberated or politically conscious thinking. All this constitutes a process of legitimation which is pivotal in understanding African leadership (Wai, 1997).

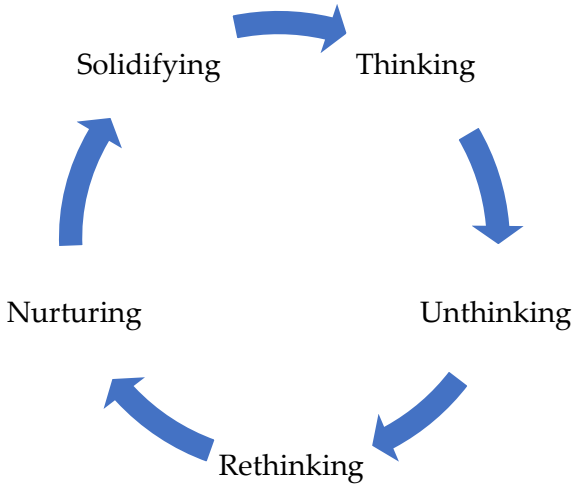
School leaders may fail if they do not engage with conscious thinking of the necessary theories. The imperial school leadership theories that originated in the United States (Santamaria, 2016) and instituted cultural hegemony in the practice of educational leadership in Africa will need to be deconstructed in order to acommodate 'subaltern' theories (Saffari, 2016), a concept in critical theory which refers to the marginalised worldviews that are relevant to effective organisations. Conscious leaders in Africa will need to be empowered in order to gain the courage to look within themselves as they support innovative organisational cultures. To achieve that goal, the TURNS Model is put forward as viable approach to educational leadership in Africa.

The TURNS Model for Effective and Relevant Leadership

In preparing future school leaders, programmes should be intent on emphasising certain elements in their training programmes. All potential leaders need a new face of leadership. In my studies, I have designed a model to uphold decolonial strategies and oppose epistemic violence in leadership programmes (Msila, 2008; Msila, 2015). The following cycle represents this model:

Figure 1.

The TURNS Model of Leadership (Msila, 2020)



The above model is about transforming leadership and management, it is also about unlearning and learning new ways to enhance effective leadership. The concept TURNS comes from the five stages' first letters:

Thinking

Unthinking

Rethinking

Nurturing and

Solidifying.

The philosopher Alvin Toffler (1970, p.367) points out that "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." The TURNS model (Figure 1) above accentuates Toffler's views. Accomplished leaders in Africa should be able to unlearn Wa Thiong'o's *blacknisation* and include the marginalised African practices.

The **Thinking** stage requires that leaders use the ecology of knowledges for effective leadership should begin with understanding their own practice through self-reflection. Many organisations fail because leaders do not understand both their organisations as well as themselves. Paulo Freire uses the term 'conscientisation' to refer to a process of making others conscious of the political and social conditions; it also refers to the action of being able to challenge inequalities in society. The TURNS model reflects this. When leaders learn to think, they become conscientised and use critical awareness in understanding their leadership roles. Thinking assists in understanding ways to deconstruct Western hegemony and epistemic violence. Thinking and also rethinking helps in the discovery or awareness of colonial hierarchies and demeaning models that dehumanise and seek alternative cultures and values.

Besides redressing Western hegemony, rethinking in leadership helps in the constant rebuilding of the organisation. Various writers have demonstrated that when leaders think their leadership practice, they are bound to improve their organisations immensely

(Bennet, 2003; Davies, 2010) and similarly Vaughan (2013) states that if organisations are to grow the leaders must learn to think. Thinking ensures that members of an organisation never repeat the same mistakes. Organisations around the world struggle because of poor thinking. Davies (2010) posits that rethinking and thinking education leadership enables the organisation to move from improvement to transformation.

The **Unthinking** stage of the model refers to a stage where the leaders have to disengage with the past negative and internalised practices in leadership. In Toffler's philosophy it encompasses unlearning as people prepare to learn anew. This is also akin to the concept of "undoing" in psychology. During the undoing stage people shun destructive actions as they engage in new positive behaviours. Sigmund Freud introduced undoing as a defense mechanism (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). A leader who unthinks also obliterates ingrained toxic forms of leadership such as absolute authority, patriarchal domination and egocentric leadership forms. Unthinking starts with the realisation that there is a need for mental change as leaders prepare for progressive organisations that thrive. After the Unthinking stage which is about the destruction of toxicity, rethinking comes in as a stage for rejuvenation and re-establishment of the institution.

Rethinking thinking in TURNS reminds leaders about the need to magnify critical knowledge that would enable them to unlearn what Macedo refers to as a false dichotomy between Western and indigenous knowledges. Macedo (1999, p. xv) posits:

> *It is only through the decolonisation of our minds, if not our hearts, that we can begin to develop the necessary political clarity to reject the enslavement of a colonial discourse… It is through the decolonisation of our minds and the development of political clarity that we cease to embrace the notion of*

Western versus indigenous knowledge, so as to begin to speak of human knowledge. It is only through the decolonisation of our hearts that we begin to humanise the meaning and usefulness of indigeneity.

True self-reflection will lead to these ideals as it engenders critical and broadmindedness in looking at leadership. Decolonial leaders should rethink all these notions to guide successful schools. In many instances school leaders are so obsessed about learner achievement and school effectiveness that they forget that this all begins with introspection and self-reflection. Rethinking leadership enables people to be conscious leaders who will know exactly how to cultivate decolonial practice in their leadership. Furthermore, conscious leadership is related to the Ubuntu worldview because conscious leaders emphasise the "we" rather than the "me" and they know their role is to create a culture of trust, care and influence (Vermey, 2014). Rethinking leadership ensures that leaders are made aware of unconscious leadership's pitfalls. Unconscious leadership means there is no reflection, hence the institution can easily become toxic. Unconscious leaders are unlikely to be bold and courageous in the face of change. Furthermore, the constantly changing society we live in needs conscious leaders who will not lose the organisation's vision. Dethmer *et al*. (n.d.) point out that conscious leadership offers an antidote to leadership by fear. Instead, conscious leadership transforms fear-based leadership to trust-based leadership. Healthy relationships, commitment, passion and energy are all qualities enhanced by conscious leadership. Conscious leaders communicate with integrity, lead with genuine approaches, and are not like unconscious leaders who usually are reactive and let their egos dominate.

Odora Hoppers and Richards (2012) write about ways of recentering marginalised epistemologies. The two authors argue for

the moving of the centre, thus ensuring that the indigenous knowledge systems are brought forward. The TURNS model enables us to deeply examine the role of leadership in a decolonised environment. Odora Hoppers and Richards also discuss ways in which education institutions including universities need to redeem themselves from toxicity and how it can be a vehicle for transformation.

Untransformed leadership notions will not transform institutions and will not be positive agents to transform society. The process of rethinking thinking around leadership means that leaders will humanise their institutions and end epistemic violence as they instil values that would consider issues of diversity and social justice. African leaders need to magnify the vision of humanising workplaces and entrenching the qualities of solidarity, community, dependability and commitment explicated above under Ubuntu. When I talk about the need to rethink thinking, it is an attempt to search for new paradigms and new solutions. If leadership is to transform, it needs us to rethink the content. Newman (2012) also uses the concept of rethinking thinking as he contemplates paving the way for positive leadership. He argues that organisations can attain sustainable behavioural advantage if they help managers understand and improve how they think about what drives success or failure in their everyday lives.

Vaughan (2013) has also supported the idea of rethinking thinking when it comes to leaders. He highlights that how to think is more critical than what to think. His theory is important when one looks at alternative perspectives. Like Odora-Hoppers and Richards as well as Newman above, Peter Senge (1995) also highlights the role of rethinking leadership in sharpening the skills of leadership in learning organisations. Rethinking leadership starts with the commitment of

the leader. Furthermore, Senge (1995) points out that there is no one who can force another person to learn, when learning involves profound changes it needs strong individual commitment in new attitudes and new beliefs.

Rethinking will be incomplete without the **Nurturing** stage which fosters the necessary values. Effective rethinking in African institutions leads to self- reflective leaders who use indigenous values encapsulated in African epistemologies. Among these values are those embodied in the Ubuntu worldview. Some of the values embraced by Ubuntu are humanness, solidarity, communalism and commitment. Ubuntu opposes negative competition as it promotes unified ways to focus on the vision. Leaders who use the Ubuntu worldview move towards decolonisation. Ubuntu is unique to Africa although elements of this worldview are found in Western philosophies such as servant leadership. This is a point made by Elonga Mboyo (2019) who avers that Ubuntu has similarity to Western colleagial models that utilise participative approaches.

These values need to be nurtured and **nurturing** leadership is about developing or enhancing one's leadership skills. Leaders need to work on their weaknesses as they strengthen the positive attributes. Effective leaders will develop others with leadership potential in the institution. Nurturing helps in increasing the institution's productivity. During the nurturing process, effective leaders develop a symbiotic and trusting relationship with the followers. When trust happens it leads to the leaders' influence which in turn will build personal growth pivotal in institutional success. It is at this stage that solidifying comes into the picture.

Solidifying stage can only happen when the other stages above have been accomplished. And it involves congealing values and

culture developed in the initial stages of the TURNS model above. Solidifying refers to a process of the leaders' ultimate transformation and self-discovery. During this stage, leaders select their preferred ways of leading organisations. Without the process of self-reflection the solidifying stage will be unattainable or inadequate. The stages of **Thinking**, **Unthinking** and **Rethinking** form part of the self-reflection process and finalised when leaders establish effective values to lead their organisations. Msila (2020) states that leaders who consciously transform their practice are scrupulous leaders who have solidified their practice through the realisation of relevant qualities. Solidified leaders are professionally matured hence they have been able to nurture the necessary values leading to the embracement of progressive values.

Turning the institution's leadership in TURNS seek to attain the ultimate goal which means reinforcing certain qualities. Only leaders who are aware of their goals and vision can explore solidification. If they use Ubuntu as a philosophy, they should highlight the values to lead their institutions and solidify these, working with their teams.

Aspects of the TURNS model stages are reflected in several theories in Africa and the world. Below, I explore the implications of Khoza's (2012) and Santamaria's (2014) contentions on leadership and self-reflection for social justice.

Self-Reflection and Decolonisation of Leadership for Social Justice

Among the major elements addressed by the TURNS Model is the idea of social justice leadership which is concept referring to democratic, inclusive and innovative practice that transforms social structures and influence all role-players to promote justice and equity in schools (Foster, 1989). Effective education leaders will be those that are able to think inclusively and democratically whilst redressing

injustices (Wang, 2018). However, social justice in schools need the involvement of all. Hence, Ezzani (2020) argues that social justice leaders should coach teachers and advance practices that underscore respect and dignity and these are crucial in collaboration strategies to social justice leadership. Social justice approaches are an antidote to how society treats the marginalised people and their philosophies. Socially just leadership is critical to the building of socially just schools devoid of glaring injustices based on inequities

Thinking, Unthinking and Rethinking are crucial in self-reflection as leaders seek to understand who they are as leaders and challenge inequalities in school leadership in Africa. By its nature the TURNS model's self-reflection leads not only to knowing about oneself but also about understanding the diversity of the organisation.

Santamaria (2014) argues about the need for diversity to inspire transformation and improvement of organisations. Education leadership should support social justice and educational equity. Self-reflective leaders are likely to glean from progressive decolonisation models that seek to coalesce Western and indigenous models of leadership. The bottom line is that educational leaders should accommodate all their followers and this begins with understanding oneself. "Positive identity traits associated with ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and gender diversity…are manifested in terms of leadership for social justice and education equity" (Santamaria, 2014, p. 383). Whilst TURNS cannot only be applied to decolonisation it is posited as a critical tool to utilise in self-reflection and decolonised leadership. In instilling leadership that seeks to transform institutions and empower all it needs conscious efforts to be applied in nurturing certain skills and reinforce several practices.

Decolonisation of leadership would enable leaders to add their experiences to their practice and experiment their marginalised knowledges in order to be culturally responsive (Santamaria and Santamaria, 2015). The practice of decolonised leadership ensures that the subaltern knowledge shares the centre with other knowledges. Decolonial struggles should begin with the preparation of the people, enabling them to be ready to discard colonialism and Eurocentrism. In embracing epistemic freedom and in preparing future African school leaders, we all need to think about conscious or intentional transformative trajectories. There are several norms in society wherein some groups have been oppressed and these manifest themselves in leadership as well. Systemic injustice marginalises many people as it creates epistemic violence and colonial denigration. Decolonisation should be able to address what Young (1990) refers to as the five faces of oppression; exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Oppressive institutions cannot be centres of social justice and just leadership. In an atmosphere of oppression, leadership cannot speak of effective leadership and worthy followership.

Khalifa *et al*. (2019) point out that the colonial origins of formal education institutions have an immense impact on educational leadership. These authors state that Westernised Eurocentric schooling serves as a tool of imperialism, colonisation and control in the education of indigenous peoples. They argue for an Indigenous Decolonising School Leadership framework that seeks to decolonise school leadership and build on indigenous people's "ancestral assets and knowledges" Khalifa et al. (2019, p. 585).

All progressive leaders would want to address the colonial administrative practices as they seek to accommodate indigenous and

community-based practices. Western hegemonies have been shown to be dangerous and misleading. Based on colonial notions of domination, they marginalise other knowledges and debar Africans from expressing their own knowledges as central. For this reason, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) affirms of the need to deprovincialise Europe, as Africa is being decolonised. This is needed to dispel colonialism as Africa's knowledge is brought to the centre.

In South Africa, apartheid management in schools was always hierarchical in nature and school managers were never expected to be creative. The system of Fundamental Pedagogics stressed the importance of obeying authority at all times. This emphasised the authority of the inspectors and the obedience of teachers (Steyn et al., 1988). Obedience was part of pedagogic authority – a child (learner) should be obedient to the responsible adult (a teacher) who in turn had to be obedient and loyal to the inspectors. "Freedom for responsibility means to obey the authority of norms" (Steyn et al., 1988, p. 218). Apartheid schools had a fixed set of rules and these influenced a number of punishments for breaking these rules for the learners and their teachers and the leadership of the teachers (Christie, 1988). Khalifa et al. (2019, p. 603) state,

> *...colonisers claimed that to de-barbarise, Christianise, and civilise the indigenous people would be to humanise them. That notwithstanding, a more likely goal for colonisers was to use schools to develop indigenous workers and managers who would ensure that human and natural resources of the colonised lands would flow exclusively toward the colonisers and European lands.*

As a result, many educational leaders unconsciously promoted imperial practices through their styles of leadership. Their practice reflected colonialism and oppressive styles.

Lopez and Rugano (2018) argue that school leadership preparation should reflect the contexts and experiences of the African educators rather than merely adopting exclusive experiences of preparation from the Global North. The experiences of principals in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) - School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) programme between 2007 and 2011 demonstrated the critical nature of local South African contexts when preparing school leaders and managers (Bush et al., 2009; Bush et al., 2011).

The introduction of the ACE-SML Programme for school managers in 2007 was an initiative to formally prepare school managers for positions of leadership. Hitherto, principals and other management team members were appointed based on their classroom performance. The ACE-SML Programme did not necessarily focus on the decolonisation of leadership. However, the results demonstrated the need to look at various ways of improving leadership and this includes parental involvement and the utilisation of vision (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011; Msila, 2011). Additionally, the results showed the need to methodically and thoroughly prepare school leaders for successful school leadership. This also means that preparing today's leaders needs management curricula that would oppose the colonial legacy in leadership preparation programmes. The management programmes should address the epistemic violence in management programmes. Rugguman (2016) contends that the curriculum of management studies in South Africa extends epistemic violence, which refers to the violence of knowledge production. The preparation of a new leadership corps is critical for institutions so that they avoid the repetition of epistemic violence. New values that support social justice and cognitive justice should be part of decolonial management programmes.

Rethinking Leadership: Why Values Matter?

Leaders in educational institutions need principled leadership accompanied by authentic values. It is my contention that when inspired by the TURNS model, Principled leaders who are intent on decolonisation will, after rethinking thinking, nurture and solidify appropriate values that will define their practice. Glynn and Jamerson (2006) point out that principled leadership starts by recognising the ethical dimensions of leadership actions, followed by prioritising one's values and then aligning them with those of the organisation. This process forms part of thinking, unthinking and rethinking leadership through the search for principled leadership that would lead to self-reflection.

Glynn and Jamerson (2006) point out that principled leadership encompasses leading courageously with humanistic values, which include integrity, fairness, respect and humility. Being courageous, fair, humble and honest are also values linked to these humanistic values of principled leadership. Boon (2001) writes about the need for the interactive nature in the Ubuntu worldview but also emphasises the need for the organisation to create values. Boon (2001, p. 84) states that principles "are fundamental world truths and do not change with time. The same things appear in every major philosophy and religion in the world. They are universal truths that reflect our humanity". Values cannot be created by leaders alone, hence leaders should build communities that should be shared and involve all the members. These can be solidified within the fabric of an institution where leaders can nurture their practice utilising these values.

Broodryk (2006) claims that values are related to norms and social rules. Leaders will know which values will enhance the effective operations in the organisation. Broodryk (2006) also affirms that there

are core values in the Ubuntu worldview that form the basis of thriving organisations. Humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion are pivotal values for successful organisations. Msila (2015) maintains that Ubuntu-inspired workplaces focus on dependability, teamwork, interconnectedness, caring, collective vision, performance and loyalty. Mbigi (1997) has also found that there are five key values for Ubuntu and these are survival, solidarity, spirit, compassion, respect and dignity. Mbigi perceives these as originating from the African cultures.

Yet although Ubuntu has all these positive qualities when it comes to women leaders it can be dubious due to the influence of patriarchy and traditional hierachy. Patriarchy is one of the potent ills in society today and it is real and needs to be opposed as women fight for social justice and meaningful leadership. The gender stereotyping including patriarchy imposed by the society is opposed by the Ubuntu worldview. Understating models of rethinking leadership is critical in ensuring that leaders are able to know their voice as they express their leadership practices. Ngunjiri (2016) argues that there needs to be more women research in Africa. In patriarchal environments we cannot assume that theories that apply to women also apply to men the same way. Yet Ngunjiri (2016) and Viviers & Mzondi (2016) argue that women are most likely to use Ubuntu because it is linked to motherhood, participative and servant leadership.

However, Manyonganise (2015) studied Ubuntu among Zimbwabwean women and found that even in Ubuntu, the rules are set by men who tend to avoid focussing on women subordination. The men may patronise women as nurturers, as purveyors of love and compassion but still downplay their humanity. Manyonganise posits that although Ubuntu does have liberatory qualities it has much oppressive elements that support patriarchy. She points out that

Ubuntu can sometimes be gender insensitive. Some cultural practises dehumanise women in the name of Ubuntu and tradition and customs. Within Ubuntu men are expected to be land owners, breadwinners, providers and it is within these concerns that Ubuntu needs to be examined when it comes to gender relations (Manyonganise, 2015). Isike and Uzodike (2011) opine that negative masculinities in the African continent have made women victims of various forms of abuse. These authors also add that the positive human factors which defined womanhood before were corrupted by colonial interruption "of Africa's socio-cultural existence leading to the marginalisation, tokenisation and de-feminisation of women" (Isike & Uzodike, 2011). For women rethinking leadership have to think of two aspects; on the one hand is their personal development whilst on the other they need to eschew or confront the patriarchal society's notion of women leadership. Despite the patriarchal society, women need to embrace certain values including Ubuntu to enhance their leadership. Rethinking should enable them ward off the negative effects of patriarchy which taints Ubuntu and other critical values. Patriarchy as well as the hierarchy enforced by tradition upon women reflect the blacknisation that Wa Thiong'o highlights above.

Several values as highlighted are pertinent in engendering leadership for social justice. Schools all over the world are under pressure to promote innovation and enhance a school culture that would lead to learner achievement. Leaders need effective strategies for leading successful schools. Harris and Johnston (2010) state that values-based leadership is pivotal in sustaining school transformation and improvement. As leaders rethink their leadership strategies, they need to find their rhythm and voice as they share their vision and goals with the followers Yet Ubuntu will only be successful when leaders are

able to lead with the intention of decolonising the institutions. In finding their voices, decolonised leaders will be able to:

Model the way - clarifying their personal values:

Inspire a shared vison - leader need to share their aspirations in a meaningful manner;

Challenge the process - as they seek new methods of innovation leader will have to challenge the status quo.

Enable others to act - Leaders promote cooperation and build trust among the followers.

Encourage the heart - Effective leaders will accept individual excellence as they create a spirit of community (Kouzes and Posner in Harris and Johnston, 2010).

Incidentally, the five concepts above are at the centre of Ubuntu leadership. Ubuntu seeks to bring the African values into leadership and these include trust, solidarity, cooperation, commitment and communal values.

Conclusion

The TURNS leadership empowerment model explicated in this article is an example of how leaders can use self-reflection to enhance their leadership practice. In the face of a dynamic organisation, effective leaders will always seek to reinvigorate their practice whilst improving their institutions. Rejuvenating leadership in African institutions means using various philosophies including decolonisation. o leaders can reimagine institutional changes without understanding themselves as well as the contexts in which they lead. Ladkin (2010) states that rethinking leadership presents a reconceptualisation of leadership as "a contextually embedded, physically embodied phenomenon." Leaders will not realise this rethinking without constant self-reflection evident in models such as

TURNS. Progressive leadership forces leaders to be lifelong learners who learn at all times. Leaders today work in complex organisations that compel them to analyse their leadership practice all the time. Leaders who look for successes only in their institutions will fail; it is leaders who search themselves who will be successful in leading organisations (Kotter, 1995). The TURNS model is about the recreation of institutions through introspection and self-criticism. Effective leadership starts with understanding oneself before one can inspire others and build the institution.

Beyond the era of decolonisation, organisations in Africa will need leadership styles based on the ecologies of knowledges. The calls for transformation of institutions and for leaders who are visionary and who would take it upon themselves to bring about stainable organisations based on social justice principles. The Western models such as shared leadership, servant leadership, and conscious leadership will be invaluable for organisations when used in combination with indigenous leadership strategies that reflect the African values. The TURNS model is also about transformation of organisations through thoughtful leadership. The entire TURNS cycle from Thinking to Solidifying is a quest for best practices. Leading in decolonised environments requires leaders who will understand the need for approaches that accommodate diversity, relevance and new values that would sustain today's organisations.

Attuned leaders will be courageous leaders who have a vision to lead effective organisations. Courageous leaders would be able to define their objectives in a fast-changing environment and seek to try new strategies that decentre Western epistemologies. New leadership would start with the decolonisation of the mind. Leaders with no right consciousness will not be able to lead. Infusing African/indigenous

leadership in today's institutions demands new leaders with a new critical consciousness. Finally, the process of thinking and rethinking leadership will build conscious, courageous and intentional leaders who use their influence to create other leaders as well.

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Representations of School Leadership and Management in Africa: A Postcolonial Reading

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Abstract

Perhaps one of the most scathing critiques on school leadership and management literature in Africa is its reliance on western models that do not quite fit the context, hence a lack of relevance. In this article I present a postcolonial reading of the representation of school leadership and management literature in Africa. The analysis suggests that school leadership and management literature in Africa is represented in deficient ways that do not promote indigenous ways of developing leadership and management knowledge and practice within the local education contexts. It argues that knowledge that is located in cultural and indigenous discourse might be more effective and more sustainable. A postcolonial understanding of educational leadership and management that acknowledges the cultural context as presented in this article builds on postcolonial scholarship, thereby addressing a gap in educational leadership and management. The paper ends with proposals for counter representations.

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Introduction

Perhaps one of the most scathing critiques on school leadership and management in Africa thus far is its reliance on western models and a lack of theorisation (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Pansiri, 2011). Pansiri (2011) posits that education in Africa broadly reflects a colonial legacy and replication of the west through its notions of the national curriculum, language of instruction, examination systems and school calendars to name a few. This leads to a managerial view of educational leadership and management as it is centred on aspects that need to be closely managed (Lopez & Rugano, 2018). Shizha (2013) contends that the school curriculum in modern-day Africa remains problematic because it negates the voices of African indigenous populations, as it continues to be delivered in foreign language that constrains learning experiences of African students. He states that postcolonial education continues to "mirror colonial education residues, ... which continue to imprison the actions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and the conceptual capabilities" (p.6) of people indigenous to Africa. While the curriculum across schools and universities is said to reflect the colonial legacy hence the decolonisation call (Le Grange, 2016; Mahabeer, 2020), the language of delivery has been deemed even more controversial in postcolonial discourses as it has been identified as one of the most powerful ways in which colonisers erased cultural significance (Khalifa et al., 2019) and a way through which they maintained the legacy of colonialism (Mahabeer, 2020). Coombes and Brah (2000) have questioned the very use and effectiveness of anti-colonial critique while using the "language of the oppressor" (p.10), with others (e.g Barry, 1995) arguing that the use of such a language acquiesces colonial structures. Educational leadership and management practices and policies have not been devoid of the

colonial legacy. Eacott and Asuga (2014) critiqued that educational leadership practice in Africa is largely modelled along the western systems and thus reflects a strong legacy of colonialism. Pheko and Linchwe II (2008) argued that leadership and management practice is based on the Weberian bureaucratic model that differentiates the headteacher from teachers, placing the former at the apex of the school structure and giving him/her power and authority due to this position. The efficacy of this model in the African context has been questioned, with Pheko and Linchwe II (2008) and Pansiri (2011) arguing that replicating the west does not help improve Africa's education systems as the western models do not fit the African context. More recently, Lopez and Rugano (2018) blamed African countries' reliance on international aid, which, they argue "makes adopting policies and practices from the north convenient" (p. 2) even though they may be unsuitable. This implies that policies of education as well as models and approaches to leadership and management in schools are informed by western experiences and implemented in a context that is not suitable and, significantly, in a context where local indigenous knowledge systems have been and continue to be undermined by the colonial legacy (Khalifa et al., 2019). As Khalifa et al argue, school leadership literature in non-western contexts is thus missing decolonising and indigenous ways of doing leadership.

It is against this background that, in this article, I offer a postcolonial reading of school leadership and management literature in Africa; contributing to postcolonial scholarship that started around the context of education in general and school leadership and management in particular (Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Shizha, 2013; Pansiri, 2011). The intention behind the adoption of this analysis is twofold: first, it is to reveal and problematise colonial ways in which

school leadership and management literature as a body of knowledge has been represented; and second, to highlight some counter representations and explore possible ways of rethinking school leadership and management. There are two primary questions driving this analysis: i) how is school leadership and management in Africa represented in the literature? ii) what possible indigenous counter-representations exist and how can they be built on to ensure sustainability of effective leadership practice within the African context? In postcolonial reading, representation refers to how, from the period of empires onwards, knowledge about Africa as the 'Other' was produced and interpreted, and ultimately passed through western lenses back to the colonised themselves (Coombes & Brah, 2000). Wolf (2000) argues that representation is riddled with power relations between the dominant (west) and the dominated (non-west).

For purposes of this analysis, the continent of Africa is used to contain and contextualise the argument, but the material used refers mostly to the region of sub-Saharan Africa, which experienced colonisation by Europe. However, even within the sub-Saharan African region, it should be noted that there are national differences hence, there is no single national culture. These sub-Saharan African countries (with the exception of Ethiopia) were colonised by different European countries and have been subjected to different colonial experiences, all of which left devastating impact of colonial education which is partly responsible for the present African underdevelopment (Mudimbe, 1988; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). In this paper, I draw from individual countries, which are used as examples to illustrate arguments, and are not to be construed as representative of the region or the continent. Although political decolonisation ended in the 1960s in this region, with most countries

gaining their sovereignty and independence, the colonial legacy remains and has shaped the educational landscape permanently. Yet, African education systems are hardly comparable to their colonisers' systems upon which they were modelled.

After this introduction I present a brief background to the postcolonial educational leadership and management literature, followed by an overview of the postcolonial theory used as both theory and conceptual framework for this analysis. I then tackle the key focus on the representation of school leadership and management literature in Africa, articulated in three contentions that are intended to bring attention to how the colonial past has shaped and continue to shape knowledge in the field and how the postcolonial present is ignoring the 'erosion' of pre-colonial knowledge. The paper ends with some suggestions that offer a counter view of the representations of school leadership and management literature, and some implications for research.

Educational Leadership and Postcoloniality

The recent surge of the decolonisation discourse, in the wake of the *#RhodesMustFall* and *#FeesMustFall* campaigns in South Africa in 2016, has given a boost to the decolonisation agenda in higher education globally and including in Africa as a continent. The much more recent resurgence of the *BlackLivesMatter* movement, sparked by the racist killing of an unarmed black man in the United States, added an impetus to the decolonisation discourse albeit with a much stronger focus on race equality and a call to end racism particularly in the Anglophone countries. While the *#RhodesMustFall* movement was initiated within African educational institutions, campaigning for the decolonisation of the western modelled curriculum in African educational institutions, the decolonisation agenda is mostly focused

on higher education and remains visibly absent in African schools (Le Grange, 2016). This, despite countries such as South Africa having gone through a series of curriculum changes since the end of apartheid over two decades ago (Mahabeer, 2020). Noticeably, the school leadership and management literature is still silent on decolonisation, making this analysis relevant and necessary as it addresses an existing gap.

There is only a handful of studies in school leadership and management literature in Africa that take a postcolonial perspective (e.g Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Pansiri 2011) or adopt the use of postcolonialism as a theoretical lens in exploring school leadership and management practice (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Without claiming to have conducted a thorough and systematic search, some literature with postcolonial references decries the loss of indigenous knowledge and practices that were more communal, collaborative and people-centred and have been replaced by bureaucratic and hierarchical models that centre power and decision-making in central administration (Obiakor, 2004; Onukwuba, 2018; Pheko & Linchwe II, 2008). Others have problematized the notion of Anglophone Africa funding by the north as uncritical continuance of the colonial legacy at the expense of localised and indigenous ways of knowing (Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Lopez & Rugano, 2018). Pansiri (2011) had earlier criticised the uncritical adoption of western models of educational leadership and management, arguing that they do not help improve performance in African schools, while Mestry and Schmidt (2012), as well as Lopez and Rugano (2018), posed a postcolonial feminist critique of women school principals and their leadership practice in South Africa and Kenya respectively. These authors argue that women's leadership in education ought to be understood within the postcolonial context that denounces universality of gendered

experiences and acknowledges differences of culture as significant shapers of experiences. Although these scholars engage a much-needed postcolonial discourse, they are only a handful.

As a theoretical lens, postcolonialism is yet to make its mark in educational leadership studies. Khalifa et al. (2019) confirmed that "educational leaders inherited colonial leadership structures and practices that were meant to wipe indigenous cultures, norms, languages, spiritualities, and epistemologies clean of "indigeneity"" (p. 572), and that the scholarship of educational leadership has thus far not provided enough resistance or challenge to the colonising legacy. Khalifa et al. takes a global perspective to analysing indigeneity and concluded that western colonial approaches to school leadership needed decentering, while we centre "the experiences of people with a colonial past in order for authentic meaningful change to occur" (Lopez & Rugano, 2018: 2). For Lopez and Rugano (2018), authentic meaningful change would genuinely occur if those whose indigenous knowledge systems and histories have been eroded could become part of the reconstructed social realities. The reconstruction of social realities can be achieved through a postcolonial theoretical lens.

Postcolonial Theory

Loomba (2015) describes postcolonialism as a body of theory and a field of study that seeks to critically examine the legacy of western colonialism in non-western contexts such as Africa. In arguing for a postcolonial lens, Ahluwalia (2001) posited that colonisation of Africa eroded everything positive about Africa and represented everything about Africa as negative including socialising them to hating their history and culture. Postcolonialism has thus been regarded as a particularly useful discourse for empowering

those who have been marginalised, helping them to make sense of and reconstruct their social realities. Ahluwalia (2001) argued that the adoption of a postcolonial perspective in understanding colonialism in Africa does not necessarily negate the relevance and significance of other theories, but that it enhances and develops the argument for postcolonial identity.

Shizha (2013) confirms that indigenous knowledge systems have been eroded and invaded by western belief systems, western epistemology and ontology that invaded African culture, influencing particular forms of representation that do not necessarily serve to benefit the continent. Nkomo (2011) observed the tension with regard to the "dominant portrayal" of 'African' leadership and management in the mainstream literature. While her review was based on general organisational management and leadership literature, it nonetheless revealed an unsettling characteristic of deficiency that is "rooted in essentialist racial and colonial stereotypes of Africa" (p.370). She observes further that, some counter narratives have been offered in response to these dominant portrayals, however, they do very little to disrupt the discourse because not only do they "evoke a unique 'African' identity that is "predicated on essentialism and a recovery of the grandeur of pre-colonial Africa reminiscent of some anti-colonial discourse", they also "end up reinforcing 'African' otherness, retarding progress towards an emancipatory discourse about leadership and management in Africa" (Nkomo, 2011, p.370).

Bhabha (1994) contended that postcolonialism is not only an issue for the formerly colonised but for the colonisers as well, as both cultural identities have been affected by colonialism. Postcolonialism is therefore viewed as heterogeneous entity that must be interrogated from multiple perspectives (Chen & Mason, 2018; Young, 2001).

Young (2001) acknowledged the heterogeneity of colonialism should be engaged both in terms of where colonialism happened and who the colonisers were; whether in the case of a classical coloniser-colonised relationship between Europe and Africa or colonised becoming the coloniser with Australia as the case in point, or decolonisation followed by recolonisation in the case of Hong Kong (Williams, 1997). These scholars argued that while the colonised battle with the on-going consequences of colonialism on the economy, culture and education, the coloniser faces the epistemological challenge of their superiority manifested in western knowledge and representation. Hence, analysis of leadership representation ought to be examined in both western and non-western contexts. Khalifa et al.'s (2019) review is thus appropriately placed as a post-colonial analysis of school leadership literature in both western and non-western contexts. They argue that the way in which school leadership knowledge is produced and reproduced in western contexts, bears implications for how leadership is understood and interpreted in non-western contexts.

This complex intersection of postcolonialities is a hallmark of postcolonial theory, that endorses the notion of multiple perspectives of colonialism (Chen & Mason, 2018), and supports Williams' (1997) earlier argument that the centrality of colonialism should not only be between the centre (coloniser) and the margins (colonised) but also within the margins (among the colonised). Postcolonial heterogeneity must thus be recognised even within the same geographical location, necessitating a multiplicity of perspectives and meanings in different cultural contexts that suggest a diversity of ways in which the legacy of colonialism can be addressed and overcome. Indeed, Chen and Mason (2018) point to the cultural situatedness of leadership, which

they argue should be taken into consideration when analysing leadership practice.

Another view of the postcolonial heterogeneity is seen in the diversity of its theoretical underpinnings, intellectual positions and practices of postcoloniality that straddle many interdisciplinary fields. Nkomo (2011) posits that postcolonial heterogeneity with its multiplicity of theoretical underpinnings raises questions for its relevance to Africa, wherein some sceptics have questioned the relevance of postcolonial theory to Africa (Ahluwalia, 2001). Indeed, in examining the complexity of postcolonialism, Williams (1997) likened postcoloniality to other "ideological tendencies and movements prefixing themselves with `post', [that] often end up in the warehouse of unclaimed mail" (821). He saw the use of 'post' in ideologies such as "poststructuralism, postmodernism and postfeminism" as "naïve triumphalism, ... premature and even presumptuous celebration of ascendancy [that] have laid them open to harsh, retributive justice" (821). Ahluwalia (2001) has however, defended the use of postcolonialism as different from other 'post-isms' in that postcolonialism takes into consideration specific historical processes and how the colonies themselves were affected. It is perhaps somewhat unsurprising that this debate happened as the silence or absence of or limited focus on the African input in the "theoretical formulations" (p. 9) of postcolonialism was observed, which would ironically imply that the legacy of colonialism was very much alive. Nonetheless, others have maintained that postcolonialism does not in any way suggest that colonialism has materially ended, with Loomba (2015) arguing that this would be premature "when the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased" (p. 28).

It is against this theoretical landscape that the continuing absence of postcolonial theory is observed in education studies and particularly in school leadership in Africa. The extent to which the representation of school leadership literature disrupts or reinforces the dominant discourses of African otherness becomes the focus of this article.

Representations of African School Leadership and Management Literature

This section focuses on the representations of school leadership and management literature in Africa. I make three contentions as a way of situating my argument on how school leadership and management literature is represented through the postcolonial lens. These contentions are based on three themes: conceptualisations of school leadership and management, school leadership preparation and development and social justice leadership.

Conceptualisation of Leadership and Management

The first contention I make is that African school leadership and management literature is modelled on prescriptive and normative western theorisation that depicts African practice as deficient. The normativity of [western] educational leadership theories is indicated by Bush (2020a), who states that theories of educational leadership tend to be normative, hence they are more likely to "reflect beliefs about the nature of educational institutions and how people behave in those institutions, rather than reflect the analysis of actual practice. It is in this normative feature of educational leadership theory that African school leadership practice and its [in]effectiveness tends to be [mis]represented and

[mis]construed in western terms that are accepted as the norm. In this normativity, African school leaders conceive of their role in managerial terms that are remnants of the colonial legacy informed by western bureaucratic and hierarchical norms rather than visionary strategic terms that are reminiscent of precolonial leadership discourses (Besong, 2013; Lopez & Rugano; 2018; Zame et al., 2008).

A postcolonial reading of school leadership and management finds the very notion of hierarchical leadership in a school setting wherein a school principal at the top of organisational hierarchy, authoritative and problematic. While this notion is currently an unquestioned permanent feature of the school organisational structure, it sits in contrast with traditional African practice of education (Pheko & Linchwe II, 2008). Pheko and Linchwe II state that the traditional Setswana, "a leader is a member of the group and she/he does not occupy a hierarchical position" (p.401). Here decisions are reached by consensus. Khalifa et al. (2019) problematize the way school leadership is conceptualised in the western colonial literature, arguing that it is *narrowly* (my emphasis) confined to what happens in schools, ignoring what happens in communities, particularly for non-western contexts. Indeed, Pheko and Linchwe II (2008) argued that the postcolonial model of schooling presumes that only teachers in schools are the experts – another discord against the traditional sense where the transmission of traditions, skills and knowledge was imparted by all elders around children.

The hierarchical notions of leadership depict principal leadership as the most important figure in a school who has to demonstrate knowledge on all aspects including "the curriculum, student growth and development, assessment, and best teaching practices" (Zame et al., 2008, p. 117). The challenge with this notion is

that it is not always possible to have such knowledgeable individuals, and with this lies the inevitability of portraying school principals as inadequate. Pheko and Linchwe II (2008) argue that this lends the principals with no support from the teachers leading some schools to be an ineffective one-man show. Secondly, leaders are often found to perceive their roles in managerial rather than leadership terms (Zame, et al., 2008; Lopez & Rugano, 2018) and this is always viewed as deficient, as it does not fit the current global leadership practice. Khalifa et al. (2019) suggest that Indigenous and postcolonial scholarship of leadership portrays leadership in Africa as a communal, decolonising practice that is less hierarchical and that offers group rather than individual decision-making.

Perhaps if one considers the notion of policy borrowing within the globalised world in which learning happens in the postcolonial era, the application of western conceptualised models to the African context is inevitable. Indeed, Elonga Mboyo argues, in this special issue, that this sharing of models across different contexts might be a helpful way forward in terms of bridging the gap between different west and non-western contexts. However, it is its uncritical application that is problematic. A postcolonial perspective negates purity of the pre-colonial state, suggesting the inevitability of a compromise.

Leadership Preparation and Development

The second contention is regarding the representations of school leadership preparation and development literature. In recognition of the difference of roles and responsibilities in teaching and leadership, school leadership preparation and development is primarily concerned with specific ways in which anticipation for leadership positions and capacity for leadership is built and

leadership is continually developed. There are three reasons why the focus on school leadership preparation and development is relevant to postcolonial analysis. First, the conceptualisation of school leadership and management above, has a direct bearing on the construction of leadership preparation and development programmes of school leaders. The hierarchical model of school leadership foregrounds only the preparation and development of school principals or headteachers and their poor performance is usually linked to their inadequate preparation (Zame et al., 2008; Kitavi and Westhuizen, 1997). Second, it has been identified as a "hot topic" (Eacott & Asuga, 2014) and a significant area of research in three of the most recent reviews of educational leadership research in Africa (Bush & Glover, 2016a; 2016b; Hallinger, 2018). The third reason revolves around what Pansiri (2011) and Eacott and Asuga (2014) problematised as the colonial legacy of policy interventions for leadership development that perpetuate dependence of Africa on the west through aid agencies that exclude localised knowledge and lack contextual friendliness. This includes frameworks and policies [or lack thereof] of school leadership preparation and development programmes that are continually influenced and funded by the west and replicate western practices under the pretext of global responsiveness. School principals in many African schools are portrayed as inadequately prepared after their appointment was based on [good] teaching credentials and with no specific training for principalship (Bush 2020b; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 1997; Zame et al., 2008). This literature maintains that school principalship requires specific preparation because it is a different role from teaching and requires different skills. While this argument holds true, it is the same conception that renders teaching insufficient preparation for principalship. Here, teaching and leading

are presumed to be separate functions with each having its own place and [possibly] its own actors. This separation of roles ignores the interactive nature of the learning process that is inclusive of the whole community. Indeed, Maharasoa and Maharasoa's (2004) analysis of the Basotho people supports Tedla's (1992) analysis of some Ethiopian people in terms of the traditional educational practices of the indigenous African people. In these traditional African settings both children and adults learn together where the transmission of values and preparation for adulthood occurred. "There is no distinction between formal, nonformal, or informal education ... the entire community is continually engaged in learning and teaching" (Tedla, 1992, p. 7).

The emergence of the literature on school leadership preparation and development is linked to the global shift from management to leadership which, according to Bush (2008), signalled a more meaningful change of focus on the role of school leaders as leaders of change and agents in their own right rather than mere implementers of policy. In Africa, this global shift coincided with some European aid investments in the development of school leaders in some African countries: The pilot of new programme of leadership development in South Africa which introduced a formal preparation programme for school principals on a national scale. The evaluation of the pilot recommended an "entry-level qualification for new principals" (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011: 41). The Kenya Educational Staff Institute (KESI) was established in 1988 with the primary focus to offer in-service training to heads of educational institutions (Asuga, Eacott and Scevak, 2015; Otunga et al, 2008), while Botswana launched a Primary School Management Development Programme (PSMDP) in 1999, which was funded by a UK-based international agency – DFID (Pansiri and Majwabe, 2020).

Although the South African pilot came almost two decades behind the establishment of KESI and PSMDP, the three were heavily influenced by western conceptions of preparation for school leadership that put more emphasis on certification of school principals over localised experiential knowledge. The latter could arguably have more contextual relevance and sustainability when it is made to be more inclusive. Indeed, Lopez and Rugano (2018) make a useful observation that the emphasis on qualifications appears to outweigh skills that the principals would have acquired throughout the length of their experience as teachers. Eacott and Asuga (2014) argue that the reliance of Africa on the west legitimises views of Africa as the deficient other, while Khalifa et al. (2019) argue that it undermines knowledge as experienced and dislodges an educative process of "oral community traditions" (p, 585).

Besides a few programmes identified above, the literature on school leadership preparation and development on the African continent has been consistently critical on the absence of preparation training for school principals (Asuga, Scott and Scevak, 2015; Arikewuyo and Olalekan, 2009; Bush, 2020; Bush & Glover, 2016b; Moorosi & Bush, 2011) suggesting that the efficacy of school leadership cannot be established unless leaders have undergone specific preparation training programmes. This body of literature has depicted school leadership to be wanting in the majority of public schools in most African states, particularly when it comes to their lack of functionality and effectiveness in improving student performance. Pitting Africa against globally developed systems of the west and particularly those that are responsible for the state of coloniality in Africa, is a statement of othering (Barry, 1995). Moreover, the portrayal of this state of affairs not only creates challenges for newly appointed principals as studies showed (Bush, et al., 2011; Kitavi &

Van der Westhuizen, 1997), but continues the discourse of deficiency of leadership, as new newly appointed principals are not able to use their agency and construct leadership as they experience, but have to fit in existing discourses. Lopez and Rugano (2018) question as to how much space is left within this context for agency of school leaders, to reconceptualize and reimagine their roles. This literature is critical on the inadequacy of the systems in Africa, but it is missing the suggestions of possible and alternative indigenous ways in which localised knowledge on school leadership scholarship could be used or passed on through formal professional training and be used to "disentangle school leadership practices from this colonizing legacy" (Khalifa et al., 2019). This is important as the functionality of schools is widely linked to the efficacy of leadership, which has been shown to matter for effective school performance, particularly where student outcomes are concerned (Oduro & Bosu, 2010; Lopez & Rugano, 2018). The narrative and representation of underdevelopment persistently presents Africa from a deficit position. The question remains as to how Africa is to develop its own leadership and build its own capacity for leadership when mainstream paradigms of leadership are mainly based on culturally defined knowledge frameworks that are "contextually dissonant with African society" (Iwowo, 2016; p. 2). This lends itself to a more blended approach infused with aspects of western culture of formal training, but one that is more inclusive and understands leadership from an indigenous perspective.

Social Justice Leadership

The third contention concerns the representations of social justice leadership, particularly with regard to notions of equity and equality, and how they have been constructed. Social justice is central to the postcolonial discourse (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012) and

postcolonial feminist scholarship challenges the notion of universal gender oppression and argue for men and women to work as allies against the common oppressor that is colonialism (Parashar, 2016). It is noted that research on gender and educational leadership took a slow start in Africa, influenced by the western focus on the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (e.g Chabaya, et al 2009; Moorosi, 2010) which was a dominant western discourse of the 90s. This preoccupation with the underrepresentation of women in leadership was premised on the assumption that as a group, women are oppressed by men, which is a white liberal feminist discourse predicated on western experiences of white women. This white feminist liberal discourse overlooked "racial, cultural and historical specificities that mark the condition" of African women (Tyagi, 2014; p.47), and failed to acknowledge the diversity of cultural contexts and the simultaneity of African men's role as oppressors of African women under patriarchy and as the oppressed themselves under colonialism. African feminist perspectives reject the western feminist dichotomization of human relations that places men against women and encourage "individualism and competitiveness" (Ngunjiri, 2010; p.757). Indeed, Arvin, Tuck and Morril (2013) confirmed that native feminism which is akin to postcolonial feminism does not view men as the sole oppressor of women. Postcolonial feminism rejects universality of gendered experiences for both men and women that ignores the uniqueness of cultural experience. In this theorisation, "Native men are not the root cause of Native women's problems; rather, Native women's critiques implicate the historical and ongoing imposition of colonial, heteropatriarchal structures onto their societies" (Arvin et al., 2013, p.18). Indeed, Freire (2000) argues that the oppressed ought to cultivate the pedagogy of their own oppression together.

Counter-Representations and Possible Ways Forward

A postcolonial reading of the representation of school leadership and management literature reveals the literature is premised on the western notions of leadership and management that are hierarchical and bureaucratic as opposed to the community-based type of leadership that is indigenous to African communities. Said's (1978) notion that colonialism took away the ability for countries to define themselves but that the colony defined the countries in a manner that suited its terms, is depicted in what Pansiri (2011) defines as an uncritical adoption of western models of leadership and management that limit Africa's own self-determination. Khalifa et al. (2019) argued that "self-determination provides Indigenous school and community leaders with a sense of destiny and shared values that propel them to act in spite of their social and political environment" (p. 592). They add that indigenous school leaders who are aware of their communities' colonial, patriarchal, and racist history are more capable of operating within the confines of their restrictive environments, and can provide their students and school communities with a sense of purpose to challenge the status quo and usher change. A lack of congruency between colonial education and African reality created people that are abstracted from their reality (wa Thiong'o, 1986), whereby western ways of doing and knowing are seen as the norm and the usual and yet unattainable. A possible way forward would begin with Africa defining what leadership means for Africa, rather than relying on western definitions. Pheko and Linchwe II (2008) argued for the notion of school leadership that is infused with cultural practices that accommodate consultation as opposed to top-down approaches that reflect a colonial legacy. Such notions as advocated by Pheko and Linchwe II are evident in the

collective and consensus seeking leadership models in the Setswana and Sesotho speaking culture, "*kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*" (in Setswana) and "*Morena ke morena ka sechaba*" (in Sesotho) both meaning, the Chief is a chief by the grace of the people he serves (Mokolatsie, 2020; Pheko & Linchwe II, 2008; Prozesky, 2016).

Otunga et al. (2008) provides an account of how African children were educated before the arrival of the missionaries and their introduction of formal education. The fusion of formal, informal and non-formal education (Maharasoa & Maharasoa, 2004; Tedla, 1992) suggests that learning and leading occur concurrently in communities with children and parents together. It is in this fusion that leadership potential emerges and gets nurtured. This speaks to notions of teacher and distributed leadership in modern western infused leadership and management. However, it is notable that in the western sense, these notions of shared leadership do not include children. Arguing that Africa goes back to its pre-colonial state would be a futile step too far. After all, as Bhabha's (1994) hybridity notion suggests, the purity of the pre-colonial state has been tainted and cannot be undone. However, there seems to be merit in arguing for indigenous ways of learning and leading that are informed by traditional notions of, for example, Ubuntu, infused with modern aspects of leading. Ncube (2010) recognised Ubuntu as a transformative leadership practice that holds promise for "progressive and ethical change for Africa" and offering an alternative to perspectives of leadership that are based purely on western perspectives. The communality interdependence of Ubuntu is thus seen as central to social justice leadership, providing solidarity and upliftment of the school community in times of need (Moorosi & Heystek, 2021). Mangaliso (2001) argued that Ubuntu holds promise for organisational leadership and management; "organizations

infused with humaneness, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness will enjoy more sustainable competitive advantage" (p. 32). Indeed, Khalifa et al.'s (2019) notion of indigenous decolonising leadership speaks to notions of Ubuntu and a culturally responsive leadership. Khalifa et al. viewed culturally responsive leadership as leadership that connects leaders to students. Here, teaching, learning and leading happen concurrently. As Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity implies, the pure form of pre-colonial Ubuntu is unattainable. What can be achieved, through epistemological challenges, might be a more modernised version of Ubuntu that is shaped by western and non-western ways of knowing and leading, that would result in a cross fertilization of ideas based on cultural practices (Ncube, 2010). Elonga Mboyo (2019) advocated for a re-imagined notion of Ubuntu incorporated into school curriculum and pre-empting the pressure of the western performativity culture as the convergence between African and western cultures increase.

Postcolonialism rejects universality and sees the "universal as specific" (Nkomo, 2011; p.372). However, this universality is taken for granted when it comes to leadership theory. Although Ubuntu has been offered as an indigenous way of thinking about and practicing leadership, Nkomo (2011) cautioned against a universal treatment of Ubuntu and an essentialised acceptance of one African culture. Mbigi (2005) argued for the significance of examining the role of cultural paradigms in organisational leadership. The literature suggests different notions of Ubuntu that emphasise different aspects. Pheko and Linchwe (2008) refer to "*botho*" (personhood) as a characteristic of a society that expects the leader to enculturate specific approaches among people. While Mbigi's (2005) Ubuntu, emphasises communality and interdependence, *botho* emphasises

virtues of good character such as *hlompho* (deep respect) and *boikokobetso* (humility), which are essential to the understanding of ethical leadership in Setswana and Sesotho speaking cultures (Mokolatsie, 2020; Pheko & Linchwe, 2008; Prozesky, 2016) and are instilled early in life. Indeed, Prozesky's (2016) argues that consideration of such virtues have direct implications for ethical leadership in the African context. Acknowledging cultural diversity is accepting the diversity and complexity of African identities as "rooted in the post-colonial experience" (Ahluwalia, 2001, p. 9). Madimbo (2016) argued for indigenous research of leadership where it resides in its cultural and social context. This is useful as it helps provide an understanding of the strategies the leaders employ to move beyond historical barriers and into being successful leaders. Pre-colonial values and virtues are advocated here as a vision for decolonising leadership and management. These to be considered within an integrated model with aspects of modern western leadership is a useful way forward, in recognition of the hybrid state of postcoloniality. The implications for leadership development are that, in the communal sense, school leadership development focuses on building capacity for leadership and the development of individual leaders within the broader context. Eacott and Asuga (2014) called for the construction of school leadership development as an ongoing research object, rather than just the confirmation – or disconfirmation – of the researcher's model of what that reality should be. Pheko and Linchwe (2008) argued that the modern approach to school leadership used by school principals, putting them at the centre of leadership, was inadequate in Africa, hence the need to blend this modernity with traditional aspects of leading that are community focused. A traditional view of leadership that engages wider community involvement blending with aspects of

modernity suggests the tainted hybridity of Bhabha (1994) but is perhaps a necessary cross-cultural interaction compromise.

It is the prevailing liberalist agenda that gave minimal attention to the "unjust social arrangements between men and women" (Ngunjiri, 2010; p.757) in Africa. Ngunjiri (2010) and Maharasoa and Maharasoa (2004) provide a helpful perspective of African spirituality imbued with practical wisdom arguing that it leads to a deeper engagement in social justice leadership. Chen and Mason (2018) also add that, "spirituality is considered an important facet of an Indigenous perspective of leadership; it is an approach that is central to the leaders' existence, reflecting long-standing ways of seeing the world and a way of life" (p.162). This form of indigenous leadership acknowledges that school leaders operate in ways that recognize the racist culture that surrounds them but are still capable of using practices that communities to work in more inclusive ways. Accordingly, leaders are inclined to be transformative and play an inspirational role in their schools and communities. This is in line with Obiakor's (2004) African-centered education and others who advocate drawing from indigenous knowledge systems to make sense current leadership and management challenges. In this context, men, women and children work together for the benefit of the community.

Conclusion

This analysis problematizes the representations of African school leadership and management literature. I focused the argument on three themes: conceptualisations of educational leadership and management, leadership preparation and development and social justice leadership, and contended through a postcolonial reading that

the literature is represented as the deficient other to western norms. In addition to offering visions for decolonising educational leadership and management, this article has also served as a form of resistance expressed through a postcolonial critique and can be viewed as a significant step towards decolonisation. In the words of Freire (2000), in order to;

> *...surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity (p. 47).*

Hence, I make a suggestion towards a hybrid model of educational leadership and management that incorporates indigenous African values, virtues and practices of holistic learning and leading that includes all members of the school community. I have made an attempt to integrate feminism and postcolonialism in pursuit of a postcolonial scholarship that interrogates the multiplicity of histories. In so doing, I have engaged problematically to the discourse to which I have contributed in forging space for the way forward. I acknowledge that this area needs further development and I am not claiming to "speak for the subaltern" (Spivak, 1988; p. 104) but I consider this as a form of subjective reflection in acknowledging the colonial legacy inherent in the representation of educational leadership literature in Africa. My subjective position is that of someone who has contributed to the uncritical postcolonial discourse that I now seek to critique. I reiterate making an explicit call for decolonising ways of conducting research that look deep into pre-colonial practices and learn localised ways of leading and managing, ways that reside within the richness and diversity of the richness of the African cultural context. This suggested research should make observe postcolonial leadership and management practices and use

of postcolonial theories to help make sense of the African indigenous past and how it can help advance the postcolonial present to make it more effective and sustainable. As the notion of hybridity suggests, the pre-colonial cultural practice in its purity is unattainable. However, this integrated form of generating knowledge holds emancipatory chances of advancing indigeneity within African school leadership, schools and their communities.

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Theorising Context in Educational Leadership from a Relational Critical Realist Perspective

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Abstract

Educational leadership scholars are unanimous in their appreciation of the importance of context. As a concept, however, context is not unproblematic and, while being scarcely theorised, the recent growing interest around the topic has shown fundamental differences in the way that it is approached with repercussions on how the field progresses. The analysis of published literature on context undertaken in this article, therefore, attempts to look beyond current framing of context as antecedent and moderator, in order to propose a relational critical realist perspective to framing context and, hopefully, shape as well as decolonise future policy, practice and theorising in educational leadership.

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Introduction

In its most unspecialised understanding, context can be defined as 'the circumstances that form the setting of an event…' (Oxford dictionary). To illustrate this more clearly, the circumstances of an isolated police brutality incident towards a black person, for example, can form the setting for a 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) event/ protest.

'The physical environment in which practice [an event] takes place' (McCormark et al., 2002, p. 96) may become pervasive, in that events, such as BLM protests, can, for different reasons, spread across settings. While the expanding collective moral imperative of the BLM movement might strike a chord with many, expanding an educational practice or policy that seems to have worked in one setting across all settings is a bone of contention. The pervasiveness and dominance of events across settings triggered by certain circumstances, or the tendency to replicate 'what works here' in different contexts, is a poignant reminder for the need to frame the *in situ* of each setting and discern its contrasting and/ or shared positional space, time, actors, motives and other factors that characterise the here-and-now, as opposed or related to the there-now and at other times (*ex situ*) and vice versa. Understanding these dynamics of context is crucial since 'there is no leadership without context' (Rumsey, 2013, p. 3), as recognised by contributors to this special issue. And although the framing of the *in situ* of context is gaining momentum, this article aims to review the thinking thus far and propose a relational critical realist way forward when thinking about context. It also serves as a viable theorised justification for various degrees of hybridisation and comparative approaches that articles in this special issue grapple with, as they respectively put forward a comparative research concept and framework (Elonga Mboyo), Multilateral model (Loomis & Akkari), TURNS model (Msila) and Post-colonial framework (Morrosi), as possible ways of decolonising educational leadership in Africa. The article begins by recasting context as a cross-field of various interacting factors and acknowledges its contested nature before problematising how it has been understood as an antecedent and as a moderator. It goes on to reframe how context should be theorised as a relation from

a critical realist perspective before making some recommendations as part of its concluding remarks.

Threat to Context and the Role of Educational Leadership

The focus on the singularity and importance of 'context' is not new (Flikschuh, 2018) but the trend to override the *in situ* of educational settings is arguably a real threat that appears to have peaked and prompted calls for pause. One such call was made by Harris and Jones (2017), who decry the practices that essentially consist of copying leadership practices in order to remain competitive in national and international league tables and, as a result, fail to take into account the *in situ* of context without which enduring and embedded success is unattainable. O'Donoghue and Clarke (2010) have noted how such an approach has failed, particularly when implementing curriculum change. Although normative educational leadership approaches are said to be in response to the 'centrality of context', in order to help practitioners to solve specific problems in schools using certain types of leadership behaviours (Bush, 2011, p. 27), it can be argued that normative educational leadership, in the case of formal models of leadership for example, has, to some extent, served the sociological order set by the standardised top-down policies that also affect educational leadership practice.

It is important to remember that Harris and Jones (2017) do not explicitly advocate for contextual insularity that makes standardised external dictates evaporate into thin air without corroding the *in situ* of context. Therefore, the moment of pause away from standardised approaches is, arguably, a moment of immersion into local contextual racialised, gendered, cultural… epistemologies that are not necessarily impervious to external realities and wider perspective. It is this overlapping yet unique nature of context as an intersection, a 'cross-

field' (Zulfakar, 2020, p. 101) and 'glocal' point, where 'local and global forces interact to shape context' (Brooks & Normore, 2010, p. 54) that, I argue, educators and school leaders are confronted with and that needs to be theorised in a relational critical realist perspective, in order to catalyse real change when leading schools and theorising educational leadership in Africa, as is the case in this special issue.

A Contested Terrain

Despite its centrality, educational leadership literature has tended to portray the *in situ* of context as not the 'be all and end all'. To cast the view further afield to the wider context, school leaders have been urged not to be confined by (the *in situ* of) context (Day, 2005) and attempt to abstract what successful leaders do across all contexts (Day et al., 2011). On their face value, these assertions appear to contest Harris and Jones' (2017) insistence on the uniqueness of context and suggest that a 'less contextually dependent' (Eacott, 2019a, p. 67) approach to school leadership is what is needed.

While recognising the influence of 'socio, political, economic, and professional contexts', Day (2005, p. 575) also argues that 'successful heads were driven primarily by individual value systems'. Although individual value systems and what one does with, or as a result of, them might impact on context, it can be deduced from the above authors that those value systems arguably exist outside the realm of context. The choice between the primacy of something other than context, on the one hand, or the need to bracket everything else deemed external, in order to examine an exclusively internal entity called 'context', on the other, can be viewed as an obsolete dichotomy, particularly when engaged in comparative educational leadership research, theory and practice that require recognising the particularities of the *in situ* of context while moving beyond it (Sackey

& Mitchel, 2002, p. 909). This flight beyond a singular (aspect of) context, in order to develop epistemologies that cut across contexts is, arguably, firmly rooted on the specificity of context. In other words, developing a sophisticated analysis of context for educational leaders cannot be achieved if one is exclusively focused on immediate bearings of a given location, while ignoring the overall cross-contextual map and vice versa. By suggesting that school leaders be less confined by context, Day (2005) and Day et al. (2011) arguably seek to recognise the 'glocal' contextual dynamism therein, in order to develop core leadership practices upon which most successful school leaders draw to embed themselves into unique contextual situations and devise appropriate responses in order to achieve specific educational goals.

It is, nevertheless, these not only pertinent but also contentious, considerations about context and how leadership behaviours should be in respect of them that make 'a theory of context' (Eacott, 2019a, p. 67) necessary and this article aims to do just that, while reframing previous attempts in an effort to advance an arguably viable understanding of and impactful (decolonising) approach to theorising context when leading schools and researching and theorising educational leadership, particularly in Africa. When recognising the intricacy of the *in situ* and *ex situ* of context in the exercise of leadership on which the success of schools depends, Day et al. (2011) use previous research in educational leadership to theorise context as either an '*antecedent*' or a '*moderator*'. A further concept that this article seeks to add frames context as a '*relation*' that is argued here from a critical realist perspective.

Theorising Context as an Antecedent

Shaping the notion of context as an antecedent is the perception that a setting is not an empty vacuum; that context can be framed from

pre-existing conditions that need to be identified and matched with appropriate leadership actions. The most fitting current analysis of context that integrates studies by Clark and O'Donoghue (2017) comes from Hallinger (2018). Hallinger's theorising of six contexts through institutional, community, national cultural, economic, political and school improvement lenses can be framed as contextual variables structuring a given setting that school leaders must seek to analyse, understand and respond to with an appropriate 'repertoire of practices' (Day et al., 2011, p. 7). The impact of these antecedent conceptualisations of context on school leadership practice is real, as Gurr et al. (2018, p. 40) noted that 'behaviours and intentions on the part of principals and other school leaders could be linked to each of the [six] contexts'. If African national cultural context, for example, finds its corresponding educational leadership approach, it could be argued that context as antecedent has the potential to decolonise educational leadership in Africa. However, while these bounded normative, as well as critical, mechanisms for framing context are useful in understanding key contextual factors, they structure school leadership actions from an essentialist understanding of context. This essentialist reading of context sidesteps various levels of complexity and hybridity in which school leadership practice in Africa is enacted. It also ignores the fact that (leadership) actions are not only add-ons to a pre-existing context but constitutive of it.

Theorising Context as a Moderator

While leaders approaching context as an antecedent seek to impact on it, the moderating nature of context is conversely measured on how contextual factors can 'dampen or magnify the impact on organisational outcomes of the same set of leadership practices' (Day et al., 2011, p. 7). This is particularly the case where leaders who are less successful in one setting may thrive in another. What you get in

this conceptualisation is not only an ever-expanding list of leadership behaviours/ styles in response to varying moderating factors but also a re-examination of those in order to identify leadership models and leaders' traits that are more successful than others (Day et al., 2011). In reality, context as a moderator does not provide an elaborate breakdown of a theory of context. Hence, the extent to which context as a moderator impacts on organisational outcomes, arguably only goes to validate embodied leadership competencies that need the right moderated context to unleash potential.

Most educational leadership literatures are caught up in this two-way traffic that either views context as an antecedent or a moderator with educational theories that are shaped around those notions of context. Although the styles, models of leadership, high impact and 'what most successful leaders do in most contexts' repertoires are not developed outside context, their normative positioning with regard to context as an antecedent or a moderator have portrayed both context and leadership approaches from essentialist and normative perspectives. Educational leadership has arguably been built around establishing normative inventories of (antecedent and/ or moderator) contextual factors or variables that, as noted by Thorpe (2020), have tended to lead to refashioned school leadership behaviours as tools for (new) liberal managerialism as a dominant contextual factor. Here, context analysis can become a mechanical inventory exercise of normative factors that either impacts on leaders or on which school leaders exert actions. When the merit for success for these leadership actions are determined by policy makers in an increasingly neoliberal world, one dominant understanding of context can easily prevail at the expense of others and structure leadership behaviours that have prompted calls for pause, such as the one by Harris and Jones (2017). As the objectification of context (as

antecedent and moderator…) is foregrounded, the role of relations that would have given rise to these normative strands of context in the first place often goes unnoticed. In this partially flawed understanding of context, school leaders in various parts of the world, can be compared to subjectively unengaged scientists, who attempt to objectively dissect reified and compartmentalised components of context without contamination of school leaders' organising activity and other external factors. The subjective relational involvement in what is effectively an interplay of contextual factors within a cross-field is hardly articulated as context. There is, therefore, the need to look through and beyond the normative theorising of context in order to relationally frame both the *ex-situ* and *in-situ* of context and enrich educational leadership theorising and practice.

Theorising Context as a Relation

This conceptualisation is primarily built around the need to look beyond normative framing of context, in order to view it as an on-going process and outcomes of agents' (dis)enabled relations. It recognises that context is not only an antecedent and/ or moderating 'state' but also an 'act' or, as framed here, a combination/ hybridisation of both where, for instance, acting on contextual (antecedent and moderators) states gives rise to new comparative, postcolonial, TURNS-framed contextual relations to educational leadership, as discussed through different contributions in this special issue. It is worth noting that some theorists favour the bracketing (Eacott, 2019b), flattening (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987) and stratifying (Baskhar, 1989) of normative realities, or (states of) contexts in this case. This concluding rejoinder, however, seeks to advance a relational critical realist (stratified) reading of context to further cement a viable new departure in decolonising educational leadership research, theorising and practice in Africa and beyond.

Notwithstanding the questionable attempt to bracket normativity as the focus shift to relations (Elonga Mboyo, 2019a), Eacott's (2019c) pioneering framing of context as 'constitutive of and emergent from activity' (p. 69) breaks away from the normative understandings of context as an antecedent and places agents/ auctors' organising activity at the centre of the emergence of context. However, Eacott's focus on context as organising activity of relations only wishes away the bracketed normative entities, of contexts as antecedents and moderators in this case, without necessarily demonstrating how agents (auctors) ward off, engage with and/ or transform normative international political dictates of what works, for example, that Harris and Jones (2017) noted can be used to override the *in-situ* of local context. If the setting of a school is an open system where (the in-situ and ex-situ of) mechanisms interact, Eacott's bracketing of normative (antecedent and moderator) contextual factors portrays auctors' organising activity as emerging *ex nihilo*. In this normativity bracketed, yet filled with relations, setting, Eacott's (2019a) empirical study further recommends three criteria, such as clarity, coherence and narrative for high-impact leaders in context. In a nutshell, these defining features of context portray high-impact school leaders as needing to establish 'the purpose/s for which a school is working and demonstrating coherence (or at least naming the criteria by which one wishes to be judged), [and] the generation of a narrative' (Eacott, 2019a, p. 72). The reality, however, is that school leaders do not always have the latitude to bracket normative antecedents of contexts or the authority to set the criteria by which they are judged, as they are compelled to implement top-down directives from (inter)national and even local institutions with abusive and destructive consequences (Courtney & Gunter, 2015; Harris & Jones, 2018; Krasikova, 2013). The dominance of certain normative notions of context, whether they are

ex-situ (such as universal education policies) or *in-situ* (in the way of local tyrannies) can be overcome by reframing context relationally and, hopefully, within the thrust of this special issue, decolonise educational leadership in Africa.

To understand context as *a relation* from a critical realist perspective then, involves first recognising that normative antecedents and moderating factors of context are a real and stratified ontology (Baskhar, 1989) of, in this case, context that is the bedrock of educational leadership. Whether imposed or wilfully activated, the generative presence or absence of these contextual mechanisms can either perpetuate dominant mono-dimensional perceptions of contexts or give voice to marginalised elements or forces of context. As part of critical theories (of context) then, critical realism helps 'to transcend appearances and reveal enduring social structures that ratify special interests and the status quo in society' (Egbo, 2005, p. 268) and brings out marginalised gendered, cultural, post-colonial voices, as raw materials of context. For the most part, educational leadership theorising reflects western normative approaches that have been copied across contexts and effectively have perpetuated the colonial narrative, not only in educational leadership but also the context upon which the theorising should be rooted. In response, some critical gender, cultural and postcolonial approaches to context can, arguably, be said to overcompensate for their systemic exclusion in the ongoing policy, practice, and research arenas. In so doing, they provide uniquely exclusive perspectives based on an arguably legitimate although insular reading of context that is not cognisant of the cross-field and relational nature of context. When these critical voices are, in turn, abstracted as bounded essentialist entities, they, I argue, only echo a one-sided normative narrative of educational leadership in context. The projected understanding of 'context' emerging from

critical approaches to educational leadership is still built on siloed conceptualisations of context as 'antecedent', with arguably the only difference being the foregrounding of previously marginalised antecedent factors of context.

While standing 'within the stable of critical theories' as indicated above, critical realism still 'stands apart' (Thorpe, 2020, p. 39). It arguably 'stands apart', in that, it allows for the inclusion and examination/ analysis of 'a multiplicity of factors, *of context in this case* – [my italics], which interact to produce a specific outcome' (Stylianou, 2017, p. 977). When this is applied to theorising about 'context', in this case and school leadership thereof, it arguably implies perceiving context as an emergent reality resulting from agents' organising activity of all the stratified contextual realities.

While this emergence (of *context* as a *relation*) can be understood from three viewpoints: unilateral dependence, taxonomic irreducibility and causal irreducibility (see: Stylianou, 2017), the unlabelled description of emergence in this article can be fully grasped by reconsidering every antecedent and moderating factor that constitutes context as formless capabilities which are non-neutral, intentional and competing forces or potencies that relationally interact through agents' organising activity. These (antecedent and moderating) formless capabilities are the raw materials or mechanisms of context in schools' open systems; and they are so, not because they are less important and less unique to their settings but rather because they are incomplete. Although actual, meaning, existing in their normative forms as antecedent or moderator, incomplete/ insufficient contextual raw materials are not fully formed (hence, formless) in as far as they need to be relationally acted upon to become complete and arguably result in the flourishing or bringing about of something new

in a given setting. The *in-situ* of context that is a 'cross-field' of various factors (Zulfakar, 2020) is, therefore, a zone of (in)completion (Elonga Mboyo, 2019b) whose (incomplete or complete) processes and outcomes, as we are being urged by Harris and Jones (2017) to pause and reflect upon, are inextricably linked to agents' organising activity. Turning a zone or setting from that of incompletion to completion is not an activity performed from without context but rather from within it. Organising activity of the stratified layers of context is therefore part and parcel of context as a zone of (in)completion.

Decolonising educational leadership in Africa through contextually responsive school leadership approaches (Reed & Swaminathan, 2015), is therefore an enterprise that should consist of relationally engaging with various raw materials of context in order to develop school leadership approaches that effectively transform the layered interacting raw elements of context from incompletion to completion. The need to advance eclectic leadership approaches that are consistent with and/ or based on the heterogeneity of context cannot therefore be left to chance on the basis, for example, that 'most successful leaders are likely to embody most or all [the leadership] approaches in their work' (Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 565). It requires conscious framing beyond a uni-dimensional perspective of context and leadership. Articles in this special issue, therefore, set the tone for a narrative that recognises the nature of context as a cross-field zone of incompletion and call for or advance consistent models of hybridisation when seeking to decolonise school leadership in Africa. Relational critical realism therefore offers an additional valid conceptual toolkit to ground such a decolonising mindset in African contexts.

Conclusion

This article has sought to advance an understanding of context from a relational critical realist perspective. Context as a relation can therefore be defined as the cross-field zone of incompletion whose flourishing is constitutive of auctors' organising activity. This does not do away with previously theorised notions of context as antecedent and moderator. These rather structurally layered contextual entities (Donati, 2020) are instead recast as raw materials of context. Hence, this article, and indeed this special issue, do not call for an elimination or bracketing of these raw materials of context. The institutional, community, national cultural, economic, political and school improvement lenses (Hallinger, 2018) and many other siloed normative and critical framings of context and educational leadership are essential and it is not excluded that a call to pause and reconsider context (Harris & Jones, 2017) might, for some, mean the exclusive elevation of long-ignored cultural contexts, for example, and arguably offer a decolonising educational leadership in Africa. This logic of competition, in decolonising context and educational leadership, that arguably defined modernity (Donati, 2014) is flipped here in favour of relational logics that recognise networks of contextual relations that need to emerge through agents' organising activity.

I therefore want to end this section, article and, indeed, this special issue by addressing the *so what* question. This is done by way of offering some considerations for both researchers and practitioners, particularly when thinking about decolonising educational leadership in Africa from a critical realist relational understanding of context. This arguably requires a certain degree of (1) awareness of the heterogenous nature of context, (2) engagement in the authoring of that glocal

context and (3) framing of consistent decolonising leadership behaviours.

An awareness of the heterogeneity of schooling environments (Maringe Moletsane, 2015, p. 357) is necessary. It recognises context as a cross-field of various factors that need to be identified; and that those normative factors are incomplete raw materials of context that need engagement. Engaging with raw materials of context is far from mounting a counter-insurgency exercise seeking to occupy previously dominated spaces. Here, the biological logic of survival of the fittest (contextual factors) needs to be recast through relational logics (Donati, 2014) within the stratified factors/ realities of context; and that organising activity (otherwise referred to wrongly or not as leadership) is therefore central when seeking to develop the most productive hybridised relations that may lead, as argued in this special issue, to the application of a comparative framework (Elonga Mboyo), Multilateral model (Loomis and Akkari), TURNS model (Msila) and Post-colonial framework (Morrosi) when leading schools in Africa.

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Book Review

School Leadership for Refugees' Education: Social Justice Leadership for Immigrant, Migrants and Refugees

By: Khalid Arar

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Book Review

Despite the proliferation of studies exploring refugee education, researchers tend to conduct limited investigations, e.g. exploring such education in one country (Arar et al., 2018; Aydin & Kaya, 2019; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2020; Richardson et al., 2018; Streitwieser, 2019; Vergou, 2019). While Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019), in their comparative study, highlight the importance of providing quality education for refugees without providing a clear model, Dr. Arar argues in his book that researchers, practitioners, and educators in general need a clear source / guide to help in better understanding of refugees' education and suggests a model to adopt and adapt educational actions and strategies. He describes the importance of his book as follows: "The present book draws largely on empirical

research on educational policy and the practices of educational leaders working to provide equal education opportunities for refugees in the educational systems of several states in the Middle East, Europe and North America" (p.5).

Arar highlights the importance of understanding the types of newcomers, such as immigrants, emigrants, asylum seekers, and first- and second-class citizens. This is a very important point, as many educators and humanists jump to provide support without understanding the needs and the cases they are dealing with. The author emphasizes the necessity of mental health aid for such newcomers, contending that not enough light is being shed on psychological first aid and the important role that schools play by supporting their communities through various programs.

The book includes eight chapters. The introduction paves the way by highlighting the multifaceted and interconnected psychological, social, economic, and educational obstacles refugee children face. Arar clarifies the main terms used for the types of newcomers, such as immigrants, emigrants, asylum seekers, first- and second-class citizens, and he identifies some of the consequences of educators' lack of understanding of these terms.

The second chapter takes the reader from the refugees' home countries to the host countries that embrace them. Here, the author presents Turkey's, Germany's, Canada's, and the USA's respective policies towards refugees. In the third chapter, he gives voice to the challenges of the refugees and their educators, describing those that are related to issues of documentation, resettlements, accreditation, and placements. I found this chapter very enlightening, as it is crucial that both groups are being heard and dealt with.

In the fourth chapter, a systematic review of literature on refugee education is presented and subjected to thematic analysis. Three themes emerge: 1) The implementation of absorption, resettlement and integration policies in the host countries. 2) Research on school-based mental and psychological interventions. 3) Research on educational practices. This chapter will be helpful to every researcher and practitioner interested in refugee education.

The fifth and sixth chapters outline the suggested model for quality refugee education. Arar shows that an educational leader, whether a principal or a teacher, can deal with students from different cultural backgrounds and succeed in building an educational scene that gives all cultures a presence through recognition and participation. The model is considered comprehensive, as it reflects the political and societal discourse while acknowledging the role of community groups in achieving this aim.

More practical frameworks and research, including theories and models from the last decade, are mentioned and explained in the seventh chapter to promote a culture of welcoming refugees and providing equal opportunities to grow in global communities. The last chapter highlights the need to increase the human presence in the educational process, and to go beyond the official speech to a humanitarian discourse prioritizes social justice. In it, Arar emphasizes the importance of developing a discourse that comes from inside refugee communities and that promotes recognition, listening, and building participation circles for students. The diversity of their social backgrounds, and of course their psychological distress and other relevant factors, should be acknowledged.

Although this book is a great contribution to literature, there are several questions that are left unanswered. For example, how

would evaluation of the current model happen? What are the needs for higher refugee education? What about preschool preparation? And how is informal education to be provided? Another element that needs to be considered is the perspective of organizations dealing with education in emergencies, such as Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). There is an urgent call to study what non-citizens face in many countries around the globe, along with the role education systems can play to support these newcomers.

In conclusion, this is a timely, much-needed book. I highly recommend this very comprehensive book for educators, humanists, physiologists, researchers, and school leaders. This book paves the way for educators to reflect on and reconsider their practices, and will help them to humanize their actions and decisions.

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