

Fostering Movements or Silencing Voices: School Principals in Egypt and South Africa

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we examine the role of educational leadership in promoting and/or challenging racism as an intentional outcome of schooling. We focus on Egypt and South Africa, two countries uniquely framed as both deeply divided by race, religion, and/or class and as models of resistance and conscious activism. We draw upon experiences working as, or with, school principals in South Africa and Egypt to reveal how the context of education is negatively shaped by schooling practices that foster race and class-based inequalities. Using personal narratives of school principals, we situate educational leadership as core to understanding how Western educational reforms are structured, conceived, and enacted within Egyptian and South African contexts. This analysis sheds light on how educational inequalities are reinforced and justified by contexts of educational leadership and how efforts to resist are institutionally silenced.

KEYWORDS: Educational leadership, multicultural leadership, interest convergence, Egypt, South Africa

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Today Mabizela, whose parents named him as an answer to the then present-day apartheid policies in South Africa, sent the second author a rare e-mail message on the passing of Nelson Mandela. The principal of a large township high school outside of Cape Town, Mabizela wanted to celebrate the

arrival of his grandson, born on the day of Mandela's passing. His real message was of his grandson's namesake, "Tomorrow":

We need hope now than ever we have before. May Tomorrow take us to where we have been unable to take South Africa. May Tomorrow create a new vision, a new day for schools, where all of our children, Black and Coloured and White and Indian, Muslim and Christian, can learn how to live together. May Tomorrow remind our continent that our work is ever growing because our poverty is ever increasing and our schools are ever more exclusive.

While his own prayer mirrored Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech (Carson & Shepard, 2001), Mabizela linked Dr. King to Mandela in a shared struggle against what Mabizela called the "vast global machine of Western philanthropy and multinational Western-based education companies that have not realized that the icons they name schools after resisted their products." When I called Mabizela later that month, he told me he no longer had faith that schools would be South Africa's answer. As Mandela's life had been turned into a fictive image of success over the forces of racism and imperialism, Mabizela argued over the phone, South African schools "do the same as what the United States has done to Dr. Martin Luther King," and the "happy, less critical version [South Africa] buys from US or EU-based curriculum companies" hides the reality that "resistance [to white-supremacy] is treated as terrorism."

This paper begins with the assumption that education in South Africa and Egypt, despite recent political revolutions, has remained a false beacon of hope for the majority of poor youth. This false beacon exists, in part, because schooling has been organized, defined, and measured by Western-framed notions of knowledge and associated approaches to reform (Brock-Utne, 2000; Dixon, 2010; Holdstock, 1987; Said, 1993). Despite growing structural disparities in part due to Western political and imperial relationships, South Africa and Egypt have maintained the exclusionary educational structures that led to the protests both countries are well known for (Herrera & Torres, 2006; Marsh, 2014).

Combining the personal experience of a Black American school principal in Egypt with interviews of two Black South African school principals taken from a larger study on post-apartheid leadership, this paper synthesizes two projects to explore the context of critical multicultural and anti-racist leadership. As a result of dialogue based on our experiences, observations, and work as educators, we situate both nations as having similarly adopted Western approaches to education reform, which has resulted in the reification of education policies and practices that entrench inequities across boundaries of race and class. We argue that an adherence to Western notions of how schools should be organized and led creates a problematic leadership context. We begin by clarifying how Western-framed reform efforts have served and continue to serve as the foundation and benchmark for the national education systems of both nations. Employing a conceptual approach, we place critical multiculturalism in conversation with the concept of interest convergence, ultimately suggesting that

anti-racist educational leaders in Egypt and South Africa face contradictory, challenging patterns that limit their perceived efficacy.

In relation to Egypt, we discuss how the defunding and privatization of schooling has resulted in two separate systems that limit the educational opportunities for youth across lines of class. In South Africa, we explore the role that Western-framed reforms have played in stifling the continued struggle against racial and economic apartheid. Upon establishing the foundation and backdrop for the production and maintenance of educational inequities in both nations, we offer a series of vignettes from educational leaders in Egypt and South Africa to operationalize how educational leadership against racism and class-based oppression is systemically resisted.

Situating the adoption of Western-framed education reform efforts as a form of interest convergence that ultimately benefits White and wealthy power infrastructures, we contend that these reforms reproduce white-supremacist-capitalist-paternalism (hooks, 1994) in South Africa and Egypt, as in the United States. Examination of the personal experiences of three leaders in two studies reveals how Western-based reforms and the maintenance of race and class-based hierarchies disrupt opportunities for educational leaders to engage in anti-racist leadership. While our discussion and findings suggest that those who attempt to implement dialogic, anti-racist, and class-conscious approaches to leadership often face immediate and perpetual resistance, solutions, including critical leadership preparation, do exist. We begin with the importation of Western-based education reforms in Egypt and South Africa as a framework for understanding anti-racist and class conscious leadership.

Context of Western-Framed Reforms

Though over a decade has passed since the approval of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* in the United States, many argue that the law and its subsequent manifestations have expanded educational inequities, widened the opportunity gap, and disproportionately silenced working-class students and students of color in contrast to their White, middle-class, and affluent counterparts (Ard & Knaus, 2013; Delpit, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Knaus, 2007; Lipman, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). With a growing body of research supporting these claims, educational researchers have extended the argument that US schools accomplish exactly what they are intended to do: maintain and reproduce a compliant, dispensable workforce and permanent underclass as a source of cheap labor to support the increasingly polarized distribution of wealth and resources for an elite, typically White, wealthy subsector of American society (Apple, 2013; Bell, 2004; Brooks, 2012; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005). Education policy and reform measures in the United States continue to rely on existing structural, institutional, and systemic forms of racism and class-based inequities to accomplish this task, disguised within the

discourses of quality, excellence, and rigor (Au, 2009; Dantley, 2005; Hill & Parker, 2007; Knaus, 2007; Young & Laible, 2000).

Similarly framed policies are exported to developing nations in the form of structural adjustment programs and US-backed development initiatives implemented through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, often with English-only preferences (Brock-Utne, 2000; Shahjahan, 2013). These efforts achieve similar outcomes in impoverished, segregated countries, while simultaneously reinforcing systemic racism and class-based inequities, as they do in the United States. Brock-Utne (2000) clarified this problematic foundation:

The question of standards is often discussed as a way to create an impression that there exists a distinction between the ill-defined concept of internationally competitive standards and African standards. Often these internationally competitive standards do not mean truly international standards, but Western, most frequently Anglo-American, standards (p. 267).

Education policies and international reform efforts in Egypt and South Africa are emblematic of profit-driven policies and programs that have widened race and class-based achievement gaps in the United States (Shahjahan & Torres, 2013). Egypt and South Africa have served as testing grounds for profit-based educational innovations representative of corporate and "philanthropic" organizations currently driving reform and fueling resistance in the United States, including but not limited to the Gates Foundation, Broad Foundation, and Walton Family Foundation (Barkan, 2011; Kovacs, 2011; Saltman, 2010). School choice, privatization, standardized testing, the narrowing of the curriculum, policy preferences for Western languages as the instructional medium, and the inequitable distribution of resources across race and class lines are not new in Egypt or South Africa (Dixon, 2010; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Indeed, such education reform and policy initiatives have been implemented over the past 20 years in South Africa and Egypt, since the overthrow of apartheid and the passage of Law 306 in Egypt that opened up the education market (Brock-Utne, 2000; Dixon, 2010; Sayed, 2006).

Egypt

With the signing of the Camp David Accords, the eventual conclusion of the Cold War, and the reorganization of the global economy in the 1990s, Egypt became the second largest recipient of Western foreign aid dollars via the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, behind Israel (Momani, 2003). As noted by Sayed (2006), "The 1990s were also the decade in which basic education was launched as Egypt's national project *par excellence* and became the focus of attention of international development organizations" (p. 3). Despite initial claims of promoting universal access to education, the implementation of structural adjustment programs that mandated the liberalization and privatization of the

Egyptian economy essentially limited state spending on public good expenditures, including education (Dixon, 2010). As growth in the demand for quality education grew amongst the wealthiest members of Egyptian society, Law 306 (1993) was passed, legalizing the creation of a private, for-profit education system (Sayed, 2006).

This privatization created two vastly different Egyptian education systems. The first, public schools, reflects a lack of national investment and offers inadequate numbers and quality of schools to poor and working class communities. The second, private schools, prepares upper-middle class and wealthy Egyptian youth to learn Western-centered curriculum and languages (particularly English, French, and German), to attend university, and eventually to replace their parents at the top of the economic hierarchy. From the first co-author's experience, many prestigious, private, for-profit, Western degree-granting schools employ non-licensed foreign teachers and leaders who make several times what public school teachers and leaders are paid. It is also not uncommon for public school teachers to augment classroom teaching with private lessons, in order to remain slightly above poverty (Anderson, 2011). This system has created incentives for public school teachers to avoid basic teaching responsibilities such that their students are forced to pay them after hours in order to receive a basic education (Bray, 2006). These separate education systems maintain the class-based infrastructures already in place.

South Africa

South African historical context shaped an even more dire system of disparities between those with resources and those without. Through the apartheid system, wealth was funneled into the hands of Afrikaner settlers who in turn were forced to share with British colonizers. The complicated system of 15 different departments of education, each designated to address the education of particular ethnic groups (such as Afrikaaner, Coloured, Indian, and numerous African populations), was specifically designed to "promote and sustain the values of apartheid and to keep the black population in check" (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 3). When Mandela was elected president in 1994, many celebrated the overthrow of the apartheid system, yet work to transform the educational infrastructure was only just beginning. (For a more thorough history of South Africa's transition from the apartheid system, see Kallaway, Kruss, Fataar, & Donn, 1997; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Harber, 2001.) Indeed, while the African National Congress (ANC) has ruled South Africa since Mandela's election, efforts to transform the educational system have not been able to disrupt the system's racial foundation.

Those who visit South African schools witness dramatic disparities, from the most well-resourced schools that serve White students (with the newest technologies, Wi-Fi, and a global curricular base) to schools that serve Black and Coloured students that are rife with overcrowded, crumbling buildings, and often

lacking access to electricity, desks, required curricula, and quality teachers. As one scholar argued in a public address, South African schools “are not simply reproducing race and class inequities. Far worse, they educate poor and working class youth away from academic mastery and democracy, toward academic ignorance and civic alienation” (Chetty, 2012). This alienation is exacerbated by language policy and practice; despite the recognition of 11 official languages in South Africa, there is a clear preference for English, even as English is most Black school teachers’ second or third language (Pitman, Majhanovich, & Brock-Utne, 2010). In addition, matriculation exams required for high school graduation and enrollment into university are offered in English or Afrikaans, requiring native speakers of the other nine official languages to demonstrate multiple levels of literacy not required by White students; similar expectations of learning in English lead to academic disparities not found when students are taught in their mother language (Brock-Utne, 2007). This alienation is further enforced through textbook and curricular bias, which again stigmatizes students regarding their mother language. While libraries are rare in township schools, even rarer are educational books written in Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Swati, Venda, Tswana, Tsonga, and Ndebele. In short, a White-framed education has been imposed in South Africa. Since many of the post-apartheid efforts have focused on access, quality and democracy have been subsumed while racial inequalities have maintained (Fataar, 1997).

Focusing on these two nations, at times positioned as exemplars of economic development and democracy on the African continent yet deeply divided across race and class, we advocate for a more nuanced examination of the education policies and reform imported from the West. As Western development and philanthropy dollars continue to inform educational infrastructure development in both countries, public services and basic resources are still denied to impoverished communities, reinforcing cycles of racism and class-based inequities that are further strengthened by global economic policy (Moyo, 2009). At the core of this struggle are educational leaders, tasked with implementing equitable schooling within political contexts of oppression. Our work is concerned specifically with how such leaders challenge and resist the very systems within which they are employed, often as some of the first full-time employees in their families and communities.

Conceptual Approach

This analysis represents the intersection of two research projects focusing on how the political context of schooling silences anti-racist and anti-classist leaders. Though drawn from separate studies, this paper is situated within a critical inquiry framework, as we are concerned with relations of culture, power, social inequalities, and human agency that advance social justice through schooling (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Conceptually, this study builds off of the critical multicultural approach to leadership that frames the

work of Mabizela and Tshepiso, two Black South African school principals, as well as the work of one of the co-authors, a former private school principal in Egypt. The co-author, an American Black man from a working-class background, led an international school for four years in Alexandria, building off of his previous leadership experiences within US schools.

The two principals were part of a larger study on leadership in post-apartheid South Africa, and quotations are taken directly from interview data. Today Mabizela, the first participant, identifies himself specifically as Xhosa and grew up speaking Xhosa, Zulu, and then English, while Robert Tshepiso, who identifies as Zulu, grew up speaking Zulu and learned English after mastering Afrikaans in primary school. Mabizela has been a school principal for 10 years, and Tshepiso for eight. Both are in their late 50's and have lived in Cape Town's townships for all of their adult lives.

After situating school leadership within a critical multicultural framework, we draw upon professional insights and perspectives to highlight how educational reforms reflect critical race theory's notion of interest convergence, wherein those in power in both nations are supported by efforts that, in theory, are positioned to support those in poverty. More specifically, we discuss how the importation and implementation of these policies and reforms strengthen the imperial relationship the West has with Egypt and South Africa, and the complicated impacts this has on individual leadership practitioners.

Critical Multicultural Leadership

Egypt and South Africa have historic and recent youth-led movements that attempt(ed) to decenter top-down patriarchal societal structures that have been reinforced by educational policy and practice (Marsh, 2014). Meanwhile, educational advocates have argued for a culturally-centered curriculum and teaching approaches that reflect and respond to the needs of students as a form of liberatory practice (Freire, 1970; Gay, 2000; hooks, 1994; Luthuli, 1982; Zaki, 2012). In the context of the South African study and professional experiences in Egyptian school leadership, critical multiculturalism played a central role in reclaiming educational leadership practice as resistance to racism and class-based oppression (McLaren 1995, 2003; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999). Critical multiculturalism offers a framework for school leaders to translate hope into practice (Dantley, 2002; Murtadha-Watts, 2001; Riehl, 2000).

Precisely because school leaders who position themselves as anti-racist recognize the complicated terrain surrounding their formal position, such educational leaders can employ critical multiculturalism to frame teaching, curricula, school design, and policy contexts to allow students to learn about the structures of oppression while also navigating daily survival needs (Bogotch, Beachum, Blount, Brooks, & English, 2008; Brooks, 2012). This section thus

clarifies principal reliance upon an anti-racist framework to challenge the professional compromises that frame social justice work.

Tshepiso studied what he called “Black nationalism” when he was learning to be a teacher. “This learning,” he recalled, “was in teacher’s union meetings and with underground ANC councils.” In his mid-twenties, Tshepiso identified as an anti-apartheid activist and argued, “That was the only way to be a teacher back then. We did not trust teachers who were not challenging the apartheid system.” When Tshepiso became a principal, he knew his charge was not just to continue the training he had, but to translate it to a newer generation that had not grown up in formal apartheid. Tshepiso clarified his foundation in linking educational leadership to anti-racism:

When I first was nominated to serve as the headmaster (and now principal), I had to go in front of a panel of locals. These were all former ANC-leaders, so they quizzed me on Biko, on consciousness. And I see my job to translate the consciousness in here [points to his head] to here [points to his hands]. In townships, that means feeding children, teaching them to build shack houses, to strip metal, to develop drainage systems in their yards. Once we do that, then we can show the children why we have but one faucet tap to water 10,000 people. We show them why the garbage is collected very rarely. We show them that racism and poverty go hand-in-glove in South Africa, and that once you are fed, you are intended – we educators intend for you – to complete our political transformation.

Tshepiso argued that the role of the educational leader is to ensure all “teachers, educators, parents, families, everyone at the school” shares an anti-racist vision. “Sometimes,” he argued, “I cannot reach every parent – especially the ones on dagga, mandrax¹. So I focus on learners, on teachers. The goal is to teach and have structures that allow real teaching.” Underlying Tshepiso’s political orientation is a mission to transform South African society. He clarified:

The solution is not about race, it is about economic empowerment. Black learners are in poverty, but it is the poverty that we can address, not the racism. So we have to teach our learners how to break the cycle of impoverishment. That is as much curricular as it is pedagogic.

Mabizela continued Tshepiso’s theme of the political orientation of schooling, and argued that there is a larger context in which South African education sits. “We have to realize,” he demanded, “that teaching to read when no publishers will go with Black authors is not enough.” Recognizing the larger structures of racism that limit Black publications and Black perspectives angered Mabizela, who argued: “The ANC has limits to our power. We cannot change who is seen as an expert. We cannot change who funds curriculum companies. We cannot just change the reliance upon White.” What could be done, Mabizela argued, is a comprehensive educational approach to teach the entire family.

The principal is really a community leader. He has to teach the entire family, not to read – that’s the teacher’s position – but to really begin to

voice their situation, and to organize for collective action. The principal has to rally the troops, to get into the community, to go into homes, to tell parents to put down their Black Label² and pick up the pen and journal, or maybe to learn themselves to use the pen. My job is to help each of us learn without school, because what we are forced to teach disempowers, disillusion us. To take matters into our collective hands, and use collective knowledge, that is the job of the principal.

Mabizela further argued that parents send their children to school, despite knowing that graduating may not get them further ahead in life, in part just to “keep our children alive.” While Mabizela teaches teachers to teach learners how to develop “real skills, to get a full employment,” he realizes the limitation is that without a leadership commitment to transformation, to “critically examining our situation through school as the center, there is no purpose to leadership.”

Mabizela and Tshepiso provide a framework for recognizing the importance of critical multiculturalism as the foundation of schooling. While not growing up in the same context of an anti-apartheid era Black Consciousness movement, the first co-author’s experience helped instill a similar anti-racist foundation, which later translated into critical multiculturalism.

Unlike the United States, extreme wealth and poverty in Egypt are not separated by rivers, train tracks, or freeways. Wealthy students interact with poverty regularly, whether it is on their commute to school, or in interactions with the drivers, maids, or nannies that raise them. However, like the United States, critical opportunities to engage students with their cultural and political realities continue to be distinctly absent from educational spaces.

In Egypt, individuals who openly express their discontent are often arrested, tortured, or simply disappear. Within the classroom, a lack of creativity and critical thought is encouraged by enforced silence. I recall scrambling before Education ministry visits, ensuring all incriminating curricular materials were absent from classrooms. I remember gluing book pages closed to conceal taboo topics such as the Arab-Israeli war, and discarding maps that recognized the Israeli state.

Opportunities for professional development within such a context are severely limited. Yet I was able to draw on the cultural wealth and knowledge of parents, community members, and teachers to foster cross-cultural dialogue across boundaries of race, religion and social class. In this way, we supplemented our curriculum and pedagogical strategies to co-create spaces where students could voice their perspectives and ideas on issues that paralleled their own realities. Informed by the work of Paulo Freire and Derrick Bell, we found ways to meaningfully connect our curriculum to lived, contextually relevant, student realities and voices.

Teachers led the implementation of critical multiculturalism at the curricular level. One teacher, for example, connected the United States’ civil rights movement to tensions between Muslims and Christians.

Helping students make connections to contemporary social, cultural, and political activism in Egypt, this teacher guided students in making sense of and discussing the dialectical relationship between the oppressed and their oppressors.

These attempts to center critical multiculturalism as the role of the leader ultimately fostered transformative efforts in families, teachers, and students. And while these efforts embodied the purpose of education for these three class-conscious, anti-racist leaders, they often had to compromise.

Educational Leadership as a Compromised Solution

In the following narrative, the first co-author clarifies the context of his anti-racist leadership orientation, situating his principalship as both complicated and contradictory. In essence, serving in leadership roles within institutions that stratify – and justify that stratification process as meritorious – enforces a professional leadership compromise.

My school followed a top-down structure with the owner at the helm of all relevant decisions. Though I had limited access to school finances, I found solace in working in an environment where teachers were allowed the flexibility to shape their curriculum and pedagogy around critical multiculturalism. Though private, students came from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, from the political elite to those whose life savings barely covered tuition. Despite high tuition, the school was resource-poor: books and other basic resources were in short supply.

While I am thankful that I was able to co-create a critical teaching and learning environment for students, I struggled with the fact that better opportunities for our students were defined by the possibility of eventually leaving Egypt to study, seeking opportunity in the United States or Europe, as opposed to transforming injustice within Egyptian society. The school employed a college counselor from Canada that regularly hosted visits from Western universities. The school relied heavily on the placement of our graduates in these institutions to compete with other private schools. In hindsight, we could have used these elite-purposed resources to improve the education we were providing to our students, so that they might develop a framework for giving back to their communities. Though privileged in comparison to many fellow Egyptians, our students and families envisioned opportunity as restricted to the West, rather than conceptualizing opportunities for their people to navigate extreme poverty. I struggled having to compromise, framing possibility as something that took place elsewhere.

During the same years, on the opposite side of the African continent, two Black principals were leading separate high schools in the area to the east of Cape Town often referred to as the “Cape flats.” Mabizela and Tshepiso echoed

the first co-author's frustration at being between what Mabizela called a "professional rock and a hard place." Both spoke extensively about being forced to implement and run schools that were framed as a tool to oppress the very Black students they dedicated their professional lives to.

Mabizela looked in the mirror each morning and saw that he represented the "face of an oppressive regime that we have fought our entire lives against." His entire purpose as a principal was summed up in what he felt his job had become: "We are the ones told to silence our families and we have to live with delivering that message." Mabizela continued:

It was not always like this. I do not want to romanticize apartheid-era schooling, because it was a terrible injustice. But even under trees, we taught [children] to read about themselves, to learn who we are as people, to know about ancestors and the struggles that they went through to find language. Now, we teach the standards, to pass matric, but then what? Our students are not revolutionaries, they are taught to be the consumer. There is no longer a good purpose here.

Tshepiso echoed the sentiment that the purpose of schooling had shifted away from a focus on revolution and the transformation of societal inequality to preparing worksheets. "In the immediate days after the overthrow," Tshepiso argued, "Black and Coloured teachers taught [learners] to talk and think like what we think the Afrikaner and the British talk and think like." The African National Congress (South Africa's ruling political party) focused on providing access for all of South Africa's children to schools, and, as Tshepiso reports, "we were fairly successful, as long as you do not compare quality of the buildings or teachers or books." The problem remained, however, of whose version of school to use. Tshepiso argued, "That was answered when these aid organisations brought books and curriculums from America, England, and the Dutch." He clarified:

We had this national effort to develop a national curriculum, and we were working on that, but in this new nation, such a thing takes a very long time. While we were working on this development, these organisations with big money came in and said, 'do not worry about your little curriculum – we already have one and it works.' And after all that 'science-based best practice' nonsense, we bought in, and we have been using this ever since, and well, you can see what good this has done us.

Tshepiso was referring to the dramatic racial disparities amongst school funding, teacher training, access to instructional materials, and just about every indicator of school quality (Carter, 2012; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Spaul, 2013). When asked why he remains a school leader in such a context, Tshepiso responded that no other option exists. "Hope is the one thing you have to hold onto tightly. And I believe that school is a place to teach the learner how to be a young man, a young woman, in a youthful country." We had been talking in his office, and after briefly sharing this hope, Tshepiso took in the crumbling ceiling, the panel-less walls that allowed us to see into the secretary's office, and the

plastic flooring that barely kept the dirt down. After a few seconds of silence, a resigned Tshepiso sighed:

Principals are like soft-spoken house slaves. We tell children how to work the fields and tell them survival is everything. When they don't believe us, we have rules that kick them out, label them ineffective, un-intelligible. When you ask me to tell learners that they have to value education, but they and I both know that passing matric, which most will not, will not feed them or give them water or electric, it is as if you ask me to sell them on a hope that is not real.

These principals shed light on the ways in which leaders are asked to take on roles that ostensibly help empower their communities, but ultimately reinforce the very inequality they are dedicated to addressing. This compromised solution results in individuals shouldering responsibility to prepare youth to navigate within a context of societal inequality, while recognizing that the very preparation process is oppressive. Leading schools while maintaining a socially just purpose was contradictory, in part because these leaders knew they were being asked to reproduce inequality within their buildings, curricula, and teaching.

Penalization of Resistance

While all three principals recognized that the context for their leadership was problematic, they also used creative means of resistance. Yet in each case, intentional resistance was met with official, unofficial, and even community rejection that impacted professional standing.

The first co-author shared his leadership experience with implementing critical multiculturalism and the reactions such efforts faced.

In order to have more autonomy to partner with families, I led in the development of a new school. With resources even more limited than they were previously, we attempted to build a school where our community would be the foundation of the curriculum. Teachers worked tirelessly to plan field trips to local historical sights, museums, and workplaces to make education real for students. I quickly learned that the space we were attempting to create was viewed as a threat to the order of schooling in Egypt.

In response to the declining quality of education in Egypt, the American University in Cairo hosted a summit for private school owners to discuss how schools could foster democracy and critical thinking skills amongst student populations in preparation for higher education. With a keen sense of the issues that undermined K-12 education in Egypt, the owner of my school asked me to prepare a statement that she could share at the summit.

I wrote about American interests and the manner in which private education in Egypt served as a new market for American textbook companies, for-profit accreditation firms, and testing companies that situated Egyptian schools and students as consumers. I outlined how democracy and critical thinking were undermined in the process, and how private school owners were complicit in and benefited from this process, both monetarily, and in terms of maintaining a social order that would ensure their positioning at the top. Closing the letter, I made it a point to state that Egyptian schools were doing exactly what they were designed to do: Silence those who questioned social inequity, and ensure that youth remained passive and uncritical. Upon sharing my statement, along with her personal sentiments, we were both shut out from future summit meetings. One year later, the school folded.

While the first co-author was excluded as a result of his critique of educational policy, Tshepiso and Mabizela faced within-career discipline, as well as outside-of-school public punishment. Mabizela spoke vehemently about what he called a “wage iniquity.” He clarified: “The more one speaks about these things, the more that one’s salary remains the same; others who do not speak out, one can witness their salary and their upward trajectory.” In addition to being repeatedly passed over for promotions, despite leading one of the largest schools in Cape Town, and despite being regularly touted as a successful school, Mabizela earned significantly less than principals with fewer years of leadership experience, significantly smaller staff sizes, and less public recognition.

The [Western Cape Education Department] has the national pay scale, but who gets increases in service years does not reflect how long you serve, but for how you go in for them, and how they go in for you. And [the WCED] know I do not go for that. And that is why my salary has not seen the increase, my accumulated years is lower, because I raise the issue, and the ones that do not keep on rising.

Tshepiso echoed the sentiment of exclusion, yet argued that continuing the struggle was why he became a school leader in the first place. Tshepiso expected punishment in part because, “I came from the ANC struggle. I knew that we might be killed or imprisoned for teaching what we taught.” When ANC rule began, Tshepiso initially had high hopes, but when he continued to teach opposition, he began facing retribution.

After a contentious local election, the ANC official who won began questioning my loyalty. I said I was loyal to the learners, to teaching them to be part of the new South Africa. There was this big debate – maybe seven years ago, and the learners were protesting, they walked off of [the school]. I was called into the deputy minister’s office and...they told me to say this, to say that the learners should go back to the classroom, that I would take care of their needs, because the learners trust me. But I would not agree, I told them I could not sell that to the learners. And the very next week, I was removed from my local ANC post. Just like that.

Challenge the schools, and you lose politically. Challenge your learners, and you lose salary.

The penalization of resistance, at political and professional levels, reflects a larger lack of tolerance for these principals' critical multiculturalist leadership. They all argued that they were punished specifically because they intentionally operated within an anti-racist, class conscious framework. These leaders ultimately had to balance efforts to provide educational opportunities that they felt were core to their professional mission, with the retribution those efforts would result in. This retribution led to lower pay, fewer rewards, and in some cases, exclusion from political processes or even the shuttering of schools. This ultimately led these individuals to refocus efforts away from the political systems and towards insulating their schools, so that they could focus on working with learners but not address the larger structural inequalities that limited their budgets, curricula, pedagogy, and buildings.

Discussion: Interest Convergence

At the core of these three school leaders' experiences rests a problematic outcome: These principals positioned themselves as anti-racist and class conscious, attempted to integrate anti-racism into the daily structure of their schools and within the local and/or national political conversation, and were summarily punished and/or excluded. These locally situated school leaders were ultimately silenced by those who are rewarded by outside Western interests, which further reinforces educational reform efforts that undermine a localized curriculum and inhibit principal capacity to implement culturally responsive approaches. Placing the critical multicultural framework from which these leaders approach anti-racist leadership in conversation with Derrick Bell's (1980) concept of interest convergence, we position the adoption of Western-based reforms as limiting possibilities for locally-derived, community-centric, anti-racist, class-conscious educational change for the specific purpose of benefiting the larger White Western world.

Synthesizing Bell's (1980) monumental work, Brophy (2011) defines interest convergence as the notion "that White people will support racial justice only to the extent that there is something in it for them. That is, only to the extent that there is a "convergence" between the interests of the white people and racial justice" (para. 1). Situating interest convergence as "still another barrier in the struggle for racial equality" (Bell, 1980, p. 33), Bell identified the extent to which US court decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* serve as symbolic gestures that signal racial progress in education. Bell (2004) contended that the underlying interests that Whites had in desegregating schools were less oriented toward promoting equity, and more focused on producing and maintaining the illusion of egalitarianism within a deeply racist capitalist economic system during the height of the Cold War and in contrast to communism. Supporting his argument, Bell (2005) revisits 50 years of desegregation policies to highlight the

limited progress the United States has made in the struggle for racial equity. Connecting the concept of interest convergence to the “post”-apartheid South African context, and the opening of the Egyptian education market to the West, the leaders in our study reflect a peculiar form of interest convergence. Indeed, tolerated – and celebrated to some extent – because of their commitment to critical multiculturalism, these leaders also have been forced to compromise and continue to face racialized resistance.

Within Egypt, the previously mentioned implementation of World Bank and IMF-mandated structural adjustment programs has limited government spending on public schooling, creating the need for private educational institutions to serve the nation’s elite. In order to position the children of the Egyptian elite to secure and reproduce their families’ standing at the top of the Egyptian class hierarchy, a demand for Western-oriented private schools was created. This demand serves as a form of interest convergence as it ensures that the economic elite have access to quality schooling, enabling them to reproduce their status and control in contrast to their poor and working-class counterparts. Yet these schools are justified under a language of democracy; indeed, American educators of color, similar to the first co-author, are recruited in part because of their social justice orientation.

Similarly, the privatization of education in Egypt created a need for Western curricular and instructional materials, a steady market for Western-based and regional educational accreditation agencies, as well as a demand for Western teachers and educational leaders. With the establishment of a private system that concurrently benefits the interests of the Egyptian elite with Western educational corporations, the focus on addressing structural barriers and inequities within Egypt education becomes tokenized. Thus, as the experiences of the school principal in this paper suggest, educational leaders committed to social justice are perpetually met with systemic resistance.

Within a South African context, where the language of overthrowing apartheid conditions and creating a new democracy is the norm, interest convergence takes on an equally problematic context. Indeed, tourists to South Africa can embark on township tours that take those who pay into the heart of Black townships, as overloaded buses ride through undeveloped communities, celebrating how far South Africa has come. Yet these bus rides are often through neighborhoods without running water, by schools without operational toilets, and near classrooms that are ridiculously overcrowded. As Tshepiso argued, “The great compromise was that the world would use the word democracy to describe [South Africa] while the whites would keep our wealth and property.”

Saving South Africa, then, became a commodity, a global need for the United States and the Western World to address. Yet the help offered is often seen, as Mabizela and Tshepiso argue, as the problem. Rather than being able to develop multilingual curricula that address the concrete survival needs of South Africa’s black township residents (including malnutrition, lack of adequate shelter, running water, or electricity, and related public health travesties including tuberculosis and AIDS), educational leaders are tasked with implementing

Western-framed curricula and then tested using Western framed assessments. All this help can only occur if South African townships remain impoverished, for if Black educators are allowed, indeed *empowered*, to transform the purpose of schooling, the scope, mission, and operation of schools, the reliance upon White Western curricular and educational frameworks would diminish.

In short, South African and Egyptian educational leaders who both implement forms of critical multiculturalism and transformative/dialogic leadership and position themselves against the status quo Western framework are seen as a threat to the Western agenda of shaping global educational structures. Yet the larger Western (read: White) interests are furthered by not entirely removing such principals from their posts. They are helpful, in a sense, because their sheer existence demonstrates democracy, where Egypt and South Africa can show off their resistance fighters while structurally containing those fighters and limiting their influence. Thus, such educational leaders are tolerated, but only because their influence on the larger national agendas of both countries is intentionally limited. And it is these larger national agendas that directly reinforce the racist framework of educational inequalities, built directly into the curricula, pedagogy, and woefully unequal distribution of resources. Resistance to such, it appears, reinforces the Western onslaught against indigenous African education, critical multiculturalism, and culturally responsive approaches that recognize the dramatic poverty and racism that stratify Egyptian and South African youth.

Implications for Practice

Interest convergence is deeply complicated, and as critical race theory suggests, directly maintains racism (Bell, 1980). Yet the narratives and experiences in this paper suggest the need to recognize barriers leaders face in implementing anti-racist leadership approaches. Indeed, we argue for three systemic orientations that support the continued development of educational leaders with a commitment and orientation to anti-racist leadership, needed in part to address the context which limits leadership that intentionally reflects critical multiculturalism.

The first orientation is a systemic commitment to foster localized education as the core of international and community development efforts. Rather than continue an outside-in model of development that privileges global education and leadership expertise that does not often translate into localized contexts, African educational systems can and should embrace a localized notion of education. The linking of education to the global system of aid furthers the interests of those providing the aid, indebting future generations of Africans into the intellectual and cultural arms of Western educational corporations and philanthropies. Though arguing about the global aid system, Dambisa Moyo's argument is directly relevant to African educational renewal:

Africa's development impasse demands a new level of consciousness, a greater degree of innovation, and a generous dose of honesty about what works and what does not as far as development is concerned. And one thing is for sure, depending on aid has not worked. (2009, p. 154)

The dependence on outside-in framed efforts has contributed to the continued implementation of Western-framed educational systems, despite centuries of the West's failure to provide equal, let alone socially just, culturally responsive education to people of African descent. Locally developed educational leadership, as a core of local development strategy, should reflect the experiences, cultural wealth, and democratic framing that Egypt and South Africa claim. Outside aid, as such, should support and foster leaders like Tshepiso and Mabizela, while nurturing those who offer resistance to oppressive systems.

Such a strategy would additionally require an educational transformation to reconsider the development of leaders, leading to our second orientation. The preparation of anti-racist, class conscious education and community leaders to promote radical change in the Egyptian and South African contexts is seen as a threat to the convergence of interests between Western philanthropies and the elite of both nations. However, through the development and establishment of leadership pipelines to support local, current and future leaders, there are opportunities to disrupt the status quo. Through dialogical engagement (Freire, 1993) amongst and between community and education leaders, opportunities to name and address the reproduction of oppressive class and race-based inequities can be initiated. This would require both the localization of education and the centering of local issues in supporting practicing leaders, while simultaneously familiarizing future leaders with theoretical and practical insights into the structural limitations and weaknesses of Western-based approaches to education reform. In preparing future leaders to draw upon the cultural wealth of their local communities to drive anti-racist, class-conscious education reform, as opposed to foreign interests, educational training programs must be developed with intentional commitments to critical multiculturalism at the leadership levels.

While financial resources are critical in establishing equitable, long-term efforts to prepare local leadership, the recognition, framing, and centering of community cultural wealth, grounded in historical and present-day traditions of resistance, are equally vital. Tapping into the cultural knowledge of elders and youth who have been engaged in the ongoing struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the revolution in Egypt is vital in re-situating education as a means-to-an-end and vehicle towards equity and justice. Situating critical local voices, experiential knowledge, and commitment to class-conscious, anti-racist leadership as a central component to leadership preparation could assist practicing and future leaders with the tools and support to stay within the profession.

In implementing critical multiculturalism at the systems level, a focus on locally responsive efforts and local leadership development must also recognize, and tap into, pan-African resistance to Western imperialism. In Egypt and South Africa, the preparation of school leaders is often something that takes place

outside of each nation, in the West, or locally, by foreign “experts,” through professional development, international Non-Governmental Organizations, or satellite campuses of Western philanthropic and educational institutions. The continued centering of Western-based models for leadership has not addressed class-based, and racial inequities in the West, and is not designed to do so in Egypt or South Africa. This is partially due to the reality that, in addition to Western funding creating programs to support educational systems (however problematically), Western learning opportunities are also valued over local university programs, further encouraging critical leaders to leave their local contexts, and potentially not return.

Still an underlying concern, beyond what has been referred to as the ‘Brain Drain,’ where developing expertise remains within the Western country that provides higher education access, is the notion that African leaders can learn localized solutions to global problems outside a context of pan-African expertise. Indeed, we echo arguments that have long been made about the need for experts in indigenous knowledges, those who position research within an indigenous, anti-oppressive context, and those who study and engage in African-centered education (Smith, 1999; Wa Thiong’o, 1986). We advocate for a third orientation that situates global expertise for creating and sustaining educational systems that teach the skills needed to navigate the West, and the creativity needed to envision a new world, along with the skills to foster such a transformation. Such a global orientation suggests reframing Western inputs, altering the scope of what is seen as knowledge, and transforming who leads such conversations. What we are suggesting, in short, is a third orientation that centers not only local, anti-racist leadership development, but fosters a Pan-African process of redefining the purpose of education, the notion of schools, and the way knowledge is conceived of, shared, and validated.

Tshepiso and Mabizela argued that their own intellectual development was based upon anti-racist discussions with teachers outside of schooling (since those were outlawed or simply not funded). Their development was nurtured at the hands of anti-racist community leaders, not teachers, school principals, or anything resembling formal schooling. It was not a formal curriculum that shaped their critical multicultural orientation, but the work of individual community educators. We are not suggesting that we discard the years of research on youth development and formal learning; instead, we suggest that a pan-African coalition of critical leaders committed to pan-African continent building is needed to reframe the entire purpose of education so that such research--and philanthropic interests--do not dictate the African education agenda.

Conclusion

We must acknowledge several shortcomings in our conceptual analysis. The first is that we report on two sets of experiences and studies, but these do not do justice to the depth and range of anti-racist leadership experiences within

both Egypt and South Africa. While there have been historical analyses of anti-racist, and more specifically anti-apartheid, leadership, we argue that more research is needed that documents contemporary resistance, particularly from Afrocentric perspectives in schooling. Further, this conceptual analysis did not engage in questions of implementation; how leaders implement their visions of anti-racism is key, yet in our experience, many educators frame their work as transformative. How schools actually provide a transformative foundation, how individual leaders conceptualize and integrate critical multiculturalism into their anti-racist leadership on a daily basis, and how educators can do either of these within Western-framed schools are more difficult to examine. Yet such analyses would benefit and inform discussions of transformative leadership within global contexts.

We began this paper with a discussion about hope for a more socially just world for the world's children. We end on the note that, in order to foster such hope, school principals should be better supported, nurtured, and developed in terms of their capacity to implement critical multiculturalism in schools, but also in terms of their professional treatment. This requires rethinking the way educational leaders are identified, nurtured, educated, and evaluated, moving away from Western frameworks from which to consider effectiveness. This also requires empowering a larger pan-African network of leadership to reconceptualize the very purpose of education and the role of educational leaders.

Notes

1. Common drug names (dagga = marijuana; mandrax = a pill)
2. Black Label is a brand of South African beer.

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