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The Discursive Utility of the Global, Local, and National:

Teach For All in Africa

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Abstract

Teach For All (TFAll) is a global network dedicated to cultivating its unique brand of fast-track teacher training and policy reform. Launched in 2007, TFAll programs now exist 60 countries – including Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda – and utilise particular discourses to recruit teachers, court donors, and support ongoing operations. Scant research has focused on TFAll programs in Africa or the spatialised discourses of the network itself, however. This study draws on critical and multimodal discourse analyses to explore the discursive utility and deployment of the 'global', 'local', and 'national' by TFAll and three of its African affiliate programs. Our findings suggest the 'global' is depicted as expansive, universal, and progressive; the 'local' is peripheral, authentic, and a site for humanitarian gaze; and the 'national', though often elided, is framed by patriotic yet apolitical discourses, when invoked at all. We posit that these spatialized discourses help legitimate the work of TFAll organizations.

Introduction

Teach For All (TFAll) is an umbrella organization that supports the development of programs around the world based largely on Teach For America's (TFA) synchronous-service teacher preparation model (Thomas and Lefebvre, 2020). Intended to be a "global network for expanding educational opportunity"[T1], TFAll was launched in 2007 by the founders of Teach For America and Teach First UK at a Clinton Global Initiative-sponsored event (Rauschenberger 2021).[1] Since then, it has promoted the development of 60 affiliate organizations across six continents. These selective, fast-track teacher training programs are intended to form "a locally-rooted, globally informed network"[T2] that develops "promising future leaders"[T2] by recruiting and placing primarily recent graduates from elite universities into under-resourced schools to teach for two years.

As the TFAll network has expanded – in terms of affiliates, financial capital, and global policy influence (see Adhikary and Lingard 2018; La Londe et al. 2015; Olmedo et al. 2013) – it has maintained that each partner organization is distinct, independent, and "locally led"[T3] with a high degree of autonomy. Indeed, TFAll affiliates have clear differences and should not be taken as monolithic (Lam 2020; Olmedo et al. 2013; Thomas, Rauschenberger, Crawford-Garrett 2021a). Yet, TFAll's claims may belie more complex dynamics muddied by the organization's rhetorical efforts to assert that its 'global' corporate- and foundation-sponsored model is first and foremost, a 'local' and 'grassroots' movement (see Friedrich 2014).

This paper aims to explore conceptualizations of the global, local, and national across discursive texts central to the success of TFAll organizations: websites. We employ critical and

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[1] Throughout this paper, superscripts are used to attribute quotes to unique webpages from the four organizations we analyzed, a list of which can be found in Table 1.

multimodal discourse analysis to analyze the websites of Lead For Ghana (LFG), Teach For Nigeria (TFN), Teach For Uganda (TFU), and Teach For All itself. Specifically, we engage with these program websites by understanding them as communicative events (Fairclough 2014) that offer key insights into the discursive and social practices shaping each affiliate and the parent TFAll network. Thus, this study seeks to explore when and in what ways these organizations invoke the 'global', 'local', and 'national' to garner support for their work.

Teach For America and Teach For All

TFA was conceptualized by Wendy Kopp in the late 1980s amidst a local U.S. context characterized by increasing anxiety surrounding educational quality and international competition. Apropos of the era (see Barnes et al. 2016) and based loosely on extant volunteer programs (e.g., Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America), TFA drew on discourses of human capital and globalized competition to frame a problem it positioned itself to solve. Specifically, through its "extraordinary" (M. 2010) recruits, TFA aims to redress long-standing educational inequities. It works to accomplish this first by recruiting, training, and placing America's 'best and brightest' as teachers – branded as corps members (CMs) – for two years in low-income, under-resourced communities. TFA (2020) then strives to position CMs as leaders "working with unwavering commitment from every sector of society to create a nation free from this injustice" (M. 2010). In sum, CMs and alumni are expected to advance the "movement" (M. 2010) even – and especially – if they leave the classroom.

Over time, TFA's increasing prominence and approach to education reform attracted the attention of like-minded social entrepreneurs. In the early 2000s, Brett Wigdortz, an American

entrepreneur working for McKinsey & Company[2], founded Teach First UK, which borrows

heavily from TFA's discourse and programmatic structure but differs somewhat in its

relationship to traditional teacher education institutions and regulations (Rauschenberger 2021).

In 2007, Wigdortz joined Kopp in co-founding Teach For All to support the proliferation of

similar programs around the world. TFAll's network has since expanded considerably, with

ongoing plans for growth. In some years, up to seven new affiliate programs were launched in

different countries, demonstrating a remarkable scaling of the organization and its influence.[3]

This robust trajectory is not without challenges, however. For instance, the first TFAll partner in

Africa – TEACH! South Africa – launched in 2009 but is now unaffiliated (Elliott 2021). Since

then, Teach For Ghana (subsequently re-branded as Lead For Ghana) launched in 2016, followed

closely by Teach For Nigeria and Teach For Uganda in 2017. More recent African programs

include Teach For Liberia, Morocco, and Tanzania in 2019; Teach For Kenya, Sierra Leone, and

Zimbabwe in 2020; and Teach For The Gambia, Senegal, and The Nation (South Africa) in

2021; with others in development. Within this growing constellation of programs, current

African affiliates have received scant scholarly attention. This paper therefore aims to make a

unique contribution by focusing on the longest established TFAll affiliates in Africa: Ghana,

Nigeria, and Uganda.

Discourses of TFA and TFAll

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[2] See Robertson (2012) and Olmedo et al. (2013) on the increasing influence of McKinsey and other organizations in the global governance of (sub)national educational systems.

[3] See Ahmann (2015) on the scaling of TFAll through storytelling and La Londe et al. (2015) on its expansion through policy networks, as well as Thomas, Crawford-Garrett, and Rauschenberger (2021) for a list of established TFAll affiliate programs and related research.

There is a robust and methodologically varied body of literature on TFA (Anderson 2020). Most relevant to this study, researchers have examined TFA's neoliberal ideological positioning (Osborn et al. 2015), discourse of relentless pursuit (Thomas and Lefebvre 2018), and teaching "scripts" (Matsui 2015), while others have explored TFA's expansion (La Londe et al. 2015). Of particular note, Barnes et al. (2016) used critical race theory to analyze Wendy Kopp's rhetoric, finding a co-optation of culture and culturally relevant pedagogy as well as evidence of "latent racial bias...represented by textual tendencies that either advantage a dominant, white group, or disadvantage non-white groups" (6).

Beyond U.S.-based TFA studies, researchers have used similar discursive methods to explore various TFAll programs and their participants. Oldham and Crawford-Garrett (2019) found that Teach First New Zealand associates/teachers drew on neoliberal discourses to describe both their work as teachers and the perceived means through which their students might move out of poverty. In other work, Southern (2018) examined media representations of TFAll teachers in Wales, and Gautreaux and Delgado (2016) used a similar approach across 12 countries, finding that these representations were "generally consistent and coherent", where the TFAll "teacher embodies and internalizes corporate managerial values that have come to typify what it means to be a good teacher" (17).

Research on TFAll affiliate programs has also previously involved analyses of websites. Ellis et al. (2016) conducted an analysis of websites to compare the rhetoric of "traveling educational reform" used by several TFAll programs and one associated but unaffiliated program, wherein their teachers were positioned as "teaching other people's children, elsewhere, for a while" (60). Elliott (2018) analyzed a range of sources (websites, videos, training resources), noting the prominence of eliteness, hero narratives, and social mobility within Teach

First UK organizational discourse. Finally, earlier comparative work by Blumenreich and Gupta (2015) used multimedia analysis to compare the websites of TFA and Teach For India to "identify similarities between the two programs" (88). Their findings highlighted common discursive emphases on private sector involvement, purported eliteness of recruits, leadership development, and an emphasis on the use of English, even in the Indian context. They noted, "judging from [Teach For India]'s own self-description, globalization looks very much like a replication of American models, and thus a neocolonial 'monoculture'" (95). In what follows, we build on this aspect of Blumenreich and Gupta's (2015) work to consider how particular concepts of the 'global', 'local', and 'national' are deployed to disseminate and legitimate TFAll's specific brand of interventions.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptualizing the global, local, and national is challenging, as understandings or interpretations of these descriptors vary considerably across time and space (Larson and Beech 2014). In particular, conceptualizations of globalization in Africa cannot be understood apart from its long colonial history: first in the seizure of land, enslavement of people, and subsequent formation of nation-states along European geopolitical lines; then in the ongoing colonization of the mind (Fanon 1952/2008; Mamdani 1996) and entanglement of so-called 'modernity' with the global colonial project (see Appadurai 1996; Escobar 2007). As scholars have outlined, colonial understandings of the 'local', and often the 'national', continue to be oriented vis-à-vis a self-positioned European universal – or 'global' – norm (Chakrabarty 2008). As Tsing (2005) writes, these universalisms "were deeply implicated in the establishment of European power. In the context of colonial expansion, universalism was the framework for a faith in the traveling power

of reason" (9). Integral to this process, discourses were often "abstracted from the historical experiences in the local contexts of which they were constructed", becoming "floating signifiers that [were] then relocalized and resignified as they enter[ed] specific places and different contexts of power relations" (Larson and Beech 2014, 200), often displacing other ways of being and knowing in the process.

Building on this historic hegemony, present patterns and conceptualizations of globalization have largely followed familiar lines (Tikly 2004). While globalization remains highly contested and variously defined, it is still commonly framed as an ahistorical and unmitigated force representing progress (Appadurai 1996; Rizvi and Lingard 2010), and likewise continues to entail a set of "unequal exchanges" (DeSousa Santos 2006, 396). This temporal parallel between configurations of power is important because just as discursive dimensions of racism and colonialism inscribe formerly colonized and colonizing countries into 'knowable' and 'controllable' categories through seemingly static concepts of 'West' and 'Orient' or 'North' and 'South', we contend that for TFAll and its affiliates, the 'global' and 'local' function not as descriptive geographical terms, but as a body of knowledge that produces an imagined 'modern' and 'backward' ('self' and 'Other') set of relationships (Said 1978; see also Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Tikly 2004). Moreover, these discursive productions have "real effects" that become both an "organizing factor in a system of global power relations *and* the organizing concept or term in a whole way of thinking and speaking" (Hall 1992, 278, emphasis in original).

As one relevant example, the 'globalization' of teacher education and the development of 'global' teaching discourses are shaped significantly by extant systems of global power relations through international agencies such as the World Bank and OECD (Tikly 2004). These agencies draw on enduring visions of 'universal' and 'modern' reforms, while also reinscribing certain

expectations, demands, and fiscal constraints (Mundy 2007; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Robertson 2012). These configurations of power are then legitimated by international reports and metrics, and reified through the production of expertise. As Paine and Zeichner (2012) suggest:

> …local and national policy makers now find it increasingly hard to ignore the experience and sometimes the advice of 'experts' from outside their country or…the frames, developed elsewhere, that shape how teaching or teacher education is organized, conducted, or assessed. (575)

As a relatively recent entrant into this discursive space, TFAll takes up this familiar conceptual frame – developed elsewhere (Adhikary and Lingard 2018; Blumenreich and Gupta 2015; Ellis et al. 2016) – to organize and conduct 'global' education reform. While TFAll affiliate programs differ in terms of their fit within national education systems, core (exogenous) programmatic elements remain consistent and conform systems to a macro (global) norm, while also influencing the subjectivities of staff and recruits on a micro level (Olmedo et al. 2013; Thomas, Crawford-Garrett, and Rauschenberger 2021). For example, affiliates often critique current state systems, while simultaneously forgoing structural interventions in favor of market-oriented reforms under the presumption that this will avoid what may be perceived as unproductive "friction" (see Tsing 2005). Friedrich (2014) contends TFAll:

> mobilizes the sensibilities embedded in the language of the grassroots movements by shifting the locus of change away from international financial entities and state-level policies and onto NGOs and individual leaders who understand themselves to be agents of change against a stagnant status quo. (307)

In this way affiliates paradoxically eschew 'global' and 'national' institutions while simultaneously leveraging their discursive power in a relocalized and resignified, seemingly

disguisable, TFAll form. Discourses of the global, local, and national therefore take on enhanced importance, as the broader TFAll network authorizes and disseminates particular education reform logics, recruits participants, mobilizes transnational capital, and, in some instances, seeks to change education from within (Appadurai 1996; Thomas, Rauschenberger, and Crawford-Garrett 2021b).

In sum, by engaging with the perceived distinctions between 'global', 'local', and 'national' we adopt a critical stance toward the "depoliticized celebration of increased global interconnection, which obscure[s] ongoing and even intensified modes of domination and dispossession" (Stein 2017, 31). To this end, we examine the websites of TFAll and three African affiliates to ask: In what ways does this (re)deployment of discourses reinforce extant configurations of the 'local', 'national', and 'global'; power relations; and (post)colonial logics therein? This question helps us grapple with the significant implications of TFAll for teaching, teacher education, and education policy. Moreover, the answers are especially salient in the African context where long histories of 'global' intervention have resulted in severe exacerbation of poverty and social disparity.

Research Methodology

Methodological Approach

Discourse analysis is based on the premise that power is at least partly derived from knowledge and that "relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault 2003, 93). Accordingly, this paper brings together elements from two strands of discourse analysis that take up this work: critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2003; 2014; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002) and multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA) (Kress and Van

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Leeuwen 2001). First, CDA encompasses a broad movement that views language as a shared social practice through which texts are produced and consumed to meaningfully constitute a particular social world (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Therein, ideas and values associated with dominant discourses appear as natural, inevitable 'truths', and language (re)produces relations of power by privileging certain "knowledge, beliefs, understanding, plans, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values", while disqualifying others (van Dijk 1993, 257). The analytic goal of CDA is therefore to uncover these 'hidden' discursive practices used to maintain the social order (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). In this paper, CDA allows us to examine the tacit meanings, values, and assumptions embedded in TFAll texts (i.e., webpages) as the network mobilizes particular understandings of the 'global', 'local', and 'national'.

While discourse traditionally focuses on language, visual images are likewise relevant. As a second methodological approach, MMDA (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) explicitly accounts for 'language' as only one partial resource used for meaning-making. A distinguishing feature of this study is our inclusion of the semiotic work performed by an ensemble of modes, including images, music, color, composition, font, layout, etc., to show how discursive choices contribute to the construction of a cohesive organizational logic, while drawing on particular (familiar) ideologies and distributions of global power relations. Representing multimodal websites in print articles is inherently challenging, but we nonetheless analyze and describe examples of multiple semiotic modes. While we were unable to publish pictures from the websites, we encourage readers to access the links provided in Table 1.

Methodological Process

Bringing together elements of CDA and MMDA, we explore how linguistic and visual semiotics contribute to the (re)constitution of various social identities and relationships

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(Fairclough 2014; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) through an analysis of the websites of TFAll

and three of its African affiliates. A summary of the sites we analyzed is shown in Table 1.[4]

Table 1. *Organizational webpages analyzed*

Organization	Webpages Analyzed	URL *(accessed 3/7/21)*	Citation
Teach For All	Homepage	www.teachforall.org	T1
	What We Do	https://teachforall.org/what-we-do	T2
	Network Partners	https://teachforall.org/network-partners	T3
	About	https://teachforall.org/about	T4
	News and Stories	https://teachforall.org/news-stories	T5
	Get Involved		
	Teach in Your Country	https://teachforall.org/teach-your-country	T6a
	Launch a Network Partner	https://teachforall.org/launch-network-partner	T6b
	Join Our Staff	https://teachforall.org/join-our-staff	T6c
	Donate	https://teachforall.org/donate	T6d
	Our People	https://teachforall.org/our-people	T7
Lead For Ghana	Homepage	https://leadforghana.net/	G1
	Who We Are	https://leadforghana.net/tfg-at-a-glance	G2
	Our Vision	https://leadforghana.net/our-vision-1	G2a
	Core Beliefs	https://leadforghana.net/core-beliefs	G2b
	Leadership	https://leadforghana.net/leadership	G2c
	People and Culture	https://leadforghana.net/people-and-culture	G2d
	Diversity and Inclusion	https://leadforghana.net/diversity-and-inclusion	G2e
	What We Do	https://leadforghana.net/overview-1	G3
	Recruitment	https://leadforghana.net/recruitment	G3a
	Leadership Development	https://leadforghana.net/leadership-development	G3b
	Network Development	https://leadforghana.net/networkdevelopment	G3c
	Research and Innovation	https://leadforghana.net/research	G3d
	Join The Movement / Join The Fellowship	https://leadforghana.net/join-the-fellowship	G4

[4]Data gathering and analysis for this paper occurred from 2017-2020. After an initial round of data collection in 2017, updated data were collected primarily in March 2020, though in a few instances we reference older iterations due to their relevance. When these older data are included, we note the year; otherwise, all examples were current as of March 2020.

	Join The Team	https://leadforghana.net/join-the-team	G4a
	Join The Supporters	https://leadforghana.net/become-a-sponsor	G4b
	Contact Us	https://leadforghana.net/contact-us-1	G5
	Donate*	https://leadforghana.net/donate	G6
Teach For Nigeria	Homepage	www.teachfornigeria.org	N1
	About Us	https://teachfornigeria.org/about-us/	N2
	The Crisis	https://teachfornigeria.org/the-crisis/	N3
	Fellowship	https://teachfornigeria.org/fellowship/	N4
	Contact	https://teachfornigeria.org/contact/	N5
	News	https://teachfornigeria.org/news/	N6
	Become A Fellow*	https://teachfornigeria.org/apply/	N7
	FAQ	https://teachfornigeria.org/faq/	N7a
	Donate*	https://teachfornigeria.org/donate/	N8
Teach For Uganda	Homepage	www.teachforuganda.org	U1
	Who We Are	https://teachforuganda.org/who-we-are/	U2
	What We Do	https://teachforuganda.org/what-we-do/	U3
	Get Involved	https://teachforuganda.org/get-involved/	U4
	Blog	https://teachforuganda.medium.com/	U5
	Contact Us	https://teachforuganda.org/contact-us/	U6
	Donate*	https://www.omprakash.org	U7
	Apply*	https://applications.teachforuganda.org/login	U8

*These page titles are highlighted using on-brand-colored backgrounds and stand apart from other links in the header row, drawing one's eye from the TFAll-like logos on the left to "Donate", "Apply", or "Become A Fellow" on the right.

We draw on Fairclough's three-dimensional model – as well as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) – to (1) examine common linguistic and design features (textual and multimodal analysis); (2) analyze the production, consumption, and circulation of these multimodal texts (discursive practice); and (3) explore broader consequences of these programs' discursive practices (social practice).

Textual and Multimodal Analysis

In their analysis of policy texts, Vavrus and Seghers (2010) argue that the comparative education field has underutilized textual (and we argue multimodal) analysis to examine how *internal* textual relations and design features shape and reflect specific constructions of power and knowledge. We therefore focus careful attention on this first level of analysis as texts are crucial to networking relations across different scales of educational reform, enhancing the "capacity for 'action at a distance'" in the context of "contemporary 'globalization'" (Fairclough 2003, 31). We organized texts and images from these four websites into a spreadsheet, and recorded specific references to or conceptualizations of 'local', 'global', and 'national'. We then analyzed these texts, focusing on several key features from Fairclough (2003), including intertextuality; semantic, grammatical, and lexical relations; strategies of legitimation; modality; indentificational meanings; logical implications; and metaphors. We similarly analyzed multimodal sources in different genres (e.g., images, recruitment videos, donation campaigns etc.) to examine how branding, color, and composition are employed to sustain institutional structures or regulate social practices (Fairclough 2003) including fundraising, recruitment, marketing, and soliciting support for TFAll's model. Our aim here is not to provide an exhaustive account of each website; rather, we focus on illustrative examples to demonstrate how relations within texts reinforce authoritative representations of a particular vision of education reform and the social relations implicit within it.

Discursive Practice

The second level of Fairclough's (2003) model examines discursive practice, which refers to the production, circulation, and consumption or interpretation of texts. This aspect of the paper – like CDA more broadly (see Jørgensen and Phillips 2002) – is somewhat limited because of our exclusive focus on websites. However, our focus on websites is also intentional,

as they are arguably one of the most important genres through which these alternative teacher training programs communicate their missions, recruit teachers, accept applications, and raise financial support. As Ellis et al. (2016) have argued, "great deliberation and great expenditure goes into [these websites'] construction" and they are "indicative of perspectives, assumptions and policy intentions of a highly influential umbrella organization...prime channels for the rhetoric that underpins these specific policy moves in teacher education and training" (64). Where possible, we therefore incorporate insights about the production of these websites (discursive practice) that illuminate relations between text and social practice.

Social Practice

The final dimension of Fairclough's (2003) model considers the "power/knowledge relations in society that are 'external' to the text but are reflected in it and reinforced by it" (Vavrus and Seghers 2010, 81). Focusing on the consequences of discursive relations – including socioeconomic and cultural relations, and conditions and structures – points to the importance of situating multimodal websites within broader social practice, though how discourse is situated "cannot be answered by discourse analysis, as Fairclough defines it" (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 86). Still, we draw in this case on extant research on TFAll and critical globalization and postcolonial theories to shed light on social practices engendered by TFAll's global network. Accordingly, we seek to explicate not only TFAll's entry into the global educational reform landscape, but also its positioning within well-trodden terrain.

Findings

In this section, we explore how the categories of 'global' and 'local' – both of which largely elide the 'national' – function as semiotic apparatuses within a discursive space created and maintained by TFAll and its affiliates.

Discourses of the 'Global'

'Global' as Expansionist

TFAll materials often emphasize its global reach and expansionist ambitions. On its home page, for instance, an interactive map serves as a pictorial metaphor: 60 orange dots sprawl across the world, continents and countries marked in grey against sky blue oceans.[5] Each dot represents an affiliate program. Hover over a dot, and the name and logo of an affiliate is revealed. Just above the map, "We are a Global Network" is written in bold, white letters backdropped by the same sky blue. Underneath is written: "Teach For All is a growing network of 60 independent partner organizations and a global organization that works to accelerate the network's progress…"[T1] The image of this seamless, expanding global network emphasizes TFAll's growing geographical presence and concurrently may reflect a conceptualization of globalization as "an inevitable leap into friction-free flows of commodities, capital, corporations, communication, and consumers all over the world" (Luke and Tuathail 1998, 76). Elsewhere, TFAll discourse similarly intimates that its 'global' network and transferrable model exists in a neutral space wherein affiliate "teachers and alumni can share ideas and innovations"[T1] through equal and mutual exchanges "across borders"[T6a]. Yet simultaneously, TFAll – managed by a

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[5] The TFA website once displayed its sites similarly: as spanning a decontextualized, grey U.S. map.

largely American/European/corporate board – asserts that it maintains an "influential voice in the global discussion"[T4]

TFAll's conceptualization of the 'global' in terms of expansion can also be seen in lexical relations in the text; vocabulary like "grow"[T1], "scale"[T2], "progress"[T1,T4], "accelerate"[T1,T2] and "expand"[T6a,T6c] feature consistently, co-occurring with ideas about the geographical extension of their partner network *and* their increasing influence on 'global' policy. Indeed, TFAll's discursive practice is imbued with a spatial and temporal teleology of growth and acceleration, values deeply ingrained in capitalist modernity (Luke and Tuathail 1998). Indicative of this expansionist orientation, TFAll not only maintains a designated "scale team"[T7], but since at least 2010 has purchased the rights to websites featuring variations of the 'Teach For…' moniker. For example, TFAll owns www.teachformalawai.com, www.teachformalawi.net, and www.teachformalawi.org, though Teach For Malawi does not yet exist. Even variants of URLs for a hypothetical 'Teach For Tuvalu' (an Oceanic nation with fewer than 12,000 people) have been claimed, suggesting no location is beyond TFAll's reach. Consequently, TFAll's texts and discursive practice operate in conjunction to project an expected future, while euphemizing frictional encounters (Tsing 2005) and inequitable dynamics in the broader shaping of educational priorities.

'Global' as Universal

TFAll partners also work from a set of "Unifying Principles"[T3], reflecting their common goal of recruiting high-achieving college graduates and placing them in under-resourced schools as a means to "cultivate lifelong leadership"[T3]. Indeed, TFAll explicitly seeks to "pursue *our* global network's shared purpose and theory of change rooted in *our* theory of the problem, live into *our* core values when working across the network, and contribute to *our* unifying vision and

intended outcomes"[T3] [emphasis added]. Here the identificational use of the pronoun "our" reveals TFAll's discursive construction of its 'locally-rooted' affiliates as homogenous entities under TFAll, while the definite article "the" relies on an *a priori* presumption of a universal "problem", reflected in words like "global", "shared", and "unifying". TFAll discourse represents its work as signifying a universal vision and better future while affiliates (referred to as working in "disadvantaged communities"[T4]) are situated as 'local' subordinates to the organization's "intended outcomes"[T4]. TFAll presents itself as both a central hub *and* a dispersed, grassroots movement, (re)making connections within its expanding network and allowing its discourses to exert disproportionate influence on national education systems, based on a purportedly universal approach.

A striking set of graphics on TFAll's 'What We Do' page explicates these assumptions. Entitled "A Locally-Rooted, Globally Informed Network"[T2] (with 'Locally' and 'Globally' highlighted in the same light blue font, marking their affinity) the image shows an equation. In it, the first addend depicts scattered, similarly-sized puzzle pieces representing unidentifiable countries, below which is the label: "strong, independent organizations innovating in diverse contexts"[T2]. An orange plus sign connects this graphic to an empty blue globe labelled: "a global organization sharing solutions to accelerate impact"[T2]. Here, the 'global' organization TFAll is visualized as acting upon a blank space. An orange equal sign indicates the sum of these efforts – a "thriving network ensuring all children fulfill their potential" – and the same puzzle pieces are now aligned on the globe; orange lines radiate outward, evoking success. The semiotic work performed by textual and visual signs of this 'universal formula' (re)produces a common sense about the 'global' as a neutral or blank canvas, homogenizing the world and ignoring existing, heterogenous educational landscapes. TFAll reimagines the space in which it works as easily

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(re)shaped to fit its agenda, rather than as comprised of socially- and historically-constituted places wrought by the complexities and consequences of colonization and globalization.

'Global' as Opportunity and Progress

Across the three African program affiliates reviewed, the 'global' also evokes the promise of international mobility for recruits, as well as expanded opportunity for the students they teach, paid for by the generosity of donors who have taken up the social practice of "invest[ing]" [G2d,N8] in a "proven"[N2] model. Moreover, this particular 'globalism' is frequently associated with favored, market-oriented qualities such as leadership, innovation, and progress. As an example, discourses circulating in the materials of LFG, TFN, and TFU express affinity with the 'global' as intrinsically valuable, drawing on it to establish further legitimacy. Their websites often appeal to an imagined reader, recruit, or donor who is globally-minded, results-oriented, and amenable to a shared cause. The TFN website in particular, recruits fellows by touting TFAll's global success and drawing on modalities of 'truth':

> The Teach For Nigeria model is based on the *proven* success of 40 country organizations including Teach For America, Teach First UK, Teach For Ghana, Teach For Bangladesh, Teach For Nepal and Teach For India, who are all part of the Teach For All network[N2] [emphasis added].

Through a process of 'nominalization' (grammatical metaphor) inanimate nouns such as 'model' and 'network' act as agents of progress and opportunity, while also eliding people (in positions of concentrated wealth and power) who initiate (messy, hegemonic) processes that act upon and make decisions for others. Elsewhere TFN advertises to potential applicants the "opportunity to be part of a global network of change agents from across 52 countries"[N7a]. TFU's website similarly uses language referring to progress and opportunity alongside "global", "spanning",

"countries and continents", etc.: "*cutting-edge* global training in leadership and innovative teaching methods, *networking opportunities* to learn from a global Teach For All network fellows, alumni and leaders spanning over 40 countries and 6 *continents*…"[U5] [emphasis in original]. Throughout the websites, it is the idea of 'global' itself – global aspirations, global networks, global opportunities – that promises opportunity and mobility. Concurrently, *access* to the 'global' is portrayed as exclusive and all three affiliates repeatedly emphasize the selectivity of their training, open only to the "most promising"[N1,U3] recruits in whom organizations will "invest" to "generate long-term value"[G2d] (see also Blumenreich and Gupta 2015; Elliott 2018).

Discourses of the 'Local'

'Local' as Marginal and Peripheral

While TFAll describes the communities where they work as valued "assets"[T4], discourses of the 'local' consistently appear as supplementary and peripheral to its 'global' intervention through affiliate organizations. For instance, TFAll contends:

> We value the enormous assets in the communities where we work, immerse ourselves in local perspectives, needs and opportunities, and work in deep partnership with students, families, educators, and community members – all while also seeking to build our understanding of what is possible based on insights from outside of our communities and countries.[T4]

Looking closely at the grammatical construction of the sentence above, we see that TFAll values the 'local' (in the main clause). However, this 'value' is subordinate to the TFAll network; interventions primarily draw legitimacy from the 'global', rather than from other non-global and/or national models of reform. What is "possible" comes not from local stakeholders but

"from outside of our communities and countries", reaffirming the 'global' as a symbol of progress and possibility.

Indeed, while 'local' rootedness features prominently on TFAll's website, it is noteworthy that affiliate programs offer scant details about the complexities of the locations where they work. Instead, statistics and generalized facts about schools, teachers, and the under-achievement of students commonly stand in their place. Across all three TFAll affiliate websites, almost all references to the 'local' co-occur with marginalizing language, as shown below (see Table 2):

Table 2. *Language Used to Describe the 'Local'**

Lead For Ghana	Teach For Nigeria	Teach For Uganda
21.1% are not learning reading[G1]	60%...are not learning[N3]	not prepare[U3]
43.1% are not learning Maths[G1]	many can not even read and write[N3]	6.5 out of 10…cannot read and understand[U3] 5 out of 10…cannot pass[U3]
Only 16% graduate[G1]		
challenging environments[G2]	overwhelming challenges facing local students and families[N6]	
	quality of teaching and learning is so poor[N3]	low quality or no education[U3]
	under-nourished given the extreme poverty[N6]	two million…live in poverty[U1]
	broken education system[N3]	receive low quality or no education[U3] most do not have access[U1] poor access[U3]

*Examples have been arranged to highlight themes across the three affiliate organizations, as well as within the websites themselves.

Exceptions to this pattern generally occur when students are described in terms of what they will gain from TF-affiliate interventions – "participants (fellows) significantly improve the achievements and aspirations of their students"[U3] – and are often in the future tense:

> Our children *will strive* for academic excellence, with the ability to think critically about the world around them…They *will have* control over their financial lives, determine their career choices, and develop a plan to execute their aspirations…Our children *will demonstrate* a strong level of optimism about their life outcomes.[G2a] [emphasis added]

It is in relation to the deficient, extant 'local' that these programs seem to position themselves as uniquely positive and transformative forces, embedded 'locally' while bringing with them "insights"[T4] from elsewhere. Words and phrases that describe or reference the work of TF-fellows and affiliates are included in Table 3.

TFAll discourse therefore appears to participate in prevailing colonial logics that cast the provincial 'local' is a site of difference and inferiority, while asserting itself as a 'savior' (see Adhikary and Lingard 2018; Crawford-Garrett and Thomas, 2018). These examples also suggest a particular kind of development – situated in broader market-oriented global reforms that emphasize "leaders"[N2,U3,G3c] who will pursue "innovative approach[es]"[U3] – aimed at remaking educational systems along a 'global' TFAll model akin to the original, U.S.-based TFA. Given the complex histories of these countries and Africa as a whole, as well as the "continuing hegemony of western forms of knowledge/power" and "the interests of postcolonial elites" (Crossley and Tikly 2004, 149-50), it is unsettling that efforts aimed, ostensibly, at transforming colonial education legacies may reproduce much older hegemonic patterns.

Table 3. *Language Used to Describe the TFAll Affiliates*

Lead For Ghana	Teach For Nigeria	Teach For Uganda
changing the educational trajectory[G3a]	transform the educational trajectory[N4]	transform their classrooms[U3]
successfully overcome challenges[G3a]	committed to challenging[N3] progressing with such optimism[N6] spirit of joy and optimism[N7a]	
diverse backgrounds and perspectives to spark innovation[G2e]	backgrounds outside of Education[N7a] no prior teaching experience[N7a]	
best and brightest[G2]		top and most promising university graduates[U3] culture of high academic achievement[U3]
determination and dedication[G2d] willing to work[G4] hard work and passion[G4a]		perseverance and resilience[U4]
innovative and ever-evolving[G4a] accountability and flexibility[G4a] original, fundamental insights[G3d] inspiration, skills and understanding[G3c]		innovative approach[U3]
	most promising future leaders[N2] leader and a change agent[N6] leadership and entrepreneurial skills[N7a]	movement of leaders[U3] lifelong leaders[U3]
	set targets and work towards ambitious goals[N4]	high expectations[U3] interrupting the cycle of poverty[U3] improve the achievements and aspirations[U3]
	proven success[N2] formidable network[N3]	
		deeply rooted in the communities[U3]
		willingness to care for and protect[U4]

'Local' as 'Authentic'

While TFAll and its affiliates ascribe their validity primarily to the 'global', the most common exception to the appearance of the 'local' as a site of 'lack' is when it functions as a proxy for 'authenticity', thereby legitimating the 'grassroots' affiliate. For example, all three

websites highlight the names of board members and/or local leadership, though how these are presented varies, some replicating global-local hierarchies visible elsewhere. For instance, TFU prominently displays two board members – Elisabeth Mason and Barbara Bush – with headshots much larger than the board members below; the actual TFU operations team is included even further down.[U2] Elsewhere, on a recent (now revised) version of the LFG website, a biography of the CEO, Daniel Dotse, foregrounded his global credentials – "Before he co-founded LFG, Daniel worked at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. in New York...studied biomedical engineering at Cornell University" – and then claimed authenticity through his 'local' childhood experience: "Daniel started primary school in the Northern part of Ghana…He recalls his third-grade class experience, where 80 students crammed in one classroom with no chairs, exercise books, or teaching aids. Worse, the class teacher rarely showed up"[G2c]. In both examples, we see the use of authorization by global affiliation, co-occurring with legitimation by local affiliation. Together, these internal textual relations construct knowledge about the 'local' identities of these programs, which cohere to reinforce TFAll's authority, while also maintaining that affiliates are 'authentic' interventions.

'Local' as a Site for the Humanitarian Gaze

Finally, a subtle but striking feature of TFAll discourse is how it positions the 'local' as a site of humanitarian consumption, and by extension a beneficiary of 'globally-minded' actors. In particular, the imagery of the TFAll websites references familiar constructions of the 'other' in international development discourses (Naylor 2011). For instance, TFN's homepage[N1] features a rotating panel of images with superimposed text that issues a call to readers that includes: "Are you Ready for a Challenge?" "Jide accepted the challenge to teach for Nigeria." "Let's end educational inequity." Each text is backgrounded by familiar images of children, including

young, smiling school students looking directly at the camera. The call is likewise connected

(literally) to action: embedded under Jide's acceptance is a link to "Apply", and under the last

statement about ending inequity is a link to "Give Monthly". In this way, the multimodal

representation of TFN's work draws on what is "unsaid" (Fairclough 2003): widely circulated

images from development discourse wherein children often "stand-in for an entire population" as

"singular, abstracted subject[s]" (Naylor 2011, 185) that need to be 'saved'. In TFN's imagery

and discourse – and elsewhere across the four organizations under study – the 'local' is

positioned as a site for intervention and local schoolchildren become sympathetic representations

of the presumably neglected educational challenges of a particular country, now to be taken on

and 'solved' by TFAll's supposedly globally-successful model. The allure of the photographs

thus performs a particular function in appealing to a viewer's empathy, which is then coupled

with requests for individual participation in a specific kind of 'global' humanitarian intervention.

Discourses of the 'National'

'National' as an Opportunity for 'Nation-Building'

When the 'national' appears, discursive representations often flatten nation-states into

homogenous sites upon which TFAll and its affiliates can work. For instance, across the affiliate

websites, each organization brands its work as a unifying, nation-wide effort, using colors

reminiscent of their respective national flags: TFN's website draws heavily on green and white;

TFU has made frequent use of red, black, and yellow[6]; and the LFG logo is comprised of three

rounded triangles, each a color of Ghana's flag. This echoes the branding of TFA, which uses red

and navy extensively, invoking U.S. patriotism. To our knowledge, these three African

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[6] TFU changed its logo in between data analysis and publication of this paper.

organizations also maintain websites only in English, which is consistent with these countries' national languages,[7] but also ignores more complicated ethno-linguistic histories rooted in colonial pasts.

Relatedly, LFG, TFN, and TFU describe their missions similarly, employing a high degree of intertextuality and interdiscursivity as they borrow significantly from Kopp's (2001) original mantra, "One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education" (165):

> "One day all children in Ghana will have access to an excellent education"[G2a]
>
> "One day, every Nigerian child will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education"[N1]
>
> "…every child in Uganda, regardless of their socio-economic background, deserves an opportunity of an excellent education"[U3]

With references to "all [the nation's] children" accessing or attaining an "excellent education" – a mission notably broad and meritocratic in its conceptualization (Crawford-Garrett et al. 2021) – these organizations again suggest their efforts are a form of nation-building, borne out of a concern for all Ghanaians, Nigerians, or Ugandans. LFG ambitiously claims: "We are writing the future of this nation"[G4a], reinforcing a sense of patriotic belonging or national unity with this semantic assertion. At the same time, country names are often re-contextualized and deployed to highlight state failure and state-sanctioned inequities, positioning TF-affiliates as both a remedy and potential replacement.

'National' as an Apolitical Site of 'Challenge'

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[7] As a perplexing counterexample, Teach For Senegal's website existed only in English until only recently, even though French is the official language and there are six additional (non-English) 'local' national languages.

As 'national' organizations, LFG, TFN, and TFU suggest that they are responding to state-created educational inequities, using similar statistical evidence, including:

"91% of children in Ghana enroll in primary school".... "Only 16% graduate with a university degree"[G1]

"In Nigeria, 10.5 million children are out of school"[N3]

"70% of children who enroll in primary school drop out before primary school completion"[U1]

This focus on state failures is made more explicit elsewhere. TFN contends, "…the Nigerian education system reflects a broken education system that makes it difficult for Nigerian children to receive an excellent education, consequently making it impossible for them to fully realize their potential"[N3]. It elsewhere claims that while there is "no single solution"[N3], TFN intends to "build a formidable network of determined leaders"[N3], setting up cause-effect semantic relations wherein the cause of potential change is the TF-affiliate and the effect is a more positive future. In Uganda, TFU argues that the root causes of the country's challenges are: (1) a lack of "change agents"[U3], (2) current curriculum and pedagogy, (3) low state spending on education, and (4) poor access for particular populations. Thus, both organizations use cause-effect semantic relationships to acknowledge the complexity of the problem of educational inequity, while framing their model as the relatively straightforward solution (see Bacchi 2012). They do not address (at least in their discursive practice here) approaches to social action and political participation that might be comprehensive enough to tackle systemic challenges. Indeed, none of

the three affiliates even serve their entire nations. TFN, for example, places 'fellows' in only three of Nigeria's thirty-six states, and TFU fellows only work in 25 schools in two regions.

Ultimately, what is curious about these dual discourses of the unified nation and the failing state is that LFG, TFN, and TFU critique "broken"[N3] *systems* for the inequities they perpetuate – due to lack of funding and poor educational practice, among other things – while also seemingly eschewing opportunities for systemic-focused change, instead relying on building a "formidable"[N3] network of alumni leaders. In other words, the theory of change they propose concentrates power and influence within their own network rather than promoting more democratic approaches: "the solutions to educational inequities around the world will come from individual champions of educational equity who largely come from outside the current governments and school systems" (Thomas, Rauschenberger, and Crawford-Garrett 2021, 270). Described in this way, TFAll seems to intend to be, as Ahmann (2015) analyzed, "a global movement comprised of national organizations that are not nationalized" (3).

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings highlight the complex ways in which 'global', 'local', and 'national' imaginaries are cultivated and invoked. Here 'global' is not simply a geographic descriptor, but instead stands in for a more elusive and presumed universal – globally 'desirable' – set of practices that reflect an expansionist movement wherein progress is advanced through seemingly 'frictionless' global flows and interconnections (Appadurai 1996; Tsing 2005). It is the 'global network' (core) that offers opportunities for "broken"[N3], "low quality"[U3] national systems of education (periphery) to improve their futures vis-à-vis TFAll's 'local' partners. In turn, affiliate

programs (re)construct the 'global' in such a way as to grant them legitimacy and reinforce their superiority to the provincial 'local'.

Depicting TFAll as 'global' also elides TFAll's own 'local'. TFAll would not exist without its origins in TFA, nor the UK's Teach First program, yet the close reproduction of these programs is often obfuscated. Indeed, TFAll discourse seems to ignore the fact that "there are no global conditions for which we cannot find local roots" (de Sousa Santos 2006, 396), and that these local roots have faced sustained criticism in recent years (see Anderson 2020; La Londe et al. 2015; Matsui 2015; Rauschenberger 2021). Instead, a "proven"[N2] model refrain is championed loudly within the network (La Londe et al. 2015). Additional inquiry into TFAll's underlying history, logic, and *modus operandi* could be immensely productive to disrupt claims of its neutrality and universality; it would seem that greater attention to provincializing (Chakrabarty 2008) TFAll is necessary.

These discourses, outlined above, further serve to occlude TFAll's traveling model, which touches down in already inhabited educational territories (Adhikary and Lingard 2018). In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, this includes a legacy of colonially-rooted systems of schooling, as well as an ongoing influence disproportionately exercised by former and neo-colonial powers (see Tikly 2004). Certainly, the neo-colonial overtones of TFAll's formulaic equation (the global) that orchestrates and (re)orders puzzle pieces (different *countries*) to remake the world into its 'network' are deeply disconcerting. In this way, TFAll's website suggests a certain degree of cognitive dissonance between a desire to foment authentic, local, social entrepreneurship, and an attempt to spread a distinctly neoliberal, global model of supposedly independent educational reform. As Ahmann (2015) argues, TFAll's model seemingly seeks to

"predict local conditions from a universal model" (6) and to "defy the contingencies of place" (4).

Yet place factors into the organizations' national orientations. As noted above, notions of 'nation-building' – of a specific variety – ring loudly. This nationally-oriented development discourse interpellates high-achieving, "best & brightest"[G2] recruits to serve their countries, while offering access to both global and local networks (i.e., "a movement"[G4]) of "outstanding leaders"[G4]. However, these affiliate organizations are not national in scope, as might be implied by their names. (How and to what extent various affiliates do work with local or national governments is certainly itself an important area of study.) Even beyond these three, relatively new, TFAll affiliates under study in Africa, the nation-wide nature of TFAll programs is routinely invoked, and likely meant to enhance their socio-political legitimacy and influence. It seems TFAll's discursive reach exceeds its own capacity, all the while affording it an "influential voice"[T4] in shaping global educational governance.

Beyond their limited (national/global) presence, TFAll and affiliate organizations produce particular epistemologies that define a problem and subsequently offer their goals and practices as ideally situated to address it (Bacchi 2012). As such, their websites are important forms of discursive and cultural production that seek to define educational reform agendas on their own terms. The complementary discourses of government failure and neoliberalism, global competition and global governance, and inequitable stagnation and entrepreneurial innovation, cultivate a fertile field within which TFAll can operate. What is arguably problematic about the dissonant messaging of 'local' intervention within a 'global' model, however, is that it perpetuates the same uneven relationship of policy borrowing, predicated on global North intervention in African contexts (Tikly 2004). Without careful attention to discourse (Vavrus and

Seghers 2010) and its material effects, the (re)construction and perpetuation of these relationships might otherwise go unnoticed.

Finally, in addition to the discursive utility of the global, local, and national in facilitating TFAll's interventions, these discourses have important implications for social practice. In the U.S., TFA has advocated loudly for its interests (Baxendale 2020), lobbying to effect policy change largely congruous with neoliberalism, such as deregulation of teacher education and licensure, and increased support for charter schools (Kretchmar et al. 2018; Rauschenberger 2021). Moreover, Trujillo et al.'s (2017) research suggests many TFA alumni "attribute the roots of educational inequality to perceived managerial shortcomings of the public school system" and "embrace largely managerial, technocratic responses to inequality" (353). To assume that alumni of these three programs in Africa would maintain similar perceptions would be unfair (see Lam 2020; Straubhaar 2020); yet, given that several TFAll organizations have aimed to influence, alter, or circumvent government systems along similar lines (see Adhikary and Lingard 2018; Friedrich 2014; Olmedo et al. 2013), it would not be surprising to see parallel movements in these contexts.

In sum, the future is unwritten as to how the discourses of TFAll and its affiliate organizations enable or constrain various actors in effecting educational change. Yet this and other research suggests the need for more critical attention to TFAll's approach to educational reform, especially as they enter broader, global conversations wherein particular invocations of the 'global', 'local', and 'national' harken back to a much longer and fraught interventional history. We ardently support further research on these models in African contexts and beyond, seeking a more nuanced understanding of their impact.

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