African Leadership Models in Education:
Leading Institutions through Ubuntu

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ABSTRACT The present paper explores leadership aspects imbued by African way of life. Unravelling what literature reflects, the paper also reveals how the Western models can glean from the African models and vice versa. Whilst the author focuses on school leadership, the applications can be utilised in various organisations. It shows how leadership needs to focus on people rather than processes only. *Ubuntu* as a form of African culture is examined as to how it can be applied to leadership practices. The paper explores the cultural aspects such as values, beliefs and norms of the African life. Finally, it argues that at times the African models might not be perceived as unique because some of its values are universal.

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership in Africa and the world is beginning to be put under focus as managers and leaders want to ensure success of their institutions. Lin and Chuang (2014) believed that the correct leadership styles will have positive effects on the learning motivation of pupils. Recent researches also exhibit that teachers perceive that principals need to demonstrate more transformational leadership style as the success of the school depends on the quality of leadership (Lin and Chuang 2014). Further, Fitriati et al. (2014) declare that principals must instil certain crucial values in guiding their schools. These authors point out that these values may lead to school success. Appreciative leadership, moral leadership, democratic leadership, servant leadership, social justice leadership are some of the kinds of leadership used in the preparation of today's leaders. In his writings about school leadership, Bush (2007) also contends that there is a great interest in educational leadership today because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership produces a significant difference to school and pupil outcomes. The call for mentoring of school managers comes at a time when organisations such as schools are emphasising quality for the attainment of effective teaching and learning. It is a critical commonplace that the 21st century, school principals are always confronted by moral and ethical dilemmas. Arguably, morality and values should be the core of education in general. Sobol (2002)

contends that troubled and dysfunctional schools where justice and equity are absent are precisely the places in which ethical thought and action are needed. In addition, the school leaders and managers today require certain qualities to survive the challenging demands of their positions. Ramsey (1999) points out that most school administrators are stuck and that they are usually limited to function strictly as managers. Ramsey also believed that managers do monitor and that being a manager is hard work and not much fun. However, leaders energise and excite the organisation and the people in it by showing what it can become. Several authors have observed the best leadership practices and have discovered that today's educational institutions require shared leadership and shared decision making at all times (Kotter 1996; Pretorius 1998; Singh and Manser 2000). However, employees cannot share decisions or visions in institutions unless there is high morale in the work place. Ramsey (1999) perceives employees' morale as one of the cornerstones of productivity and contends that while some managers might care less about morale, effective leaders surely will. Good morale results in a strong sense of common purpose, mutual support and unified effort. There are also various cultural models that acknowledge the importance of morale.

Cultural models in organisations have become crucial as organisations begin to emphasise the informal aspects. Bush (2003) asserts that cultural models focus on values, beliefs and

norms of individuals in the organisation and "how these individual perceptions coalesce into shared organisational meanings. Cultural models are manifested by symbols and rituals rather than through the formal structure of the organisation." Further, Bush (2003:156) postulates:

"The increasing interest in culture as one element in school and college management may be understood as another example of dissatisfaction with the limitations of the formal models. Their emphasis on the technical aspects of institutions appears to be inadequate for schools and colleges aspiring to excellence. The stress on the intangible world of values and attitudes is a useful counter to these bureaucratic assumptions and helps to produce a more balanced portrait of educational institutions."

Objectives of the Study

The present paper encompasses research that focuses on the potential of African leadership models. The following are the objectives that illustrate that the paper sought to:

- Explore African models of leadership that school leadership can borrow from;
- Unravel the potential role of *ubuntu* in today's schools; and
- Examine the relevance of culture and values in leading schools.

African Models

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Leadership Curriculum: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders

There are various kinds of leadership that new leaders can be brought through. However, institutions of higher learning in Africa should also facilitate leadership preparation programs using the knowledge of the various useful African models. Hoberg (2004) aptly puts it when he contends that while the practice in South Africa calls for the recognition and application of indigenous knowledge systems, educational management is facilitated solely from a Western framework. Higher education institutions should include the rich indigenous knowledge systems in training educational leaders. At the time when educational institutions such as schools are underperforming, it is necessary to explore the

value of alternative leadership practices and some IKS-inspired models are as such. Underperforming institutions need to inject certain values to steer their organisations to success. However, there is not much evidence in South Africa of higher education institutions that offer leadership training in IKS-inspired leadership models. Further, Hoberg (2004: 42) expresses:

"Most of the curriculum content in higher education is concerned with the Western tradition of school principalship, management and leadership, with scant evidence of existing AIK systems. Although there are multiple links between AIK and school principalship in terms of needs, goals, anticipated outcomes and methods of evaluation, not much has been written or researched on AIK in higher education."

It is within this context that African societies such as South Africa need the utilisation of the IKS-inspired models. In Africa it makes sense for institutions to use indigenous knowledge systems born out of the African environment. However, even now the indigenous models are overshadowed by the Western models. There are however, many other models from Western orientation that have elements that overlap with some African models as *servant-leadership* discussed below shows.

Servant-Leadership: Leading for Community Building

The West has developed a number of leadership styles that might be seen to have a semblance of African models. Shared leadership, participative leadership, collaborative leadership, and democratic leadership have qualities of African leadership models discussed by African scholars such as Mbigi (2004), Ramose (2004) as well as Higgs and Van Wyk (2007). As highlighted above, servant–leadership shares a number of qualities with some African models of leadership. Greenleaf (2002) describes servant-leadership as a management philosophy which sees the leader as a servant first before s/he can contribute to the well-being of people and community. The significant aspect of servant-leadership is that it underscores the importance of serving first before one leads. A servant leader creates a facilitating environment for a participative management style where employees are constantly supported in an effective organisational climate. Spears (1995) highlighted 10 char-

acteristics pivotal in the practice and development of a servant leader:

i. *Listening* – servant leaders need communication skills in order to enhance the organisation;

ii. *Empathy* – servant leaders must be able to be in the shoes of the other followers and see from their own point of view. This is a recipe for deep understanding;

iii. *Healing* – servant leaders will try and help others solve their problems in relationships. When the followers find healing at work the work environment becomes free of fear of failure;

iv. *Awareness* – servant leader ensure that the followers gain self-awareness;

v. *Persuasion* – servant leaders eschew coercion of the followers and they rather convince them;

vi. *Conceptualisation* – servant leaders' functions are dependent upon a vision. They build on certain goals and strategies;

vii. *Foresight* – servant leaders try and foresee the likely outcomes. They learn from past experience as they move into the future;

viii. *Stewardship* - effective servant leaders seek to win the trust of employees; they want to serve them and discover that it is better to persuade in trust than control people;

ix. *Commitment* to growth of people – servant leaders build the spiritual growth of the followers. The followers are also encouraged at all times and

x. *Building community* – servant leaders build strong community with their organisations and want to develop a true community.

All these explicate the role of a servant leader who has to ensure that people around him/her are wiser, freer, autonomous and are able to be servant themselves (Gonzaga University and Greenleaf Centre 2005). The servant first leader ensures that other people's needs are being served in thoughtful and sensitive manner. Spears (1995) perceives servant-leadership as a long-term transformational approach to life and work. Spears (2010:26) also writes about the growing interest in servant-leadership:

"We are experiencing a rapid shift in many businesses and not-for-profit organisations – away from the above traditional autocratic and hierarchical models of leadership and toward servant-leadership as a way of being in relationship with others. Servant-leadership seeks to involve others in decision making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour, and enhances the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organisational life."

Besides, servant-leadership engenders a sense of strong community. The leader makes everyone feel ready for change; as change agents or as change managers. In fact, effective servant leaders inspire from within the fold; when the followers' hands become dirty the leaders' hands are unlikely to be clean. The servant leader believes in developing and sustaining equality, respect and a sense of community. When the followers believe in their (servant) leader, they tend to believe in themselves as well.

The servant leader builds a sense of community. As a servant leader serves people with compassion and diligence, the followers appreciate the relationship among themselves. All are respected equally; they uphold their self-worth and serve one another as well as their organisation. The effective servant leader engenders values and culture supportive of organisational growth. Many organisations fail when this interdependence remains absent, Organisations that underperform may be so due to individualism that exists including the selfish competition in practice. In Margaret J. Wheatley's (1999) speech, she pointed out that "the root of all suffering comes from our belief that we are not connected. The source of suffering is the belief that we are independent actors". Servant-leadership combats this notion of individualism. People in such organisations serve their community, they want to serve others. The brief discussion above shows the selfless nature and interdependence in servant-leadership. A person exists for others and servant leaders create a community among colleagues.

This community cannot exist if other members destroy the objectives and reason for its existence. The democratic organisations in the 21st century will need to experiment on the noble qualities of the servant-leadership if they want to thrive in trying times. In schools the idea of developing other teacher colleagues as teacher-

leaders can increase their commitment and responsibility towards their organisation. The servant-leadership model is ideal in nurturing the community. Servant-leadership can also be seen to be akin to Fullan's (2003) sense of strong moral purpose. Below, the discussion is on *ubuntu* and school leadership. One will pick up the commonalities which show why African models are strong. This juxtaposition also demonstrates that some of the African values are not unique to Africa but some vestiges can be found elsewhere in the world. However, there are aspects that are unique to Africa though, the African experience can frequently not manifest itself anywhere else.

The African Leadership Context

Effective leadership leads to a positive work climate. In the above discussion on servant-leadership one can see this leadership style leads to successful working teams within organisations. Maxwell (2010) writes about the four pillars of leadership. One of these pillars, pillar 1, is *relationships*. Like servant-leadership discussed above, Maxwell's first pillar underscores solid relationships; he relates the importance of connecting with one another in the workplace. Some of the concepts he uses in this pillar are used in the discussion on *ubuntu* below. Maxwell also highlights five characteristics in relationships and they are respect, shared experiences, trust, reciprocity and mutual enjoyment. Maxwell, like Greenleaf and others discussed above, emphasises serving and leading people at the same time. Jain (2009) also states that working relationships matter in enhancing leaders and their self-efficacy, beliefs, conscientious leaders would also want to ensure that the followers are committed to the organisation. Hoy and Tarter (2003) aver that there is a strong relationship between trust, collaboration and organisational commitment.

Some Western models do contain elements of the African view and vice versa. However, caution should be taken when applying the purely "Western" applications of leadership in an African context. Western ideologies and forms of management and leadership have a potential of introducing a new form of colonialism because these entrench Western ways linked to Europe (Blunt and Jones 1997). In addition, Malunga (2006) states that a variety of initiatives are largely imported from the West and these tend to have limited application to African contexts. African culture is at best ignored or at worst viewed as a negative obstacle to "good" leadership. Whilst the African models do share certain qualities with the Western models of leadership and management each is unique and is informed by context.

Masango (2002) declares that in Africa a leader is viewed as someone who is a servant to the clan. He cites Nehavandi who points out:

a. Leadership is a group phenomenon. Leadership always involves interpersonal influence or persuasion;
b. Leaders use influence to guide groups of people through a certain course of actors or towards achievement of certain goals;
c. The presence of leaders assures some form of hierarchy within a group.

Further, Masango (2003) also adds that in Africa, leadership becomes a function to be shared by all villagers or community members rather than a leadership entrusted upon one person. The African villagers are usually dependent upon the encouragement and support of the leader. He is the voice of the village and the villagers in turn represent him. The role of the leader was crucial in sustaining the life of the village. Masango (2002: 711) aptly puts it:

"The whole aim of an effective or life giving leader is to uplift the villagers/community in such a way that they progress. This will help people to express their own gifts within the village/community. As leaders share their gift of leadership in return the people will honour them. As they continue to share in African religious ceremonies, which are an essential part of the way of life of each person, the villagers/community will join in celebration."

It is an African-centred education and leadership that will teach some of these aspects hence the need is to shift education of leaders in Africa. Thabo Mbeki, the former South African president once spelt the role universities should play in Africa when he stated, *"Education has an important role to play in the economic, cultural and political renaissance of one continent in the drive for the development of indigenous knowledge systems. This implies that all educational curricula in African institutions should reflect the African context. They need to show the indigenous hue in grounding and orientation. To address this state of affairs we need a distinctly African knowledge system"* (Mbeki 2005).

Malunga (2006) comments on *ubuntu* which he characterises as a cultural worldview that captures the essence of what it means to be human. *Ubuntu* is the innate policy used to run the village. As members are born or join the village they are socialised to the principles of this policy. This keeps the fabric of the society intact and members learn about unity. Leaders have to follow the code contained in the *ubuntu* philosophy although it is not unusual for corrupt dictators to break this code through greed. Megalomaniacs will always be incongruent with *ubuntu* ideals because they use a different code. *Ubuntu* always strives for equality among the clan members in the village. Mthembu (1996) describes *ubuntu* as the key to all African values and that it involves humanness, a good disposition towards others, and a moral nature. In addition, he declares that *ubuntu* describes the significance of group solidarity and the interdependence in African culture. Mbigi (2005) supports this by pointing out that *ubuntu* is a metaphor that describes the significance of group solidarity on survival issues that is so vital to the survival of communities.

Malunga (2006:3) points out that *ubuntu* is built on five interrelated principles:
- Sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges;
- The importance of people and relationships over things;
- Participatory decision making and leadership;
- Patriotism; and
- Reconciliation as a goal of conflict management.

Leadership within an African context includes these elements and leadership training in this framework will embrace some or all of these qualities. Msila (2014) also delineates five characteristics in *ubuntu*- these are the five P's in *ubuntu* philosophy:

People-centeredness- ubuntu emphasises the role of the people within the village, the organisation. Without an interest in people *ubuntu* cannot be realised;

Permeable walls- communication in the village is not restricted and the walls are not opaque. All the members are able to communicate with one another without fear;

Partisanship – one of the most positive factors of *ubuntu* philosophy is loyalty. People communicate freely and they are made to feel closer to the village;

Progeny- Ubuntu leadership promotes collective decision making. However, under this, effective leadership is respected and the leader is also respected; and

Production – when the above characterise the village, production is guaranteed. The village prospers when its members enjoy respect, loyalty and good leadership.

Below, the argument focuses on *ubuntu* and school leadership. It shows how the philosophy applies in a school situation. This is one aspect that leader trainers in Africa should accommodate as they develop leaders for schools in this case. Institutions of higher learning should take a lead in this regard by embracing curricula that would promote these values.

Ubuntu and School Leadership

Letseka (2014) accepts that *ubuntu* represents the traditional African community and embodies values, morals as well as notions of communal justice. Embracing *ubuntu* in school leadership is about transforming old exclusively authoritarian systems. Teachers involved in various programs have tried to transform the old top-down structure that used to be purported by the previous departments of education in South Africa. The top-down structure was hierarchical and teachers were usually told what to do and not what not to do. It is this top-down culture of the past that is usually blamed for the teachers' resistance to change initiatives. Reeves and Ralphs (1994) pointed out that many experienced teachers and principals were mostly schooled in apartheid ideology. They were used to being administrators within their schools and when it comes to democratising the schools they tend not to accept this. Mahomed (1999) averred that four to five decades of a top-down teacher culture and passive acceptance of instructions might be enhancing interpretative difficulties being experienced by educators. Management utilising *ubuntu* as a basis of management ensures that a new culture of inclusiveness is promoted in the workplace. Recently, there have been a number of writers and researchers who have suggested new forms of leadership in many dysfunctional schools (Steyn and Van Wyk 1999; Masitsa 2005). Research also shows that many historically black schools in

South Africa continue to underperform and school management structures are usually helpless in the face of educational changes (Msila 2005).

In a recent study by Msila (2005), he discovered that Black African parents continue to move their children away from historically Black African schools (township schools) because of the belief that township schools are failing their children. Among other factors cited by parents was that management in various historically Black African schools continued to deteriorate in the face of teacher apathy and incompetence. Many conscientious principals have long started to look around for alternative models that would improve their schools. A number of these schools leaders have tried and given up because they maintain that their teachers are not up to the challenge. Some are trying participative leadership, team management and various other employee involvement strategies. Although other managers have become despondent in the process there are a number who still believe that teachers need more time to understand commitment.

The *Manifesto on Education* highlights *ubuntu* as one of the important aspects and the need it to be linked to the values cherished in the Constitution (DoE 2001). *Ubuntu* is said to emerge out of the political tumult prior the 1990s and peacemakers wanted to ensure that in the process of creating a new framework, they would formulate a sentiment to make it a part of the defining vision of the democracy (DoE 2001). Besides, this publication states that there was a need in South Africa "for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimisation" (DoE 2001:15). Much Western literature as witnessed above sheds light on values that are cornerstone to *ubuntu*. Prinsloo (1998) agreed that the concepts used within *ubuntu* context are not unfamiliar to Western thinking. Sharing, brotherhood, dignity and trust can be found in Western contexts (Prinsloo 1998). Western literature also uses concepts such as participative leadership and the latter is similar to this article's view of *ubuntu* leadership. In addition, Prinsloo explains that *ubuntu* is religious, expansive, transcendental and centrifugal (1998). Below, the focus is on the deeper meaning of the concept *ubuntu*.

Ubuntu Demystified

Among others, the current system of education in South Africa aspires to bring forth a system that would be comparable to education systems around the world. Mbigi (1997) declares that if a competitive, developed nation is to be built, collective solidarity in African life should find its expression in the modern forms of business entrepreneurship, business organisations and management. This collective solidarity contains a number of values that can influence how people make choices in life. Broodryk (2006) states that *ubuntu* worldview contains the basic values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. Further, Broodryk points out that these core values are associated with other positive values such as warmth, empathy, giving, commitment and love. Mbigi (2000:6) also explains *ubuntu* as literally meaning "I am because you are – I can only be a person through others". The latter is very close to Chikanda's definition of the concept. Prinsloo (1998) cites Chikanda who stated that *ubuntu* is *African Humanism* that involves alms-giving, sympathy, care, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness.

The concept of *ubuntu* is very crucial for a number of institutions in the society and this includes schools. As South African school leaders are assuming leadership roles they need the best leadership models, philosophies and strategies to help them in this regard. Arguably, *ubuntu* is one philosophy that can help in developing practices of doing things together and differently in today's organisations (Mbigi 1997). *Ubuntu* has become prominent under the democratic dispensation in South Africa. Mbigi (1997) posits that the concept is both uniquely African and universal for it is implicitly expressed elsewhere in the world. Further, Mbigi argues that South African organisations are faced with ruthless global competition hence the need to negotiate a shared common agenda in organisations. Common among the discussions above is the idea of interconnectedness among people which is espoused by *ubuntu*. A number of African languages reflect this humanness, this inter-dependence among people. *Ubuntu* is based on these principles.

In support of the above the DoE publication (2001:16) states that out of the values of *ubuntu* follows the practices of compassion, kindness,

altruism and respect which are at the centre of making schools places of effective culture of learning and teaching. The publication further points out:

"Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but ubuntu goes much further: it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference. . . Ultimately; ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself."

Adair (2006) differentiates between leadership and management. On the one hand, he explains that leadership is of the spirit compounded of personality and vision while on the other; he describes management as a phenomenon of the mind more of accurate calculation, of methods and routine. Besides, Adair explains that leadership is the understanding and sharing of a common purpose without which there can be no effective leadership. For Adair, while managers manage change, leaders manage growth. In this article *ubuntu* leadership refers to the management and nurturing of growth within an organisation. *Ubuntu* style of leading an organisation involves a departure from hierarchically structured management relations and rather introduces a cooperative and supportive form of leadership in which collective solidarity of the group is employed and respected (Prinsloo 1998). Further, Prinsloo cites Mbigi who points out that *ubuntu* is a social survival strategy that developed from adverse social and geographic circumstances in which people had to cooperate to survive. Mbigi (2004) points out that it is the role of leadership to bring meaning and hope in any situation and into the confusing world characterised by rapid and chaotic change. Further, Mbigi states that in indigenous African traditions the leader is the one who is the medium of hope and channel for meaning. In schools, the principals as leaders need to take a lead role as they assist their teachers to make meaning of the leadership challenges that thwart certain schools.

Mbigi and Maree (2005) argue that the modern South African organisations should strengthen and convert into a competitive edge. This is supported by Khoza (1994) who opines that *ubuntu* has practical implications for the work place. Among these are values such as creative cooperation, empathetic communication and team work (Khoza 1994). These values can be very crucial for leadership in schools especially, schools that are dysfunctional. Schools striving for success can use *ubuntu* philosophy to enhance effective leadership and meaningful followership that might translate to a collective solidarity among colleagues. It appears that a number of authors have agreed that the principle of *ubuntu* has to be transmitted into the management practice (Teffo 1999).

Ubuntu, Communalism and Leadership

As evidence, the literature quoted reflects communalism as one of the important cornerstones of *ubuntu*. Khoza (1994) refers to communalism as collectivism. Khoza also points out that communalism is any of the several types of social organisation in which the individual is seen as being subordinate to a social collectivity such as state, a nation, a race, a social class Khoza further points out that *ubuntu* broadens the respect for the individual and the respect of each person in the social unit (Prinsloo 1998).

The concepts of *ubuntu* and communalism have a potential of enhancing team participation, sharing of skills as well as ideas. Mbigi and Maree (2005) point out that *ubuntu* is a collective, shared experience and solidarity and all these are crucial for the development of people and organisations. Emeka (nd.) points out that the African cultural values include, sense of community life, sense of good human relations, sense of community life, sense of good human relations, sense of sacredness of life as well as sense of the sacred and of religion. As highlighted above in different ways, Emeka underscores the importance of the sense of community:

"Go the way that many people go: if you go alone, you will have reason to lament." The African idea of security and its value depends on personal identification with and within the community. Communalism in Africa is a system that is both suprasensible and material in its terms of reference. Both are found in a society that is believed by the Africans to be originally "god made" because it transcends the people who live in it now...

The individual is safe within the ambit of the community. The individual cannot suffer alone under communalism: one will share the problem with the community. The village lives the African story told by one old man to his five sons.

He asked them each to bring a stick and ordered them to break each of their sticks. The sons found it easy to break these. However, when he gave each five sticks all tied together the sons found it difficult to break the combined wood. The old man was emphasising oneness and this is the solidarity emphasised by communalism. A village bound together by a vision will not lose the sight of its being.

Many African writers have shown in their literature over the years how the West destroyed Africa. Achebe (1994) for example, traces a story of a powerful villager, the tragic hero Okonkwo, in *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo thought that he was bigger than the tribe but he dies alone. Okonkwo thought that he alone was the bearer of values and culture of his village, Umuofia. Yet all these are the community's products. In communalism there are cherished values. The leader in an organisation that uses *ubuntu* knows the value of communalism for successful leadership. Biko (1987: 24) mentions the importance of values in a community when he says, "For one cannot escape the fact that culture shared by the majority group in any given society must ultimately determine the broad direction taken by the joint culture of that society". A leader who follows a communal approach becomes able to embrace a common vision for the organisation.

Common Vision and Ubuntu

Mbigi (2000) refers to common vision within the *ubuntu* context as collective visioning. He also states that it is crucial in creating a new collective mindset. The theory of shared leadership is one of the frequently discussed theories in literature particularly that from the 'west'. Mbigi and Maree (2005) refer to *ubuntu* as a spirit of collective development and reconstruction in organisations. Besides, sharing a common vision within the *ubuntu* context leads to the meaning of striking a right balance between the individual and the group. The right balance between individualism and collectivism is made possible by accommodating people's need for dignity, self-respect and regard for others seriously (Prinsloo 1998). Nel (1994) claims that shared visions are the deepest binding principle that enables employees to be united within an organisation. Common vision, as evident in this study, ensures that employees are able to fight their doubts and fears.

Re-education: Confronting Fears

Among other challenges of leadership is the task of leading change. This is a time when leaders need to allay the fears of the employees. Facilitators of African leadership modules at universities might encounter a myriad of challenges. They need to prepare their students to welcome re-education and change. Many candidates in African-centred classrooms might be surprised if not shocked by knowledge which reflects the noble nature of African-centred knowledge. It is not an easy process to change from an education system that shows the absolute dominance of Western model of education. "If change involves having to unlearn something in order to learn something new, and if the change involves giving up something to which the person has been previously committed or has valued, then it is expected that the process of change will be difficult" (Caghlan 1992: 227). Institutions of higher learning embracing indigenous knowledge systems and Africanisation need to think of a bigger role of re-educating Africans whose colonial history has convinced them in glorifying the western traditions.

Few African students will believe in African leadership if they cannot be re-educated to appreciate themselves and Africa. Real transformation in Africa needs the reversal of many stereotypes and higher education should be in the forefront in transforming knowledge (Vilakazi 2002). Further, Vilakazi points out that African intellectual must initiate the formulation of a new and proper education policy for Africa. They need to engage in a process of re-education of themselves on the principles and patterns of African civilisation. Pityana (2007:40) supports this as he states:

"The panorama of the South African higher education system can never be complete without resorting to what Van Ginkel refers to as the 'Corpenian Revolution' –demanding a paradigm shift as revolutionary as the shift away from the Ptolemaic belief that the earth was at the centre of the universe. We dare to assert that there cannot be one centre of the knowledge universe but many, and that Africa has as much a claim to that centre as any other."

Teffo (1999) points out that all that companies need is a mentor to teach or preach *ubuntu*. Teffo (1999:164) also states that this will go a long way into answering the question of: "How

do we incorporate *ubuntu* in our management style?" The idea of introducing a mentor is very crucial especially when one looks at the crucial aspect of preparing the workers as the climate is made conducive to be receptive to *ubuntu* models. *Ubuntu* empowers people to love and respect each other. In the search for a new management style, the writing of memos may have to be supplemented by communication (follow-up oral presentation and/or discussions). It would yield better results if the director or manager were to go to the people and discuss issues with them.

CONCLUSION

As we enter the 21st century many leadership models have become crucial and among these are African models that incorporate philosophies such as *ubuntu*. The *ubuntu* worldview can have a positive impact when its principles are used effectively in leading any organisation. Yet *ubuntu* demands a paradigm shift, a change in what many employees have been used to. As literature evidences above, much research has shown the potential of participative-based strategies. However, aspects such as caring, sharing, respect and compassion might be challenging to internalise for many workers. *Ubuntu* poses this challenge of fostering a culture of interconnectedness and interdependence among workers. Below, the focus is on recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are recommendations for the school leaders who want to improve their schools as they can consider the following recommendations and begin practising them in their schools.

Firstly, leaders in organisations especially from Africa need to be opened to a number of leadership styles. There is no one leadership style that is better than others hence it is advisable to be eclectic in approach. Accommodating models based on *ubuntu* among other models can enrich the leadership experience of those at the helm of organisations such as schools.

Secondly, leadership to day needs more people-centeredness. No leader will be successful when they have no followers. Besides, good followers are created by effective leaders. The idea of people-centeredness is very pronounced

in African models although not necessarily unique in African communities. Leadership in organisations today needs to ensure that leaders create more leaders in organisations.

Finally, linked to the above is the need for shared leadership in today's organisations. The idea of community in organisations as implied above shows that people will thrive in organisations where they have a role to play. Leaders need to serve their followers meaningfully as they earn their respect. Effective school leaders will for example use a model such as *ubuntu* as they introduce a culture of serving in the organisation.

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