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# Learning Leadership Development from African Cultures:

## A Personal Perspective

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## Introduction

Leadership development is currently a very high priority for capacity building in Africa. My experience, however, suggests that the plethora of initiatives are largely imported from the West, and tend to have only limited application to the specific African contexts and cultures in which they operate. As a consequence, they achieve only limited success in developing leaders. African culture is at best ignored and at worst viewed simply as a negative obstacle to 'good leadership'. I believe that, to stand any chance of being effective, leadership development in Africa must be rooted in the influential cultural heritage. To promote ongoing behaviour change in leaders, it is essential to tap into the energy, commitment and authenticity that reside within the culture concerned. New ideas should be grafted onto existing indigenous cultures, rather than simply uprooting them and transplanting foreign models.

This Praxis Note is inspired by the observation that leadership development from an African cultural perspective is often conspicuous by its absence in most discourses and initiatives. Within

the Note I therefore describe aspects of leadership and leadership development in precolonial Africa (though many of the practices identified are still widely followed today, particularly in rural areas). I then go on to draw lessons for leadership development in civil society organisations (CSOs).

These perspectives are based on personal experience as well as limited primary and secondary research, the former comprising interviews with twelve individuals (indigenous authorities and paramount chiefs in rural Blantyre, members of the chiefs' council and female community elders). Special acknowledgement must go to Professor Gomo Michongwe, who freely gave his time to share with me his reflections and lecture notes from his 50 years of teaching African leadership. Using open-ended checklists, the interviews focused on the interviewees':

- understanding of indigenous leadership and leadership development;
- the opportunities and challenges they see for the indigenous leadership and leadership development model in modern society and organisations;

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- how the model can be made more relevant in modern organisations.

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## African Culture of 'Ubuntu'

African cultural heritage, passed on from generation to generation, has been a source of guidance for communities in times of peace, uncertainty, birth, life and death. At its best it has been the basis for identity, respect and self-confidence. It has enabled us to live in harmony with our physical, social and spiritual environment. It provides our foundation for leadership, problem-solving, decision making and hope for the future.

This Praxis Note is written from an Eastern, Central and Southern African Bantu perspective that can be summed up by a concept known as ubuntu. Ubuntu is a cultural world-view that captures the essence of what it means to be human. My own experience and that of others suggests that many of the cultural practices in leadership and leadership development in sub-Saharan Africa were and are more similar than different (Malunga, 2004; Dia, 1991). 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.

The positive elements of these principles will be discussed in turn and then applied to leadership development. This is not to say that there are no negative elements of ubuntu. Some of these negative elements arise from the fact that ubuntu principles were mainly practised at a village or community level in a very stable and predictable environment. Part of the challenge that this 'African model' is facing today is that it has failed to change with the times and transcend this stable and predictable context. This has resulted in certain 'shadows' being cast over the current practise of ubuntu values, such as:

- loyalty to kinship may develop into tribalism;
- the belief in chiefs and kings ruling for life could lead to leaders not respecting term limits in office;
- fear of unpredictable futures may motivate leaders to try to accumulate as much wealth as possible, or succumb to corruption while in office;
- values attached to relationships at the expense of personal progress may often lead to wasteful expenditures on, for example, births, weddings, initiation ceremonies and burials;
- the value of respect for elders may lead to a blind loyalty to old ideas that may have stopped working; and
- the desire for 'continuity or survival of the village or clan' may undermine the need for radical change in response to rapidly changing task environments.

To compound these problems, the trend towards globalisation implicitly foregrounds Northern values and can give the sense that indigenous values and practices are somehow inferior. The low self-esteem that results from this

has caused many people in the South to abandon their own values and embrace those from the North. In the past, this was reinforced by missionaries who branded indigenous practices as evil and backward.

The lack of a culture of documentation and reading is another challenge. In many parts of Africa, culture is passed orally from generation to generation. However, with increasing external pressures and influences, this oral process is becoming diluted over the course of time, but is seemingly not being replaced with a culture of documentation. It was not easy, for instance, to find appropriate literature even for this study. Much of what is written about African cultures and leadership is from a Eurocentric view which casts much of the African culture and leadership in negative light.

Unfortunately, in the past, the negative aspects of ubuntu have been overemphasised (Sardan, 2004), with the effect of 'throwing away the bath water together with the baby'; that is, throwing the good out with the bad. To redress this imbalance, in the following sections, I have chosen to explore the positive aspects of the five principles of ubuntu and how they were applied in the past.

## 1. Sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges

*"Your friend's child is your own child"*

Most indigenous African societies believed in taking collective responsibility. Children were seen as children of the community rather than belonging to their parents only. Discipline could be meted by any adult member of the community. Children were taught to respect all adults the same way they respected their parents. Clan households collectively met

responsibilities such as school fees and other expenses for the children.

When a visitor came to the community, they were a visitor for the whole community and not only the household. Members of the community would take responsibility for the visitor. They would be expected to make contributions for the visitor's upkeep or take it in turns to feed them. When a member of the community got sick, the whole community was affected. The members of the community would be expected to help in things like taking care of the children of the sick person or help them with gardening work. When a person died, the funeral was a community funeral.

Cooperation in work and life were encouraged, with real progress was believed to be that which could benefit all. Those in privileged positions took it as their responsibility to help the less privileged to rise to positions of privilege as well, living by the saying that *'a lit candle loses nothing by lighting another candle'*. They were therefore not expected to be jealous of others rising to positions of privilege as well.

While encouraging collaboration, each person was expected to contribute towards the well-being of the clan, according to his or her age, knowledge, skills and experience. No one was expected to be a parasite. Only the very young, the old and the sick were exempted. They believed that problems were better solved by working together on the assumption that: *'united, the ants can take a dead elephant to their cave'*.

## 2. The importance of people and relationships over things

*"Kinship is like a bone, it does not decay"*

In indigenous African communities relationships were given very high

priority. Uncles were ranked the same as fathers. Aunts were mothers. Cousins were brothers and sisters. All adults were treated as one's parents.

When one married someone from another clan, one did not marry just the individual but the whole clan. When this happened, every member of each clan became a relative of every member of the other clan. This also implied mutual responsibilities: the weddings, funerals, births, problems and celebrations of one clan belonged to the other as well.

Relationships were characterised by respect, especially by the young to the old. Children were taught that "*what old men and women saw while seated, they could not see even when standing on their toes*". They were taught that children who respected their parents would learn many things without parents having to teach them. The closeness of family or clan was the beginning of African education. Family relationships were also informed by shared responsibilities, such that when a parent died, children would be automatically adopted by the family members and treated as one's own children.

The cohort that went through initiation ceremonies together became brothers and sisters for life — as strong a bond as a blood relationship. A school today rarely produces such an effect on classmates.

### 3. Participatory decision making and leadership

At first glance, indigenous African leadership appears automatic and autocratic, and although some were born in the royal lineage, the approval of the people was critical for the legitimacy of a newly elected leader as illustrated in the case opposite.

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**Stoning ceremonies**

The Bafut kingdom of Cameroon installed their kings only after a candidate had been presented to the people for a 'stoning' ceremony. In the case of approval of a new leader the stones consisted of tiny harmless pebbles, but if the candidate was not desired the stones were large injurious rocks hurled to maim, chase off or even kill the proposed incumbent. It reminded the new ruler what would happen to him if his or her rule became illegitimate. If the leader survived the coronation, dethronement was unlikely because systems were put in place to provide checks and balances to the king so that he/she did not defy accountability to the people. Ritual acts and elements such as ceremonial objects with an established protocol for usage (e.g. a sceptre, crowns, utensils, stools and flywhisks) could not be used at the king's whim. These objects were invested with divine or ancestral power to inhibit their abuse. If the transfer of power from one leader to the other did not follow agreed procedures, the usurper of the throne would be disapproved by the gods, evidenced by misfortunes arising from his or her attempted use of the sacred objects. These misfortunes would be in the form of sterility, madness or even death, and could extend to the people who colluded to install the leader fraudulently. The misfortunes also applied to any rightful leader who turned against his or her own people (Williams, 2002:61).

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The accountability of leaders was reinforced because there were many possible candidates for leadership, so strict criteria were applied to determine who would emerge as a leader. This

decision was often subject to the approval of the people.

As Professor Michongwe explains (2005 personal communication), to emerge as a leader candidates had to show competence in:

• understanding people and human nature;
• understanding human relationships, conflicts and how to manage them;
• diplomacy and relationships with other kingdoms;
• the art of war;
• strategic thinking; and
• kingdom secrets and how to guard them.

African leadership was much more participatory than appears from the outside. Nelson Mandela (1994:20) describes the profound influence that the democratic decision-making processes of the Thembu people (of which his grandfather was chief) had on him:

> *"Everyone who wanted to speak could do so. It was democracy in its purest sense. There may have been a hierarchy of importance amongst the speakers, but everyone was heard ... Only at the end of the meeting as the sun was setting would the regent speak. His purpose was to sum up what had been said and form some consensus among the diverse opinions. But no conclusion was forced on those who disagreed."*

While the king was the most visible leader and the indigenous custodian of power, auxiliary authorities — often people of highly respected religious or elder status — continually advised the king in roles that promoted democracy in the kingdom. Tangwa (1998:2) observed that while the king generally appeared very powerful from outside, he or she was nevertheless subject to very strict control, not only by means of taboos, but also from institutions and personalities whose main occupation was the protection and safeguarding of the people, the ancestors, the land and the unborn. Indigenous leadership, therefore, was not comprised solely of the authority of the ruler, but was influenced by queen mothers, godfathers, councils, secret societies, mystics, rituals, ceremonies, rules and citizens. The king's decisions and policies were continually subject to review by others (Molotlegi, 2004:3).

Among the Bantus, a council of elders often played a key governance role in the kingdom in the following ways:

• Custodianship of the kingdom. The elders were concerned with the welfare of the land, the living, the ancestors and the unborn. Individual chiefs or kings could come and go but the council was a permanent structure.
• Advising the king. The king would use the council as a sounding board for his ideas and critical issues facing the kingdom. For example, on the occasion of identifying his or her successor, the chief would propose the name to the council who would discuss the issue and give their feedback.
• Managing conflicts and disputes on behalf of the king in courts. The chief only listened while the council dealt with the cases. After a case was concluded, the council would meet with the king or queen to give them their view. The chief would examine it against what s/he had heard. They then would come up with a joint stand and the chief would announce the judgement.
• Managing the transition from one king to the next. The council had to approve an identified candidate and mentor and coach them. If the king suddenly died, the council managed

the transition to the next king by putting in place an interim ruler while initiating a process to identify the permanent ruler.

- Installing and dethroning kings. The council had the power with the mandate of the people to dethrone a king or queen whom they felt 'had gone astray' or was leading the kingdom astray. They would ask the king to resign, or they would ask him or her to voluntarily 'drink poison' to make way for a new king. This was a rare occurrence, however, because the selection process for the king ensured, as far as possible, the prevention of such eventualities.

- Proposing new laws and changing laws that had become obsolete. Officially, the chief was accountable to the gods through the council. The king could only overrule the proposals of the council if he sensed that the council was in error. When this happened, the king had to give adequate explanation for his decision in order to convince the council, and this had to be accepted by the wider population.

## 4. Patriotism

*"a river that forgets its source will soon dry up"*

The kingdom came first in all decisions, before any personal interest. The reign of a particular king, however loved or hated, was never more important than the endurance of the kingdom itself. In some kingdoms, when the ruler was perceived to be a political liability, or if their continued reign was considered dangerous to the survival of the kingdom, he or she could be quietly executed or even asked to 'voluntarily' drink poison.

All the people had an understanding of the need for a common bond of security; they would not allow anything

to endanger the security of the clan. People within the clan could disagree and quarrel, but people outside the clan were not allowed to take advantage through collusion with the disgruntled members.

There was great emphasis on pride in one's clan. Each child was taught their origins, their family history and they were encouraged to know and visit all members of the extended family, even those that were staying far away. People were continually reminded to respect their origins and identity by sending remittances and not abandoning their cultural values and practices, irrespective of where they were.

## 5. Reconciliation as a goal of conflict management and resolution

Principles of conflict management emphasised the values of trust, fairness and reconciliation. This was closely linked with the importance of relationships. Conflict mediation and maintenance of relationships was a critical role of the chief and the council.

In conflict management, the council members arrived at decisions through consensus, though the judgement was made by the chief after listening to the position taken by the council.

The people were duty-bound to attend court hearings and to ensure laws were upheld. As a result of this collective responsibility, everyone had a right to question in an open court. The concept of openness was an important value, implicit in which was the belief that no one should be punished for anything correctly said in an open forum (Jackson, 2002:8).

Conflict was managed systematically through a hierarchy of levels. Smaller conflicts were resolved at family or household levels and proceeded to

higher levels through appeal if some parties were not satisfied with the outcome. At family or household levels, clan leaders were responsible for resolving conflict. At the higher levels, different levels of representatives of the king were responsible. The gravity or seriousness of the conflict determined the level at which it would be dealt with. Only very big cases would therefore reach the king's or the queen's court. The goal of all conflict mediation was reconciliation and relationship building. The notion of ubuntu emphasised the importance of peacemaking through principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between people. It provided a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness (Murithi, no date, pp 6).

The principles of ubuntu do not belong only to a romantic past. In most of both rural and urban Africa, one can observe the application of ubuntu values and principles during activities requiring collective effort like celebrating births and marriages and managing funerals. I remember in a recent workshop a lady asking me, "why am I a different person at my place of work and at my home — I am an African at home but I feel like I am somebody else at the office?" What she meant was that she felt more connected to ubuntu values and principles at home and the community in which she lived, but was at a loss for how to apply the same values at her place of work. The challenge is not so much the loss of ubuntu values, but how to apply them in organisations and modern leadership development.

## Learning to be Leaders in Ubuntu Culture

The above sections have discussed the context in which leadership was developed and practised. The following sections will discuss the processes through which leadership was developed and then draw lessons for leadership development programmes today.

Leadership development emphasised the importance of the communal benefit. The method for developing leadership was through education. Professor Michongwe (2005 personal communication) defined African education as *the ability to use what one has collected through a learning process to develop oneself and one's community or country*. He noted that modern education, including most leadership development initiatives, emphasises developing oneself and not one's community or country. If leadership development is to be effective, it must be aimed at developing individuals and their organisations. Many such programmes, packaged as leadership training courses, are rarely transferred from the individual to the organisation.

### Indigenous learning

Indigenous educational systems in precolonial Africa were aimed at passing on to the young the accumulated knowledge to enable them to play adult roles and so ensure the survival of their offspring, and the continuity of the community. The older generation passed on to the young the knowledge, the skills, the mode of behaviour and the beliefs they should have for playing their social roles in adult life. The young were taught how to cope with their environment; how to farm or hunt; fish or prepare food; build a house or run a home. They were taught the language and manners, and generally the culture of the community. The methods were informal, with the young learning by participating in activities alongside their elders, as well as by listening, by watching, by doing.

They recognised that the ways the young would fulfil their social roles would

depend on the sort of persons they became. So they were taught the community's standards of conduct based on their shared values. Above all, they were taught that their behaviour was a matter of concern for all their kinsfolk to whom how they behaved and what they did would bring honour or dishonour. In different ways and situations, the young learnt what the community regarded as good and what it regarded as evil, and caught the community's concept of the good life. This was training in citizenship. The greatest concern was shown about the sort of persons the young would become, and the life they would lead as members of the community.

Though indigenous Africa had many cultures, they all appear to have emphasised as the *summum bonum* a social sensitivity which made one lose oneself in the group: the kinsfolk were, and lived as, members of one another. It was the goal of education to inculcate this sense of belonging. The solidarity of the small, homogeneous group of kinsfolk; the close-knit organisation of the village, chiefdom or tribe; the rituals by which their sense of belonging was constantly renewed: all of these were reinforced. Indigenous education sought to produce men and women who were not self-centred; who put the interest of the group above their personal interest; who dutifully fulfilled obligations hallowed and approved by tradition out of reverence for their ancestors, gods and the unknown universe of spirits and forces. There was always the awareness that human life was the greatest value, and an increase in the number and quality of the members of the community the greatest blessing the gods could confer on the living. Indigenous education also drew strongly on the spiritual dimension, which pervaded all activities and all relationships. Education inculcated a religious attitude to life, manifested in a

reverence towards nature and the unknown universe.

The indigenous education system used a variety of methods including work and play and religious rite; through song and dance and folklore and proverbs; through customary services received or given within the all-embracing network of family and kinship ties.

The practical approach to education emphasised the importance of experiential learning as a way of dealing with new problems. They believed that *"a person is taller than any mountain that he or she has climbed"* and that "*a bird that has flown over a sea cannot be afraid of a river".*

In most African schools, the modern school teaches skills (cognitive domain), but not the affective domain (the domain of values). The little teaching concerning the affective domain that exists is foreign and without much relevance to the context of the learner (Malunga, 2004:xii). As one of the women interviewed said:

> *"When our children come back from school, they have been turned to foreigners. They cannot understand why we ask them to kneel before their parents. They cannot understand why we tell them not to go to their parents' bedrooms. We believe that one week at an initiation ceremony is worth ten years at a primary school as far as the developing of values is concerned."*

## Indigenous African Leadership — Building on the Positives

The previous sections highlighted the key elements of many African cultures taking a more positive view of indigenous leadership. I went on to explore the process by which indigenous learning occurred.

In developing African leaders, there are obviously many aspects of indigenous leadership and learning that it would be wise to build or graft onto models of leadership development. In this section I will explore how the following values of ubuntu may usefully be applied to leadership development:

- collective responsibility for the organisation;
- importance of relationships;
- participatory leadership;
- patriotism;
- reconciliation.

## 1. Taking collective responsibility for the organisation

Collective responsibility is key to organisational success. In many organisations, both leaders and followers place blame on each other, thereby abdicating their responsibility. Blaming others for organisational challenges can dissipate the organisation's energy and diminish its ability to address the challenges.

Collective responsibility also applies to the fair distribution of benefits and efforts. When some people are perceived as unjustifiably benefiting more than others from the organisation's collective efforts, this will lead to resentment and strained relationships, adversely affecting team spirit and organisational performance. In addition, people must feel that others are pulling their weight in the organisation. When people feel that that are 'selling more than they are buying', they may reduce their efforts or opt out. This can kill the hard-working and innovative spirit in the organisation.

## 2. Importance of relationships

The ubuntu emphasis on relationships may usefully be applied to leadership. Organisations can be viewed as extended families in which relationships are close enough to go beyond the professional level. The harrowing story of Dorothy, related in Praxis Note 12, illustrates the importance of being able to relate closely with other staff, and even crossing the boundary of peoples' personal lives — especially in the context of HIV/AIDS. In formal organisations, in contrast to indigenous communities, there is a tendency to not cross this boundary or interfere with people's personal lives outside the office. This is despite the fact that what is done outside the office affects staff and eventually the organisation as well.

In the African context it may be more appropriate to create an organisational environment where people feel close but also able to 'interfere' in other people' lives if they feel that would benefit the person and the organisation.

## 3. Participatory leadership

As with community leadership, appointments to positions of organisational leadership need to be conducted with complete transparency and accountability. The process of selection must leave stakeholders satisfied with its fairness.

A symbolic 'stoning' ceremony for new leaders might be an important ritual to connect the new leader with the people in the organisation. Such a ceremony could involve letting people 'shoot' the leader with the burning questions concerning the organisation and how his or her leadership will make a difference.

Leadership development needs to emphasise the importance of involving all people in addressing the challenges the organisation is facing through meaningful participation. When people participate meaningfully, they will also own and commit to the identified solutions. In addition, their sense of

belonging to the organisation is enhanced.

Individual leaders should not be allowed to become too powerful. The important role of the councils, elders and healers to provide a check and balance on this power needs to be developed within the governance and internal systems of the organisation. This is done primarily through ensuring that the organisation has effective policies, systems and procedures that are being adhered to.

## 4. Patriotism

The ubuntu concept of patriotism means that organisational interests must always precede personal interests. Many leaders in organisations sacrifice long-term organisational interests for short-term self-interests. Leadership must be taken as an opportunity to serve rather than as a means to accumulate personal wealth and power.

No person should be more important than the organisation, no matter how much the person is loved or hated. When a leader's continued existence in the organisation becomes a danger to its survival or well-being, they may need to be fired or asked to 'voluntarily drink poison' by resigning.

Organisations should also encourage in their staff a culture of pride in the organisation. In many organisations, staff feel that there are better organisations out there and they therefore do not make much commitment to their own. Managing the culture and performance of the organisation helps leaders develop pride among staff. True commitment to an organisation is based on people deeply and consciously connecting their values and those of the organisation, so it is important to identify these personal values and link them to those of the organisational culture. Initiatives like

mentoring, coaching, succession planning, nurturing young and second-tier leaders should emphasise the clarification and cultivation of values. This is because One way of doing this is through adopting rituals from the people's cultural context. Rituals symbolising celebrating success, growth and losses connect people to each other and their cultural values.

## 5. Reconciliation

The organisational mechanisms for conflict resolution must ensure fairness, trust, reconciliation and relationship building as the goal. People should have the right to appeal to higher levels if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the conflict mediation process.

The aim of conflict resolution must be to help the people involved reach an agreement by consensus rather than forcing them to 'shake hands' before they feel that the issue has been resolved or justice has been administered. Giving and receiving forgiveness must provide the foundation for relationship building.

In a conflict situation involving a subordinate and a superior, great wisdom and discretion should be exercised to balance fairness, maintain respect and avoid loss of face in the case of the senior party being in the wrong.

In the case of simple conflicts, leaders should delegate conflict management, and encourage people to resolve these conflicts at as low a level as possible. This gives the people in higher positions more space and time to get involved in bigger and more strategic issues.

## Implications for Leadership Development

Effective leadership is imperative in organisations of all types and especially CSOs. There is, however, a dearth of

leadership development models that can effectively communicate the need for values-based leadership that can touch people's hearts and motivate them to personal and organisational transformation. The African culture model based on ubuntu principles could prove very useful in this respect. The challenge is to bring this model out of obscurity to the forefront of current leadership dialogue and debate.

A number of lessons are emerging from an understanding of indigenous African leadership and leadership development as presented above. There are a number of requisites for leadership development programmes to be effectively grafted onto indigenous culture in Africa:

1. **Adopting an experiential approach** involving apprenticeship, mentoring and coaching. Emphasis must be put on learning by listening, watching and doing.

2. **Emphasis, articulation and inculcation of values.** Leadership development programmes must aim to transform individuals by touching people at the affective or values domain. Instead of focusing on what people should be able to *do* after the programmes, more emphasis must be put on what the people should *be* after the programmes. Programmes need to encourage participants to live up to their values. Leadership development must be about strengthening the values that guide behaviour through mentorship, coaching, placements and self-development programmes for example.

3. **Use of proverbs, rituals and ceremonies** as part of the leadership development process. An example of a ritual would be a symbolic 'stoning' ceremony for

new leaders. As a ritual, this would connect the new leader with the people in the organisation. Such a ceremony could involve letting the people tell the leader their expectations ands fears.

4. **Applying individual leadership development to the benefit of the organisation**. People must be empowered to take on the training lessons beyond the classroom. Leadership development programmes should emphasise the principle that leadership is a responsibility and service to the organisation and the people it serves.

5. **Viewing leadership development as a long-term,** if not life-long process. The leadership needs and demands of organisations and sectors are constantly changing, so long-term and life-long leadership development processes are necessary to adapt to and implement change effectively.

6. **Planning leadership succession in advance**. Organisations must plan for succession in good time, and have a clear and effective system for identifying their successors. These successors must undergo well thought through programmes that will prepare them to take charge of the organisation when their time comes.

7. **Involvement of the board in succession and leadership development planning.** The board must ensure that appointments to leadership positions are conducted with complete transparency and accountability. The process followed to select new leaders must leave the people of the organisation satisfied. Organisations must have

succession plans well in advance to ensure smooth transitions from one leader to the next.

It is also worth noting that potential problems may also emerge when applying ubuntu values and principles. For instance, taking collective responsibility for the organisation may suffocate individual motivation and healthy competition among staff and departments. Preoccupation with relationships may stand in the way of efficiency and a results-based culture. Participatory leadership may lead to leaders abdicating their responsibility to followers in the name of participation. Patriotism may lead to a closed organisational mind that is not receptive and open to ideas from other people from other places.

The above suggestions may also not be radically different from what some Northern management gurus would recommend. There are many principles of leadership that are universal — it is the practice that needs to be modified to suit the context. The value of the recommendations, however, is the validation of the indigenous models and the connection and ownership this validation makes possible in connecting people to their own roots and identity — to what is their own.

There is a great need for African leadership practitioners to dig deeper into who they are for a reawakening of their own and Africa's leadership capacity. Such introspection can be focused on the following enduring questions:

- Have we taken local cultures and practices into account when developing leadership approaches? How have we balanced local and external approaches?
- How do we incorporate the spiritual beliefs of participants?

- How are we balancing leadership and followership (as a co-creator and co-definer of leadership and leadership development)?
- How are we supporting the long term needs of the sector, for example, by supporting young and second-tier leaders as compared to only supporting individuals or only individual organisations?

The discoveries that this type of self-analysis can reveal should be proactively shared with the wider world for the continuing benefit of organisations and for that of developmental practice as a whole.

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