Ethical Leadership in Post-colonial Zimbabwe: Insights, Challenges and Remedies

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Abstract

This article discusses Lisa B. Ncube's essay entitled: Ubuntu: A Transformative leadership philosophy which appeared in the Journal of Leadership Studies (2010) Volume 4, Issue Number 3 from page 77 to page 82. In this essay Ncube argues that most of the problems bedeviling Africa today are a result of lack of good leadership. She, therefore, argues for ubuntu as the panacea to Africa's problems. She goes on to outline some of the ubuntu principles which she thinks can be utilized to cultivate and nurture good leadership. While I agree with her on the need to marshal ubuntu to transform leadership in Africa, I quarrel with her especially as she fails to give her argument a specific context and as she fails to explain why Western philosophies of leadership are not suitable for Africa. I provide a brief expose of Western leadership philosophies and their theoretical underpinnings before explaining why these theories do not apply in Africa. I then argue for the appropriateness of hunhu or ubuntu as an ethical guide for Post-colonial African leadership by utilizing Martin Prozesky's ten qualities of ubuntu and I use Zimbabwe as my test case.

Introduction

During my researches on the role of ethics in moulding leaders of good standing in post-colonial Africa, I came across an article written by Lisa B. Ncube who is one of the very few Zimbabwean natural scientists to research on *ubuntu* and leadership in post-colonial Africa which topic falls beyond the scope of the natural sciences. The article is entitled: *Ubuntu: A Transformative Leadership Philosophy*. After carefully reading this article my perspective on ethical leadership in post-colonial Africa completely changed. While my knowledge and

understanding of ethical leadership had, to a larger extent, been shaped by Western theories, Ncube's article led me to re-think my earlier position as she satisfactorily argued for *ubuntu* as a transformative leadership philosophy. While I totally agreed with Ncube's central argument, I note some gaps in the way in which she invites *ubuntu* to deal with the problem of leadership in post-colonial Africa. While Ncube thinks that *ubuntu* can work as a mere transformative philosophy, I put it that this argument needs a lot of unpacking. To put everything into proper perspective, I argue that most of the challenges facing African leadership today are insurmountable such that they do not only require *ubuntu* as a general transformative philosophy but as a specific ethical guide that leads to the promotion of the common good of the entire community. I argue that this ethic must be clearly articulated and contextualized. Contextual philosophizing is philosophizing! While there is probably no reason to doubt that, Ncube's argument is the first of its kind to marshal *hunhu or ubuntu* to deal with the challenges facing African leadership today, it no doubt fails to prescribe a well articulated ethic that should guide African leaders in their decision making processes.

Before discussing Ncube's mainstream argument, it is critically important to consider eight leadership theories as drawn from Western scholarship since indigenous theories can, to some extent, be rationalized by comparing or contrasting them with theories that are considered to be 'well established' though this may be a subject of contestation. This comparing and contrasting will then be followed by a critical exposition of the concept of ethical leadership.

Eight Leadership Theories

It is of fundamental importance to define leadership before outlining its theories. Thus, *Leadership* generally understood means organizing a group of people in a bid to achieve a common goal (Locke, 1991). It is, however, crucial to be more specific when defining *leadership* from a philosophical perspective as philosophy is about clarity. Against this background, *leadership* becomes a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Locke, 1991). In this matrix, effective leadership influences process, stimulates change in subordinate's attitudes and values, augments followers' self-efficacy beliefs and fosters the internalization of the leaders' vision by utilizing strategies of empowerment (Resick et al, 2006: 345-359).

Kendra Kelly (2011: 1) briefly outlines eight leadership theories namely; "Great man" theories, Trait theories, Contingency theories, Situational theories, Behavioural theories, Participative theories, Management theories and Relationship theories of leadership. "Great man" theories of leadership, for Kelly, assume that the capacity for leadership is inherent – that great leaders are born, not made (2011:1). These theories often portray great leaders as heroic, mythic and designed to rise to leadership when needed (2011:1). Trait theories are similar in some way to "Great man" theories as they assume that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership (2011:1). Trait theories often identify particular personality or behavioural characteristics shared by leaders (2011:1).

Understood this way, leadership becomes a natural disposition whereby leaders are born with innate abilities to lead. This position is untenable because it is not always the case that the leader

is judged by his or her individual capacity but sometimes by environmental circumstances. Thus, good environments create good leaders. My point is that a child who grows in an environment characterized by violence, intolerance and corruption, even if he or she were to have those innate abilities to lead will be corrupted to the extent that the potential to become a good leader will die. This for me is the major weakness of both "Great Man" theories and Trait theories on leadership. They are not people-centred.

Contingency theories on the other hand focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation (2011:1). According to this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations. Success depends on a number of variables including the leadership style, qualities of the followers and aspects of the situation (2011:1). Situational theories propose that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational variables. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making (2011:1). These theories to some extent vindicate Machiavellian approaches to leadership where situational influences may allow the leader to use devious and unethical means to remain in power even if this is against the will of the people. Now, this is a recipe for despotism and tyranny. Please note that Machiavellian approaches to leadership will be discussed later in this work.

Behavioural theories of leadership are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born (2011: 1). These theories oppose "Great Man" theories of leadership which – as intimated above – are based on the belief that great leaders are born, not made. Behavioural theories are rooted in behaviorism (2011:1). According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation and that the actions of leaders are more important than their mental qualities or internal states (2011: 1). This means that being a good

leader requires a lot of hard work and effort and the environment plays an important role in nurturing leaders of good standing.

Participative leadership theories suggest that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account and this type of leadership encourage participation and contributions from group members and help group members feel more relevant and committed to the decision-making process (2011: 2). The leader, however, retains the right to allow the input of others (2011: 2). My interventions are that participative leadership is the African way of doing business where the leader is at the service of the people. This is the essence of *ubuntu* which I shall discuss later in this work. Instead of transferring all the power to the leader, the people must also be able to contribute to national policies. Relationship theories which focus on the connections formed between leaders and followers (2011:2). These theories motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task and leaders inspired by relationship theories are focused on the performance of group members but also want each person to fulfill his or her potential. Leaders with this style often have high ethical and moral standards (2011:2). Last but not least, Kelly talks about management theories which focus on the role of supervision, organization and group performance. These theories base leadership on a system of rewards and punishments whereby employees are rewarded when they succeed and punished when they fail (2011:2).

Ethical Leadership: A Western Perspective

The definition of *ethical leadership* requires us to define ethics first as *ethical leadership* is a unique leadership quality that is relatively new in contemporary society. It is only recently when ethics have spread their wings to include leadership in the Americas, Central Europe, Africa and Asia. Thanks to the efforts of the contemporary advocates

of ethical leadership such as Joanne B. Ciulla, Betty Siegel and Vincent Luizzi who are driving this initiative from the American front and Petrus Strijdom, Martin Prozesky and Desmond Tutu who are driving the initiative from South Africa and Fainos Mangena and Lisa B. Ncube who are driving the initiative from Zimbabwe. *Ethical leadership* is an urgent matter in Africa because of the leadership challenges facing the continent today which have led to vices such as advanced stayism, despotism, violence, ethnic wars, and corruption.

Since readers are mostly interested in knowing what *ethical leadership* entails, it will be like putting the cart before the horse to define *ethical leadership* before defining the term *ethical*. To this end, the term *ethical* originates from the term *ethics* (Greek *techne ethike*) which is the scientific study of morality or the field of philosophical research that has morality as its object of study (Capurro, 2009:2). By *morality* is meant the habitually practiced customs, that is, behavioural rules and values in a given society with regard to what is considered as good or bad for oneself, for others and for the society in its various facets (Assmann, 2000).

Thus, *leadership* is considered ethical if it leads in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of others (Trevino, Brown & Hartman 2003: 1). As leaders are by nature in a position of social power, *ethical leadership* focuses on how these leaders use their social power in the decisions they make, actions they engage in and ways they influence others (2003: 1). Leaders who are ethical are people oriented and are also aware of how their decisions impact others as they use their social power to serve the greater good instead of self-serving interests (2003:1).

The essence of the Western perspective on ethical leadership is grounded on the concept of efficacy which is characterized by the Greek concepts of:

- Goal (*telos*) and means (*di'ou*)
- Action (*praxis/poesis*) and will (*boulesis*)
- The model *(eidos)*
- The leader (*hege`mon: demiourgo`s)*
- Actualization (*ene`rgeia)*

Thus, the goodness of the action of a leader is conceived of with regard to a model (*eidos*) or goal (*telos*) that the leader is supposed to achieve through theoretical (*nous)* and practical reason *(phronesis)* on the basis of a plan in order to master or inform a situation. *Efficacy* is thus the power or capacity to produce a desired effect. It is based on a project that anticipates a process towards goal (Capurro, 2009: 3). *Ethical leadership* from this understanding becomes a goal-oriented process.

It is important to observe that while Western notions of ethical leadership focus more on the qualities and role of the leader, African notions of ethical leadership focus on both the role the leader plays in promoting communal/group interests and the role of those he or she leads. In my Shona culture there is an interesting saying which goes like: *Hapana mutungamiri kana pasina vanhu nekuti mutungamiri unofanira kuzadzikisa zvido zvavanhu* (Leaders only exist for the benefit of the people who give them the mandate to lead as they must always strive to promote the common good of the people).

It is against this background that I seek to argue for a position that places an imperative on the role and importance of the masses in championing good leadership, a philosophical position that respects the collective will of the people and this philosophy should be grounded on *hunhu /ubuntu*. I argue that Western philosophies of leadership do not place an imperative on the importance of the collective will of the people a philosophy which is central in the African understanding of good leadership. Thus, good leaders follow

the will of the people. In Africa, the leader is not some gigantic, mythic or heroic figure but somebody who is given that mandate to lead by the people. Analogously, the leader is like a man who holds a torch to enable his group to navigate through the darkness.

The man is not chosen because he has special qualities but because he happened to be at the right place at the right time. The group tells him which direction to take and this is best captured in the Shona saying: *Kudzipakata handiko kudziridza* (It is not always the case that a person who is holding a gun knows how to operate it). This means that leaders in Africa are not supposed to be "Great man" but servants of the people. It is instructive to note that while Western philosophies of leadership implore leaders to influence others and make decisions that impact others, leaders in Africa must follow the collective will of the masses. This means that a leader must have a shared vision with his or her followers and this shared vision is captured in the philosophy of *ubuntu.*

Below, I give a critical exposition of this notion of *ubuntu* as outlined and discussed by Ncube before prescribing what I consider to be an ethical guide to African leadership in post-colonial Africa. Please note that my position is closely aligned with that of Ncube the only difference being that for Ncube, *ubuntu* will do well as a mere transformative philosophy while I see *ubuntu* as an ethical guide to African leadership. My position is that *ubuntu* should not only be an ethical guide for leaders but it should also be an ethical guide for the followers.

Ncube on *Ubuntu* as a Transformative Leadership Philosophy

In her preamble, Ncube gives an outline of some of the problems that have affected most African countries after becoming independent and these problems include; the subjugation of women which problem she

traces back to Colonialism, Christianity, Capitalism and the post-colonial state (Ncube, 2010: 77). Ncube blames the post-colonial state for causing conflicts, failures, scandals and corruption which have led to the general suffering of the citizenry including women and she argues that these problems are a result of the lack of good leadership (2010: 77). Ncube argues that there is need for transformative leadership in Africa which is premised on the philosophy of *ubuntu* (2010: 77).

Ncube defines *ubuntu* by locating it within Bantu Nguni languages of Zulu, Xhosa, Swati and Ndebele. She also gives the Shona equivalence of *ubuntu* as *hunhu* as drawn from Wim van Binsbergen's descriptions of *hunhu* as a social philosophy (van Binsbergen, 2001). Van Binsbergen argues that '…*ubuntu or hunhu* has become a key concept to evoke the unadulterated forms of African social life before the European conquest.'

For Van Binsbergen (2001) *hunhu* or *ubuntu* has survived the test of time: 'The world view (in other words the values, beliefs and images) of pre-colonial Southern Africa is claimed to survive today, more or less, in remote villages and intimate kin relationships and to constitute an inspiring blue-print for the present and future of social, economic and political life in urban and modern environments…' This means that *hunhu* or *ubuntu* as the ethical benchmark of African societies provides a guide to the African man and woman in whatever setting they are (Mangena 2007). *Hunhu* or *ubuntu* is the bone and marrow of sub-Saharan Africa, especially Southern Africa.

For Ncube, *ubuntu* forms the core of most traditional African cultures as it embraces the spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness (Mangaliso, 2001). *Ubuntu* expresses an African view of the world anchored in its own people, culture, and society which is difficult to explain in a Western context

(Karsten & Illa, 2005: 613). The point is that in the West, community exists to serve the interests of the individual while in sub-Saharan Africa the individual exists to serve the community. This is the spirit in which *ubuntu* operates. Thus, in Western cosmopolitans the leader is more visible and influential than the people he leads and yet in Africa, people influence the direction their leader should take when it comes to governance issues and leadership is about serving the people.

It is instructive to note that *ubuntu* for Ncube, encourages humanness and recognizes the sanctity of human life as it operates from the premise that no individual is more sacred than another (2010:78). Although *ubuntu* shares characteristics that "qualify" it as a leadership philosophy such as the call for servant leadership, unity, peace and social harmony, Ncube argues that *ubuntu* is distinct on a number of levels from the Western philosophies that have been in existence for many decades (2010: 78). First, *ubuntu* is basically a cultural value system and is still in its emergent and exploratory stages as an articulated philosophy (2010: 78). Second, Western leadership philosophies were developed from a Eurocentric perspective while *ubuntu* is an indigenous and Afro-centric philosophy (2010: 78).

More importantly, Ncube maintains that scholars of leadership now recognize the importance of including traditional cultural perspectives of leadership which in the past were shunned and she does so by quoting van Hensbroek (2001) who argues that as a post-colonial paradigm for leadership, *ubuntu* holds promise for a more inclusive discourse that embraces historically misinterpreted and marginalized non-Western traditions. This inclusive discourse takes on board the views and interests of both the majority and minority groups thereby transcending race, tribe and creed. This is in contrast to the colonial discourse of marginalization which thrived on

racial and tribal discrimination. During the colonial era, for instance, the colonial masters in a bid to divide and rule their subjects would create racial barriers between them and the black majority and tribal barriers between the Shona and Ndebele people. It is these barriers which were a source of disunity and disharmony and yet as we will see later in this paper, *hunhu or ubuntu* is there to destroy these barriers.

Having defined *ubuntu*, Ncube considers how this indigenous philosophy can be appropriated in the transformation of African leadership from dictatorship or tyranny to servant leadership where the leader is there for the service of his people. She, however, admits that this is an arduous task considering that most African leaders deny or ignore this philosophy (2010:78). This is probably true considering that most post-colonial African leaders use Machiavellian approaches to leadership which do not respect the will of the people in order to remain power.

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, however, leaders were guided by the traditional values of community when executing their leadership duties. In a way one could say that pre-colonial leaders behaved in accordance with the dictates of *hunhu or ubuntu* but the influence of colonialism coupled with Western education had a different effect on the post-colonial African leader which explains why some of them had to adopt Machiavellian philosophy as an approach to remain in power. Briefly stated, Machiavellian philosophy replaces the term *leader* with the term *prince* who wields absolute power and authority to the extent that he can even kill his enemies if he feels that his authority is under threat.

For Machiavelli, it does not matter how praiseworthy we may think the prince is who always keeps his word, for experience shows 'that princes who have achieved great things have been those who

have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick men with their cunning and who in the end have overcome those abiding by honest principles' (Williams, 1983: 46). Machiavelli argues that the prince should abide by law in his political dealings. However, those with whom he deals are by character both man and beast, so the law must necessarily be supplemented by force (1983:46). The prince must be both a lion and a fox. He has to be lion to frighten away his fiercest enemies and he has to be a fox to recognize all the traps that are set for him by his shrewdest opponents (1983:46). In a world of beasts (which is what Machiavelli thinks the political world is) the prince must both be the most cunning and the most powerful of all (1983: 46).

Although the prince should not set great store by such characteristics as virtue and honesty he should none the less, cultivate an image of himself as being such a leader (1983: 46). Machiavelli implies, therefore, that the wise ruler is self consciously a hypocrite who tries to gain a reputation for upright ethical behavior and yet he ought always to be prepared to act deviously and unethically (1983: 46). Thus, soon after liberating their countries from white colonial rule most African leaders adopted the Western style Machiavellian leadership philosophy – on a breathtaking scale – to ensure that their political leadership was not challenged and to silence any dissenting voices. As I observed earlier, these are people who had received Western education and their struggle against colonialism had taught them one or two things about how to remain in power through cunning and fraudulent means.

The Midlands and Matabeleland atrocities in Zimbabwe between 1983 and 1987 are a case in point where government forces allegedly killed about twenty thousand people in the name of dealing with the dissent element in these provinces. Most of these victims were linked to Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF

ZAPU), a political party which was then challenging the political leadership of Robert Mugabe, the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. The same thing happened in Rwanda and Uganda. In the case of Rwanda, it led to what has become known as the Rwandan genocide. This style of leadership also characterized most African states in the late 90s and led to major uprisings by the masses.

In Zaire (now The Democratic Republic of Congo) Marshal Mobutu was forcibly removed from power because he had disregarded the will of the people by acting deviously and unethically in his socio-economic and political policies. In Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda went the same way and the new millennium has seen Machiavellian leadership styles causing major uprisings in sub-Saharan African countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Madagascar. There has also been a wave of violent protests in Arab Africa with Egypt and Libya leading the pack. Arab Africa though lies outside the scope of this article for strategic reasons.

Nonetheless, these gruesome experiences have clearly shown that Machiavellian approaches to leadership do not work in Africa. There is need to embrace the philosophy of *hunhu* or *ubuntu* which holds that *munhu munhu muvanhu* (Shona), *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Ndebele/Zulu/Xhosa/Swati) or a person is a person among other persons (English). This means that a leader must be answerable to the people, since without them he or she is not a person but a beast. Ncube, however, notes – in her defense of *ubuntu* – that there are some leaders who have become embodiments of the principle of *ubuntu* as their leadership has fully demonstrated their values. These include former South Africa president Nelson Mandela and former Botswana president Sir Seretse Khama (2010: 78) among others.

To this list, I would add Thomas Sankara former president of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) who also lived an ethical life by

embracing the philosophy of *hunhu or ubuntu* until he was assassinated by his political emissaries. Mandela spent twenty seven years in prison for wanting to free the black people of South Africa from white apartheid rule. After his release from prison, he had the shortest reign as president of South Africa as he wanted South Africa to move forward. Sankara lived a simple life as president of Burkina Faso as he was against those who wanted to amass wealth at the expense of the poor. He had very few material possessions that included a broken two plate stove.

Ncube outlines *ubuntu* as a philosophical framework for African leadership whereupon she bases this philosophy on Mbigi's African Tree concept (1997) although she does not say more about this African Tree concept. Another critical aspect of *ubuntu* as a social philosophy is the important role that agreement or consensus plays. Here Ncube quotes Louw (2001: 15) who avers that: "Without a common scale, that is, without an agreement or consensus on criteria, the beliefs and practices of the other simply cannot be judged without violating them." This means that for any person to be able to judge the beliefs and practices of a people then that person must be conversant with the criteria used to come up with such beliefs and practices. From the perspective of *hunhu or ubuntu*, beliefs and practices result from or are a function of agreement or consensus and these beliefs and practices are passed from generation to generation. Indeed, no person outside these generations will be able to judge these beliefs and practices without violating them.

It can also be argued that spirituality is one of the moral anchors of African leadership as most African leaders almost always seek to justify their continued stay on power on 'their endorsement' by the spirit world. However, the masses can invoke the same spirit world to deal with wicked leaders. We have seen this happening in Arab African states such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya where people

have invoked the Islamic spirit through prayer and fasting to remove despotic leaders such as Hosni Mubarak, Ben Ali and Muammar Gaddafi. This is done in the spirit of *hunhu/ubuntu* which is called *ma`at* in Arab Africa. Since 1980 when Zimbabwe became independent, the political leadership of ZANU PF has justified its continued stay on power on the basis that the leadership was endorsed by great ancestors like Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi and Lobengula. *Mutungamiri wedu takamupiwa neva dzimu* (Our ancestors gave us this leader) the Shona people will say.

That said, Ncube models her *ubuntu* leadership philosophy along six key principles namely; modelling the way, communal enterprise and a shared vision, change and transformation, interconnectedness, interdependency and empowerment, collectivism and solidarity and continuous integrated development. To begin with, *ubuntu* as a transformative leadership philosophy requires leaders to model the way for others. Ncube quotes Malunga (2009) as saying that as role models, the leader legitimizes his or her relationship by a commitment to such African values as honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, compassion, empathy, dignity and respect for others.

For Ncube, values reflect the most basic characteristic of adaptations that guide individuals in deciding into which situations they should enter and what they should do in them (Nonis & Swift 2001). Thus, *ubuntu* values epitomize good leadership. While change and transformation are often not strong opponents of traditional societies, applying *ubuntu* to leadership contributes to changing and transforming the world. Rather than being forced on people, change comes through a process of openness and transparency. Thus, decisions to change come by consensus rather than by polling (2010: 79).

Another important principle of *ubuntu* as a leadership philosophy, for Ncube, is interconnectedness and interdependency. According to this *ubuntu* principle, no man is an island unto himself and as such, it is important for people in leadership to recognize this aspect as building relationships with others is the hallmark of good leadership (2010: 80). Ncube maintains that in building relationships, one builds trust thereby fostering collaboration and reciprocity. By accepting our interconnectedness, a leader will also have the desire to empower others by strengthening them and allowing them to act on their own initiative (2010: 81).

Ncube also attaches importance to collectivism and solidarity as a leadership principle derived from the concept of *ubuntu.* For Ncube, the African social culture is generally collectivist in which the needs of the community or society trump the needs of the individual and a collectivist mentality for Ncube encourages teamwork and a non-competitive environment (2010:81). Ncube urges that such an environment promotes solidarity and a spirit of working together towards common goals (2010:81). Finally, Ncube believes that the leader who demonstrates *ubuntu* will empower others to act and nurture their growth and creativity through mentoring and building relationships. I would say that Ncube's six principles place *ubuntu* at the centre of the leadership discourse by demonstrating that leadership is about building relationships, teamwork and solidarity. This means that the leader must realize that he is part of a group when coming up with issues that affect the generality of the population. Leadership that takes this into consideration transforms the lives of those who are led.

Critical Prospects

Attractive as Ncube's argument may sound, I put it that it has a lot of faulty lines. First, while Ncube argues for *ubuntu* as an alternative

leadership philosophy, she does not give reasons why Western leadership philosophies cannot be applied to Africa. She does not even give a brief outline of these philosophies as this is important for purposes of comparison and justifying the need for an alternative philosophy. Second, Ncube mistakenly assumes that every reader of her article know what both *leadership* and *philosophy* are. It is critically important to define key concepts as this will help the reader to appreciate and follow the argument. In my book, *leadership* is about both influencing and being influenced by others. It is about taking on board the views of the masses. *Philosophy*, simply put is a critical reflection on assumptions or questions in order to gain wisdom. People philosophize when they begin to ask such questions as: What is African leadership? What are the qualities of a good leader from an *ubuntu* perspective? Why are some African leaders good while others are bad? The same questions can be reflected on in the West.

Third, Ncube does not adequately explain how *ubuntu* as a leadership philosophy can be transformative. As a Moral Philosopher, I would expect a transformative philosophy to create certain desirable qualities in a leader as judged by those who gave him the mandate to lead. These desirable qualities, in my view, must enable the leader to realize that whatever decision he makes must be for the benefit of the group. So without outlining the philosophy that is required to create certain desirable leadership qualities, it will not be enough to suggest that *ubuntu* is transformative leadership.

As I observed earlier, I believe that a leadership philosophy is transformative if it creates desirable qualities in a leader as judged by those who elevated him or her to that position. *Ubuntu* does not only create desirable qualities in a leader, it also creates the same qualities in those people who are led, the followers. What this means is that *ubuntu* always remind leaders that they are there to serve the people. This will also make it possible for the followers to reciprocate by

giving them (leaders) the respect that they deserve. Thus, leaders must earn their stripes.

In Zimbabwe we have seen leaders who, once they are given the mandate to lead, turn their back on those who will have given them that mandate. They begin lining up their pockets by engaging in looting, corruption and nepotism while the majority of the population remains poor. Most rural constituencies have remained underdeveloped in Zimbabwe and yet there are politicians who represent these constituencies in parliament who have done nothing to improve the welfare of people in those constituencies. Binga which is in Matabeleland north has remained underdeveloped as there are no roads, schools and hospitals and yet the constituency has always been represented in parliament since 1980 when Zimbabwe became a Republic. It is a similar story in most rural constituencies such as Gokwe in the Midlands, Muzarabani in Mashonaland Central and Mudzi in Mashonaland East and yet politicians always promise people in those constituencies that they will improve their welfare when they get into power only to turn their backs on them once elected.

This situation is not only peculiar to Zimbabwe. Recently, newspapers in Swaziland were awash with the news that King Mswati and his fourteen wives were leading a lavish lifestyle while 70% of the country's population earned below the poverty datum line. This is the sad story of post colonial African leadership (*NewsDay*, Thursday 13 April 2011**).** In her descriptions of *ubuntu*, Ncube contends that *ubuntu* is distinct on a number of levels from the Western philosophies that have been in existence for many decades although it shares characteristics that "qualify" it as a leadership philosophy. Though she goes further to outline the *ubuntu* characteristics, she does not outline and discuss the characteristics of the Western philosophies she is comparing with *ubuntu*. I charge that

this is problematic as her thinly veiled attack on Western philosophies of leadership cannot be philosophically justified unless these philosophies are discussed and nuanced with other philosophies. The obvious question would be: What is wrong with Western philosophies of leadership when applied to Africa?

As a quick response to this question, I gave an outline of one of the characteristics of Western philosophies of leadership earlier in this article when I quoted Capurro as saying that the essence of the Western perspective on ethical leadership is grounded on the concept of efficacy which is characterized by goal (*telos*), action (*praxis*) and will (*boulesis*) and will continue to do so in this section. As mentioned earlier, *efficacy* becomes the power to produce a desired effect and ethical leadership becomes a goal-oriented process. We are not too sure whether the desired effect is on the leader, his or her followers or both. This is important as it will help us locate where power –which is the essence of leadership – really lies. This, for me, is the missing link which makes it difficult to apply Western philosophies of leadership to Africa especially Southern Africa where *ubuntu* transforms both the leader and his followers. Thus, Western philosophies of leadership tend to place an imperative on individual excellence whereby the leader is judged by what he or she can do rather than by what the masses can do to help him meet national goals.

Going by Machiavellian approaches to leadership, power begins and ends with the leader. This is a departure from the African way of doing things whereby only the collective will of the people is celebrated rather than individual excellence. This is the context in which I criticize Ncube since she does not take this important point into consideration. Now, it can be seen that *ubuntu* as a leadership philosophy is goal-oriented as it serves to promote the goals of the group or the community at large. Thus, while Western leadership philosophies regard the leader as the driver of these goals, *ubuntu*

allows both the leader and his followers to work together to achieve desired national goals. This is important as it ensures that the leader does not pursue individual agendas or personal goals.

This justifies why *ubuntu* should be an alternative leadership philosophy where participation by a whole group is valorized than leaving everything to one person, the leader. While Ncube is right to argue for *ubuntu* as a philosophy that transforms African leadership, her argument remains thin since she fails explain why *ubuntu* is more favourable in Africa than Western philosophies of leadership. As observed in earlier sections, Ncube also adopts the position by Karsten and Illa that *ubuntu* expresses an African view of the world in its own person, culture, and society which is difficult to define in a Western context but the idea of a collective will which is seen when a leader works closely with his followers seems to be missing in her argument. I do not have any problems with the position that she is taking except that I expect her to go beyond telling her readers what *ubuntu* can do to Africa to telling them what Western philosophies have failed to do when asked to explain African leadership realities which is what I have attempted to do here.

Hunhu or ubuntu as the Post-colonial African Leader's Moral Compass

It is important to observe from the onset that *hunhu or ubuntu* encourages leaders to be at the service of the people and to help put my point across, I rely on Martin Prozesky (2003: 6-7)'s ten qualities of *ubuntu* leadership which are: toughness, gentleness, hospitality, rejecting aggression and shunning the ugly side of competitiveness, bearing no grudges and being strong and resilient. I use these qualities to build an ethical theory that is best suited for the post-colonial African leader something which Ncube fails to do.

To begin with, it is important to argue that while some people might think that toughness contrasts good leadership, I put it that toughness is desirable as it is tantamount to standing by one's principles only if they promote the common weal. A tough leader is not necessarily somebody who makes life difficult for the people he leads by coming up with tough decisions and policies but one who sticks to those decisions and policies for as long as they improve the welfare of those he leads. That is to say, he does not compromise when it comes to the welfare of his people.

Gentleness means being able to listen to the problems facing the people with a tender heart and being empathetic to their cause. Gentle leaders share their vision with those who gave them the mandate to lead. They know that there are there to serve and not to dictate with the derived benefits shared rather than accruing to the leader and his or her inner circle. Since the beginning of the new millennium we have seen leaders who have deliberately avoided sharing their vision with the masses. In Zimbabwe, the chaotic land reform programme was a result of political leaders failing to share their vision with the masses. The net effect was that only those close to the leadership of ZANU PF benefitted from this chaotic land reform programme as most of them have more than one farm each.

The land reform programme which began in 2001 was chaotic in that it was politically motivated as ZANU PF used it to hit back on white commercial farmers who had shown their allegiance to the newly formed opposition party which known as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which to them was more progressive than ZANU PF. This resulted in members of the war veterans association and other pro-government elements invading white owned commercial farms thereby driving white commercial farmers out of these farms. As I mentioned earlier, only those aligned to ZANU PF benefitted from this programme and yet the majority of population

remained landless. I argue that *hunhu or ubuntu* requires that resources be shared equitably.

Ncube is probably right to argue that the *ubuntu* leadership framework requires a shared vision but her argument will only be philosophically sound if she contextualizes it by giving examples of African states where this shared vision has taken place or where it has not taken place. This is what I seek to do in this article. By parading Prozesky's ten qualities of *ubuntu* in this section, my intention is to demonstrate that certain *ubuntu* qualities can be appropriated to come up with not only a mere transformative philosophy, but a clearly defined ethical guide to African leadership. While Prozesky has used his ten qualities in a South African context, I use them in a Zimbabwean context which for the past ten years has been a fertile ground for grinding poverty, polarization, violence and plunder of national resources by the political elite.

Hospitality implies being able to receive visitors making them enjoy their stay even if they have a different political world view from that of the host leader. This has been a problem in post-colonial Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe political leaders from ZANU PF have viewed those who oppose their political ideologies as enemies and yet *hunhu or ubuntu* requires that they model the way for others including those who do not agree with their political philosophies. *Hunhu or ubuntu* destroys those barriers created by political competition and encourages our leaders to invoke the spirit of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Rejecting aggression and shunning the ugly side of competitiveness means not using unorthodox tactics such as violence and intimidation to outwit other political opponents as this has the net effect of polarizing the nation as has happened in Zimbabwe in the last ten years. While this aggressive behaviour is common in post-

colonial Africa, it is the direct opposite of the stipulations of *hunhu or ubuntu* as an ethical guide to good leadership. *Hunhu or ubuntu* celebrates oneness, peace and solidarity and it is the duty of the leader to ensure that oneness, peace and solidarity prevail and the masses should feel proud to identify themselves with their leader.

In Shona we say: *Mwana wedu iyeye, tinodada naye* (He or is our child, we are proud of him) referring to their leader if he or she has become a paragon of morality. If the leader does the opposite we say: *Haasi munhu uyu* (He or she is not fully human). Violence and intimidation are tools which are normally used by leaders who want to protect their own selfish interests at the expense of the collective will of the majority and any leader who resorts to these ugly tactics is deemed not to be fully human. As Ncube would put it, leaders should search for opportunities to initiate change through people. Rather than being forced on people – by using violence and intimidation – change comes through a process of openness and transparency.

Thus, most African leaders want to resist change by employing violence and we have seen this in countries like Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Egypt and Libya where leaders have used force to remain in power and yet *hunhu or ubuntu* as a leadership philosophy says *ushe madzoro or ushe huno siyiranwa* (power is shared). While Ncube's change and transformation argument is valid we do not know which audience she is addressing. In other words her argument is like a lake without fish, crocs and Hippos as it (the argument) has no clearly defined context.

Hunhu or ubuntu also requires leaders to bear no grudges as this is a recipe for conflicts and social disharmony. Being strong and resilient implies that the leader is not driven by parochial party interests but by the desire to defend his country against any form of

aggression both internal and external. By committing to ethical behavior, Ncube believes that leaders models ethical values and characteristics for others (2010: 79). For Ncube, the *ubuntu* leadership philosophy also requires that leaders not only inspire a shared vision but that they should also have a vision for the future that offers direction for others. This enterprise is communal as the benefits accruing from it are communal shared rather than being taken by an individual (2010: 79). Outcomes for the group are more important than individual goals.

Conclusion

In this article, I argued that Ncube's submissions on *ubuntu* as a transformative leadership philosophy – seemingly attractive – are faulty as she is not addressing a specific audience. I also argued that her thinly veiled attack on Western theories of leadership has no philosophical justification unless she gives a brief exposition of what these theories are and why they cannot be successfully applied in Africa. I then outlined what I considered to be the qualities of *ubuntu* which can be utilized to build a leadership ethic which can transform leadership in post-colonial Africa. I argued that although Ncube's six principles of *ubuntu* are important for the transformation of African Leadership, they must be contextualized and nuanced.

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