Indigenisation of Corporate Strategies in Africa: Lessons From the African Ubuntu Philosophy

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Within an African setting, the Ubuntu philosophy embodies a socio-cultural framework that applies to all individuals and institutions throughout the continent. The Ubuntu application is pervasive in almost all parts of the African continent. Hence, the Ubuntu philosophy is integrated into all aspects of day-to-day life throughout Africa and is a concept shared by all tribes in South, Central, West, and East Africa amongst people of Bantu origin. This paper presents a desk research that aims at reviewing and analysing literature on corporate lessons that can be realised from the African Ubuntu philosophy. The paper reviews the background and significance of the Ubuntu philosophy including successful cases of Africanising management systems. Finally the paper reviews major contributions that the Ubuntu philosophy can make towards global management systems. The literature reveals that there are a lot of corporate strategy lessons that can be realised out of the Ubuntu philosophy. These lessons include collectivism and teamwork, creation of synergies and competitive advantages, humanist leadership styles and maturity, consensus in decision-making systems, effective communication, and community-based corporate social responsibility. Therefore, there is a need for corporate strategy and management systems to be realigned with the local Ubuntu philosophy that defines the Africa's socio-cultural framework. To be successful, Africa-based organisations must be found on this Ubuntu philosophy.

Keywords: Africa, community, Malawi, natural environment, performance, South Africa, stakeholders, strategy, synergy, Ubuntu

Introduction

Management practices and policies are not an entirely internal organisational matter, as various factors beyond the formal boundary of an organisation may be at least equally influential in an organisation's survival. In this review paper, society, which includes the local community and its socio-cultural elements, is recognised as one of the main external stakeholders of an organisation (Khomba, 2011; Rossouw, 2010a). For the ultimate success of any organisation, it is imperative that business executives, employees, as well as other stakeholders understand the dynamics of the socio-cultural frameworks within which an organisation operates.

Within an African setting, the Ubuntu philosophy embodies a socio-cultural framework that applies to all individuals and institutions throughout the continent. In an African framework, taking into account these local socio-cultural dimensions are critical to organisational performance and the ultimate success of an organisation

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(Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). Hence, it is necessary to review and analyse all perspectives surrounding the Ubuntu philosophy in order to understand its dynamics and apply the same in corporate strategy formulation and general management systems within an African setting.

Research Aim and Objectives

This research paper based on the critical review and analysis of issues surrounding the African Ubuntu philosophy. Thus, the paper aims at examining the humanist Ubuntu philosophy by looking at issues surrounding the African socio-cultural framework. Specifically, the paper introduces the African Ubuntu philosophy which is omnipresent throughout the African continent and also critically reviews and discusses the significance of this philosophy in practice within an African framework. In view of the Ubuntu philosophy, the paper also discusses external factors that affect internal organisational operations, for example, African culture and leadership styles, employees' social-cultural values, and issues pertaining to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which are deeply entrenched in the African Ubuntu socio-cultural systems. Further, the paper outlines major cases of Africanising corporate management systems that based on the Ubuntu philosophy. Finally, the paper also enumerates overall contributions of the Ubuntu philosophy to the success of global corporate management systems.

Knowledge and the inclusion of these socio-cultural elements could act as a recipe for the successful implementation of an African management system.

Understanding the African Ubuntu Philosophy

The word "Ubuntu" is derived from a Nguni (isiZulu) aphorism: Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu, which can be translated as "a person is a person because of or through others" (Moloketi, 2009; Tutu, 2004). Ubuntu can be described as the capacity in an African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity, and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Khoza, 2006; Mandela, 2006; Tutu, 1999).

The Ubuntu application is pervasive in almost all parts of the African continent. Hence, the Ubuntu philosophy is integrated into all aspects of day-to-day life throughout Africa, and it is a concept shared by all tribes in South, Central, West, and East Africa amongst people of Bantu origin (Rwelamila, Talukhaba, & Ngowi, 1999). Although the Bantu languages have evolved since the concept was first formulated, the meanings and principles of Ubuntu are the same in all these languages. Examples of the derivatives of the term in the Bantu languages are summarised in Table 1.

The application of the Ubuntu philosophy optimises the indigenous setting of an African organisation. The Ubuntu philosophy believes in group solidarity, which is central to the survival of African communities (Dia, 1992; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). An African is not a rugged individual, but a person living within a community. In a hostile environment, it is only through such community solidarity that hunger, isolation, deprivation, poverty and any emerging challenges can be survived, because of the community's brotherly and sisterly concern, cooperation, care, and sharing.

Nobel Prize winner and the former president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela (2006), described Ubuntu as a philosophy constituting a universal truth, a way of life, which underpins an open society. The Ubuntu philosophy does not mean that people should not address themselves to a problem, but it does imply that they should look at whether what they are doing will enable or empower the community around

them and help it improve. The Ubuntu philosophy also implies that if people are treated well, they are likely to perform better.

Table 1

Derivatives of "Ubuntu" in Bantu Languages

Ubuntu derivative	Bantu language	Source
Abantu	Uganda	Broodryk (2005)
Botho or Motho	Sesotho	Broodryk (2005)
Bunhu	Xitsonga	Broodryk (2005)
Numunhu or Munhu	Shangaan	Broodryk (2005)
Ubuntu, Umtu or Umuntu	isiZulu and isiXhosa	Broodryk (2005)
Umunthu	isiNgoni, Chichewa, Chinyanja, and Chibemba (Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe)	Khomba (2011)
Utu	Swahili (Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda)	Broodryk (2005); Khomba (2011)
Vhuntu or Muntu	Tshivenda	Broodryk (2005)

Note. Source: Adapted from Broodryk (2005) and Khomba (2011).

Practising the Ubuntu philosophy unlocks the capacity of an African culture in which individuals express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity, and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and communalities (Poovan, Du Toit, & Engelbrecht, 2006). Respect and love amongst the community members play an important role in an African framework. The African view of personhood rejects the notion that a person can be identified in terms of physical and psychological features. Ubuntu is the basis of African communal cultural life. It expresses the interconnectedness, common humanity, and the responsibility of individuals to each other (Koster, 1996; Nussbaum, 2003).

The above descriptions of the Ubuntu philosophy bring to light that an African society is, in general, humanist, community-based, and socialist in nature. The Ubuntu philosophy therefore underpins any grouping within an African society. Such groupings include formal organisations that operate within local communities. Thus, the African Ubuntu philosophy can play a significant role in corporate planning and performance management systems, as it influences the internal operations of an organisation that operates in an African environment.

Significance of the Ubuntu Philosophy for Corporate Strategy

The sections below discuss cases that show the profound significance of the Ubuntu philosophy in an African context. Some analyses are based on the researcher's personal knowledge and experiences gathered over the last 40 years in the course of their African upbringing and associations.

The Community is More Important Than an Individual Under the Ubuntu Philosophy

The Ubuntu philosophy represents an African conception of human beings and their relationship with the community that embodies the ethics defining Africans and their social behaviours (Dia, 1992; Van den Heuvel, Mangaliso, & Van de Bunt, 2006). Africans are social beings that are in constant communion with one another in an environment where a human being is regarded as a human being only through his or her relationships to other human beings (Tutu, 2004). Therefore, the survival of a human being is dependent on other people—in the community and society.

There are several basic management principles derived from African tribal communities that embody this

philosophy, including trust, interdependence, and spiritualism (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). In the African management system context, the African Ubuntu philosophy represents humanness, a pervasive spirit of caring within the community in which the individuals in the community love one another. Ubuntu transcends the narrow confines of the nuclear family to include the extended kinship network that is omnipresent in many African communities. As a philosophy, Ubuntu is an orientation to life that stands in contrast to rampant individualism, insensitive competitiveness, and unilateral decision-making. The Ubuntu teachings are pervasive at all ages, in families, organizations, and communities living in Africa.

The Ubuntu optimises the African philosophy of respect and human dignity that is fundamental to being able to transcend ethnic divisions by working together and respecting each other (English, 2002; Poovan et al., 2006). People who truly practise Ubuntu are always open and make themselves available to others, they are affirming of others but do not feel threatened that others are able and good. With Ubuntu, one has a proper assurance that comes with the fundamental recognition that each individual belongs to a greater community.

From the above literature review, it seems that, in an African framework, the community frame of reference is what an individual is defined and associated with. In Africa, the definition of an individual is community-based and not individualist. Anybody who does not identify him or herself in the community is regarded as an outcast, which is contrary to western ideologies. Thus, an African organisation must run its activities on the premise that the community cares, and that the care of its members is paramount.

Positive Behaviour is Related to the Ubuntu Philosophy

Behaviour in line with Ubuntu is identified as an individual's state of being, where the person's behaviour is governed by an ability to reason and think within the community context (Swarts & Davies, 1997). Rational behaviour thus focuses on positive human values, such as love, sympathy, kindness, and sharing. Respect refers to an objective and unbiased consideration of and regard for somebody's rights, values, beliefs, and property (Eze, 2006; Tutu, 2004).

Under African governance provisions, respect, dignity, caring, and sharing are considered critical values that build African communities (Bekker, 2006; Poovan et al., 2006). The fundamentals of sharing are prevalent in African communities. The Ubuntu philosophy implies that one can only increase one's good fortune by sharing with other members of the society and thereby also enhancing their status within the local communities (Broodryk, 2005). The human value behaviour of the Ubuntu philosophy includes visiting sick people who are not necessarily one's own relatives, sending condolences to a bereaved family, adopting an orphan as one's own child, providing food for needy people in the community, assisting the elderly in many different ways, and greeting others in a loving, friendly, and compassionate way.

Broodryk (2005) summarised the Ubuntu philosophy as representing various positive attributes, as indicated in Table 2.

The attributes of Ubuntu show that an African society, which is humanist in nature, is also more community-based and socialist than Western society. Socially, organisations may be motivated to train their employees using Ubuntu as a philosophy, because doing so can help African organisations to develop a better understanding of African society and their roles as an integral part (corporate citizens) of that society. The positive attributes of Ubuntu also demonstrate what an organisation can gain in terms of understanding the seriousness of embracing a corporate conscience that is in line with African society.

Table 2

Positive Attributes and Meanings of the African Ubuntu Philosophy

Ubuntu attribute	Ubuntu meaning
U—Universal	Global, intercultural brotherhood
B—Behaviour	Human (humane), caring, sharing, respect, compassion (love, appreciation)
U—United	Solidarity, community, bond, family
N—Negotiation	Consensus, democracy
T—Tolerance	Patience, diplomacy
U—Understanding	Empathy (forgiveness, kindness)

Note. Source: Adapted from Broodryk (2005).

Gaining Synergies and Competitive Advantages Through the Ubuntu Philosophy

African organisations can build cooperation and competitive strategies by allowing teamwork based on Ubuntu principles to permeate the organisation (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). As a people-centred philosophy, Ubuntu stipulates that a person's worth depends on social, cultural, and spiritual criteria. It requires a life that depends on a normative engagement with the community, a substantive appreciation of the common good, and a constitutive engagement with one another in a rational and ethical community.

In this way, in order for a person to be identified as a true African, community and communality are substantive prerequisites. Communalism and collectivism are essential to the spirit of the African Ubuntu philosophy. Equally important in Ubuntu relationships is the aspect of working with others as a team (English, 2002; Poovan et al., 2006). A spirit of solidarity simultaneously supports cooperation and competitiveness amongst the team by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the betterment of the entire group.

In a team setting, the existence of Ubuntu as a shared value system implies that the team members are encouraged to strive towards the outlined team values, which consequently enhance their functioning together as a team (Poovan et al., 2006; Van den Heuvel et al., 2006). The team is brought one step closer to being effective because of the increased level of team members' commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction, which ultimately has a positive impact on overall performance. Thus, management systems that tend to focus on achievements of individual team members and not the entire group are likely to miss out on all the social and collective framework of an African society.

Conversely, when a team is not intrinsically held together by all members, the consequences can be negative or sub-optimal. Sub-optimality occurs because each team member works towards different goals based on different value systems. This can result in dissatisfaction, a lack of productivity and commitment and a lack of teamwork or team spirit amongst team members (Poovan et al., 2006). With such a scenario, it would be the task of the team leader to try to create an environment that is conducive to a team culture that appreciates the values of the Ubuntu philosophy.

Within an African society, oneness and sharing play a pivotal role in local communities and organisations—it is said in the Chinyanja, a Bantu language, that "mu umudzi muli mphamvu" (unity is strength). Community-based approaches also help to build synergies where the whole is more effective than the sum of individual parts. Under the Ubuntu philosophy, synergies are realised where the groupings are socially or culturally bound (Mangaliso, 2001; Prinsloo, 2000). The spirit of Ubuntu leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments, because the community is encouraged to participate, share, and support all the team members (Regine, 2009; Van den Heuvel et al., 2006). People can work together with community

groups in order for them to be more productive, for example, they farm, construct roads, fish, or fell trees together, while they are singing traditional songs as part of morale boosting. Thus, the community-based Ubuntu philosophy enhances productivity and organisational performance.

Through the Ubuntu philosophy, synergies create a great deal of competitive advantage for organisations from employees who practise this philosophy and their teams. An African organisation can gain competitive advantages on the basis of several business premises, including effective human relationships with others, language and communication, decision-making, time management, productivity, age and leadership, and cultural beliefs (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). Such business premises about the Ubuntu's contributions towards different areas of business perspectives is in conformity with English's (2002) argument that it is the spirit of Ubuntu which can give the African continent an edge and that will allow it to find a way forward. Within the redesigning processes of foreign ideologies, an African organisation must be localised in terms of its systems to respond to socio-cultural and environmental demands.

African Culture and Leadership Styles Can Be Found on the Ubuntu Philosophy Framework

Every geographic environment has its own distinguishing features, including culture. African culture is very different from western cultures in some ways which implies that in an African framework, social and cultural linkages are considered to be a key determining factor for the success of any organisation that operates on the continent (Karsten & Illa, 2005; Mangaliso, 2001). The implication of such concerns is that people must come first, before productivity, products, and profits. Once people have been given priority and are treated well in their daily endeavours, productivity, products, and profits should automatically be realised.

Afrocentricity encompasses African history, traditions, culture, mythology, and the value systems of communities, according to Khoza (Mangaliso, 2001), who is the Chairperson of Eskom, the supplier of electricity in South Africa. Khoza believes that corporations in Africa will be successful if they adopt the Ubuntu management and leadership styles, which are people-centred. It is perhaps telling that Eskom registered an after-tax profit of R5.2 billion over a period of 15 months up to the end of March 2005 after the corporation had adopted the Ubuntu management philosophy (Broodryk, 2005).

Similarly, Wolmarans (1995) reported that South African Airways (SAA) adopted an Ubuntu management system in 1994. Since then, the African Ubuntu philosophy has been a driving force in the company. The secret behind its success has been the publicly stated core values of South African Airways—these include teamwork, employee care, customer orientation, corporate citizenship, integrity, safety, and innovation, which are all embodied in the Ubuntu management philosophy. Improved results demonstrate that culture and leadership style play pivotal roles towards the achievement of set goals and strategies of an organisation.

Emerging African management philosophies see an organisation as a community and can be summed up in one word—Ubuntu (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). An African Ubuntu management system recognises the significance of group solidarity that is prevalent in African cultures, acknowledging that an African leadership style involves group and community supports, sharing and cooperation. Ubuntu-based leadership dictates sharing burdens during hard times, because by doing so, suffering is also shared and diminished. What is distinctive about the Ubuntu philosophy is the premise of a short memory of hate (Mazrui, 2001). Africans teach children to communicate effectively, reconcile, and find ways to cleanse and let go of hatred and give children the skills to do so. The Ubuntu approach to life enables people to express continued compassion and perseverance within communities and institutions.

However, African leadership that is grounded on compassion should use the Ubuntu philosophy with its original good intentions (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2005). Application of the Ubuntu philosophy should be in harmony with the good governance principles of an organisation. If these principles are not properly used, especially by managers and officers, claims of using Ubuntu in principle can create negative connotations if people say they are applying the philosophy whilst in fact their actual practice is divorced from the principles of good governance. For example, giving handouts extravagantly to people who have not worked for what they get would not be part of the Ubuntu philosophy. The Ubuntu philosophy encourages people to work hard within their communities/organisations as a team.

African Ubuntu Collectivism Cultivates a Team Spirit Towards Work

Traditionally, African societies tend to be cohesive and productive, working together as one family in their social grouping. Studies that were done in Malawi and Tanzania confirm that amongst the most outstanding values in these societies is the salience of the group (An Afro-centric Alliance, 2001). The group tradition or collectivism is so strong that generally Africans view success and failure as caused by traditional spirits that are controlled by the society.

In east and central Africa, family remains, and is likely to remain, a centrepiece of collectivism. Using family metaphors may be regarded as one viable option in managing motivation in the workplace (Carr, MacLachlan, Kachedwa, & Kanyangale, 1997). If there are any multinational organisations in Africa that continue to promote individualist performance systems, there must be a need to articulate folk theories containing traditional accounts of achievements.

The above literature review suggests that a wholesale introduction of individualist performance management systems may be socially and economically divisive and costly for any organisation based on Africa. The social-cultural framework of an African society is pervasive, even within the management and among employees who have direct attachments with their society.

Ubuntu Philosophy Involves Recognising an Employee's Socio-cultural Values Within an African Context

The successful implementation of any plans and goals of the organisation can be realised only if the human resources component is rejuvenated to perform better. It is important that the spirit and morale of employees be renewed, apart from those of the business processes in order to realise the set goals and strategies (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The development of cooperative and competitive employees can be achieved through training and educating them with indigenous knowledge. Such training programmes can encompass critical areas such as patriotism and citizenship, which focus on the constant acquisition of different local skills and the best working techniques, based on Ubuntu and teamwork.

Apart from the emphasis on employee training and learning on the job, it is important for a company that employees uphold a number of values for them to be effective and productive. In the African context, employees' values emanate from African socio-cultural underpinnings. For example, employees have to be treated as human beings and not necessarily as programmed machines (Prinsloo, 2000; Voelpel, Leibold, & Eckhoff, 2006). Employees have extended family systems that should be respected, and these systems may have an impact, for example, in terms of medical needs and funeral services.

When an individual is included in the community, that person begins to appreciate the idea of having an extended family system. The extended family system is not necessary based on biological bonds, but rather on

bonds of community solidarity (Poovan et al., 2006). Seeing oneself as a part of an extended family provides one with an identity in African society. It is the identity that makes one realise that all people collectively share the same commonalities in life and need to do so positively to co-exist and survive.

Even in a working environment, the spirit of extended family systems is practised. In the workplace, there should be a family spirit if there is to be produced (Broodryk, 2005). If all employees regard themselves as members of one extended family in the workplace, Ubuntu would apply in respect of personhood or brotherhood (or sisterhood), and everybody would automatically be a member of this big family—an organisation.

In Eritrea, the extended family system is an important source of security, economic, and social support in daily life, in sickness or old age, in cases of job loss and other societal events. It is the moral obligation of an Eritrean who has an income to support the poor, the aged, and the needy within the family financially (Ghebregiogis & Karsten, 2006). This kind of moral obligation and support based on a person's conscience has even been enshrined in the Eritrean Constitution (Government of Eritrea: Article 22: 3).

In Africa, the traditional heritage in many regions reflects the cultural norms of working together, developing a sense of co-operation, and helping one another in times of adversity and prosperity. Supporting the family is a symbol of solidarity and the interests of the family are always a priority (Mwenda & Muuka, 2004). Thus, if an organisation can function as a kind of community or family, similar employee values can be harnessed through the development of that sense of honour and good relationships with employees, as family members of the organisation.

It is important to note the above African ideologies and the social obligations that employees are expected to meet. Such perceived social obligations can have a direct impact on corporate performance. The non-fulfilment of perceived obligations (non-monetary) by organisations might cause employees to refrain from deploying their energies effectively in organisational processes. The perceived obligations by organisations can be conceptualised as "intangible liabilities", which represent the non-monetary obligations that an organisation must accept and acknowledge in order to avoid the depreciation of its intangible assets, such as intellectual capital and knowledge (Garcia-Parra, Simo, Sallan, & Mundet, 2009).

The above literature review illuminates basic guidelines regarding issues affecting employee welfare in an African framework. The constitutional provisions in some countries illustrate the national importance attached to these values that employers should take cognisance of when engaging their employees. Employees need to be given conditions of service that are all-encompassing in terms of the community support that is required by all citizens, including employees. In African Ubuntu-based systems, community relations are made up of extended family systems, distant relatives, and friends who all form a close-knit network of human beings of all ages.

In an African organisation, efficiency and competitiveness can be achieved by an emphasis on social well-being rather than on purely technical rationality. The Ubuntu philosophy propounds that employees' cultural values, which include extended family systems, medical and funeral arrangements, must be respected. The Ubuntu philosophy recognises the significance of treating employees as human beings but not necessarily as "programmed" human capital resources. The Ubuntu philosophy is imbued with respect for human beings, especially one's elders.

Respect Is Shown to One's Elders Under the Ubuntu Philosophy

Apart from the usual organisational culture and individual personalities, the content and style of leadership are dictated by culture. In Africa, authority flows from the old to the youth, and respect for the elderly is a guiding principle. In corporate relationships, age is an essential element in Africa (Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Darley & Blankson, 2008). Thus, an older person is automatically expected to hold a certain level of superiority, regardless of his or her rank, title or education. Respect for one's elders, which is pervasive in all African societies, is one of the requisites that foreign corporations should include in their corporate strategy and management systems; and this also applies to multinationals operating in Africa.

It is equally important to understand the social and management implications of respecting one's elders. For instance, in Africa, leadership is more likely to be accepted and is easier to respect when it comes from a more experienced and older individual than from young and apparently inexperienced individuals (Mangaliso, 2001). What this means is that it is very rare for a young man (and arguably even more difficult for a young woman) to be comfortable about assuming high office and leading a group consisting of older people who are regarded as senior to that young person.

Equally, it would be awkward for older employees take instructions from the young. This issue becomes especially complicated in a highly structured system such as the military, where compliance is a prerequisite and the leader is required to be more directive. However, respect for one's elders still remains a decisive feature of African society. Apart from the respect for one's elders in particular, the Ubuntu philosophy also demands respect for the community in general, where individuals are expected to be socially responsible to their local communities and society at large.

Respect to the Community and Corporate Social Responsibility Are Part of the African Ubuntu Philosophy

The Ubuntu approach allows team members to strive towards becoming caring, understanding, and sharing (Poovan et al., 2006). The compassionate approach enables team members to achieve a common goal. Through a common understanding, community members are able to help and care for each other as members of one family, as required in the humanist African Ubuntu approach towards the community and its members (Tutu, 2004). For example, the African Ubuntu philosophy, which is premised on community solidarity, demands that success of an individual should not be aggressively achieved at the expense of others as the purpose of the group existence is for communal harmony and well-being of all.

In line with the people-centric Ubuntu philosophy, individualism is not viable, for it is inadequate as a model to understand the basic human elements of a society (Khoza, 1994). By nature, humans are social beings and their wants and capacities are largely a result of society and its institutions. The most effective human behaviour is that which experienced in the web of relationships people have with the groups, organisations, family, and other bigger groupings that they belong to, such as the church, the state and other national and international organisations. African organisations have to understand this kind of relationship between their business activities and the social responsibilities that they have to meet.

The Ubuntu philosophy advocates community and engagement with the society that we live in. The communalism that the African Ubuntu approach preaches involves care for the community and society. This communalism involves wealth distribution among members of society (Khomba & Vermaak, 2012b; Prinsloo, 2000). In an African setting, a slaughtered cow is shared amongst the community members for their mutual

benefits. This social responsibility can also be expressed in terms of harvesting only part of the crop from the field, leaving the rest to the less privileged, the poor, the sick, the elderly, the orphans or the destitute and eventually to the birds of the heavens. Likewise, companies have a social responsibility to the community in which they are doing their business.

Meeting social responsibilities which are human-centred in nature is enshrined in the Ubuntu philosophy and has a positive impact on the long-term sustainability of communities and organisations. The philosophy also includes environmental protection, as human beings are considered to be part of creation (Broodryk, 2005). In Africa, there is considerable scepticism about the view that humans can be defined as lone beings, in terms of individual qualities. Instead, the view is that human beings must be defined in terms of their environing physical community.

It is regarded as important to human survival that the natural environment upon which the community survives must be respected and protected. For instance, it may be acceptable in other societies to hunt wild animals with firearms for entertainment or as a pleasurable sport. Such a practice is not acceptable in Africa, since hunting is only excusable if it is done for the purposes of feeding people (Broodryk, 2006).

To be in conformity with Ubuntu principles, socio-cultural attributes should never be ignored in any African organisational management systems. Corporate social responsibility should be extended to the notion of ploughing back to the local communities within which corporations do business (Rossouw, 2010b). Corporations can do this in the form of financial assistance to the disadvantaged, through educational and health systems, donations in times of disaster, and the overall community maintenance of infrastructure and cultural values.

Generally, the caring and sharing concept that forms the core of the Ubuntu philosophy has now been recognised globally. Modern corporations now realise that they are part of the local communities within which their operations are conducted (Liker, 2004). The literature analysis indicates that the inclusion of the Ubuntu philosophy into organisational systems would enable companies to be more responsive to the call for corporate social responsibility and good corporate governance.

Good Corporate Governance Is Made Possible Under the African Ubuntu Philosophy

Issues of corporate governance are becoming more pronounced in modern business practices. Corporate governance, which is intertwined with business ethics, is considered critical in organisational practice, as well as in general corporate productivity (Rossouw, 2005). The founding principles of business ethics and corporate governance are in line with the Ubuntu philosophy of regarding all members of an organisation as part of the community. It is this direct involvement in and with community members that brings about greater solidarity, love, caring, and sharing within a grouping (organisation).

A major governance challenge in current governance issues has been corrupted, which reveals the moral depravity and badness of the perpetrators (Broodryk, 2005; Moloketi, 2009; Nyarwath, 2002). Generally, corruption is caused by a lack of commitment to moral beliefs by the perpetrators, which is in turn due to the weak moral will of an individual towards other people. Corruption can be seen as a moral issue, where the perpetrators are fundamentally corrupt due to moral ignorance and confusion. Such a moral issue affects human life in a negative way where individuals abuse their personal and official powers (Broodryk, 2005). Corruption comes in different forms, which include nepotism, misuse of power, favouritism, and bribery.

While corruption manifests itself in the relationship between individuals and institutions, as a practice, it is

mostly rooted in the operations of market forces (Moloketi, 2009). Unlike the Ubuntu teaching, corruption is a pursuit of individual prosperity, as opposed to the common good of society. Corruption erodes the common fabric, undermines community and perpetuates poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. Ultimately, corruption leads to a rise in the blatant pursuit of individual gains.

When the awareness of moral rights and wrongs is strong, corruption can easily be rooted out. This is the principle behind the community-based Ubuntu philosophy. To curb corruption, for instance, the Ubuntu philosophy must be the essence of a value system that underpins a commitment to eliminate corruption (Khomba & Vermaak, 2012a; Moloketi, 2009). There is also a need for strong robust democracies, where all sectors of society, including the media and organisations of civil society, the private sector, trade unions, traditional leaders, and faith-based organisations have a responsibility to educate and promote the values of Ubuntu philosophy and anti-corruption.

The above observations indicate that there is much that the Ubuntu philosophy can contribute towards business ethics and good corporate governance issues. Under the African Ubuntu philosophy, people should be aware that individualism and greed, and profit achieved by sacrificing other community members, contravenes the true foundations of humanity (Ubuntu). The notion of Ubuntu or humanity teaches community solidarity, caring, and sharing amongst the members of a community or organisation.

Overall, the literature also reveals the tremendous contribution that the African Ubuntu philosophy has made towards organisations in the form of its unique management style, which is pervasive in Africa. It would be necessary to include all considerations and contributions of the Ubuntu philosophy by including it in the modern Africa-based management systems.

Indigenisation of African Corporate Management Systems

In the past, most business executives and government officials believed that aspects of management theories developed in the west may apply to the African context without any modifications. Indeed, there is still considerable confidence by management scholars and executive managers in using western cultural management models in African countries (Ghebregiogis & Karsten, 2006; Gray, Shrestha, & Nkasah, 2008). The use of such foreign ideologies is misplaced, in that Africa has a different socio-cultural framework altogether. Therefore, the adoption of foreign practices should be contingent upon the contextual cues on the circumstances of the society concerned.

It has also been established that local socio-cultural ideologies can hinder or facilitate the implementation of any foreign concepts and practices (Bourguignon, Malleret, & Norreklit, 2004; Ghebregiogis & Karsten, 2006). To a large extent, management tools are congruent with the local briefs and ideologies in the society of their origin. To some extent, locally developed management models tend to be aligned with the specific beliefs of the local society in question. Thus, the socio-cultural assumptions of a management model transferred from one place to another may be more, or less, consistent with the ideologies of the target society.

Africa needs to build its own Africanised workforce for the continent to create organisational and national values (McFarlin, Coster, & Mogale-Pretorius, 1999). Organisations will fail if they do not move quickly to Africanise their management efforts, including areas of corporate strategy. The universal adoption and implementation of foreign ideologies that do not fit into the African context have been a main cause of many corporate failures operating in Africa (Gichure, 2006; Khomba, 2011).

The above literatures indicate that a wholesale adoption of foreign theories should be avoided and that

adaptation of such theories must be encouraged to promote productivity and corporate performance. The use of management theories and practices should be contingent on the societal underpinnings of the environment within which an organisation operates. Furthermore, business managers in multi-national companies should always seek a compromise and strike a balance to target the different environmental settings of the different communities in which they operate, together with their different socio-cultural frameworks. Based on this understanding, it would be necessary to conceptualise the African beliefs and socio-cultural values in order to adapt unique management systems, specifically for Africa-based organisations.

Kamoche (2002) presented a similar argument, asserting that there is a great need to identify the characteristics of management systems in Africa, the diversity and adequacy of approaches currently in use and how these might be affected by the key contextual factors. African culture differs from other cultures in that Africans construct different meanings from western cultures, they negotiate different social and cultural contexts, and they make sense of their own environmental underpinnings (Ahiauzu, 1986).

International as well as domestic business managers gain a more informed understanding of the local cultural environment. Through such interactions, managers are guided in their decision-making processes (Gray et al., 2008). Thus, a multinational company manager has to interact with many cultural groups with different value systems whose perceptions of foreign presence vary widely from those of the foreign company. In compliance with the socio-cultural demands, multinational companies need to think beyond their domestic environments when formulating their global strategies and more especially when forming business partnerships in Africa (Koku, 2005). Foreign companies are required to first understand and appreciate the socio-cultural realities of the African continent that operate largely under the Ubuntu philosophy.

A body of research in Africa, *An Afro-centric Alliance* (2001) elucidated the vitality of contextual factors, including national and organisational cultures that may have a determining effect on the design and diffusion of management theories, policies, and practices. African culture is unique in promoting the reciprocity principle (Darley & Blankson, 2008; Tayeb, 1998). To be effective, one requires a clear understanding of the African context, including the historical, legal, educational, economic, and competitive factors that influence corporate operations.

Given the need to change and the limitations of western management development models, African countries need to develop their own unique approaches that are appropriate to their respective environments (Binedell, 1994). There must be proper identification of the African indigenous philosophies and values that underlie the African framework. Under this argument, it is expected that new management development models that are designed must be tested and validated in order for them to be useful tools in the African setting.

Social linkages are quite pertinent in the corporate world. Cultural and social linkages determine how an organisation interacts with its stakeholders, including customers. Even within the national framework, Klemz, Bushoff, and Mazibuko (2006) found that in South Africa large multinationals are primarily individualist in their cultural orientation and therefore are more likely to drive what they describe as "non-humanistic" aspects of service delivery to their customers. By contrast, the small black-owned businesses are more collectivist in their cultural orientation and therefore use humanist-type variables as a basis of their competitive strategy. Although black people are employed by large, traditionally white-owned corporations; their work-related behaviour is shaped by the prevailing cultural orientation of the owners and managers of those organisations through training and socialisation.

There is a need for the Africa-based business practices to be consistent with the cultural concepts of the

Ubuntu philosophy. In respect of customer care and satisfaction, small retail shops in South Africa are encouraged to supply empathetic and caring service because of its strong influence on the black township residents' willingness to buy (Klemz et al., 2006). Within an African context, in the long term, organisational goals and strategies are achieved when a compromise is found between different socio-cultural parameters and they are fused into the national and organisational frameworks. Therefore, it is in an organisation's best interest to move beyond just window-dressing and the empty rhetoric of the past towards an approach to management development that reflects Africa's unique context (McFarlin et al., 1999). African organisations and projects need to re-align themselves to the true African context and not a western setting in order for them to be economically and socially viable.

However, the African management theories can take a leaf from some of the western management theories, as they contain some universal truths. For instance, in Africa, some people keep "African" time, where indigenous managers tend not to attach much value to time keeping (Lutz, 2009). The universal business truth is that wasted time results in decreased productivity. There is, however, a need to discriminate between theoretical elements that can enrich a management theory based on the Ubuntu philosophy and elements that cannot.

When developing the African management theories and practices, principles, and concepts, the Ubuntu should be incorporated, as the philosophy emphasises the need to harness the desire for solidarity among the African people (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). Therefore, it is important for organisations based on Africa to adopt some western and eastern management techniques that can enable them to attain competitive advantage, but they need to do so, taking into account the African context.

The above literature review confirms that it has become imperative that cultural analysis be grounded in the local geographical environment, taking cognisance of different historical experiences, socio-demographics, internal politics, and other socio-cultural forces prevalent in the local areas within an African context. International partnerships and collaboration can be reached through consultation and consensus within the African framework. This means that foreign corporations should pay attention to issues surrounding local relationships and socio-cultural ideologies.

The above lessons about African socio-cultural frameworks are significant for organisations based in Africa. Managers need to be more dynamic in addressing the foundations of an African society, namely, the Ubuntu philosophy. To become a stable and successful competitor in both local and global economies, an organisation should strive to embrace new management models that are consistent with the local socio-cultural frameworks that apply where the organisation operates. The universal adoption of a foreign model without any adaptation is likely to be a mismatch with African society and may ultimately not succeed.

Contributions of the Ubuntu Philosophy of the Global Corporate World

There are positive aspects of African systems which could be adopted to enhance the corporate performance of local and international organisations. The sections below discuss the general contributions that the Ubuntu philosophy can make to the corporate world, and how they can do so.

Promotion of the Ubuntu Philosophy Management Systems

Observations about the unique Afro-centric systems show that new management models must be developed for organisations in Africa in order to realise the better value creation. Managers need in-depth

cross-cultural values for their organisations to penetrate African marketplaces successfully (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). Thus, a model can be developed and implemented taking cognisance of the teachings of Mbigi and Maree (2005), who advocate an Ubuntu-based approach to African management systems. The development process must evolve through several distinct phases in order for it to be successful.

The first phase involves the creation of a learning community to enhance the bonding for building a foundation and solidarity and promoting group learning. The learning process is a significant factor in achieving better organisational processes and performance (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). Secondly, the strategic planning process must be instituted to involve representatives of all constituencies in an organisation. Strategic visioning and values exercises have failed in the past because of their lack of a spiritual dimension.

The next phase is the strategy sharing, which entails the involvement of the entire organisational workforce in fora that are designed to share corporate strategy, suggestions, and receive inputs (Khoza, 2006; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The sharing of corporate objectives and strategies could involve a series of meetings with employees from different levels, functions, and racial groups. The sharing of strategies increases ownership and later reduces resistance to change. Ultimately, strategy implementation becomes easier.

Finally, the last phase requires participative skills building with mentors who emphasise close, trustful, and helpful relationships (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). This phase encourages trainees to be self-empowered and become authors of their own identity. One needs to consider and comprehend different factors that are constantly working in an African society in the mentoring process to be effective (H. Manwa, & F. Manwa, 2007). For instance, it is not appropriate to apply the western type of mentoring for Zimbabwean organisations, because of differences in socio-cultural values and beliefs. The significance of mentoring and its impact on attendants' performance ultimately affect their productivity and overall corporate performance (English, 2002).

Furthermore, Mphuthumi Damane, a former chief executive officer of Nuclear Energy of South Africa, recommends that every manager in South Africa be required to pass a course on Ubuntu management in the same way as all managers have to understand basic financial management (Mangaliso, 2001). It can therefore be observed that human resources development is a prerequisite for any successful strategy development and the implementation of the plans of an organisation based in Africa; and that the Ubuntu philosophy should be part of it.

Utilisation of African Social Capital

Generally, the corporate world can use Africa's uniqueness and social capital to build on corporate strategy and ultimate corporate performance. Social capital, which constitutes an organisation's emotional and spiritual resources, is a distinctive competitive factor, like intellectual capital (Ngunjiri, 2010). Social capital affects the impact of any strategic intervention and the ultimate effectiveness of policies, procedures, and processes. However, the current corporate practices, management thinking, and literature are weak in managing and using emotional and spiritual resources, which also help to determine the value of an organisation in Africa.

It would be important for people to think through and know who they are socially and culturally, why they are, and what they can become (Binedell, 1994; Moloketi, 2009). Social capital can, for example, be acquired through collective dancing, singing, drumming, and storytelling, as well as mythography, a technique that requires the facilitator to capture the collective story of the group in the form of a heroic mythology with distinctive events and characters to dramatise the message (Broodryk, 2005; Mwenda & Muuka, 2004). The

ritual elements of the workshops can be as important as the content and discussions of the groups. It is worth noting that in Africa, the dominant spirits determine the organisation's outcomes, consciousness, conscience, culture, and energy levels, which ultimately determine corporate performance. The belief in good relationships and communication within community members is also critical in the African Ubuntu philosophy.

Effective Communication and Public Relations

Communication and effective control systems constitute a significant component of a successful organisation (Neely, 1999). In an ancient Afro-centric conception of the Ubuntu philosophy, communication is reflected in various African traditional forms that regard communication as directly connected with the underlying concept of communalism (Mersham & Skinner, 1999). Within such underlying elements, community members effectively communicate on various aspects of the survival of the community.

The other useful attributes of Afro-centric systems include the reciprocity and mutuality of human relations that emphasise the belief that respect should always be reciprocated. Reciprocity underlies the Ubuntu phenomenon, where one only becomes a person through one's relations with others, thereby creating harmonious world relations with others. This also forms part of the ancient African philosophy that relates to communication (Broodryk, 2005). These aspects of the African philosophy may explain why public relations theorists and practitioners increasingly find African public relations intriguing, posing challenges to accepted normative approaches, as they seek a conceptualisation of a sustainable new global model of management.

Global Transformation Based on the African Ubuntu Philosophy

There is a lot of that the African community can contribute towards itself in particular and to the world in general. Organisational transformation is not just an intellectual journey—it is also an emotional and spiritual journey (Khoza, 2006; Mbigi & Maree, 2005). In order to access the emotional and spiritual resources of an organisation, appropriate bonding symbols, myths, ceremonies, and rituals are needed. With this understanding, the Ubuntu literature suggests that Africa can provide a unique contribution to the global practice in many management systems that revolve around Ubuntu, as propagated by Steve Biko (Coetzee & Roux, 1998):

> We believe that in the long run, the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationships. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa—giving the world a more human face. (p. 30)

The Ubuntu philosophy which is founded on the African framework has applied on a global scale because of its values that are based on human relationships. Such values as solidarity, compassion, generosity, mutuality and commitment to community can find resonance well beyond Africa's borders (Ngunjiri, 2010). It is based on this notion that the Ubuntu philosophy has spread its wings worldwide. Former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, embraced the Ubuntu philosophy when on September 28, 2006, he told the Labour Conference in the United Kingdom to embrace Ubuntu (BBC News, 2006).

The African Ubuntu philosophy has also been acknowledged and accepted by the US Department of State. When she was sworn into office on June 18, 2009, Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, the Secretary of State's Special Representative for Global Partnerships, expounded positively on the concept of the Ubuntu philosophy (US Government, 2009).

Thus, the African Ubuntu philosophy has a global impact on corporate management systems. With globalisation, the modern management regards the firm as a community and not just as a collection of

individual entities (Lutz, 2009). Therefore, an Ubuntu global philosophy will make managers understand the purpose of management as a tool for promoting the common good of all the stakeholders of an organisation.

The literature analysis of the African Ubuntu philosophy underscores the significance of Africa's unique socio-cultural framework, which has a direct impact on the performance of an organisation based in Africa. In an African society, community is paramount and society is founded on the Ubuntu philosophy, which is community-based and socialist in nature. The inclusion of the African social-cultural framework would be a basic step towards redesigning corporate management models.

Conclusions

This paper has critically reviewed and analysed the literature on the African Ubuntu philosophy, considering its implications for management and thus for its inclusion in formulating corporate frameworks, specifically for organisations in Africa. The review paper gives the background on the Ubuntu philosophy and how it can be linked up with corporate strategy lessons for organisational success. One of the profound lessons on Ubuntu philosophy is that it integrates African organisations with the local communities. The reviewed literature also reveals that organisations are able to realise synergies through communalism and collectivism that arise from the Ubuntu principles.

Based on the Ubuntu philosophy, there are several external factors that automatically affect organisational internal operations. Such external factors include African culture and leadership styles, business ethics, and good corporate governance, employees' socio-cultural values, including extended family systems and corporate social responsibilities. Finally, theories suggesting the successful implementation of Afro-centric management systems have also been analysed.

In general, within the Ubuntu philosophy, the importance and value of the human being (munthu) and the community (mtundu) are pivotal. The practices of the Ubuntu philosophy with regard to humanity, caring, sharing, teamwork spirit, compassion, dignity, consensus decision-making systems, and respect for the environment are all positive elements that could make a contribution towards the improvement of corporate performance. The literature in fact indicates that there is now a global shift in management thinking which is now taking note of the Ubuntu philosophy.

The article has also reported on the literature review which highlights the need for management systems to be realigned with the local Ubuntu philosophy that defines the African socio-cultural framework. To be successful, Africa-based organisations must be founded on this Ubuntu philosophy. Indeed, all we need is Ubuntu.

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