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The perceptions of black senior managers of the obstacles to the practice of African leadership in South African organisations

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The perceptions of black senior managers of the obstacles to the practice of African leadership in South African organisations

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Johannesburg, 2014

ABSTRACT

African leadership remains one of the most under-studied of all leadership theories. There are numerous examples of exemplary leadership by Africans through traditional practices and principles. These African leadership principles have unfortunately not enjoyed the warranted success in business organisations in South Africa.

This qualitative study delves into the obstacles in the workplace to the practice of African leadership. Various other issues including multi-culture, the importance of vision and values are also studied in order to study the environmental conditions necessary for a leadership theory such as African leadership to endure.

A tremendous amount of work is necessary to build a solid foundation for the prosperity of leadership principles and practices that have been part of the upbringing of most black Africans and this will require that business leaders, academics and society speak with one voice to promote and protect their heritage.

DECLARATION

I, Charles Makgala, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

_____

Charles Makgala

Signed at …….

On the …….. day of ……. 2014.

DEDICATION

To Thabile, my cornerstone, friend and wife, my lovely children Dikhabiso le Mmuso.

Ke nna lesoko le letsho le le senang senyedi mo molaleng.

Ke nna ngwana wa tatedi kgoromotswana, ngwana wa mmamokate wa kgomo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to everyone who contributed to this study and my supervisor, Professor Drikus Kriek, for his patience and guidance.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research was to identify the perceived obstacles to the use of African leadership principles and practices in organisations operating in the Republic of South Africa.

1.2 Context of the study

Mangaliso (2001) states that much of the current management and leadership theory is based on the literature of western scholars and these theories are limited, in that cultural and regional differences are largely ignored. Wasanika, Powell, Littrell and Dorfman (2011) go on to add that most leadership literature does not reflect indigenous dimensions and context that are central and essential to African leadership. As pressures related to global competitiveness intensify, the pressure to make swift organisational and cultural change is greater than ever and these changes can only be effected through people (Grobler, 1996).

Walumba, Avolio and Aryee (2011), argue that economic performance is critically dependent on the ability to develop and exploit critical internal capabilities. They further argue that even though other factors such as technological developments are important, leadership and management remain critical factors in creating and sustaining competitive advantage. According to Nkomo and Cook (2006), Africa as a continent, does not score highly on global measures of social and economic well-being. Some of the issues raised include:

- High rates of illiteracy among African people;
- Low life expectancy;
- Low GDP per capita;
- Poor infrastructure; and
- Social inequality.

Nkomo and Cook (2006) suggest that these trends in measures for the African continent further intensify the need for leadership in Africa that is rooted in African culture. Furthermore, this African leadership needs to be responsive to the political and economic context of the continent.

The recent events of public service delivery protests, illegal strikes on the mines, community protestations against big business, violent strikes, etc. have left a void of leadership that needs to be filled. It should be asked whether the current leadership style was suitable to avoid these crises. Leaders in both the political and business arena have come out in favour of certain aspects of African leadership and its potential influence in positively impacting harmonious living and creating the much needed cohesion between the various aspects of our communities.

1.3 What is African leadership?

African leadership has, to a large extent, to do with traditional values and to this end Nkomo (2006a) states that African management and leadership is thought to emphasise “traditionalism, communalism, co-operative teamwork and mythology” (p. 10).

Africa is by no means a single entity and the term African leadership in itself is problematic in that it, by definition, suggests a single or uniform leadership style in the vast continent of Africa (Nkomo, 2006a). This tendency to portray Africans as a homogenous group fails to recognise vast linguistic and ethnic diversity, which highlights the need to be sensitive to these factors while using the common factors in cultural values to inform practices of leadership and management of people in Africa (Walumba et al., 2011).

African leadership finds its roots in the entrenched cultures and traditions of the African continent. The main thread common to African leadership is the sense of family that extends far beyond the nuclear family unit, a concept predominant in the rest of the world (Nkomo, 2006a).

The system and functions of the family unit is thus the basic building block of African leadership. This manifests itself in concepts such as Ubuntu, which has been aptly defined in the South African government's 1996 white paper on welfare, and quoted as:

> "… the principle of caring for each other's well-being and a spirit of mutual support. Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being" (Hailey, 2008, p. 3).

While Ubuntu is a uniquely South African term, work by Hailey (2008) drew references to examples of other cultures across sub-Saharan Africa and other African humanism debates. In fact, Hailey (2008) draws on examples of metaphors and proverbs in parts of Africa that embodies the spirit of Ubuntu.

After Hailey (2008) and the various attributes of Ubuntu, the following African leadership attributes are apparent:

- Respect for human beings, human dignity and human life;
- Collective sharedness, obedience, humility, solidarity and caring; and
- Hospitality, interdependence, and communalism.

Thus, African leadership is concerned with the welfare of the group rather than that of the individual. These attributes are however not unique to African leadership, similarities can be drawn between African leadership and other leadership theories.

By definition, transformational and authentic leadership have similarities with African leadership in that the transformational leadership style promotes an engagement in a "mutual process to raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Changing Minds, 2012, p. 1). Other comparisons can be drawn between African leadership and other leadership theories, which in the end

support the notion that African leadership is really a calabash of many characteristics of various leadership theories.

Through Ubuntu, the African leadership style has the potential to galvanise the workforce towards a common goal and this energy, if channelled correctly, has the potential to multiply the profits of organisations in South Africa.

1.4 Problem statement

1.4.1 Main problem

The purpose of this research was to determine the perceptions of black senior managers to the obstacles regarding the practice of African leadership and if Ubuntu is recognised as an appropriate leadership trait that can be successfully implemented to advance the financial objectives of South African business organisations.

1.5 Significance of the study

The intention of this research was to ascertain the extent to which African leadership principles can be utilised to run successful multi-national organisations. Haruna (2009) argues that in an era where Africa is engaging in its search for institutional capacity, to promote governance and policies that will foster socio-economic change, community-based leadership has to be the only option as it taps into the culture of community, collaboration and cooperation.

African leadership principles are often seen as being socially orientated and community-based and thus not the preferred when compared with the more western leadership theories and principles.

The historic aspect of leadership in South Africa, as highlighted by Booysen (2007), is that there are still significant differences between black and white top management in South Africa with regard to culture and leadership values.

The study provides guidance to managers and business leaders on how to harness the cultural commonalities in the various African cultures by structuring an informed leadership and management model to gain competitive advantage in a global economy.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

- The study was aimed at senior managers and heads of department and or higher levels so as to exclude potential respondents with limited or no managerial/leadership experience;
- The study was limited to medium- and large-sized organisations; and
- The study focused on black senior managers

1.7 Definition of terms

- *Core values:* A system of timeless guiding principles and tenets of an organisation (Collins & Porras, 1996);
- *Lekgotla:* A consultative process between individuals or groups pursuing a common goal (Wasanika et al., 2011);
- *Tacit knowledge:* Unwritten, unspoken, and hidden vast storehouse of knowledge held by practically every normal human being, based on his or her emotions, experiences, insights, intuition, observations and internalised information (Karsten & Illa, 2005);
- *Total Quality Management (TQM):* Management approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction (Karsten & Illa, 2005);
- *Communitarianism:* Balancing of the individual's rights against those of the community (Garston, 1993);
- *Particularism:* Attention to variations among particular cases (Garston, 1993);
- *Individualism:* Concern for oneself (Garston, 1993);
- *Universalism:* Abstractions that are always true (Garston, 1993); and

- *Gross Domestic Product (GDP):* The monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific period.

1.8 Assumptions

- There was no bias in the choice of companies or respondents;
- The respondents remained objective about the subject matter;
- The respondents had sufficient knowledge concerning leadership and African leadership principles to provide valuable insight; and
- The time allocated per interview was sufficient to allow for adequate information sharing regarding African leadership.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to establish a theory base for the research and to highlight the important aspects of the literature required for the other aspects of the research process. In this chapter, key themes that are critical to the research are explored to form the foundation of the research.

The degree of understanding of African leadership principles was assessed, and from the onset, the distinct difference between traditional leadership and African leadership was highlighted.

2.2 Leadership and leadership styles

For the purpose of this research, leadership was defined as an act or behaviour of a leader to bring about the desired result or change in a particular setting (Naidoo, 2011). In most circumstances, leaders are constantly faced with both internal and external influences and strive to ensure the success of their respective organisations while taking a long-term view of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead (Chappelow, 2004). With this in mind, leaders in any organisation face a fundamental challenge of creating a shared vision and common goal while grappling with the challenges created by the advent of globalisation, liberalisation and modern technology (Neera, Anjanee, & Shoma, 2010).

A historic perspective on leadership has shown that not only are certain traits important in leadership but the context or situation is equally critical (Neera, et al., 2010). The ability to influence and create meaningful relationships has recently come across in the modern leadership studies (Daft, 2002 as cited in Naidoo, 2011).

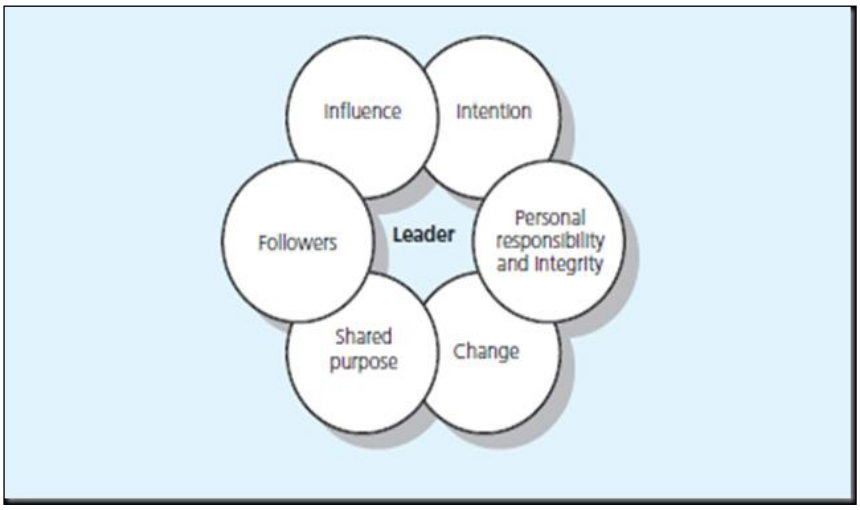


Figure 1: What leadership involves

(Daft, 2002 cited in Naidoo, 2011)

Figure 1 represents a definition of leadership by Daft (2002, cited in Naidoo, 2011) whereby all the elements identified, when dealt with congruently, form the basis of a successful leadership.

Given the traits that leaders possess and their particular situations, a number of conventional leadership styles have been defined to consolidate further the various studies on leadership. These leadership styles are:

- Transformational;
- Transactional;
- Charismatic; and
- Narcissistic.

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has been widely defined as a “process by which leaders and followers raise each other to high levels of morality and motivation” (Burns, 1978 cited in Gandolfi, 2012, p. 523). The effectiveness of this leadership style hinges mainly on the leaders ability to communicate effectively by delivering messages in a coherent fashion through an effective communication practice.

The main challenge that leaders around the world are faced with is the "management of culture as organisations operate more and more in a boundary less environment" (Neera et al., 2010, p. 22).

Bass (1990) lists the following as the number of ways that a transformational leader may achieve results:

- The leader may be charismatic and inspiring;
- The leader may satisfy the emotional needs of each individual; and
- The leader may be intellectually stimulating.

Table 1, adapted from Gandolfi (2012) and Bass (1990) summarises the characteristics of a transformational leader.

Table 1: The transformational leader

(Bass, 1990; Gandolfi, 2012)

Characteristic	**Description**
Charisma	Provides vision and sense of mission Creates meaning for individual followers Instils pride, gains respect and trust
Inspiration	Expresses critical purposes in simple ways
Intellectual stimulation	Promotes intelligence and rationality Creates a psychologically supportive work environment
Individualised Consideration	Coaches and advices each employee individually Personal recognition

2.2.2 Transactional leadership

One of the most definitive definitions of transactional leadership is by Bass (1985 cited in Hargis, Watt & Piotrowski, 2011) where a transactional leader is defined as a leader who engages in exchange relations with followers based on a set of objectives to be met.

These relationships are characterised by:

- Rewards for good performance; and
- Threat and discipline for poor performance.

Bass (1990) also referred to a transactional leader as a leader who relies mostly on passive management, and only by exception does the transactional leader intervene when the minimum standards and procedures are not met. According to Jamaludin, Rahman, Makhbul and Idris (2011), the main distinguishing factor of transactional leadership is the manner in which the leader motivates and appeals to the followers' values and emotions.

2.2.3 Charismatic leadership

According to Sandberg and Moreman (2011), charismatic leaders have the ability to mobilise their followers towards a common course. Burke and Brinkerhoff (1981 cited in Sandberg & Moreman, 2011) defined charismatic leaders as "intelligent, innovative, persuasive and magnetic leaders who emerge in situations where people are economically, socially and politically oppressed" (Sandberg & Moreman, 2011, p. 2).

Walter and Bruch (2009) go on to describe behaviours of a charismatic leader:

- Leader possesses an intense emotional component;
- Leader acts as a role model;
- Leader makes valiant, eccentric decisions;
- Leader communicates an emotionally captivating vision; and
- Leader fosters the acceptance of common goals.

2.2.4 Narcissistic leadership

A narcissistic leader is described by Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) as an individual whose aspirations and decisions are driven by uncompromising arrogance and self-absorption.

Although a narcissistic leader can be quite an effective leader, their leadership is driven by “their own personal egotistical needs for power and admiration” (Kets, de Vries & Miller, 1997 cited in Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 618).

These individuals are self-focussed and possess a persistent mould of vanity, which comes across in their self-important behaviour (Humphreys, Zhao, Ingram, Gladstone, & Basham, 2010).

2.3 Leadership in a multi-cultured environment

The advent of globalisation has placed an increasing duty on leaders and managers, to lead organisations that are multi-cultured and expand across their borders and cultural comforts (Kumar, Anjum, & Sinha, 2011).

The performance of multi-cultured teams has become key to the success of the organisation as a whole, thus elevating the issue of leadership within multi-cultured teams (Matveev & Nelson, 2004). According to Kumar et al. (2011), these leaders need to be cross-culturally aware and competent.

In an article on cross-cultural interactions, Adler and Bartholomew (1992 cited by Kumar et al., 2011) stated that the leaders in a multi-cultured environment needed to develop and be competent in the following:

- Business, political and cultural environment worldwide;
- Perspectives and trends of other cultures;
- Working simultaneously with people from many cultures;
- Living and communicating; and
- Relating based on equality rather that cultural superiority.

A leader in this environment will have to adopt a number of techniques to deal with the challenges presented by the nature of the team while recognising and valuing the cultural, religious and other differences to enhance the productivity and profitability of the organisation (Kumar et al., 2011).

Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque and House (2006) suggest that cross-cultural relationships are best dealt with by focusing on the contentious points of the varying cultures and suggest solutions to avoid cultural ambiguity and conflict. The Third Culture Bonding (TCB) model, as presented by Javidan et al. (2006), aims to bridge this cultural gap in organisations while building trust, respect and commitment from all employees of the organisation.

2.4 Potential impact of African leadership in organisations

For African leadership to have a substantial impact on organisations in South Africa, the traditional concepts of inclusivity and humanity have to be translated and developed into models of institutional and individual relations (Khoza, 2008).

One of the great gifts that African leadership offers the world is humility, where the achievement of goals and shared visions are possible when working in tandem with others (Khoza, 2008).

According to Nkomo (2006b) and Khoza (2008), the ideal African leader espouses the following qualities:

- Servant leader;
- Decisive and strong minded;
- Commands a willing following;
- Leadership style congruent with own culture; and
- "… develop a purposeful act of knowing and behaving in a humane context" (Nkomo, 2006b, p. 11).

Furthermore, Van der Colff (2003) agrees that an African leader must be able to create discontent with the status quo while creating a strong willingness to work together to achieve the organisations' vision.

While there is some literature on exemplary African leadership, there are a number of examples of authoritarian leadership that have characterised many African nations (Goldsmith, 2001). Masango (2003) further notes this notion, where there have been a number of leaders with leadership styles that were seen as not supporting the spirit of African leadership.

A number of African leaders have traditionally maintained a high power distance relationship between themselves and their followers resulting somewhat in a culture of unconditional obedience to directives. This respect for hierarchy manifests itself in autocratic leadership styles as witnessed in a number of countries and companies (Walumba et al., 2011).

Goldsmith (2001) further purports that this deviation from African leadership principles has thus led to a lack of national identity across many countries in the continent and widespread economic distress.

2.4.1 Sankofa installation

The practice of Sankofa, a cornerstone of African leadership practice has its origins in the Akan-speaking nations of Western Africa.

Sankofa installation is best described by Hotep (2010) as the ideology that one of the best ways to build an ideal future is to spend time learning from the past. To this end, Hotep (2010) promotes a deep knowledge of contributions of past leaders coupled with courage and willingness to take up their struggles.

Akbar (1996 cited in Hotep, 2010) asserts that Sankofa installation is completed by publicly expressing ancestral respect and adoration of past leaders by naming parks, buildings and the like in honour of these past leaders.

2.4.2 Ubuntu

Following the advent of democracy in South Africa, Ubuntu, as a management concept to support the revitalisation of the economy, became more and more popular (Karsten & Illa, 2005). At the time, Ubuntu was mainly aimed at improving the coordination of personnel in organisations.

Ubuntu has to be seen as a way the company members interact and share tacit knowledge with one another, in this way, the concept of Ubuntu becomes an important facet of organisational culture contributing positively towards business results rather that a fad associated with team building and other flavour of the month initiatives (Karsten & Illa, 2005).

Karsten and Illa (2005) continue to liken Ubuntu to the world renowned Japanese concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), arguing that just as Ubuntu promotes the values of humanness, the value of people is fundamental to the TQM concept. The fundamental aspect of TQM, labour, is recognised as human thus promoting the bridged gap between official and unofficial cultures. Some of the key TQM elements that resonate with Ubuntu include integrity, teamwork, leadership, recognition and communication.

Ncube (2010) argues that a large part of Ubuntu involves recognising the diversity of people, languages and histories, which makes it easier to reach a consensus or agreement. She suggests a leadership framework based on the participatory and transparent attributes of Ubuntu. This Ubuntu leadership framework makes it possible for previously marginalised leadership traditions to become prominent and relevant in the global economic spectrum while encouraging a strong African context.

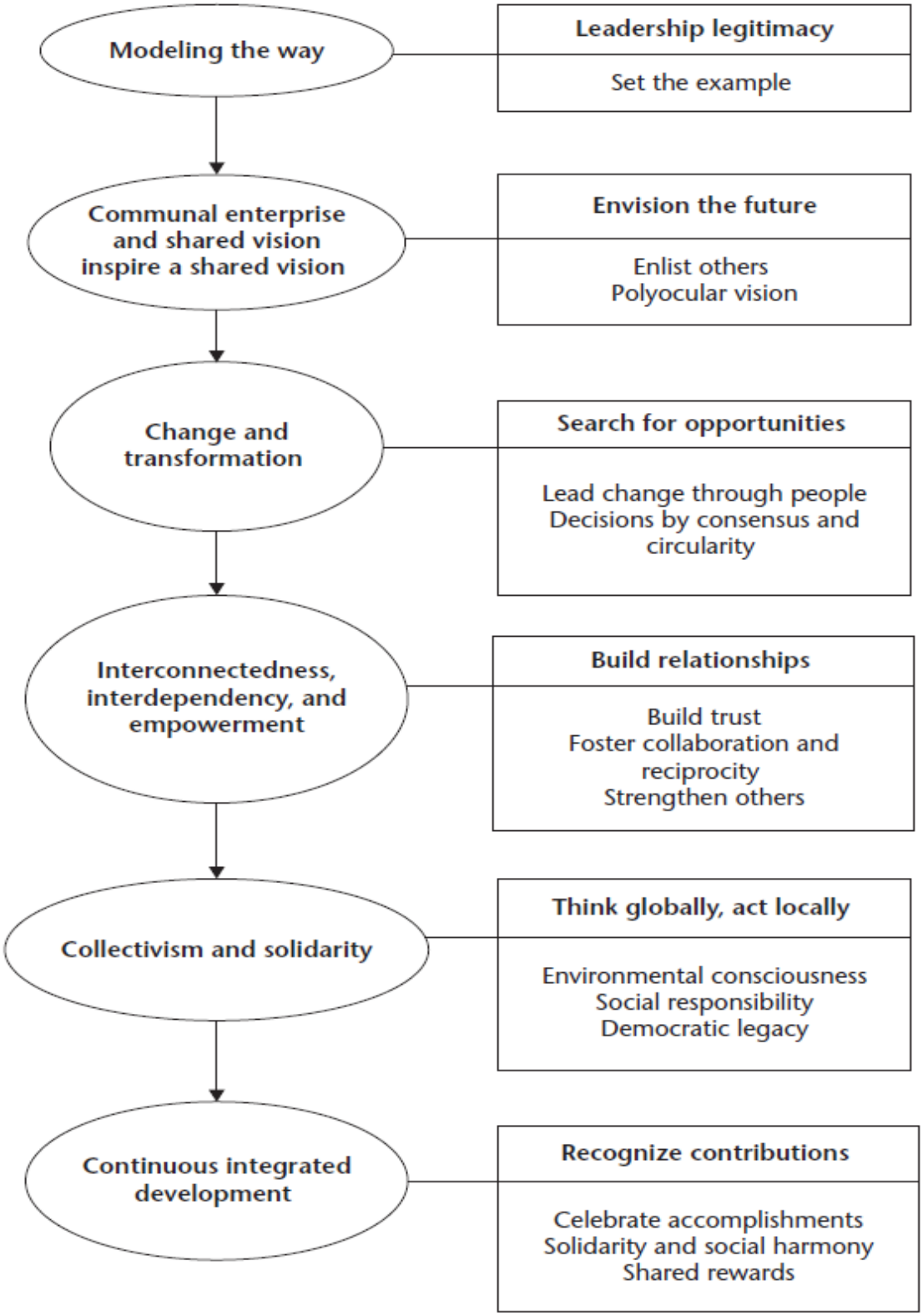


Figure 2: Ubuntu leadership framework

(Ncube, 2010)

This leadership framework, (Ncube, 2010) enhances the importance of the following traits that promote Ubuntu:

- **Modelling the way** – A leader has must demonstrate the behaviour that is expected from others and by setting an example, the leader can reinforce and legitimize their role as a leader.
- **Interconnectedness, interdependency, and empowerment** – this trait highlights the importance of a leader building strong relationships, empowering others and ensuring collaboration
- **Collectivism and Solidarity** – The needs of the collective are paramount to the needs of individuals. This can lead to greater teamwork and fortify an environment of solidarity and working together towards a common goal.
- **Continuous integrated development** – Mentoring and nurturing the growth and development of others are important aspects of leadership.

Perhaps the most defining attributes of Ubuntu are the high degree of harmony and continuity, as expressed by Mangaliso (2001), and because Ubuntu embodies the value systems and beliefs of a large number of Africans, it stands to reason that their behaviour in the workplace is influenced by their social background.

This relationship is further emphasised by the model as presented by Mangaliso (2001), where unobservable social and cultural norms and beliefs have an influence on workplace behaviour.

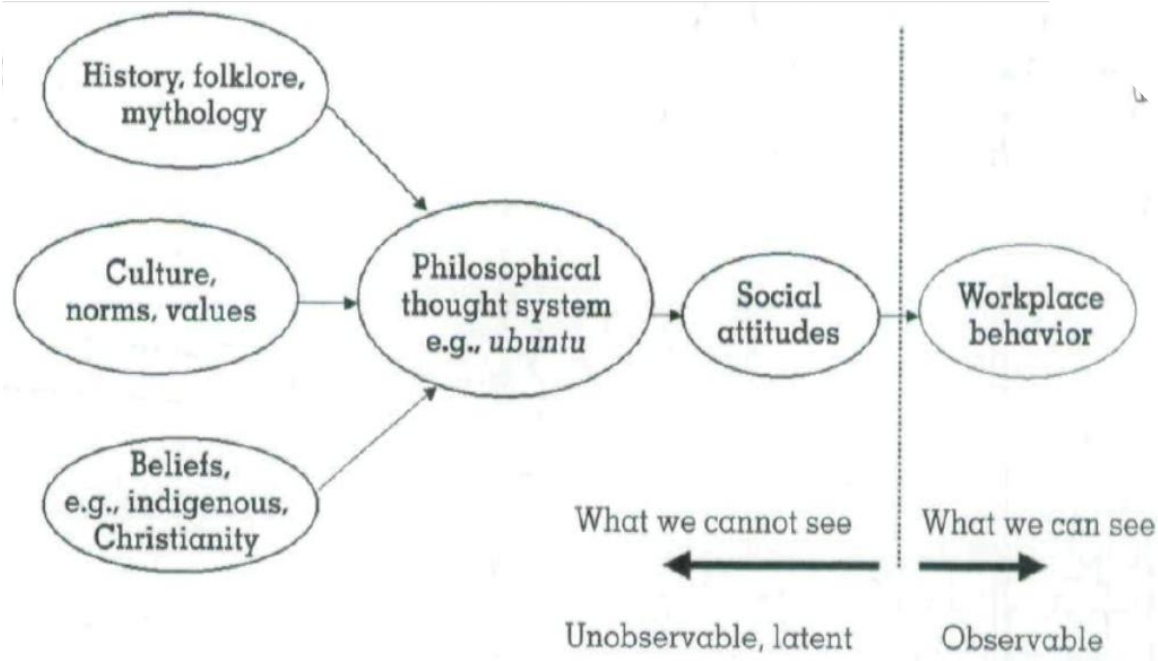


Figure 3: Philosophical thought system and workplace behaviour

(Mangaliso, 2001, p. 24)

Mangaliso (2001) expertly expressed the competitive advantage of Ubuntu using Trompenaar and Hampden-Turner's (1997, cited in Mangaliso, 2001) model, 'the seven dimensions of culture' which outlines the potential financial bottom-line benefit of adopting some of the attributes associated with the principle of Ubuntu. The key factor in the model is that the questions, aimed at over 15,000 business managers from around the world, were "designed in such a way as to allow discovery of the values, habits, and cultural styles ordinarily associated with social development or the arts - except now they were analysed as the key ingredients of economic success" (Hill, 1997, p. 1)

In a brief summary, the model coined the seven cultures of capitalism; Garston (1993) reviews the model as follows:

- Factors that may lead to success in a capitalist environment include communitarianism and particularism as opposed to factors that are unlikely to contribute to success such as individualism and universalism;

- A number of combination of choices can lead to success in a given environment;
- The model is useful for people doing international business and is a helpful tool to adapt to varying styles of business culture; and
- No recommendations for environments with an inappropriate culture for business success.

The model, as presented by (Mangaliso, 2001) is outlined in Table 2:

Table 2: Competitive advantage of Ubuntu

(Mangaliso, 2001)

Assumptions	Ubuntu	Competitive advantage
Relationship with others	Relationships are reciprocal. Treat others as your brother/sister	Mutual respect and empathy are Ubuntu advantages
Language and communication	Poetic expression and ability are signs of wisdom	Ubuntu communication means concerted action that is adaptable
Decision making	Decisions by consensus. Dispute resolution to restore harmony	Ubuntu might be slow to action but greater commitment to goals means more long-run effectiveness and efficiency
Time	Not a finite commodity: Allow enough of it for important issues before arriving at a decision	Punctuality is a virtue but time's healing dimension is a hidden competitive advantage of Ubuntu
Productivity	Solidarity and social harmony is important. Rewards are shared, so is suffering	Sustainable competitive advantage comes from strong loyalty to group goals of Ubuntu
Age and leadership	Age is an ongoing process of acquiring wisdom	Older workers bring experience, wisdom, connections and informal networks
Belief systems	Belief in the Creator and the mediating role of the isangoma. Christianity is now prevalent	Spirituality brings out the best qualities in humans. Ubuntu has the edge

2.4.3 Leading change in an organisation

Nkomo and Kriek (2011) argue that meaning and purpose for an organisation are created at a strategic level and that it is at this level that acceptance of the need to change and behavioural flexibility are paramount for leading change.

The critical role played by top executives in leading radical change is further emphasised where certain undesired leadership traits are institutionalised by design or default (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011). In the cases studied by Nkomo and Kriek (2011), a few common themes were apparent:

- Leaders must accept and align their organisations to demands imposed by external environments;
- Leaders must adopt a multi-stakeholder perspective to effect change in the organisation;
- Leaders must use their authority and influence to re-frame issues; and
- Leaders must align change within the organisation and the organisation's values to African culture and values.

In an interview with Reuel Khoza (Mangaliso & Nkomo, 2001), he points out a need for afro-centric leadership approaches in effecting change in South African business.

2.5 So, what is traditional leadership?

Communal traditional leadership has its roots in the cultural setting of the Bantu and other early hunter-gatherer societies (Wasanika et al., 2011). Wasanika et al. (2011) go on to say that with time, the leadership characteristics of these nomadic kingship communities were fairly democratic and cooperative in nature.

Traditional leadership is based mainly on power bestowed from one generation to the next through patrilineal inheritance. According to Ndlela, Green and Reddy (2010), the majority of the rural population in Africa still depend on traditional rules for guidance on issues such as:

- Land rights and acquisition;
- Justice and the rule of law; and
- Traditional practices and customs.

The historical role of traditional leadership was to serve as “the bulwark for the defence and integrity of the state” (Ndlela et al., 2010, p. 2) with a strong mandate to security, peace and prosperity at all times.

Some of the characteristics of traditional leadership, as practiced today include (Wasanika et al., 2011):

- Age is associated with accumulated wisdom and seniority;
- Kingdoms are stratified by age, sex and wealth;
- No individual ownership of land (Ndlela et al., 2010);
- Land allocation remains a central responsibility of traditional leaders (Ndlela et al., 2010);
- Traditional rule and dispute settlements; and
- Lekgotla.

2.6 Conclusion of literature review

Even though African leadership has similarities with other leadership theories from other parts of the world, there is still a long way to go for the identity of this leadership phenomenon to be entrenched and recognised as a formidable leadership trait.

The challenge remains, the willingness of executives of multinationals to embrace African leadership principles and Ubuntu, leverage its power and realise the financial gain for shareholders, is lacking. A leadership style that resonates with stakeholders can go a long way in bridging the gap between the various demands within both the internal and external environments.

The diverse nature of the South African society and the multicultural workplaces, because of globalisation, lend themselves to the tenets of Ubuntu, which

appreciates that just because people are different, be it because of race, religion, language, status etc., they do not necessarily have to work against each other.

Vigilant and courageous leadership is necessary in order to effect the necessary changes required to harness the incredible power and influence of Ubuntu, as a foundation and pillar of African leadership. There are already numerous examples of Sankofa, an encouraging sign that some principles of African leadership are already in practice.

2.6.1 Research question 1

What are the perceptions of black senior managers with regard to the obstacles to the practice of African leadership and key elements that can be practised in their organisations?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following critical topics, pertinent to the research, are covered in this chapter:

- The literature regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods;
- The research design and sample population;
- The limitations of the study; and
- Issues around validity and reliability.

3.2 Research methodology/paradigm

The research was carried out using qualitative research methods. The research method refers to the type of data collected, which in the case of qualitative methods includes data collected through interviews and observations (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

The qualitative research method refers mainly to research methods that employ data collection techniques that generate non-numeric data whereas the quantitative research method employs data collection techniques that yield numeric data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

According to Ospina (2004), qualitative research methods will allow for a systematic empirical enquiry into meaning while allowing the research to be carried out in its natural setting. The greatest advantages of using this method in this research were that it allowed:

- Flexibility to follow unexpected eventualities during the research;
- Sensitivity to context; and
- The development of ideas and theories that are empirically supported (Ospina, 2004).

Myers and Klein (2011) further elaborate that qualitative research facilitates depth of understanding and meaning. The qualitative research method was necessary in this research, as an analysis of the impact of African leadership in an organisation was carried out.

3.3 Research design

The research design was in the form of a simple interpretive study, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews and/or standard questionnaires. This format was appropriate because the research was conducted in an iterative and interpretive manner (Myers & Klein, 2011), allowing probing to build on initial responses and understand the reasons for certain decisions that participants have taken.

The advantages of this research methodology included:

- The semi-structured interview allowed a choice of questions from the interview depending on organisational context encountered during the interview process (Saunders et al, 2009);
- Standardised questionnaires yielded data that allowed for easy comparison;
- The use of interviews yielded a higher response rate than would other methods of data collection; and
- The option to ask more questions and vary the questions from one interview to the next, given the nature of events and context within particular organisations, was possible (Saunders et al., 2009).

The disadvantages of this approach included:

- The interaction between the interviewer and the respondents may have had an impact on the data collected; and
- Comments, tone and/or behaviour of the interviewer may have created bias in the way the participants answered questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The population for the research included middle and senior management of large companies with potential of a variety of cultures in the leadership team.

Wherever possible, the other stakeholders were involved and included, but were not limited to, low-level management, other employees and members of the community. This tested their views as opposed to that of management and provided a balanced view of the status quo.

3.4.2 Sample

The individuals and organisations chosen for this study were chosen using the non-probability sample method, which allowed for purposeful selection of the sample (Trochim, 2005). This is mainly because the researcher had access to these individuals and organisations and more importantly, the aforementioned were willing participants in this research.

The majority of these individuals had reached an executive level in their organisations; had thus been exposed to leadership policies and values in various organisations and the inherent behaviour of leaders resulting from these policies. These individuals were able to offer an opinion on African leadership principles in the work place.

As the individuals chosen were known to the researcher, they were first contacted telephonically to find out their willingness to participate in the research. The telephone conversation was followed up by a formal letter (See Appendix A), sent via email, requesting an appointment to conduct the interview. If any of the individuals' availability changed, the researcher requested the participant to fill out the questionnaire, failing which suitable alternative interview arrangements were requested.

Table 3: Profile of respondents by organisation and sector

Respondent type	Sector
Production director	Mining
General manager	Mining
Executive director	Mining
Head of underground operations	Mining
Manager	Satellite television
Manager	Management consulting
International business manager	Explosives
Director	Construction
Managing director	Services
Regional coordinator	Labour union
Municipal councillor	Community

3.5 The research instrument

The research instrument was a combination of closed- and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions provided specific answers, narrowed the focus and limited the respondent in terms of the manner in which they answered the questions. The open-ended questions afforded an opportunity to collect rich and voluminous information with regard to African leadership principles and practices in the respondents' organisations and sectors (Farber, 2006).

3.6 Procedure for data collection

An interview plan was drawn up to assess:

- The policies of the companies that reflect principles of African leadership;
- The level to which African leadership principles were applied; and
- The willingness within the organisation to adopt African leadership practices and principles.

The interviews were pre-arranged and conducted at the workplace of the participant. At confirmation of the appointment, the interview themes were sent to the participants. Conducting the interview at the participants' workplace assisted in gauging the culture of the organisation and the style of leadership and management in the organisation.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The vast amount of information generated through the interviews will have to be "described and summarised" (Lacey & Luff, 2001, p. 7) and relationships sought between various themes.

For the purpose of this study, and to enhance the quality of analysis and interpretation, thematic analysis guidelines were used throughout the research process. Thematic analysis is a method used widely in qualitative research to identify and analyse patterns within research data. The typical steps outlined in thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Steps in thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Steps	Analysis
Phase 1	**Familiarising yourself with the data:** Includes transcribing the data following the interviews
Phase 2	**Generating initial codes:** Includes identifying patterns and coding in a systematic fashion
Phase 3	**Search for themes:** Combine and catalogue patterns of data into themes
Phase 4	**Reviewing themes:** Synthesise findings in relation emerging patterns and themes
Phase 5	**Defining and naming themes**: Define the specifics of each theme
Phase 6	**Produce the report:** Analyse identified themes against research questions and literature review

Some of the benefits of thematic analysis are:

- An effective method of summarising large bodies of data;
- Can be used effectively to highlight the differences across data sets; and
- Flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analysis tool allowed a more structured process to finalise outcomes, recommendations and ultimately conclusions of the research (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002).

3.8 Limitations of the study

- Difficulty in selecting random respondents thus respondents were conveniently selected;
- The respondents willingness to participate may have played a role; and
- While the majority of respondents have vast managerial and leadership experience, they may not have been familiar with African leadership principles.

3.9 Validity and reliability

According to Saunders et al. (2009), the validity of the research is concerned with whether the findings of the research are what they appear to be whereas reliability refers to the accuracy of the research instrument or procedure and whether or not alternative research would reveal similar results.

In order to promote validity and reliability, the participants were provided with a list of interview themes before the interview. These interview themes allowed the participants to apply their minds with regard to the information requested (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002) and provide any documentation relevant to the research (Saunders et al., 2009). The interview themes formed part of the letter requesting the interview.

3.9.1 External validity

Saunders et al. (2009) refer to external reliability as generalisability and define it as whether or not findings in any particular research can be generalised as equally applicable to other research settings, other organisations, contexts and time. To ensure the external validity of this research, participants chosen were at various stages in their careers and from different organisations.

3.9.2 Internal validity

Saunders et al. (2009) describe internal validity as a measure of the integrity of the results. In order to increase the internal validity of the research, the following threats to validity were taken into consideration (Robson, 2002 cited in Saunders et al, 2009):

- *History:* The effects of recent events in the organisation and industry which may have influenced the opinions of the research population;
- *Mortality:* This refers to participants in the research dropping out of the study; and
- *Maturation:* The effect of participants changing during the course of the research.

In addition, where multiple members of the same company are interviewed, the triangulation method was considered to improve the internal validity of the research (Bryman, 2012). For the purpose of this research, the methods considered were interviews, questionnaires and documentation.

3.9.3 Reliability

Reliability measures the extent to which data collection techniques and data analysis procedures will yield consistent results each time (Saunders et al., 2009). To ensure reliability of the data collection, a standard questionnaire was used to ensure consistency and any deviations from the questionnaire were to probe for more information and clarity.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The results of the interviews are presented and discussed in this chapter. In order to ensure a logical flow from the previous chapters, the results of the research are discussed under each key perception as a result of the research questions.

The research questions utilised to identify the key perceptions to the use of African leadership in South African organisations are listed below for ease of reference:

[1] What leadership qualities are necessary to lead a successful organisation (in your industry) in South Africa?
[2] To what extent are these qualities entrenched in the vision and values of your organisation?
[3] To what extent is the value of African leadership recognised within the leadership structures in your organisation?
[4] To what extent do you as a leader try to incorporate African leadership principles into your style of leadership?
[5] Are there any deterrents to implementing African leadership principles in your organisation? If yes, how can these be eliminated?
[6] Has globalisation and the reality of the multi-cultured business environment had an impact on your leadership style and that of your organisation? Elaborate.
[7] What are your impressions of Ubuntu? Is Ubuntu an appropriate culture that can advance the capitalist nature of organisations in South Africa?

Furthermore, in this chapter, the results of the study is compared with relevant concepts and insights from the literature review. The results of the research are interpreted and only key perceptions are discussed.

Relevant verbatim quotations have been included in the discussion to strengthen arguments put forward in this chapter. References to the literature, as presented in Chapter 2, are included.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The respondents of the study were selected because of their extensive leadership experience in their respective industries; all respondents hold senior to executive leadership roles in a variety of industries and functions. Owing to the nature of the research topic in the views of a particular section of leaders, only black individuals were chosen to participate in the research. As planned, with the exception of one respondent, all respondents hold a university degree and some respondents have completed studies at a Masters level.

Twelve interviews were planned and of the 12, only 10 were possible because of time constraints and the non-availability of the respondents. A demographic profile of the respondents is reflected in Table 5.

Table 5: Demographics for respondents

Sector	Position/Department	Education Level	Gender
Mining	Industrial Relations Manager	Honours degree	Male
Labour	Regional Secretary-General	Matric, trade	Male
Mining	Senior Manager	Masters' degree	Female
Civil Works	Contract Director	Masters' degree	Male
Management Consulting	Senior Consultant	Masters' degree	Male
Broadcasting	Chief Financial Officer	Masters' degree	Female
Eskom	Coal Supply Manager	Honours degree	Male
Mining Services	Technical Services	Bachelors' degree	Male
Tax and Auditing	Tax and Customs Manager	Honours degree	Female
Mining	Technical Services	Bachelors' degree	Male

4.3 Key perception #1:
The value of African leadership is not recognised within the leadership structures in South African organisations.

The respondents found it hard to reconcile what they knew of African leadership and examples of recognition or practice of African leadership in their organisations. In the end, the conclusion after reconciling the responses from all the respondents is that the value of African leadership is not recognised in any of the respondent's organisations. The discussion below revolves around the possible reasons as compared with the literature presented in Chapter 2.

Reasons put forward by the respondents included the fact that companies are part of a larger multinational with an international identity and most principles are there to fit a global and not a regional or localised setting. According to respondent GM,

> "My company has made no effort to structure its leadership effort to suit local conditions in any country it operates in and if there has been a form of localisation to suit the needs of a manager or leader in South Africa then it is a dismal failure as there is no evidence of it anywhere in the organisation. Granted, an arbitrary document might exist somewhere but implementation is lacking, even non-existent".

Wasanika et al. (2011) argued that indigenous dimensions and context are central to African leadership. Following from the literature by Mangaliso (2001) it is logical to conclude that because cultural and regional inferences are ignored, these organisations are missing an opportunity to develop internal capabilities i.e. the internal capabilities in this instance refers to the leadership practices and traits that South Africans would be exposed to.

Another reason for non-recognition of the value of African leadership principles was that non-Africans, who are not necessarily familiar with African leadership principles, lead companies. According to respondent LV,

> "It is very hard for a multi-national company to even start recognising African leadership let alone practice its teachings. I would say the

> fault lies in how these companies are established in different regions: there is very little effort from the onset to staff country offices with locals. A typical leadership regime in South Africa will be that, an Australian company led by an Australian, German company by a German, etc. This model ensures that the culture of the home office is entrenched in offices in other countries thus leaving very little room to nurture other leadership traits in these multi-national companies".

Following on the literature by Nkomo (2006a), whereby it is argued that African leadership is largely founded on traditional values, multinationals operating in South Africa that have foreign nationals at their helm will not actively promote African leadership principles. Nkomo and Cook (2006) went further to say, there is a need for leadership in Africa that is rooted in African culture.

A further reason for the lack of recognition of African leadership was that African leadership teaching, workshops or seminars are not readily available. None of the respondents has ever come across any teachings regarding African leadership and almost no recognised institutes of higher learning include African leadership in their leadership course offerings. According to respondent LV,

> "I have rarely, if ever, come across a course aimed at business leaders offering African leadership principles. The majority of courses offered re-enforce traditional western leadership theories. I am not sure if there is a market for such a course but if not then non-profit institutions, that have a vested interest in promoting African leadership, should offer these courses. Some of our tertiary institutions should also be offering African leadership as an option in their curriculum".

Walumba et al. (2011) advocate that internal capabilities have to be developed to improve economic performance then it follows then that African leadership capabilities should be developed. Leadership training and development is already a sizeable part of training budgets for companies thus the only adjustment would be to include African leadership as part of the required leadership training.

According to respondent GM, some of the reasons stated above have perpetuated the notion that African leadership is a social leadership style, its principles and practices being passed on from generation to generation. This reinforces Hailey (2008), where the social attributes of African leadership are emphasised. With this as the status quo, these African leadership principles and practices will remain foreign unless:

- Someone has grown up in a community that embraces these practices and principles; or
- They have read the literature that is currently available on African leadership.

An attempt to de-socialise some of the African leadership principles was made by Karsten and Illa (2005) and Mangaliso (2001), who advocate that aspects of African leadership were proven to have the potential financial bottom-line benefit and competitive advantage. The responses to this research question further highlight the need for leaders of organisations to use their authority to re-frame issues such as African leadership and institutionalise this leadership principle (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011).

Another point that came across acutely from the respondents was that even though their organisations did not recognise the value of African leadership, leadership style or traits as a whole were only informally prescribed through the culture of the various organisations. Only one of the respondents acknowledged that their company structure does recognise and has created an environment where African leadership can flourish.

The majority of the respondents accepted that although the value of African leadership principles is not recognised within their companies, there is no effort from these companies to promote or provide a leadership framework within the organisation. In almost all the organisations, the corporate culture seems to override and guide interactions within the company and these cultures are not necessarily influenced by African leadership principles.

South African subsidiaries of multinational companies are the ones that are seen to be struggling the most with issues of identity and finding a common ground between the home base and the global identity of the larger multinational.

The inherent theme amongst the respondents is summed up by respondent LV;

> "The value of African leadership is not recognised within my organisation. Values of Ubuntu are seldom practiced. African leadership demands that a leader considers the needs of the collective rather than of the individual and I think that for a while now in the organisation, leadership has not focused on the whole".

The value of African leadership is very seldom recognised across the spectrum of respondents' current and previous companies. Individuals infer for themselves meaning from what they know about African culture, fuse that with their company's generic values and somehow manage their day-to-day existence.

4.4 Key perception #2: There are limited opportunities to implement African leadership principles in business organisations operating in South Africa

From the information gathered in the interviews; it seems that there are significant challenges to implementing African leadership principles in organisations operating in South Africa.

The most significant barrier being that multi-nationals craft their policies to fit the company as a whole and very seldom is there room or leeway to include regional leadership ideologies.

Two respondents definitively stated the impeding reasons to the practice of African leadership in South Africa. According to respondent TM,

> "… my company's former CEO was Australian and he knew very little about the values of African leadership: a foreign concept to him. To

> eliminate these, the South African leaders within the organisation need to teach or induct [new] incumbents on how things are done, especially in the South African context. Having had an Australian CEO for five years, it will be a tough challenge to undo whatever damage was done with regard to leadership and a bigger challenge to implement African leadership principles, but I believe that this is not impossible".

According to respondent TM,

> "… the major stumbling block being that the control of my company does not originate from South Africa and shareholders are not local. Also, decisions regarding leadership styles are crafted to try and match a global and not a local identity. If the company was still run as a partnership and had local representation this would be possible. Current leadership are mere mouth pieces of a global agenda".

From the literature by Wasanika et al. (2011), these results are to be expected as even in leadership literature, indigenous and regional context are largely ignored.

The behaviour of fellow black executives, who are in a position to influence decisions at the highest level in their organisations, is not conducive to promoting African leadership. These managers are seen to be hindering the advancement of the African leadership agenda.

The argument put forward by some of the respondents is that the behaviour of these black executives comes as no surprise because in most cases, their leadership style is mostly influenced by western leadership principles. Therefore, they do not advance the African leadership agenda, as African leadership is as foreign to them as it is to non-blacks and non-Africans. According to respondent IT,

> "The lack of will to promote African leadership by executives who are in influential positions is a further hindrance to African leadership. These leaders scorn their cultural background and this can

inadvertently negatively impact the willingness of their organisations to accept the teachings of African leadership".

Following from that argument, most leaders lead according to what they know and from principles that they have experienced as effective; they will create a leadership culture in their organisations, which will not necessarily promote African leadership principles. In this instance, leaders are seen to be unwilling to try to attempt this comparatively new leadership theory of African leadership; they stick to the tried and tested.

It is acknowledged that the internal and external challenges faced by leaders are in line with Chappelow (2004); a definite effort has to be made to promote African leadership in organisations. Van der Colff (2003) argues that leaders must be willing to challenge the status quo but this appears not to be the case with regard to current executives and leaders.

One deterrent, argues respondent JR, is that there is not much documented evidence of organisations that have recorded the positive impact that African leadership has had on their organisations; it is not surprising then that not many are prepared to risk their careers for a leadership theory that is relatively untested in the business of making money.

These deterrents will remain unless leaders are prepared to use their authority and influence to re-frame issues and institutionalise desired leadership traits (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011).

4.5 Key perception #3: Multi culture and globalisation influences leadership styles in business organisations in South Africa

The literature from Kumar et al. (2011) alludes to the demands that globalisation and multi-cultured work environments have on leadership. Cultural competence has thus become important in leading a successful organisation and this is of

primary importance in the South African context because of the myriad of cultures in South Africa.

In line with Kumar et al. (2011), most respondents agree that the impact of globalisation on their leadership styles cannot be ignored. While offices and branches in different parts of the world have become commonplace, respondent GM argues that multi-culture is not a foreign concept in South Africa and this has invariably influenced the leadership style of the respondents.

According to respondent GM,

> "Multi-culture in South Africa is business as usual. The global nature of the business just means that you have to be aware of certain nuances and adjust your style accordingly. I am certainly more aware of things I do/say when I am around certain cultures: and ultimately this has an impact on how I lead: I think that even within the same culture: people are different and thus one has to relate to them differently".

Information gathered from the interviews has re-enforced what was expected in that multi-culture is not a concern as this is the norm in South Africa. Some respondents argued that because of this, South Africans are able to integrate more readily into multi-cultured international teams than their foreign counterparts. Leading beyond one's cultural comfort remains a key to the success of multi-cultured and multi-national teams and this was recognised by the respondents. Mateev and Nelson (2004) reiterated the fact that the performance of multi-cultured teams is key to the success of many organisations.

None of the organisations the respondents work for have firm directives on how to deal with peers in different parts of the world and thus these managers may sometimes lack the business, political and cultural expertise to deal with peers and clients across the globe. Following literature from Adler and Bartholomew (1992 as cited by Kumar et al, 2011) on leadership in a multi-cultured environment, the respondents lack global cross-cultural competence and awareness. The comments from respondent LV, prove though that with no formal

training on cross-cultural competency, leaders can cope in these situations. respondent LV stated,

> "Globalisation and multi-culture has definitely had an impact on my leadership style. We need to lead people in ways that they are comfortable with and sometimes not impose what we think is right. The art of leadership is difficult and my leadership style has had to adapt to the environment. When one leads a team that consists of a number of race, religious and cultural groups, a leader needs to be sensitive to these differences at all times, while being fair and consistent".

Globalisation has certainly had an impact on the leadership style of the respondents and the leadership culture in their respective organisations. One interviewee summed up their experience by saying that in the end business is essentially about the interaction of people at various levels and within various functions. Inevitably, interactions with people across the globe call for a constant check in etiquette and mannerism.

The respondents' experience, in other parts of the world, has certainly helped them deal with diversity in their respective audiences. The multi-culture in South Africa came across as the norm and helped the respondents to enhance their cultural IQ, in turn creating bridges and conduits for prosperous relationships across the globe.

For all the managers interviewed, the diverse nature of the South African nation has helped them deal and adjust better to the demands of a global society.

4.6 Key perception #4:
Not all respondents agree that the principles of Ubuntu can advance the capitalist nature of organisations in South Africa

The literature from Karsten and Illa (2005) advances Ubuntu as an important facet of organisational culture that can contribute positively to business results and revitalise the economy. Respondents presented opposing views with regard to Ubuntu. While a minority felt that Ubuntu perpetuates over reliance on the state, others felt that the teachings of Ubuntu could help lift many out of the endemic poverty and hardships that they face on a daily basis.

The respondents postulated that learnings of Ubuntu are a critical part of one's upbringing and because we are not all brought up the same way, there are bound to be tensions around leadership styles. The respondents were not of the same opinion with regard to how effective Ubuntu can be as a leadership model in a business organisation.

According to respondent LV,

> "I am because you are, is what Ubuntu stands for. If organisations in South Africa paid more attention to Ubuntu a lot could be achieved in this country and unfortunate incidents such as the Marikana massacre could have been prevented. Organisations in South Africa are less concerned about the people who do the hard yards and I believe that Ubuntu is appropriate although it will take time and effort to change the Mindset that still exists in most organisations".

Ncube (2010), argues that principles of Ubuntu are an essential tool in reaching a consensus or agreement as these principles help reconcile whatever diversity exists within any group of people. The leadership framework as presented by Ncube (2010) the concept of thinking globally while acting locally, acting locally involves social responsibility: a concept referred to by respondent LV.

Respondent IT added that,

> "Ubuntu is mostly understood as the spirit of humility. It is the term mostly used in South Africa. Servant leadership displays most characters of Ubuntu, which includes but is not limited to shared responsibilities and accountability, leading by example, inspire a shared vision, encourage collaboration, and build trust. Yes, Ubuntu can advance the capitalist nature of businesses in SA. Employees look upon their leaders for guidance and acting with integrity. For an organisation the size of the one I work for and it being a state-owned company, it is of utmost importance as a leader to display the characteristics of Ubuntu since you represent the government".

The literature on Ubuntu and African leadership by Nkomo (2006a) and Khoza (2008) echoes the sentiments of the two respondents in that an African leader should command a willing following and lead with a style congruent to their own culture.

The respondents who were in favour of Ubuntu forming part of the corporate culture thought that principles and practices of Ubuntu could assist organisations to improve the following:

- Business integration;
- Effective business regulations and processes;
- Fair internal processes; and
- Strategies to invest in the future of the company and other stakeholders.

While appreciating the advantages of Ubuntu, it is apparent to the respondents that Ubuntu does not have real meaning to a number of people and thus it is difficult for them to translate learnings into the business environment. Ubuntu seems to be embraced a lot more in State-owned enterprises than in the private sector.

The negative perceptions of Ubuntu are perpetuated by the notion that Ubuntu is mostly put forward as a solution to the social misfortune of the underprivileged

and this mostly by political leaders who want organisations to be charitable towards the communities in which they operate. In most instances, the benefits of the social harmony that Ubuntu creates are not highlighted for these organisations. Even within organisations, Ubuntu is often used as a catch phrase when launching campaigns and does not become an important aspect of organisational culture of the organisation. This is in direct contrast to Karsten and Illa (2005), who advocate that Ubuntu should never be used as a fad associated with team building and other 'flavour of the month' initiatives.

Respondent CH states that, "I regret that the only influence Ubuntu has had on me is memories of the advertisements and promotional material when launching some or other common cause." This notion is supported by respondent GG, who states "Ubuntu perpetuates over reliance by people on the state".

Some of the respondents argue that their private sector organisations might not have called or labelled any of their initiatives; but, organisations do go out of their way to do projects and initiatives that, if branded right, can be seen to be in the spirit of Ubuntu.

While most of the respondents' organisations do not embrace or promote Ubuntu, viewing it as a weak form of leadership, for them Ubuntu is actually the answer to correct the inequalities among societies. If not Ubuntu alone, certainly some elements of Ubuntu need to feature prominently in the leadership ethos of organisations in South Africa.

4.7 Key perception #5: Context is pivotal when determining key African leadership competencies required to lead a successful organisation in South Africa

The literature review on leadership, particularly the work done by Daft (2002 as cited in Naidoo, 2011), provides a number of elements that are fundamental to successful leadership and these themes also came through in the interviews. The

ability to adapt according to the situation and audience while maintaining the core values of one's leadership style was also evident in the responses. According to respondent GM,

> "My interaction with the mainly unskilled and uneducated labour force dictates that I use a different set of leadership qualities to when addressing a group of graduate consultants. I suppose the micro-environment plays a critical role in the leadership style of any manager: it is inevitably up to the individual to recognise the situation and adapt accordingly".

The issues of inclusivity, integrity and accountability as mentioned in Ncube (2010) proved pivotal in the South African context of leadership. These notions were vocalised in a number of responses to this question. According to respondent GM,

> "Most times, South Africans react favourably to an inclusive leadership style, where they feel part of the decision-making processes: this can be easily achieved by forming subcommittees for various functions within the organisations. These usually include some form of labour/workforce participation".

Respondent FH, emphasised inclusivity in the simplest manner possible, "get all team members to participate and be the most positive person that you know". This was reinforced by respondent CH, who aptly captured the notion of integrity and inclusivity,

> "Does the leader walk the talk or does the leader preach that profit or purposes is paramount and that the 'end justifies the means' is what they are about. Both carry credibility because they stand for something and followers can identify with them and their cause and the mannerism of their leadership style".

The study confirmed that integrity remains a critical part of leadership in that if a leader preaches ideologies such as fairness, ethical behaviour and accountability;

that that leader should live by those principles. In essence, this means that followers will aspire to the qualities they witness within their leadership thus making it simpler for the followers to believe in the intent, direction or philosophy of their leader. This is fundamental to the issue of creating a shared vision and common goal as described by Neera, Anjanee and Shoma (2010).

The following leadership themes were more prevalent than others:

- Personal responsibility and integrity;
- Inclusivity;
- Shared purpose; and
- Influence.

An example of a great leader with integrity, a leader who 'walked the walk' as cited by one of the respondents, was Mother Teresa. Her life was subservience to a higher cause and her beliefs were underpinned by spiritual guidance and manifested in humanitarian acts of kindness.

The results of the study also stress that a successful leader has to be aware of the environment in which they operate and the various internal and external forces that influences that environment. In that way, a leader can pre-empt and manage situations as they arise. Respondent FH, stressed that in the many years that he has been in a position of leadership, one of the most critical leadership attributes that has contributed to his success was that he was always the first one to show respect.

The study also showed the importance of inclusivity, particularly in the industries that have active labour unions. In these industries, communication, recognition and respect for institutionalised processes were seen as most advantageous for successful leadership.

Issues pertaining to motivation, which were not distinctly referred to by any of the literature referenced, also came up. According to respondent LV, "A leader needs to know how to motivate a team of people they lead and be a change agent for the organisation".

Respondent LV re-emphasised the literature by Daft (2002 as cited in Naidoo, 2011), that one of the most important spheres of modern leadership theories and studies is the ability of a leader to influence and create meaningful relationships. The influence referred to in the literature could be in various forms and depends largely on the context. Respondent MN, who has extensive experience in the management consulting field, listed relationships as a catalyst for success in his particular field. According to respondent MN, "The management consulting industry is highly dependent on relationship management in the C-Suite. Therefore relational based type of qualities and leadership styles are, in my opinion, what is necessary".

In only one instance were leadership issues, emanating from board level, discussed with regard to leadership qualities necessary for a successful organisation in South Africa. According to respondent GG,

> "It is difficult for the leadership within my organisation both at the board level and executive senior management to do the right thing, which is the crux of ethical leadership, required of leaders, and time and again they struggle to choose well and as a result lead the organisation into systematic rot and dis-functionality".

The global nature of all but one of the organisations means that the leaders of these organisations have to have a global mind-set and a broad awareness of their organisations business goals and strategies while also being acutely aware of the leadership demands in their localised context.

The respondents noted that the diverse nature of the South African population with regard to education, race, religion and culture also demands that they are constantly aware of their audience and thus adapt their leadership style to suit the prevailing environment. This is in line with Kumar et al. (2011), who stress that a leader in a multi-cultured environment has to adopt different techniques, as presented by the nature of the team, in order to enhance the productivity and profitability of the organisation.

Respondent CH summarised this point in the following manner, “Leadership keeps their fingers on the pulse of people, the environment they operate in and what other forces influence it, and what is required to take the organisation to the next phase or cycle”.

A common theme in response to this question was the need for leaders across all industries to lead by example and be seen to promote policies that enhance the well-being of all employees. From the varying literature on leadership traits across the globe and from the assertion that context matters when it comes to leadership, it became apparent that a foundation of leadership requirements or needs in the South African context should be established (Neera, Anjanee, & Shoma, 2010).

The common theme from the interviews was that generally, South Africans react very positively to an inclusive type of leadership: A leadership style that invokes followers and inspires them to want to achieve their best for the company while also growing as individuals from the experience. The important values listed by the respondents included: integrity, vision, honesty, inclusivity and effective communication skills.

Some respondents alluded to the fact that when leaders fail to demonstrate a strong commitment to ethics, good governance principles and a strong moral foundation then often organisations become catastrophic failures. However, examples of leaders who have implemented unpopular policies in their countries were also cited as examples of leaders who have stuck to their core beliefs and thus still enjoy support from their constituents regardless of the whether those policies are misguided or not.

Successful leaders in South Africa understand that people do their best to support their organisation’s aspirations when they believe that they also stand to benefit. According to respondent CH, “Successful leadership understands the balance of value and allows the physical environment and stakeholders to share in real terms (i.e. remuneration) the company’s success”. Leaders also need to be seen to be building an enabling environment, allowing everyone in the organisation to prosper.

4.8 Key Perception #6: The challenge with African leadership is that upbringing and social background informs the aptitude towards African leadership principles

The information gathered from the respondents indicated that, all but one make an effort to incorporate African leadership into their style of leadership. The only respondent, respondent GG, who did not make an effort to incorporate African leadership, had the following to say in response to the question regarding their style of leadership,

> "A leader will influence their organisation or environment according to their own set of values. My values are built on treating all employees with dignity, but also providing the direction the organisation should be taking in creating value for all stakeholders that is sustainable. That involves taking decisions that might not bode well with a certain group, given the diversity of South Africa, but taking decisions that are in the best interest of the company".

Respondent GG was not probed as to what informs the values referred to above; however, Mangaliso (2001) modelled the relationship between social attitudes and workplace behaviour on the influence they have on each other. It can be argued then that respondent GG's values might well be informed by latent or unobservable traditional African customs. The respondent showed no bias though towards any style of leadership, be it African leadership or otherwise.

Respondent IT states that "for one to live the principles of African leadership, you will need to know and understand the cultural element of it." This was a common thread in the various responses to this research question.

The argument from the majority of the respondents was that their upbringing and social background supports a leadership style that is more inclined to African leadership principles. According to respondent IT,

> "For one to live the principles of African leadership, you will need to know and understand the cultural element of it. Leading by example, sharing responsibilities and accountabilities and inspiring a shared vision are typical qualities of African leadership. My leadership style is without a doubt, guided by these qualities, even though my work environment has limited scope of leadership as I don't have any subordinates reporting to me".

This is in line with Nkomo (2006a) where the notion that African leadership is rooted in the traditions and cultures of the African continent is emphasised. Examples put forward included that the respondents:

- "Tend to respect elders more than others, but revert to more aggressive, western, self-serving, unilateral style of leadership" (respondent GM);
- "Seek mutually beneficial solutions over others" (respondent IT); and
- "Tend to bargain and compromise more than others, caring, fair and consistent" (respondent MK).

These are done while maintaining a delicate balance between appearing to be a soft/weak leader and keeping their subordinates engaged because they appreciate being listened to and their opinions considered. According to Khoza (2008), an ideal African leader is a servant leader and commands a willing following; the results of this research question are in line with the literature.

Owing to their upbringing, most of the respondents incorporate some of the African leadership principles into their style of leadership. The respondents believe that the prevailing corporate culture in organisations operating in South Africa is not supportive of some of the ideas revered in African leadership. In fact, sometimes these African leadership principles are perceived as a weak form of leadership. The importance of the cultural element of African leadership was apparent.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the conclusions of the research are presented by focusing on the research questions as described in Chapter 2. This is followed by the recommendations from the research findings and then suggestions for further research in the field of African leadership.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

It was evident from the onset that the subject of African leadership was a subject unfamiliar to the senior managers interviewed for this research. Although these managers have a wealth of technical knowledge and years of managerial experience, the issue of the practice and underlying principles of African leadership in the workplace is foreign. It is almost as if black managers divorce themselves from their communal and informal teachings on leadership when they enter the workplace. This can be mainly attributed to the fact that formal leadership training seldom includes African leadership.

5.2.1 Perceptions of black senior managers with regard to the practice of African leadership

The practice of African leadership remains marginalised in many organisations. The deterrents, whether self-imposed or not, appear to be insurmountable unless a structured approach is introduced to formalise African leadership teaching in institutions in order to provide the practice with a firm foundation and place it on an equal footing with other leadership theories. Black senior managers are unaware of the similarities between some concepts of African leadership and other leadership theories.

The momentum required for the practice of African leadership to attain prominence in leadership structures has to be provided by black managers who

have been raised on an African leadership foundation. However, these managers should first believe that African leadership principles are appropriate in the workplace.

The black managers who have progressed to executive levels do not appear to be promoting African leadership and more importantly, the vision and values of these organisations do not recognise African leadership values as values appropriate for their organisations. Multinationals do indeed draft their vision and values to suit a global context, but given that other forms of leadership have enjoyed prominence over centuries, an exception to this generic approach is warranted.

There is no known evidence of documented implementation of African leadership in an organisation but the work of Karsten and Illa (2005), where African leadership principles are likened to the Japanese concept of TQM, is documentary proof that African leadership principles can be successfully implemented in the workplace.

Further evidence that African leadership principles can be successfully implemented in business organisations is found in the work of Mangaliso (2001), who outlines the potential financial bottom-line benefit using the seven cultures of capitalism by Garston (1993).

The question of which leadership attributes are truly African remains unanswered.

5.2.2 Key elements of African leadership that can be practiced by business organisations

The key elements of African leadership identified by the respondents included:

- Integrity;
- Communication;
- Respect;
- Ubuntu;
- Humility; and
- Inclusivity.

Although these values are not unique to African leadership, they do form the basis and foundation of African leadership. The inclusion of the elements that embrace African leadership principles has the potential to elevate the status of African leadership into the leadership structures of any organisation operating in South Africa. This inclusion could address the multi-culture needs of the organisation by recognising that leadership wisdom can be attained from different cultures and traditions in line with the literature by Adler and Bartholomew (1992 cited in Kumar et al., 2011) where leaders in a multi-cultured environment have to be cognisant of perspectives and trends of other cultures.

5.2.3 Is Ubuntu an important aspect of organisational culture in South Africa?

As much as Ubuntu is an integral part of the social and political scene in South Africa, the concept has not made adequate inroads into business in South Africa.

The results of the research show that much work still has to be done to elevate Ubuntu based principles and the belief that these values and principles can bring about a positive change in the way organisations conduct their business. There is insufficient understanding in business that the fundamental notion of ‘I am because you are’ does not mean that one has to give while the other takes but rather that the pursuit of common goals and interests can lead to mutual growth and prosperity.

There are currently individuals who are prioritising the promotion of Ubuntu-based values, but these voices are drowned in the overwhelming indoctrination of other leadership theories. For Ubuntu to become an important aspect of organisational culture in South Africa there will have to be a mass movement driven by non-governmental institutions, who have a vested interest in leadership development such as universities and academia, to build a strong foundation that will cultivate and embrace Ubuntu education.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 and the insight gained from the conversations with black senior managers, the following recommendations are made to promote the use of African leadership practices and principles in organisations operating in South Africa:

- Multi-national companies need to formulate strategies to deal with local identities, in the regions in which they operate while addressing their global agenda;
- The vision and values of organisations have to address the African context of leadership as an effective tool in achieving their business objectives;
- Alternative means (workshops, on the job training) of teaching African leadership practices and principles have to be exploited;
- Formal African leadership education has to be encouraged by businesses, resources have to be made available to employees; and
- Black managers and leaders have to improve their knowledge and understanding of African leadership and its positive influence on the running of businesses in South Africa.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

This research barely answered the most fundamental questions with regard to the implementation of African leadership in businesses. Other areas of study that can improve the body of knowledge regarding African leadership are as follows:

- Given the historical perspective of gender oppression in African culture, research on the views of black female leaders, with regard to elements of African leadership and how these leaders experience leading their organisations in South Africa, should make an informative study;
- Research to identify the key leadership issues that are truly and uniquely African; and

- Research on the best way to formalise the teaching of African leadership principles.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW REQUEST LETTER

Dear _____

I am completing an MBA at the Wits Business School and part of the requirements to complete the course is a research thesis. My thesis is on the obstacles to the practice of African leadership as a key element in South African Organisations.

As a recognised leader in your respective industry, I have selected you to participate in this research based on the extensive experience you have acquired in various leadership roles in your career. I have also approached other individuals or equal stature to contribute to my research. I trust and believe that the collective information from all interviews will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge around African leadership.

Be assured that I will protect your anonymity and privacy and also treat the information shared with outmost confidentiality. At the end of the research the data will be presented as a collective and at no point will your name or the name of your organisation be mentioned in my report

Pending your approval, I will record our conversation and also make notes where necessary. This information will be kept secure and will be deleted once the research report has been has been finalised by Wits Business School

I have enclosed the questions that will be asked during the interview.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Day Makgala
MBA candidate
Wits Business School
Mobile: 082 311 9837

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

1. What leadership qualities are necessary to lead a successful organisation in South Africa? (Your industry?)

2. To what extent are these qualities entrenched in the vision and values of your organisation?

3. To what extent is the value of African leadership recognised within the leadership structures in your organisation?

4. To what extent do you as a leader try and incorporate African leadership principles into your style of leadership?

5. Are there any deterrents to implementing African leadership principles in your organisation? If yes, how can these be eliminated?

6. Has globalisation and the reality of the multi-cultured business environment had an impact on your leadership style and that of your organisation? Elaborate.

7. What are your impressions of Ubuntu? Is Ubuntu an appropriate culture that can advance the capitalist nature of organisations in South Africa?

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APPENDIX C: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Table 6: Consistency matrix

Research Problem: To evaluate the extent to which African leadership principles are indoctrinated into visions and policies of successful organisations in Africa					
Sub-problem	**Literature review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
Determine where African leadership fits into the entire leadership theory spectrum	(Sandberg & Moreman, 2011) (Bass, 1990) (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) (Chappelow, 2004) (Gandolfi, 2012) (Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011) (Neera, Anjanee, & Shoma, 2010) (Naidoo, 2011)	1. What leadership qualities are necessary to lead a successful organisation in South Africa? (Your industry?) 2. To what extent are these qualities entrenched in the vision and values of your organisation? 3. To what extent is the value of African leadership recognised within the leadership structures in your organisation?	Full interview data	Qualitative data	– Familiarisation – Identifying a thematic framework – Indexing – Charting – Mapping and interpretation

Research Problem: To evaluate the extent to which African leadership principles are indoctrinated into visions and policies of successful organisations in Africa					
Sub-problem	**Literature review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
Ascertain the necessary leadership requirements in a multi cultured work environment	(Kumar, Anjum, & Sinha, 2011) (Matveev & Nelson, 2004) (Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, & House, 2006)	4. Has globalisation and the reality of the multi-cultured business environment had an impact on your leadership style and that of your organisation? Elaborate. 5. To what extent is the value of African leadership recognised within the leadership structures in your organisation?	Full interview data	Qualitative data	– Familiarisation – Identifying a thematic framework – Indexing – Charting – Mapping and interpretation
Analyse/model the potential impact of African leadership principles in organisations	(Khoza, 2008) (Karsten & Illa, 2005) (Mangaliso, 2001) (Mangaliso & Nkomo, 2001) (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011) (Ncube, 2010)	6. Are there any deterrents to implementing African leadership principles in your organisation? If yes, how can these be eliminated? 7. What are your impressions of Ubuntu? Is Ubuntu an appropriate culture that can advance the capitalist nature of organisations in South Africa?	Full interview data	Qualitative data	– Familiarisation – Identifying a thematic framework – Indexing – Charting – Mapping and interpretation