Challenges to the Introduction of an Alternative Leadership Style: A School Principal's Journey in the Introduction of an 'Ubuntu Leadership Model'

Vuyisile Msila

University of South Africa, PO Box 392, College of Education, UNISA, 0003, South Africa
msilavt@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

In various bids to improve the culture of learning and teaching in South African schools there have been numerous calls to transform school management and leadership. Recent research is proving that it is effective school managers who entrench the culture of achievement in their organizations. Shared leadership, participative leadership, invitational leadership are some of the terms tossed around and believed to have 'silver bullet' effect in underperforming schools with managerial problems. This article is based on a qualitative study. It explores challenges encountered by a school principal who desired to turn around a dysfunctional school into being more effective. She introduced ubuntu strategies in her leadership style. Ubuntu is defined as an African philosophy which magnifies group solidarity. It is based on African values that emphasize interdependence of group members. Yet even with such noble qualities embraced in this philosophy, the principal discovered that resistance arose from employees. She realized that there was a need to ensure that sometimes employees need to be assisted through a number of professional maturity levels to accomplish certain levels of professionalism. Without these levels of professional maturity, philosophies that are inherently dynamic, could fail in the hands of professionally immature staff.

Keywords: Transformation. Ubuntu. African values. Effective school leadership. School culture.

1. In Search of *Ubuntu* Leadership

Msila (2008) argues that there is a great potential in a model of leadership that utilizes *ubuntu* philosophy in schools. *Ubuntu* is part of the African indigenous knowledge (AIK) and Hoberg (2004) argues that AIK should enable school leaders to lead schools effectively with what they have rather than what they are given. *Ubuntu* leadership refers to an "African-centred" form of leadership which seeks to ensure that there is interdependence amongst workers of an organization. The term will be explored in detail in the next sub-section. South African schools have meanwhile been trying various leadership models in an endeavour to improve staff performance and student learning. Among others, the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa has introduced the Advanced Certificate in Education (School Management and Leadership) programme. The ACE-SML is a practice-based, interactive programme of study that is meant for school managers. This program prepares the practitioners for professional growth by exposing them to various leadership theories and practices. The candidates registered in this program learn a number of contemporary theories that have to do with leadership and management in schools. Among these is the utilization of various styles of leadership including *ubuntu*.

Teachers involved in this and similar other programmes have tried to transform the old top-down structure that used to be purported by the previous apartheid departments of education. The top-down structure was hierarchical and teachers were usually told what to do and not what not to do. It is this top-down culture of the past that is usually blamed for the teachers' resistance to change initiatives. Mahomed (1999) averred that four to five decades of a top-down teacher culture and passive acceptance of instructions might be enhancing interpretative difficulties being experienced by educators in many dysfunctional schools. Recently, there have been a number of researchers who have argued for new forms of leadership in many dysfunctional schools (Steyn & Van Wyk, 1999; Masitsa, 2005). Research also shows that many township (historically black) schools in South Africa continue to underperform and management structures are usually ineffective in the face of educational changes (Msila, 2005).

This article focuses is on the value of *ubuntu* and the possible role it can play in the enhancement of school leadership. *Ubuntu* is one of the fundamental values of the South African Constitution and has been proven to be relevant to education. *Ubuntu* is said to emanate out of the political tumult prior the 1990s and peacemakers wanted to ensure that in the process of creating a new framework, they would formulate a sentiment that would become part of the defining vision of the democracy (Ministry of Education, 2001). Furthermore, this publication states that there was a need in South

Africa "for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimisation" (Ministry of Education 2001: 15).

The research question explored is:

Would employees always respond positively to the inclusive and solidarity based leadership models such as *ubuntu?*

Some of the sub-questions addressed were the following:

- Will *ubuntu* leadership models eradicate qualities such as teacher apathy and teacher burnout?
- Are employees readily receptable to *ubuntu* leadership models?
- In which ways can *ubuntu* help in changing the present (negative) value systems among teachers?

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Explicating ubuntu

The importance of the concept of *ubuntu* has become prominent under the democratic dispensation in South Africa. It is rooted in African traditional society and philosophy and it means humanness or the quality of being human. It espouses the ideal of interconnectedness among people. In Africa there was always this belief that one lives for the others. Children are not brought up by their biological parents but by the entire village. There are so many idioms and phrases in various African languages that show the essence of this *ubuntu*. The Xhosa people who are a part of the Nguni group say,

Intaka yakha ngoboya benye translated as "A bird builds with the other (bird's) feathers".

Isandla sihlamba esinye translated as "Each hand washes the other". These phrases refer to one aspect that people need one another to exist. Many African languages reflect this humanness, this interdependence among people. *Ubuntu* is based on these principles. It is grounded on the notion that one cannot exist without the existence of others.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) publication (2001) states that out of the values of *ubuntu* follows the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the centre of making schools places of effective culture of learning and teaching. *Ubuntu* is envisaged as a philosophy that would ensure that there is more diligence and culture of achievement. The publication further points out:

Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but *ubuntu* goes much further: it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference…Ultimately; *ubuntu* requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself. (MoE 2001: 16)

Based on democratic principles as well as the ethos of the African worldview, *ubuntu* is always described or presupposed to be ideal democratic tenet. The democratic ideals it enshrines appear enough to convince many that its democratic base could solve many societal problems. Currently, in South Africa, there is the quest for a new identity that is not like the identities based on race and colour of the past and this multicultural society seeks solutions from a number of democratic philosophies and models. In the past decade there has been a need to embrace the spirit of *ubuntu* in various aspects of the society. Ntuli (1999) states that the spirit of *ubuntu* has long disappeared and he states that that is the reason why there is a need of an African renaissance. Furthermore, Ntuli opines that in the face of the present cultural and moral collapse in South Africa, there is a need to strive for a rebirth.

Another author, Teffo (1999:164) states that the principle of *ubuntu* has to be transmitted into the management practice. He opines:

There has to be a change in the mindsets, a paradigm shift of thought processes, attitudes, old styles of management and human relations in the workforce…

Ubuntu is a value system that can be taught. It needs more than conceptual analysis. It must be disseminated through varied strata by the workplace. *Ubuntu* is not irreconcilable or offensive to affirmative change. The company must be prepared to address the whole climate. The process should avoid emphasizing differences.

The paradigm shift that Teffo discusses above means that people need to learn to embrace each other. *Ubuntu* thrives when there is consensus, democracy and the dependence on one another. When people do not think as part of a community that has principles they cannot have *ubuntu*. Furthermore, those who practise *ubuntu* philosophy demonstrate some form of maturity, some transcendental outlook to life in general. They can teach other community members whilst they also learn from everyday encounters. In workplaces, *ubuntu* practices can enhance work ethics due to solidarity and team approaches. Arguably, values embraced by *ubuntu* are missing links in dysfunctional workplaces. Unnecessary competition and apathy have led to employees not caring about fellow workers. Schools in post-apartheid South Africa require school principals who have approaches that are congruent with democratic practices. Hoberg (2004: 41)

contends, "the new democratic South Africa demands a creative dynamic approach to principalship in a collaborative framework that will enhance trust and organisational commitment". This calls for growth within people so that they can be receptive to certain strategies. Below, the focus is on John C. Maxwell's theory of professional growth.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Change and levels of maturity

Some leadership experts such as Maxwell (1993) maintain that for ideal change to happen in leadership there need to be growth within the people working in an organization. Some innovations in leadership will need people to buy in and then adopt them. Maxwell (1993) developed a model that shows levels of growth in people within an organization. People can only be effective change agents when they are able to perceive the need for change. According to Maxwell (1993: 13), there are five levels necessary in the accomplishment of leadership and these are:

- · Position
- · Permission
- · Production
- · People
- · Personhood

Leadership is enhanced as one ascends the levels from *Personhood Level* to *Position Level*. For leadership to remain effective, the leader should have strong followership. Leaders should not move alone otherwise there would be split interests within the groups they lead. Furthermore, Maxwell contends that there are two important aspects that people in organizations need to know. Firstly, they need to know the level they are on at a given moment. Secondly, the members of an organization should know and apply the characteristics required for successes to be attained at each level.

Below are some of the qualities crucial in each level are listed as cited from Maxwell (1993:14-16):

Level one: Position/Rights
- · knowing the job description
- · being aware of the organisation's background
- · accepting responsibility
- · do more than expected
- · offer creative ideas for change

Level two: Permission/Relationships
- · possess genuine love for people
- · see through other people's eyes
- · include others in your journey

Level three: Production/Results
- · initiate and accept responsibility for growth
- · develop and follow a statement of purpose
- · develop accountability for results
- · become a change-agent and understand timing

Level four: People development
- · realizing people are a most valuable asset
- · being a model to others
- · placing priority on developing people
- · exposing key leaders to growth opportunities

Level five: Personhood/Respect
- · your followers are loyal and sacrificial
- · you have spent years mentoring and moulding leaders
- · you have become a consultant and are sought by others
- · you transcend the organisation

The theory above relies on oneness and understanding among workers. *Ubuntu* is one philosophy that has been upheld by many African intellectuals. It concerns the emancipation of self. Yet, such philosophies, after foreign domination have been stalled by underdevelopment. Mkandawire (2005) argues that there have been barriers that have been obstacles in being relevant to African ideals and these include authoritarianism, dependence and projects driven by

power hunger and self-aggrandizement.

4. The Study

This case study was conducted in one school where a new principal was trying out *ubuntu* values in her management of the school. The researcher had gone to investigate the effects of management in township schools and he discovered that as a new principal, she was in the process of changing the school leadership policies. According to the principal and five of her staff members, she had inherited "a school that was fraught with mismanagement, low morale of teachers, disobedient learners and aloof parents". When she assumed the position in the school, which is situated in an urban Eastern Cape township, was experiencing numerous challenges. Many teachers were despondent stating that they were also frustrated by the changes in education while their school was languishing "in the doldrums of educational set up". The school had 29 teachers excluding the school principal. Observations and interviews were conducted over a period of 10 months. Not all teachers were willing to be interviewed or be observed though. Five teachers neither allowed the research team to observe them nor interview them.

Educational ethnographic methods were employed. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) described the purpose of educational ethnography as providing rich, descriptive data about the contents, activities and beliefs of participants in educational settings. Like all other field studies, ethnography takes place in natural settings. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004) cite LeCompte and Preissle who have suggested that ethnographic research involves methods of inquiry, an outcome and a resultant record of the inquiry. They also point out that ethnographic research seeks to create a clear reconstruction the culture or groups studied. Furthermore, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) stated that in an ethnographic study the researchers try to render a "true to life" picture of what people say and how they act and hear the people's words and actions are left to speak for themselves. For 10 months, a research team of three studied Liso High School's culture; visiting the school at least two times a week. In most visits the research team were complete observers as they adopted a passive role, thus minimizing the contamination of the setting. The aim was to be as objective as possible.

In the school, the researchers visited the participants in their classrooms, in staff meetings and attended four teacher-parents meetings. They also became part of two meetings between the school management and the Learners Representative Council (LRC). The methods used in the study ensured that we study the participants in natural settings. Weiss (1998) pointed out that among the many advantages of qualitative research and the natural setting are:

- Greater awareness of the perspective of programme participants
- Capability of understanding dynamic developments in the programme as it evolves
- Awareness of time and history
- Special sensitivity to the influence of context
- Alertness to unanticipated and unplanned events

4.1 Methods used

Of the 24 teachers interviewed, 13 were male and 11 were female. Questions asked during interviews were open ended and participants were able to comment on broad and general issues pertaining to teaching and management specifically. The participants were interviewed once before the study commenced, twice during the study and finally when the researchers were about to conclude the study. The management team, which includes the principal, the deputy principal, two heads of department, had more questions focused on management and leadership. On average six interviews were conducted with management members. The researchers also shadowed the principal for a total of 15 days during the entire course of the study; five days before the research commenced, five days in the middle of the study and the last five days before the conclusion.

Observations were crucial in the process of information gathering. The researchers observed a number of factors in classrooms and staff meetings. In the classroom, they looked at how teachers managed their classrooms investigating whether the leadership style of the principal had any impact upon the classroom practice of her teachers. In the classrooms, they were non-participant observers who observed how teaching was carried on. In staff meetings, they observed how these were handled looking at aspects such as participation, facilitation of the meetings, whether or not there was the evidence of team management in the staff meetings. There was also an interest as to how decisions were reached in these meetings.

5. The Findings

The study unravelled much about issues around school culture, tradition and teacher change. The principal is working with a staff of people who have not been used to good management strategies. The previous principal of the school was a person who exercised a *laissez faire* approach to the management in her school. There was never proper management of classrooms and facilities. The school was even condemned by the community around it as "a failure and a useless school". As a result of this form of management teachers were usually not sure what to expect from management. When Mrs. Molo, the new principal arrived at Liso High School, teachers seemed to have been taken aback in being delegated to perform several duties such as being sports leaders, grade managers and subject heads. The teachers were not used to perform duties other than going to class in the school. They seemed not to see any meaningful role in school management. Mrs Molo asserted:

> When we prepared for the parents' evening, I could see that a number of my colleagues were surprised when I gave them various roles to perform during the parents' meeting. Many of them expected me to do everything including welcoming, financial reports, learners' progress and so on. They did not expect to take any part in the programme.

Molo also reported a huge apathy when she came to the school. She said she suspected that it was a matter of her colleagues being wary of a person coming from outside and was gradually changing their culture. She also maintained that she "could feel" that some male colleagues were questioning her abilities as a woman leader at the school. Molo also stated that it appeared as if few of her teachers understood her idea of democratic participation. The teachers frowned upon delegation and appeared very suspicious of Molo's inclusive approaches. Some even stated that she wanted to abdicate her responsibility. The teachers expected her and two of her management team assume the roles of treasurer, sports manager, choir conductor, and various others. None of the teachers took any role in extra-mural activities when Molo arrived at the school. The previous organizational culture in the school perceived teacher participation as incongruent to participative leadership.

In attempts to institute a new organizational culture, which involved teachers, Molo moved for a more inclusive approach to management as she consciously wanted to try *ubuntu* management styles. The idea of the collective is very basic to the *ubuntu* philosophy which she was consciously trying to implement. She was changing the leadership paradigm in the school. She rotated a number of roles as she delegated duties in the school. The teachers' school committee's portfolios were changed in each of the four quarters of the year. What she wanted was for all teachers "to have a feel" of what it felt to be a school's treasurer or head coach as well as other positions in the school. At some point, the teachers were very concerned when she apparently gave a position of treasurer to an alleged "irresponsible alcoholic". Although the teacher gave up after two weeks because he maintained that he "could not balance the books". Talking about her staff members, Molo said she achieved a level of success with the teacher. She averred:

> You see most of them never practised any responsibility positions in the school. Therefore, it was quite a shock for all of them to find that they were assuming positions of high importance in the school. I could see their apathy persisting. However, many got embarrassed when they had to report what they had done or not done. This taught many to be very responsible in the end. They were beginning to respect one another, which is a good starting point for ubuntu.

It was however, clear that many staff members were not used to being entrusted with important school chores and Molo found them wanting in her attempts to involve them into management issues. One teacher emphasized:

> We do not understand this. We are not used to be involved in issues such as coordinating meetings, fund-raising initiatives and school governance. We have always not concerned ourselves with things outside our classrooms. We think this lady wants us to run this school for her.

Molo encountered much resistance from teachers who seemed not ready for the challenge of taking responsibility for many school duties. The staff members wanted to be told what to do at all time. *Ubuntu* was totally not working here because of the refusal of the teachers to take up the gauntlet of changing their schools for the better. *Ubuntu* philosophy was struggling because of either the teachers' dependence upon leader's judgement or their apathy towards school management. One of the elements of *ubuntu i*s interdependence. Initially teachers in Liso were very isolated in their classrooms. Few ever shared their professional experiences. The most crucial of all these though was that there was no solidarity shown by the staff members, each operated in his or her own space alone.

Teacher isolation meant that there was no interdependence among colleagues. The principal tried to initiate

ISSN 2039-2117 (online)
ISSN 2039-9340 (print)

Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences
MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy

Vol 5 No 20
September 2014

"subject teams" headed by the heads of departments. The latter structures hardly worked because the teachers were not used to working together in issues pertaining to professional development. They lacked the necessary diligence and for number of months the teachers in the study were highly opposed to management changes that the principal was implementing. At the beginning, a number of them thought that the management strategy that the principal wanted to introduce was more linked to the post- apartheid South African curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). As one lady participant contended:

> *The principal is not likely to succeed in implementing this new curriculum. We have tried this before and it has not worked. One person cannot do it, we've been to several workshops and few of us could really come to grips with the new system.*

Teachers only began to understand the basics of *ubuntu* months after their principal arrived. Molo believed in a leadership style where she had to lead by example. It was interesting to note how the teachers changed their belief systems towards the end of the study. By the eight month more than 60% of the participants stated that they could "see" the direction the principal was taking. One teacher union site committee member stated that:

> *You have to remember that teachers come from a past where their input was not valued. We were very suspicious of authority. But the irony here is that here is a leader who wants to give us voice and a will to participate fully in school governance but again we are suspicious. That is what history has done to us.*

Similarly one of the heads of department reflected on how teachers tend to mistrust colleagues. This is what she said at the beginning of the study:

> *Sometimes you call a teacher and you show them what they do wrong maybe or something similar to that. Like one teacher in my department who never does lesson plans. These are crucial for me to control the work. But he went to other colleagues saying that I was victimizing him. It is difficult and challenging to be in school management when teachers do not trust one another.*

Concerning classroom practice, a number of teachers tried hard to use methods congruent with the new curriculum. Yet it was clear that many were still struggling in really moving away from the exclusively teacher-centred approaches even when their learners were sitting in groups. Through classroom visits with me though the principal tried in a collegial fashion to point out the weaknesses to teachers as she tried to build their classroom practice, trying to manage change as a leader.

5.1 Discussion

The study has illustrated that some of the idealized values in our society cannot always be easily assimilated by people. With the transformation in the South African education there have been many debates on what needs to be done to meaningfully transform the education system. Africanisation of knowledge, bringing in community values into education have all been highlighted as crucial in bringing forth educational change. The study above however, has illustrated four aspects in particular. One can deduce:

i) that teachers who have not been prepared for change will not be able to embrace even the most powerful of values;
ii) that even values perceived as dynamic, such as *ubuntu* do not guarantee immediate success and total commitment from the members of staff;
iii) that there is a strong necessity to combine 'Western' and 'African' values given the scenario that many employees can be ignorant; and
iv) that the so called democratic models are not necessarily providing simple 'cut and dried' solutions. There will still be many who will see these as oppressive or opposed to their own value systems.

The above display how complex *ubuntu* as one of the ingredients of change management can be. *Ubuntu* is one of the transcendental forms in African renaissance hence re-education of personnel is required before it can be implemented successfully. The latter is what Molo missed as she thought that her implementation of the *ubuntu* philosophy and practice were to be simple and that everybody was to embrace this simultaneously. She wanted to implement a different style before her colleagues were prepared for the paradigm shift. Many teachers were still applying "old-style" of management, expecting to be told by the principal what they needed to do. They were not used to aspects

shared leadership clearly reflected in *ubuntu* models. Many teachers still preferred boss-driven approaches. There was no motivation to innovate and bring strategies in sharing management duties. The professional maturity of the majority of teachers was very low to such an extent that they could not share duties well. *Ubuntu* management needs intense interconnectedness and working together. The teachers in the school could not do this initially. Towards the end of the year though, a few teachers had started understanding what was expected of them under Molo's leadership that expected them to collaborate in the workplace.

Ubuntu as a philosophy worked in the school only after the participants started to understand themselves as well as their practice as professionals. Teffo (1999) pointed out that all that companies need is a mentor to teach or preach *ubuntu*. Teffo also states that this will go a long way into answering the question of: "How do we incorporate *ubuntu* in our management style?" The idea of introducing a mentor is very crucial especially when one looks at the crucial aspect of preparing the workers as the climate is made conducive to be receptive to *ubuntu* models. The teachers could not experience the necessary cooperation. Regarding cooperation, Teffo (1999) points out:

Ubuntu empowers people to love and respect each other. In the search for a new management style, the writing of memos may have to be supplemented by communication (follow-up oral presentation and/or discussions). It would yield better results if the director or manager were to go to the people and discuss issues with them.

It is important to note that in this study, the teachers did not use the freedom granted to them. They were not used in being part of decision making. A few older teachers related that they were always used to "top-down" approaches where information moved in a linear manner from districts to the principal to the teachers. This might have been one of the reasons why Teffo (1999) states that two reasons are important for a major paradigm shift in management theory and practice in South Africa. This author explains that the first reason has to do with the negative consequences of Eurocentric management styles under the African conditions. The research team also maintain that older teachers were once exposed to oppressive measures by their respective departments, in homelands, in urban areas, in rural areas and in farms. Models that yearn to involve many of these teachers might be met with disdain and generally teachers will need some form of retraining as was the case in Liso.

5.2   When a change initiative stalls

Ubuntu is a very highly democratic principle of human interdependence and in a world of competition and individualism, it might not thrive. As the study indicates, the principal encountered many hurdles in trying to bring this model of management. Not all the teacher-participants were at ease with the philosophy, in fact, some participants felt burdened by it. For many, they might say this is a paradox to a democratic philosophy. Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that democratic control could not make "exceptional" professional teachers, for it (democracy) is the real problem. On the other hand, Gutman; (1999) opined that "the professional responsibility of teachers was to uphold the principle of no repression by cultivating the capacity for democratic deliberation". The latter applies in both ways for whilst on the one hand *ubuntu* helped other educators, it threatened others.

Ubuntu as a philosophy can only be applied at a school where teachers have gained a level of maturity as professionals. Teachers must have understood their role as change agents. In his model of five levels of teachers as managers of change, Msila (2002) adapts Maxwell's theory above as he draws five levels pertinent in teacher change.

   i)   Transmission level (Level One)
   ii)   Transcription level (Level Two)
   iii) Transmutation level (Level Three)
   iv) Transformation level (Level Four)
   v)   Transcendental level (Level Five)

Fig. 1. Msila's Five Levels of Teacher Change (2002)

The attributes of each of the above levels are tabulated as follows:

Level	Attributes
One *(Accession)*	▪ Uncritical and will practice what s/he is told ▪ Boss driven ▪ Threatened by change ▪ Might be content with teacher isolation
Two *(Accommodating)*	▪ Understands change but may be apathetic ▪ Simulates the practice of veteran teachers ▪ Need to collaborate
Three *(Accepting)*	▪ Embraces change ▪ Shares the vision of the school ▪ Cherishes ongoing teacher development ▪ Introduction of change within/without the bounds of status quo
Four *(Accentuation)*	▪ Helps in initiating change ▪ Can be a mentor to others ▪ Cooperates with management ▪ Realizes the need for a shared vision and collegiality
Five *(Accomplishment)*	▪ Manager of change ▪ Commanding respect/asset in a district ▪ Can change others in lower levels ▪ Understands the complexities of change

Msila (2002) argues that the first two stages are very basic and are more attributed to novice teachers. Many participants in Liso fell under the first two levels hence they could hardly understand the dynamics of change and could hardly embrace *ubuntu* and its ideals. It was teachers who had attained level three upwards who were able to be receptive to *ubuntu* because of their professional development and maturity. None of the teachers were in the uppermost stage-transcendental stage as the majority were in the second and third level.

In any work setting, *ubuntu* can only be embraced by people who have evolved from one basic level to an advanced one. Enslin and Horsthemke (2004) cite Makgoba who pointed out that democracy is not a finished product but an evolutionary one. In this study, that is exactly what the researchers discovered. *Ubuntu* cannot be implemented in an organization that is static; where people are not open to new ideas of the others. In this study the teachers needed to assume 'an evolution of the mind' in order to be ready for it and subsequently embrace *ubuntu* values. *Ubuntu* encompasses a process of a cycle of value sharing illustrated in Fig, 2 below:
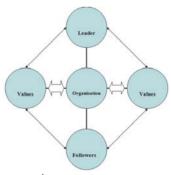

Fig. 2. *Ubuntu* cycle of (value-sharing) management

Figure 2 displays an environment where *ubuntu* is predominant, where its values surround and anchor the organization, which in turn enhance the necessary propinquity between the followers and the leader. All the elements of the organization are intertwined and are bound together by an organization that embraces all.

6. What Happens when *Ubuntu* Works?

The study showed that when *ubuntu* is made to function well, it can enhance the school performance. Yet as pointed out

above, there needs to be some form of voluntary re-education among the teachers. They need to be predisposed to change management. As the study continued, the researchers discerned steps as they witnessed the participants gradually changing and they labelled this as *Change re-education Cycle*:
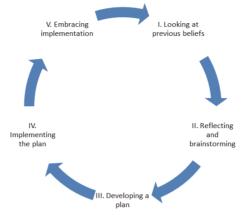

Fig. 3. Change re-education cycle

The participants were not conscious of the steps above. However, Molo was trying out her model the steps became discernible and proved very necessary for the successful implementation of the concept in the school. Employees need to look back and challenge their previous beliefs, they need to think about these as they develop a plan moving towards the enrichment of their own philosophies and beliefs as far as leadership is concerned. Even when they have attained the concept they would need to continuously reflect on their belief systems. The constant reflection on one's personal beliefs is crucial for the re-education process. In a way full of selfishness and egocentrism people need this re-education.

A complete *ubuntu* environment sounds very idealistic. However, when it is attained, it enhances performance among learners and teachers. While the schools' success cannot be measured by using grade 12 results only, in South Africa these appear to be the only yardstick used to measure high schools' effectiveness. Liso's previous year grade 12 pass rate was 21% and when Molo came she changed the school culture, climate and management policies and she maintained that it was her policy that elevated the results to 49% after ten months of trying her "*ubuntu* model". It is difficult to attribute the "success" to one intervention but the move to change the school leadership had an impact on the results. The teachers moved from isolationism to working collaboratively. Molo "softly coerced" her teachers into working together. After much resistance the school developed working teams and teachers themselves saw the need of working together.

As pointed out above before Molo came to the school, teachers did not respect their school management team. It was even worse when parents with the teachers stating that the majority of them did not regard the parents as equal partners in the governing body. However, when Molo arrived at the school, she introduced the idea of community involvement and respect for parental involvement. She underscored the value of social capital and what it can do to school success.

6.1   Ubuntu management: Is it exclusive to (South) Africa?

From the findings, it is apparent that *ubuntu* does provide a sound model of democratic governance. It has always been hailed as an African approach that the world can learn from. Yet *Ubuntu* has many qualities of other Western philosophies. Enslin and Horsthemke (2004) averred that *ubuntu*'s uniqueness is questionable on three avenues. Among these is the fact that *ubuntu* has nearness to the humanist tradition of caring from Western thought. Enslin and Horsthemke (2004:548) cite Mamphele Ramphele who pointed out:

Ubuntu as a philosophical approach to social relationships must stand alongside other approaches and be judged on the value it can add to a better human relations in our complex society…The refusal to acknowledge the similarity between *ubuntu* and other humanistic philosophical approaches is in part a reflection of the parochialism of South Africans and a refusal to learn from others…We have the humility to acknowledge that we are not inventing unique problems in this country, nor are we likely to invent entirely new solutions.

Therefore, it appears that in a move to bring solutions to a number of problems in our society and institutions there

has been a move to implement dynamic approaches that have borrowed from models around the world. At a time when Africans are claiming African-centred models, the philosophy of *ubuntu* has gained much ground. But it is naïve to create the impression that this philosophy is exclusively African.

7. Conclusion

The study emphasized the need to prepare teachers for effective educational changes. Even noble models such as *ubuntu* will falter if teachers are not thoroughly prepared. A leader's knowledge of where the followers are (pertaining to professional maturity) is crucial in their preparation for change. *Ubuntu* is based on inclusive qualities such as interdependence, democracy, respect, equality and humanism. Qualities such as teacher apathy and isolationism can be overcome if organizations embrace the essence of *ubuntu* models of leadership. Yet the study has shown that it cannot be assumed that all teachers will be receptive to change in a uniform manner.

In a world of selfish competition, it is frequently difficult to find people upholding one another. Yet it is the values of *ubuntu* that point out this equality, which enhances collegiality, and minimize conflicts. Liso High School became more functional when the principal decided to use eclectic approaches, thus combining *ubuntu* with a number of other 'Western' models. There is a danger by many to idealize African management that is "without colonial interference", but this is too simplistic (Jackson, 2002). With the introduction of *ubuntu* in their school, the teachers needed to redefine their identities. Ntuli (1999) speaks of a cultural collapse among Africans and a need to re-Africanise the Africans. This refers to the rei-nculcation of the spirit of *ubuntu* and related philosophies. Education leadership should reflect these values if schools are to attain high achievement rates and teacher commitment. Effective schools need one basic recipe as a starting point; each should respect the other and all other positive traits will follow.

References

Chubb, J.E. & Moe, T.M. (1990). *Politics Markets and America's Schools*. Washington: The Brookings Institution.
Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2004). *Research Methods in Education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
Enslin, P., & Horsthemke, K. (2004). Can *ubuntu* provide a model for citizenship education in African democracies? *Comparative Education*, 40 (4), 545-557.
Goetz, J.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. Orlando: Academic Press.
Jackson, T. (2002). *African management systems*. [Online] http://www.africamanagement.org. October 9, 2009.
Hoberg, S.M. (2004). School principalship and the value of African indigenous knowledge (AIK): Ships passing in the night? *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 18(3), 40-55.
Mahomed, H. (1999). The implementation of OBET in South Africa: Pathway to success or recipe for failure? In J.P. Jansen., & P. Christie. (Eds.), *Changing curriculum: studies on outcomes based education in South Africa*. Kenwyn: Juta.
Masitsa, M.G. (2005). The principal's role in restoring a learning culture in township secondary schools. *Africa education Review* 2(2), 205-220.
Maxwell, J.C. (1993). *Developing the leader within you*. New York: Thomas Nelson.
Ministry of Education. (2001). *Manifesto on values, education and democracy*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
Mkandawire, T. (2005). Introduction. In T. Mkandawire, (Ed.), *African Intellectuals: Rethinking politics, Language, Gender and Development* (pp.1-9). London: Zed Books.
Msila, V. (2002). *Teachers as managers of Change*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Port Elizabeth: Vista University.
Msila, V. (2005). The Education Exodus: the flight from township schools. *Africa Education Review*. 2(2), 173-188.
Msila, V. (2008). *Ubuntu* and school leadership. *Journal of education*, 44, 67-84.
Ntuli, P.P. (1999). The missing link between culture and education: are we still chasing Gods that are not our own? In M.W. Makgoba, (Ed.), *African Renaissance* (pp.184-199). Mafube: Cape Town.
Steyn, G.M., & Van Wyk, J.N. (1999). Job satisfaction: perception of principals and teachers in urban black schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 19(1), 37-43.
Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. New York: John Wiley.
Teffo, L. (1999). Moral Renewal and African Experience(s). In Makgoba, M.W. (Ed.), *African Renaissance*. Mafube: Cape Town.
Weiss, C.H. (1998). Evaluation: methods for studying programs and policies. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River.