

AFRICA: NEW FRONTIER FOR LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The concept of corporate leadership has not received much attention in most African countries. Several proposals, initiatives, ideas, and training programs have been introduced to the continent to help bridge the gap between poor leadership practices and effective leadership. Yet many challenges still exist. The challenge of developing efficient leadership persists regardless of the progress being made in many parts of the continent. This begs the following questions: How can leaders of African institutions find lasting solutions to the challenge of leadership formation, development, and sustainability? What strategies can be used to identify individuals

with the capacity to be trained to lead African countries and institutions to a desired future? Are there specific cultural and community values which can facilitate the African quest for leadership formation and development? Are there established African-based leadership philosophies that can assist in this search for and development of effective leaders? This paper seeks to answer the above questions and many more by providing bridges and pathways to some solutions that may assuage the deep-seated hunger for efficient leadership across African.

***Key Words:** Africa, leadership, African-centered leadership, economic opportunities*

INTRODUCTION

Many African scholars attest to the need for more research on African corporate leadership and leadership in general (Kirk & Bolden, 2006). The opportunities are great as Africa emerges to assume its leadership position not only in the realm of business in broader cultural and political terms. The demand is for leadership research that explores the unique African context. Much of this research will be anchored in empirical studies, but there should also be detailed qualitative analyses, case studies, longitudinal analysis, and mining of existing leadership data for practical applications. This methodological work should not be devoided from the need for theoretical studies, which go hand in hand with the search for a more robust African leadership methodology and theoretical framework. All of this should be encouraging to students and practitioners alike, stakeholders who wish to contribute to an unfolding construct of African leadership through writing, conducting new and contextually relevant research, reviews of the existing literature and suggesting new concepts in an effort to propel African leadership studies and practice forward. The search for increased competency, 'where' competency is measured in terms of efficiency, excellence and tangible results, is part of the urgency to fill this leadership gap. It also addresses the need for new models of leadership engagement across the continent and concern for the future development of African business and societies into the second half of the Twenty-first century.

Why is Africa the “Next Destination” for Business?

For several decades Africa was known as the “dark continent” mainly because of European misconceptions. Europeans at the time pictured Africa as a vacant land that belonged to no one (Pakenhan, 1991). To ignorant Europeans, Africa was a strange inaccessible place; prompting lurid tales of a strange world where there is was both unimagined wealth and danger. The tales, coupled with a quest for adventure, would fuel voyages of discovery resulting variously in the exploration, exploitation, and colonization of Africa, evidenced in the words of King Leopold II of Belgium, “I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of the magnificent African cake” (Spies, 2011, p. 86).

The so-called ‘Dark Continent’

References to Africa as a ‘dark continent’ popular at the height of the explorer period, even into the establishment of a colonial foothold by the European nations, said more about the European prejudices and stereotypes than they did about the continent or its people. Prior to the advent of the European, Africa was home to countless and ethnically diverse groups of people who owned land, and were organized into communities and associations of various sizes. Not unlike the European societies from which the colonies the colonists came, leadership was an entrenched concept. Society was organized along family, kinship, local chiefs, or larger aggregations, in some cases around powerful empires of Songhai, Mali, Zulu, Ghana, Benin, or going much further back, to the various Kingdoms of Egyptian antiquity. The coming of Europeans led eventually to the establishment of colonies that reorganized societies all across Africa, creating new systems of government, legal frameworks, inheritance rights, trade, international treaties, transportation networks and other infrastructural projects. In a word, colonialism not only redefined the social order, it challenged virtually all that had existed previously, including the very cosmos. The tendency for colonialism to ignore or devalue traditionally established leadership practices killed initiative on the part of would-be African stakeholders as a result of lack of participation of any form (Duke II, 2010). Today, some African organizations and corporation remain centralized, bureaucratic, and hierarchical in structure, a legacy of the colonial period. On the bright side, since independence, many Africans have displayed a penchant for entrepreneurial activity as well as commitment to designing and developing their own organizations.

Misconception about the Current State of Africa

Issues ranging from conflicts, hunger, famine, disease and infant mortality, to the seemingly intractable issues of poverty and corruption plague most African nations, creating negative impression of the continent. Some international stakeholders see the continent through a historical lens when assessing business opportunities. There is a consequent narrow understanding of contemporary investment opportunities and private and public institutional restructuring that has occurred across the continent (Peters, 2011).

However, the negative image of Africa as being in a perpetual state of confusion (afflicted by conflicts, hunger, famine, disease and poverty) is slowly changing to be replaced by a more positive image based on major political, economic and social transformations occurring there. Significant economic and political changes are currently sweeping across the continent. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the continent has seen successful multiparty elections in over 40 countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region. Improvements in stock exchange returns in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are examples of economic and political progress in the region (Peters, 2011).

Economic and Political Transformation

Africa has several challenges that must be met with sustainable solutions. The challenges, bring in their train a host of opportunities that stakeholders and many local Africans themselves overlook. In addition to the significant economic transformation now taking place across Africa, there are other ‘game changer’ developments. These include: successful multiparty elevations in several African countries, like Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Benin, and Nigeria; population growth with more than half of the population under the age of 24; growing urbanization with huge opportunities for intensive labor related jobs and the expansion of consumer based industries are all signs of hope and development (McKinsey & Company, 2010; Peters, 2011). These economic advances, coupled with a growing generation of young African who possess the requisite technical skills and ability to lead existing and future organizations paints a hopeful picture for individual nations and the continent as a whole. At this point one is compelled to pause and ask several questions related to the continuing dilemma of African leadership:

1. What are the missing links in the process of African leadership formation and development?
2. What can be done to create or establish these ‘missing’ links to enhance leadership success?
3. What critical skills must African leaders acquire or develop in order to become more competitive and effective?
4. What should be the priorities for African business and leadership?

The answers to the above questions are a resounding, ‘Yes.’ When all is said and done, no outsiders or external force can solve the African leadership puzzle whether these are conceived as questions of governance or socio-economic development. Africans must find their own appropriate and lasting solutions to what be euphemistically described as the burden of African leadership, or in more prosaic terms, as the ‘African Leadership challenge.’ Contemporary political and economic developments across the continent offer a glimmer of hope for the future of leadership specific sectors. While significant challenges remain in terms of ineffective government, policies, internecine conflicts, disease, poverty and limited educational opportunities across the continent, in some ways these very challenges constitute opportunities. In global terms, the world’s attention is focused on China, India, and the small association of

BRICS nations (that includes South Africa). Africa, while considered an investment or business opportunity has yet to come into its own. Students and analysts in the know recognize that while the jury may still be out, African across the continent are busy creating the structures and filling in the blanks of their technical and emotional knowledge to create a new landscape of opportunity. Whatever indices one uses, Africa is today a viable option for investment and leadership development. A Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 4.9 to 5 percent from 2000 through 2008 symbolizes a doubling of rates in the 1980's and 1990's representing signs of economic growth in the region (McKinsey & Company, 2010). Africa's combined GDP reached \$6.1 trillion in 2008, which is roughly equivalent to that of Brazil and Russia. As a result, Africa is considered one of the world's most rapidly growing economic regions today (Quelch & Austin, 1993). Early indications are that the future trajectory will see further growth and expansion of African markets with African banking, manufacturing, mining, agricultural, technological, and other interests being recognized as leaders and entrepreneurs in their own rights.

External trends such the global race for commodities, Africa's increased access to international capital, forging of a new economic partnerships and collaborations with foreign investors, the growth of its labor force, urbanization, rise of middle-class consumers, and a projected \$2.6 trillion in annual revenue for companies by 2020 are all hopeful signs of economic progress for African countries and offer further evidence of effective corporate organizational leadership development across the region (McKinsey & Company, 2010)

Africa as a New Destination for Business

Following on the positive characterization of Africa, a few projections can be offered that portray Africa as a viable destination for local and global business. These include:

1. In 2020, Africa's collective GDP will be \$2.6 trillion.
2. In 2020, Africa's consumer spending will rise to \$1.4 trillion.
3. In 2040, the number of Africans at a working age will rise to 1.1 billion.
4. The number of African households with discretionary income will be 128 million in 2020.
5. Africa is forecasted to be the highest supplier of petroleum to the US.
6. Firms from China and India have expanded their investments in the region substantially over the past decade and are surpassing investments being made by US and European firms.
7. Over the past decade, there has been a strong investment from Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait, Dhahi, Qatar and Saudi Arabia to Africa in the telecommunications sector and in agricultural cultivation.
8. There has been an increased openness to trade in the region accompanied by lower corporate taxes, improvements in physical and social infrastructure and regulatory and legal systems.

9. The continent is experiencing a growing urbanization.
10. There are higher returns on investment (ROI).
11. Africa is experiencing population growth.
12. The percentage of Africans living in cities is projected to rise to more than 900 million by 2050.

Source: (McKinsey & Company, 2010; Peters, 2011; Khanna & Khan, 2008)

From a leadership perspective, the above opportunities and challenges underscore the need for well-designed leadership training and development programs adapted to the needs of individual corporations, business sectors, and would-be entrepreneurs across the region. Such programs would go a long way to meeting critical demands and bridging the knowledge gap. They would also address host of leadership challenges ranging from corporate governance and professionalism to models of values-based and ethical leadership. Leaders, particularly those with global connections, have a range of choices and opportunities available to them. Deciding among and between these options presents a dilemma for some; what criteria should be used? Why? How well do principles developed elsewhere apply to the specific African context or contexts? What are the priorities for development? How do these connect with the demands of different constituencies, and changing demographics across Africa? These are the urgent questions confronting today's leaders.

If one thing is certain, it is that African government must work to improve African economies if they wish to attract local and foreign investments. It is also important to acknowledge a few African governments striving to establish stable political and economic systems within their borders or regions all with a view of creating the conditions for stability and stimulating the emergence of African entrepreneurs. As part of these efforts, frantic steps are being taken to end the plague of conflicts in various countries that threaten peace and with it the economic viability in those regions. These steps to improve the political and macroeconomic conditions for local and international business operations are a fundamental prerequisite for economic development and the basis upon which governments have drafted and adopted a series of microeconomic strategies aimed at promoting the positive and welcoming business atmosphere required by both local and international investors. To cite few examples; countries such Angola and Mozambique decided to a sequence of armed conflicts and national violence in those countries to ensure political stability and economic development; the reduction of an inflation rate from 22 percent in the 1990's to eight percent after 2000 and foreign debt reduction from 82 percent of GDP to 59 percent and the shriveling of budget deficits from 4.6 percent of GDP to 1.8 percent by African countries such Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya (McKinsey & Company, 2010; The World Bank, Africa Development Indicators, 2008/09).

Individual African governments are starting to adopt economic policies and reforms aimed at energizing local markets in the hope of attracting local and international private investors. As an example, Ghana privatized a number of its public enterprises (Divestiture Implementation

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Committee of 1993), which fueled competition, an increase in trade lowering of business taxes, and reinforcement of regular and legal systems that boosted private sector investments (Brune., Garrett, & Kogut, 2003). Elsewhere, between 1999 and 2006 Nigeria privatized over 116 state run enterprises; Morocco and Egypt signed a free-trade agreement with major export partners to boost their import and export industries; Rwanda institutionalized its commercial courts of law across the country in an attempt to resolve business disputes among local and foreign investors and stakeholders (McKinsey & Company, 2010).

These examples show the willingness of African governments to improve business conditions across the continent. The increased economic productivity being enjoyed in many parts of Africa can be directly attributed to structural adjustments in the political and economic spheres. With a new, more pragmatic, orientation, African governments are opening their doors in an attempt to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives, boost competition, and champion the adaption of modern business technologies.

Africa-centered Leadership

Based on the preceding discussion, Africa would appear to be headed in the right direction. In preparation for the onslaught of business growth and entrepreneurial opportunities, African leaders have a responsibility to acquire the tools and techniques that will enable them to lead their followers and organizations in ways that are effective and sustainable over the long term. Navigating the often choppy waters of leadership development does not come easy. The skill required to balance leadership approaches that one may have been exposed to in formal programs and traditional, indigenous African principles and philosophies of leadership cannot be overestimated. In addition to recognizing the significance of culture to socio-economic development, leaders must ways to look beyond the next curve in the road to or fad, o create integrated leadership models that are built upon, yet transcend simple one-dimensional formation of African or Western leadership.

S already noted the question many continue to ask is: What is leadership? How does it work? More specifically, how can we make it work more effectively for us? This is case, the reference to 'us' reflects on the value of specific historical, cultural, or demographic conditions? This leads to the question of whether there is such thing as African leadership thought? Although a great deal of attention and research has not been devoted to this important philosophical question or the general development of leadership theories and models grounded in the African universe so to speak, what is being heard are urgent calls for "African leadership rebirth" because of what are perceived to be gaps in the regional leadership process (Puplampu, 2010). This situation calls for a new mindset, one in which Africans move past the limitations of colonial and post-colonial thinking to a new awareness of indigenous African leadership values and practices. Not be seen as a panacea for the failure of modern leadership practices or wholesale replacement of Western by an African leadership construct, the call rather, is for a sober rethinking of African leadership, and revaluing of traditional principles and concepts. African scholars, practitioners, and students

are invited to collaborate in advancing new ideas for construction of an African leadership ethic, one premised on traditional cultural values, experiences, and systems of thought.

Developing a body of African leadership research and knowledge that will galvanize African corporate leaders today and contribute to the training and development of future emerging one is imperative (Bolden & Kirk, 2006). The evidence offered by some is that African leaders go back to their traditional or cultural ways of leading people and organizations after several years experimenting with Western-style leadership derived from their education and training. Can any good come of this default to an African model of leadership? What might it mean or say about the continuing investment in leadership development programs that appear to replicate Western models and experiences? Research shows many leaders preferred their previous African leadership training to several years of Western leadership and management oriented training programs (Kuada, 2010).

This preference indicates an inherent shortsightedness in total dependence on Western-oriented leadership training (Kuada, 2010); Bolden & Kirk, 2006). It points to the need for African leaders to research, learn, discover and revalue a rich tradition of leadership philosophies, incorporating principles and values without necessarily discarding useful and adaptable components of Western-based leadership training and education. Developing a solid knowledge-base of both Africa-centered and validated aspects of Western-based leadership concepts and models makes for a fuller and more integrated perspective which can better serve the interests of African leadership development.

One African-based leadership philosophy highlighted and used in this paper is the Ubuntu philosophy or approach to organizational leadership. The Ubuntu philosophy of African leadership has potential to recharge discussions or formulations of African corporate leadership formation and development process (Lutz, 2009). The relevance of the Ubuntu concept lies in the fact that despite decades of investments and an orientation towards Western-based leadership development among African leaders, effective answers to a myriad of leadership challenges continue to elude African leadership. Taking stock of this situation, one approach is to step back or at least pause and reassess the broad tendency towards a dependence on leadership philosophies, theories, ideologies, concepts, and models a majority of which have been developed outside the continent with little if any regard for its people, culture traditions, or changing needs.

The Ubuntu philosophy denotes a community-based approach to leadership and highlights pre-colonial, pre-European, non-Western tradition of leadership formation and development in Africa that leads to a reappraisal of unique African historical and cultural norms.

Regional leaders and institutions must pause and ask if there are indigenous cultural and contextual factors to the leadership challenges the continent has encountered over the years taking into consideration the fact that there may be existing elements of African culture that may

promote unique and positive leadership behaviors and practices. The quest here is to drive home the point that Africans must begin paying attention to their own well established leadership philosophies, values and concepts to enhance leadership practices across the continent. One must also note that African leaders can rely on aspects of established Western-based leadership thought and documented skills and traits while working towards the identification of and development of an African-based leadership literature. It is also imperative that African researchers maintain the integrity of African leadership philosophy and resist distortion by not yielding to demands that may be made for conformity to more established Western leadership paradigms.

The Neglected Factor

Much of the leadership struggles taking place across the continent is the result of what we call the ‘neglector factor.’ This reflects on the notion that up until quite recently, Africans had their own leadership structures, systems of organizational and leadership concepts such as Ubuntu, which emphasized a community-based approach to social and human organizations. Examination of these community-based leadership structures and systems reveal one might expect that the African approach to leadership is in many respects quite different from systems and structures in other parts of the world. Fundamentally, the traditional focus of African leadership has been advancement of the entire community, or an emphasis on promoting the whole as opposed to the welfare of the few. This difference in emphasis, while relevant to redefining the African leadership process, has been largely overlooked and ignored, eclipsed by a continuing dependence on Western-based approaches. It is worth noting that leadership behavior, formation and organizational operations are significantly influenced by cultural values, regardless of the location and size of the organization (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

This leads to the assertion that some of the differences between Africa, the United States and Europe with regards to organizational design and leadership behavior may be attributed to cultural as opposed to what are often loosely described as ‘inherent leadership failures.’ In other words, and without seeking to excuse leadership malpractices, some deficiencies in leadership may be the results of fundamental dissimilarities in such things as the value priority of African societies (Kuada, 2010). Africans are no less skilled or versed in the science or art of leadership than their counterparts in other parts of the world. They have the capacity to deal with complex organizational systems, cultural diversity, and rapid change by being adaptive, community oriented, and linking practice to the cultural contexts in which they exist. A cornerstone of this ability or facility to cope with the demands of leadership is the conceptualization of the human being as intrinsically valuable, which runs counter to Western notions that conceive of human being as essentially, resources (Kuada, 2010). Table 1; below shows comparative cultural classifications and dimensions based on an analysis of studies conducted by well-known scholars. The impact of differences in national cultures on leadership formation and national development may be worth exploring in further studies of African leadership.

Table 1: Dimensions of National Cultures and Authors

Cultural Classifications	Author(s) and Year
Individualism & Collectivism	Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1994
Vertical & Horizontal	Triandis, 1994
Masculine & Feminine	Hofstede, 1994
Active & Passive	Triandis, 1994
Universalism & Particularize	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997
Emotional Expression or Suppression	Triandis, 1994
Instrumental & Expression	Triandis, 1994
Ascription & Achievement	Triandis, 1994 & Hampden-Turner, 1997
Sequential & Synchronic	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997

Source: (Kuada, 2010).

The key conclusion to be drawn from the above table is that culture is an important mediating variable for force in defining and explaining differential leadership practices. Put another way, national culture influences perspectives, styles, behaviors, and organizational leadership practices. This leads us to conclude that culture provides a critical framework for understanding structural and behavioral differences in organizational leadership.

Is Africa Prepared?

The opening paragraphs of this article portrayed Africa as the next destination for global business. But, is the region prepared for such an influx of business opportunities? Regardless of the current evidence of projected economic growth and opportunities sweeping across the continent, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the following challenges exist and meticulous attention must be paid to them if Africans are to benefit from and sustain the current and projected economic development.

Lack of Skilled Labor, Management and Leadership

A majority of working age Africans are not well equipped to compete locally and globally, evidenced by growing concerns among employers (Materu, 2007). Regional higher educational systems do not prepare stakeholders adequately with employable skills. Graduates are found

wanting in their own countries when exiting college. Unfortunately, Western-based organizations and multinationals look down on African-based degrees because of the quality presented in most higher educational institutions (Materu, 2007). Some of these challenges are being met today in different parts of the continent by institutions like Ashesi University College in Ghana. Ashesi offers liberal arts based curriculum to young Ghanaians by teaching how to effectively read, write, research and think strategically to help solve many of Africa's problems. It is about time all African institutions of higher learning (both private and public) focus on higher and quality standards for preparing the emerging workforce to guarantee they will be locally and globally ready to perform and compete.

Africa-centered Leadership Training and Development Institutions of Higher Learning

African educational institutions from kindergarten to colleges and universities are influenced by colonial and other Western models (Duke II, 2010). Lessons and lectures are designed and delivered based on Western styles and thought. Though there are African Studies Departments in most African universities and colleges, the emphasis on African leadership thought is limited and many times virtually absent as a result of the fact that the subject of African studies is a very small aspect of university requirements for graduation. It is mostly a minor requirement for graduation. Moreover, there is not much emphasis on African leadership development in most African Studies curricula.

A web search of African universities surfaced a list of the top one hundred universities. Most of the universities listed on this website did not have African studies incorporated into existing university curricula. Some have African studies as a minor in undergraduate programs. There was no indication of a solid African studies program that focuses on dealing with African leadership issues and the identification of possible solutions to the imminent leadership challenges the continent faces. A list of the universities and African studies offerings can be found in Appendix II. Africa lacks institutions of higher learning and training in organizational leadership development that incorporates a significant amount of African-based leadership philosophy and thought into the teaching and learning process.

Universities across the continent are struggling with ineffective, inadequate, and highly bureaucratic structures that often hinder smooth operations of these institutions. University staff and faculty lack the required qualifications, the appropriate training and preparation, and remuneration to deliver in their areas of specialization. Most of these universities still rely on unproductive, inefficient, and outdated management and administrative infrastructure (Teferra & Altback, 2004). They are characterized by congested classrooms and hostels, limited computer access, and little or no access to relevant equipment, supplies and materials (Okrah & Adabor, 2010). Not surprisingly, these conditions affect students and faculty performance.

Moreover, these institutions and organizations have imported and adopted Western and Eastern-based leadership philosophies and approaches in their work (Kuada, 2010). The region needs

leadership development institutions that are African-based. This does not mean all Western partnerships and collaborations should be abandoned. These Africa-based institutions must develop and maintain an Afro-centric approach to leadership training and development to ensure visiting Western colleagues identify and use Western models and approaches that are contextually appropriate in Africa. This may help bridge the existing gap between limited Afro-centric leadership literature and Western-based leadership literature.

The development, advancement and equipment of the human resources of the region are dependent on higher educational systems and institutions. Quality higher education is relevant to successful leadership development as well as individual and organizational success. A strong foundation of thinking and decision making is dependent on the kind of instruction, teaching and learning leaders are exposed to at the early stages of their academic careers. Thus, the role of Sub-Saharan African higher educational institutions in the corporate leadership formation and development process can never be overestimated. Current college and universities, polytechnic institutions and institutes have a major role to play.

Such educational outlets must ensure students are well equipped and prepared in all aspects of their academic and professional lives prior to graduation. Basic things such as effective reading and writing, research, communication, speaking and thinking must be incorporated into academic curricula to aid student learning. This means the leadership of current higher educational institutions must consider restructuring teaching and learning and overall curricula contents to meet global expectations and standards in terms of learning materials, students' ability to read and write effectively and faculty teaching methods and styles.

For Africa to compete effectively in a world that is increasingly dominated by knowledge and information, the continent has no option but to deliberately, tirelessly, and forcefully overhaul its current and emerging institutions of higher learning so that such institutions can be raised to a standard where they can compete with their global counterparts (Teferra & Altback, 2004). National and university budgets must be committed to designing institutions of higher learning that address capacity building, support innovative behavior and a spirit of entrepreneurship, which ultimately assists the development of needed ethical entrepreneurial leaders across the continent (Abu & Ogehenekohwo, 2010).

Prior to launching the above proposals, one must pause to consider issues of availability, affordability and accessibility to higher education across the continent. The challenge of access to higher education is evident across Africa. In virtually all countries, demand for access to higher education is growing rapidly, straining the resources of already-stretched higher educational institutions (Teferra & Altback, 2004).

The issues triggering this lack of access include an absence of amenities, which is due to the high demand for higher education across the continent (Okrah & Adabor, 2010). To review the situation in one West African country, Ghana currently has a population of over 24 million

people with six public universities, one major private university, and thirty university colleges. The percent of Ghanaians enrolled in higher education is less than 3%, while in Malawi it is 0.5% and in Tanzania is as low as 0.3%. In Ghana, The University of Science and Technology was able to accommodate only 6,868 applicants out of 17,438 representing 39.38% of the applications received in 2007 (Okrah & Adabor, 2010). In the same year, the University of Ghana admitted just 7,500 applicants of the 16,000 who applied for admission, which represented 46.9% and the University of Cape Coast admitted 3,908 students out of the 13,000 applicants representing a 30% acceptance rate in Ghana (Okrah & Adabor, 2010). Millions of talented and gifted young men and women cannot progress towards a bright future because of this lack of higher educational opportunities. It is not exaggeration to say that the future of Africa is literally in the hands of these young men and women who are denied access to higher education.

The Need for More Research

The subject of this paper is that reliance on Western-based leadership literature within African institutions of higher learning and its use in an overwhelming majority of leadership development training and development programs organizations is due to the lack of relevant African leadership literature. More African-based leadership research is required to shed light on the subject within an African context. Unfortunately, many individuals and institutions lack the resources or perhaps research knowledge to undertake meaningful quantitative and qualitative leadership research. Embarking on a journey of practical leadership research with a view to uncovering and studying indigenous cultural values and concepts, establishing new perspectives and paradigms is one way to build the necessary knowledge base. The gradual development of a body of leadership literature, theoretical models and frameworks and empirical data serves not only the needs of African leadership development. Its use in comparative studies and explorations of global leadership increases the value of the African leadership research proposition.

Corporate Governance

Effective corporate practices have been the exception to a general rule of ineffectual systems and organizational practices. Discussions of corporate governance tend to be concentrated in the developed world and reached an all-time high with the headlining examples of corporate malfeasance associated with Fortune 500 entities like Enron, WorldCom and Arthur-Anderson LLP in the United States (Kyereboah-Coleman & Biekpe, 2006). In the market of Africa, there is an obvious need to give corporate governance a much higher priority and for this to be linked to calls for ethical or values-based leadership. This is one of many factors required to improve the business climate and attract much needed investment and global partnership deals. Most commentators and observers note the process whereby following independence, many governments promptly nationalized a host of corporations using the legal instrument of indigenization decrees. Many commodities such as electricity, telecommunication, postal

services, shipping, ports and air travel almost overnight became either wholly or majority state corporations. However, issues such as dishonesty, bribery, poor functioning markets, opposition and a lack of infrastructure have led to the collapse of most of these state owned institutions which has led to the recent wave of privatization that has swept across the region (Boniface, 2002).

African leaders and organizations must accept and implement concepts of corporate governance through cultivation of liberal economies and deregulation programs that encourage privately owned enterprises (Boniface, 2002). Effective corporate governance is critical for growth and the procurement of external funding institutions (Peters, 2011). African corporate leaders must for that reason adopt effective corporate leadership practices that separate management from labor to enhance the process of preparation and positioning of the region as the next frontier for global business. Regional corporate organizations must also take note of the following key characteristics of effective corporate boards such as; size, composition, ownership and skill. They must have the required number of board members meeting local corporate laws. Typically, a board comprising of eight members is considered a large board and a mid-size board consists of four, with two as the minimum (Abor & Biekpe, 2007). Corporate leaders must also ensure the diversity of their boards. This can be achieved by reaching a decision as to whether board members should be current members of the organization or outsiders. It is also relevant to ensure board members possess the skills need to facilitate effective decision making, stronger internal auditing, and a greater opportunity for growth and funding opportunities (Abor & Biekpe, 2007). These practices must be implemented in accordance with local values, practices and laws of the land.

Globalization

Similar to most of the world, Africa is confronted with a range of global challenges. However, unlike other developed continents, Africa is facing these global economic challenges with limited and inadequate knowledge and infrastructure (Swilling, 2010). The shift towards globalization requires that African leaders and corporations prepare themselves to match the level of external investments in their economies. Most multinational companies are shifting their focus to Africa as a result of the global economic downturn for higher returns on their investment elsewhere in the world. However, Africa-based corporations are not globally prepared to compete because of the absence of efficient corporate governance mechanisms and poor skilled labor, leadership and management that will protect their investments (Peters, 2011). This calls for adoption of leadership models that facilitate the training and development of the much needed talent pools of locally-based, but globally competent business leaders. Such a preparatory training agenda must be tied to an uncompromising emphasis on Afro-centric leadership and program focused on equipping locally successful, but globally, competent individuals to lead Africa's twenty-first century organizations.

Defining Organizational Leadership from an African Perspectives

Considering Africa as a destination for business, any definition of organizational leadership must meet the needs of an increasingly global community and take into consideration the dynamics and ever-shifting meanings and applications of leadership skills. This calls for embrace of multiple styles and brands of leadership as well as behaviors, relationships, and exchanges that occur in different locations.

Given Africa's tremendous diversity, a fact represented in national, tribal, ethnic and religious forms, coming up with a single, unified definition of "African Leadership" can be as problematic as settling on an integrated definition of 'European,' 'Asian,' 'North American leadership.' So, how do we proceed? We begin with a construction of leadership in Africa that is based on communal values, where respect for rank, and sacredness of obligation, high regard for compromised, agreement and good communal and individual relationship matter (Kuada, 2010). The beginning definition shifts the spotlight from the individual to the community. In general, organizational leadership can be examined from the viewpoint of individuals or groups who possess the ability to influence others to follow and, at the same time, are willing to be influenced by their followers to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). It is also the influence that individuals or groups of people in higher positions exercise through their demographic, cultural and societal traits and actions on the performance of the organization (Heck, 1996).

In global terms, organizational leadership describes a situation where leadership has responsibility and jurisdiction over an individual business or organization that has local or international activities. Such leaders exhibit the following characteristics: they have a global mindset, work with personnel from different cultures, have long-term points of reference, make organizational alterations possible, generate learning structures, inspire employees to fitness, settle conflicts, supervise unfamiliar employment and volunteers cycles competently, guide multinational teams, appreciate organizational and individual values and notions, precisely outline the traditions of others and exhibit familiarity and respect for other nations. (Jokinen, 2005).

Global leaders have a global imagination, value cultural multiplicity and develop technical know-how for building partnerships and alliances in order to share leadership and operations (Cohen, 2010). The global leaders also identifies and takes advantage of opportunities, adapting to organizational standards by adding value in terms of time, endeavor, currency, proficiency, and other resources. Global leaders are able to thrive in disorganized and uncertain surroundings. They respect and love their followers, have uncompromised ethical principles and value global business (Black, Morrison, & Greggersen, 1999).

Global leadership increases the concentration of contextual complications that usually exist for local and domestic leaders. To a great extent, global leadership is distinguished from

local/domestic leadership in terms of connectedness, borders, complexities, moral and ethical confrontations, anxieties and inconsistencies, acknowledgements, surroundings, teams and community building community as well as leading high level transformational efforts across varied organizational and cultures (Mendenhall et. al., 2008).

Leadership in a corporate organizational setting has to do with vision formation and development, the recruitment and enrollment of others, strategy execution, critical thinking and the ability to recruit and lead current and emerging leaders and followers towards short and long-term sustainability of the organization (Brotherton, 2011). It is mainly the ability to influence, inspire and enable other to contribute towards the efficiency and overall success of the organization.

The above characterizations are worth considering with respect to development of the African leadership process. Africa and Africans have much to gain from training competent local and global leaders who will assume positions in existing and emerging organizations and thereby contribute to the development of the continent. In particular, business or corporate leaders, who possess the above mentioned traits, competencies, and commitments must be identified and trained.

Building on this broad conception of leadership is merely the first step or beginning phase of an emerging 'African leadership' construct. We have already alluded to the values of communitarian and traditional beliefs and principles in establishing the boundaries of the construct. A true representation of the African leadership is found at the intersection of community, culture, and tradition, with each element refining the effect of the other, reinterpreting the way in which external – Western or other – leadership imports are added to the mix.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, given the rate and pace of change across the world and particularly in Africa, we expect the still-emerging construct of African leadership to change as it adapts to a confluence of socio-technical and political forces. With this said, no one can afford to wait for this revised version of 'African leadership' to arrive tooting its horn. This time for African leaders to get busy is now. In many ways development turns on cultivating and deploying effective leadership styles, attitudes, and behaviors. Positive leadership has always been a hallmark of the African leadership tradition and polarizations of the East and West, yesterday and today, or antiquity and modernity may be more a reflection of cultural bias and politics than fact or depth of analysis. In other words, there is much we can learn from a review of African leadership traditions. These provide a framework around which leaders-follower behaviors and positive organizational cultures can be designed and practical strategies formulated. One outcome of this reappraisal of African leadership is the establishment of better contextualized models which, fused with Western and multiple hybrid forms, offer the promise of a unique brand of African-inspired

leadership. From this vantage point the task of improving African thought and action may begin in earnest. And what Africa and its people seize today, they can export to the West and the rest of the globe tomorrow.

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