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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Philosophical Reflection on Leadership and Development in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines leadership and development in Africa from a philosophical perspective, emphasising the interconnectivity between historical legacies, indigenous values, and aspirations for transformational growth and advancement. African nations, endowed with rich cultural heritage and diversity, human capital, and natural resources continue to face challenges rooted in colonial and postcolonial disruptions, governance deficits, and external economic dependencies. Ethical leadership, grounded in the principles of Ubuntu and communal interdependence emerges as a veritable foundation for addressing these issues. This indigenous philosophy advocates for a collective wellbeing and inclusivity, aligning with the moral imperatives for accountable leadership. The legacy of colonialism disrupted traditional systems and imposed hierarchies that alienated local populations from leadership structures. This research underscores the importance of reclaiming African identity and fostering leadership paradigms that are embedded in indigenous values. Traditional models such as consensus-building and adaptive governance offer valuable alternatives to Western-centric frameworks that is copied hook line and sinker, emphasising common-good and collective wellbeing over individualised-materialistic development goals. Employing the method of critical analysis, this study holds that, 'transformative educational systems' are vital in cultivating ethical leadership and innovative reasoning to tackle Africa's unique challenges. The impact of globalisation further necessitates philosophical clarity, balancing engagement with global systems while advocating for African 'true-autonomy.' A Pan-Africanist approach that prioritises unity, self-reliance, and cultural integrity is pivotal to achieving sustainable development in Africa. Therefore, integrating indigenous wisdom with modern governance frameworks can unlock Africa's potentials, creating leadership that resonates with the history, values, and aspirations of the continent.

Keywords: Ethical leadership; globalization; Pan-Africanism; philosophical clarity; transformative educational systems; ubuntu philosophy

INTRODUCTION

It has to be clearly stated from the onset that the problem that is holding Africa backward in almost all spheres of human endeavour is anchored on leadership. Similarly, without the right leadership, there can hardly be transformational development. Leadership and development in Africa are veritable areas for philosophical reflection, as they encompass complex interconnections of education, ethics, history, culture, gender issues, and social dynamics. Superlatively endowed with rich cultural heritage and diversity, abundant human and natural resources, and profound historical narratives, Africa is on a cross road where leadership philosophies and development paradigms must reconcile inherited colonial legacies with indigenous practices and aspirations for the future. Inextricably connected, leadership and development in Africa challenges the continent's historical, cultural, and

socio-economic complexities. Despite the fact that Africa is profusely endowed with enormous human and natural resources, its potential has been constrained by the colonial legacy, systemic governance issues, and global economic inequities. A critical exploration of the ethical and, indeed, philosophical foundations of leadership is essential to understanding how these constraints can be addressed to foster transformational development in Africa.

The centralisation of governance systems that accompanied by the introduction of colonial rule downplayed indigenous leadership structures. As it were, "These systems were designed to control resources rather than promote inclusion and accountability, leaving post-independence governments with weak institutions and a reliance on authoritarian practices" (Zeleza, 2020). Prioritising hierarchy over participatory governance by the colonial systems encapsulated a culture of centralization of power that are predominant in Africa today. However, governance deficits that resulted from this is the undermining of trust and accountability, which are not only essential, but indispensable pillars of leadership and sustainable development. Another, Economic dependency is also another key lasting colonial legacy that continues to hinder Africa's progress. As a result, colonial economies were structured to extract resources for export to imperial powers, leaving African nations vulnerable to fluctuating global markets. including Furthermore, structural adjustment programmes and other post-independence economic policies often prolonged dependency and stocked taking initiative and modification (Binns, 2020). Today in Africa, leaders face the dichotomised challenge of breaking free from these dependencies while advocating for economic autonomy.

It is important to recall that colonial education systems created a leadership elite alienated from the cultural and social-political realities of their people. This disconnect persists in contemporary leadership practices in Africa, which often prefer Western contexts over indigenous knowledge systems (Mazrui, 2019). In this connection, traditional African values like Ubuntu, which emphasises community interdependence and collective wellbeing, remain underutilised in modern governance despite their capacity to enhance inclusivity and trust (Chitonge, 2021). The gap between leaders and the communities they serve could be bridged via reintegrating such values of Ubuntu philosophy into leadership paradigms across the continent. On the other hand, political instability and conflicts across Africa have lingered as a result of the disintegration orchestrated by colonial borders. As a result, "Borders drawn without regard for cultural and ethnic contexts disrupted existing social structures and created divisions that continue to challenge national unity and leadership" (Deng, 2019). Addressing this division requires leaders who prioritise regional collaboration and the principles of Pan-Africanism, which Ubuntu philosophy aligns with, to foster collective growth and advancement.

Education reform is critical and, indeed, inevitable for producing ethical and transformative leaders capable of addressing Africa's unique challenges. In Africa, current education systems anchored on colonial models often fail to promote critical-creative thinking and innovation. That is why Nyamnjoh (2020) argues that, "Reimagining education to incorporate African philosophies and prioritise social justice can empower future leaders to tackle systemic inequalities and drive sustainable development" in the continent. It is important to note that, leadership, as an influential role within societies and organisations, demands a foundation in ethical principles to ensure justice, inclusivity, and sustainability. Uzoigwe (2023) further highlights this when he argues that leadership in Africa must be anchored on, among other things, the principles of epistemethics. For him, "Epistemethics emphasises the functions of knowledge and considers the most important function of knowledge as promotion and advancement of the welfare and wellbeing of humanity, bearing in mind that man is the image of God - imago Dei, and humanity is the handiwork of God." This could also be likened to what I call leadership-politethics. It is my position that, "Leadership-politethics is an invitation to humanised leadership and politics, or rather political leadership. It is an invitation to political piety, or morality in politics…. Leadership politethics is about Godliness in political leadership. It is about application of morality in leadership and politics with respect for the dignity of human person. It is about political evangelisation and liberation of the whole man. The political leader who plays politics and exercises power should be the same person who goes to Church, Mosque, or Shrine seeking the assistance of the Absolute Being" (Uzoigwe, 2023).

As it were, neither the principles of epistemethics nor leadership-politethics is against Ubuntu philosophy rather, they are complementary partners in progress of reclaiming the African identity enshrined in good moral values. Relatedly, ethical or moral leadership goes beyond the effective administration of power. It requires leaders who prioritise common good, balance differing interests, and adhere to ethical frameworks that elevate both individuals and communities. These foundations are particularly important in addressing 21st century challenges such as wide-imagined-inequality, environmental sustainability, and globalisation, epistemic injustice, and marginalisation (noninclusivity).

Essentially, integrity is key to ethical leadership concatenating the intersection of actions, decisions, and values. Leaders who act transparently and consistently inspire trust among their followers, reinforcing a culture of accountability and probity. It is on that basis that Treviño et al. (2020) write: “integrity not only builds individual credibility but also promotes ethical decision-making within organisations.” Without integrity, there can hardly be a people-oriented leadership that will bring about good governance, growth, and sustainable development. Therefore, “Leaders must also demonstrate moral authenticity, making decisions based on principles rather than convenience or self-interest” (Roser, 2020). 21st century Africa needs selfless and empathetic leaders, who lead by good examples; leaders who can intentionally and willingly inconvenience themselves in order to liberate Africa from retrogression and lack of development. Connectedly, whenever convenience and self-interest of a leader is at the core of leadership, the community that is led will not only be impoverished, but alienated from development and better-life. In such a situation, the wealth and natural resources of the people becomes personal property of the leader and his family. To avoid this kind of scenario in Africa going forward, inclusivity becomes indispensable and inevitable.

The future of Africa can only be built with the right leadership; and inclusivity is a critical component of right leadership. As a hallmark of ethical leadership, inclusivity enables leaders to value diverse perspectives and foster equitable participation. Leaders must create enabling environments where all voices are heard and systemic barriers are dismantled. As ethical leaders work to redress historical injustices and advocate for policies that promote equality, social justice is integral to this approach. Accordingly, “social justice aligns with the philosophical principles of Ubuntu, which emphasise collective wellbeing and mutual respect” (Makoe, 2023). As a matter of urgency, Africa needs leaders who must take responsibility for their actions, inactions, and decisions, ensuring transparency, equity, justice, and fairness. Accountability not only enhances trust but also mitigates risks of corruption and unethical practices. Highlighting this further, it is of importance to note that, “fostering accountability involves both holding oneself to high standards and encouraging similar commitments within teams. Leaders who fail to embrace accountability risk undermining institutional credibility and public trust” (Odhiambo, 2021).

It has to be emphasised that justice is a basis of ethical leadership, requiring leaders to uphold fairness in decision-making and resource allocation. It is so because, “Ethical leaders must ensure that their actions prioritise equity and procedural transparency. They are often tasked with addressing systemic inequalities, particularly in postcolonial contexts where historical imbalances persist” (Signé, 2019). Justice-oriented leadership ensures that development is inclusive, prioritising the needs of marginalised communities. Ethical leadership must consider long-term impacts, prioritising sustainability and human flourishing. Leaders bear a moral responsibility to ensure that their decisions benefit future generations. This involves harmonising economic growth with environmental preservation, social wellbeing, and sustainability. Instantiating this claim, Bass and Riggio (2019) argue that, “transformational leaders who emphasise sustainability can create a lasting legacy that transcends immediate goals.” Such legacies bring about intergenerational commitment, and development.

From another perspective, globalisation presents both opportunities and challenges for ethical leadership. Leaders must navigate complex cultural and economic alignments while safeguarding the autonomy of their local communities. That is why, “Ethical leadership in this context requires cultural competence and a commitment to balancing global engagement with local needs” (Roser, 2020). In all these, Ubuntu philosophy is a necessity.

Ubuntu Philosophy

Ubuntu Philosophy is a construct of two concepts namely, 'ubuntu and philosophy'. As a Pan-African philosophy, ubuntu literally means "One for all and all for one" - "I am because we are." On the other hand, "Philosophy derives from two Greek words philo and sophia (love of wisdom). Philosophy is the rational, critical and methodological consideration of reality as a whole or of a fundamental dimension of human existence and experience" (Uzoigwe and Chukwuma-Offor, 2023). Philosophy is an activity people embark on in raising critically relevant questions about themselves, diverse fields of human endeavour, which leadership and development are essential parts, and reality in general. In this connection, Ubuntu philosophy is a Pan-Africanist philosophy that prioritises unity, self-reliance, and cultural integrity which is essential to achieving sustainable development in Africa. It has to be noted that, the word "ubuntu" has its origins in the Bantu languages of South(ern) Africa, particularly in the Nguni languages such as Zulu and Xhosa. In Burundi, for instance, "living ubuntu" means "to know an inward purity that informs how one lives, in such a way that others would seek to do so too."

The Influence of Colonial Legacy on Ubuntu Leadership Style and Development in Africa

The colonial legacy continues to exert profound influence on leadership and development across Africa, shaping governance structures, economic trajectories, cultural identity, and societal cohesion. This enduring impact is both a reflection of historical colonial policies and a challenge for contemporary leaders seeking to transform their societies. Addressing this legacy requires a nuanced understanding of its manifestations and an emphasis on reclaiming indigenous agency in governance and development. Colonial rule dismantled indigenous governance systems, replacing them with centralised structures designed to control and extract the continent's natural resources. Traditional models of participatory leadership and communal decision-making was downplayed in favour of hierarchical systems that concentrated power in the hands of colonial administrators. Post-independence African governments inherited these structures, which often perpetuated, and continues to advance authoritarianism and elite dominance. In this connection, colonial institutions were designed to extract wealth rather than promote inclusivity, creating governance systems that alienated the masses. This legacy has contributed to political instability and governance challenges in many African nations (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2019).

Furthermore, the inability to full transition from these colonial systems has stymied efforts to build accountable and democratic leadership. Leaders often replicate the exploitative tendencies of colonial administrations, thereby encouraging inequalities. This underscores the need for "a shift toward governance models that integrate and complement traditional African values of consensus and collective responsibility" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). As if that was not enough, colonial economies were deliberately structured to benefit colonial powers, creating a system of dependency that persists to this day. As a result, African economies were organised around the extraction of raw materials and the importation of finished products, leaving little or no room for industrial development. Rodney (2020) describes how this structure systematically underdeveloped Africa by prioritising external interests over local economic growth and advancement. Post-independence leaders faced the monumental task of restructuring economies while grappling with limited resources and fixed global economic hierarchies.

The continued reliance on primary commodity exports leaves African economies vulnerable to market volatility. Efforts to diversify economies and foster industrialisation have been uneven, with external debts and global trade imbalances exacerbating challenges. Relatedly, Kanu (2021) argues that, "the inability to break free from colonial economic paradigms hampers Africa's potential for self-reliant growth, necessitating innovative policies that prioritise local industries and regional cooperation." Moreso, the arbitrary borders drawn during colonial rule lost sight of cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic realities, creating fragmented nations with internal divisions. These borders disrupted traditional alliances and trade networks, exacerbating tensions among ethnic groups and contributing to persistent conflicts. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) notes how these divisions remain a major source of political instability, undermining national unity and complicating efforts to establish cohesive leadership. Similarly, the legacy of fragmentation affects regional integration efforts. Pan-African initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration and collective leadership are often hampered by the lingering effects of colonial boundaries. Addressing this issue requires

leadership that prioritises unity while respecting the continent's cultural diversity.

Colonialism imposed foreign cultural norms and languages on African societies, eroding indigenous traditions and values. Leaders educated under colonial systems often internalised these values, prioritising Western ideals over indigenous philosophies. Fanon (2019) argues that this cultural alienation created a sense of inferiority and dependency, weakening the connection between leaders and their communities. Reclaiming African identity is essential for fostering leadership that resonates with local populations. Traditional philosophy, Ubuntu, which emphasises communal well-being and interconnectedness, offer valuable frameworks for ethical and inclusive governance. African leaders can rebuild trust and create systems that reflect the continent's cultural richness and aspirations by embracing these values. Similarly, colonial education systems were crafted to produce administrative functionaries rather than critical thinkers or transformative leaders. This legacy persists in many contemporary African education systems, which often prioritize memorisation learning over innovation and critical analysis. This underlines the validity of Kanu's (2021) view that, "Education reform is essential to preparing future leaders to skillfully handle the peculiar problems of the continent. There is need to interconnect transformative education with indigenous knowledge systems and build a sense of social responsibility among leaders. Tackling the challenge this way will be of immense importance in dismantling colonial mentality which construes leadership as an avenue for amassing wealth and impoverishing the citizenry instead of making provisions for common good. African nations can produce leaders capable of fostering sustainable development by employing education as a veritable instrument of innovation and liberation. Development policies espoused by the colonial masters were not only exploitative downplaying efforts in infrastructural development, education, healthcare and general wellbeing of the indigenous people. This has left post-independence leaders with the dual burden of addressing historical inequalities while meeting contemporary development demands. In the words of Rodney, "the lack of foundational infrastructure and institutions continues to hinder Africa's progress, creating disparities between rural and urban areas" (2020). Any developmental initiative that does not prioritise inclusiveness and sustainability with a strong focus on long term solutions is bound to fail. It is so because developmental initiatives need leadership that gives priority to probity, accountability, equity and fairness in bridging the gaps orchestrated by colonial desertion.

Cultural and Traditional Leadership Models in Africa

Intricately connected to the social structure of the continent are the values such as quest for communal wellbeing, collective decision-making, and moral authority symbolically embedded in the cultural and traditional leadership models in Africa. These leadership structures have historically served as mechanisms for maintaining law and order, resolution of conflicts, and enhancing community development. While distinct from Western paradigms, which often emphasise and priorise hierarchy and individualism, traditional African leadership emphasises inclusivity, shared responsibility, and respect for societal norms. Critically exploring foundational principles such as Ubuntu, consensus-building, and the role of elders, insight is gained into their strengths, challenges, and potential relevance for 21st century governance on the continent.

Ubuntu Pan-African Philosophy and Communal Leadership in Africa

Ubuntu Pan-African Philosophy is at the core of traditional African leadership. This philosophy, and indeed, worldview underscores the intersection and symbiotic relationship (mutual support) as vital indices of human society. Within the framework or structure of Ubuntu-centric systems, leaders are construed as guardians of communal welfares rather than those who exercise personal powers. As a result, "Ubuntu fosters collaborative leadership, where decisions are made with the input of all stakeholders to ensure social harmony and equity" (Mbigi, 2021). Corroborating this view, Gyekye (1996) stresses that, "Ubuntu is fundamental to understanding African identity and leadership, suggesting that leaders in Africa were historically seen not as autocrats but as stewards of the communal wellbeing, accountable to the people." Southern Africa's Kgotla system stands out as one of the key known applications of Ubuntu leadership. As a traditional council, the Kgotla is where members of the community converge to delineate essential matters concerning them. In Kgotla, people are given opportunity to express themselves, decisions are taken via dialogue and consensus. For Mbigi (2021), "This process not only strengthens community bonds but also

promotes accountability and transparency." Here, the intrinsic value of inclusivity is a watchword, because it is a participatory model of collective governance in African cultures.

In traditional African leadership system, the place of the elders is unmistakable. They act as fountains of wisdom, honesty, probity, and other virtues and moral principles. The authority the elders exercise emanates from their wealth of knowledge, experience, and moral uprightness within their communities not necessarily from a formal process. They elders ensure peaceful and mutual co-existence within their communities. In this connection, Ayittey (2019) writes: "elders are key figures in conflict resolution, policy deliberation, and cultural preservation. They guide leaders in making decisions that align with societal values and traditions." In Ubuntu governance structure, leadership is often guided by ethical codes, emphasising and prioritising common good of all the members of the community. The conciliation processes led by elders apparently shows that equity, fairness, and justice are stressed. The traditional African leadership highlights the moral perspectives of governance by prioritizing common good and collective interest of the community over and above personal interests. As it were, the respect and honour expressed or given to the elders breeds intergenerational reverence and a continuum, warranting that leadership is anchored on the cultural heritage of the people.

It has to be recalled that consensus-building and inclusivity are among the hallmarks of traditional leadership in Africa. Traditional African leadership structure, unlike the adversarial system that is characterized by majority voices downplaying and overriding minority voices, emphasises agreement that reflects the mind of the people, their collective unity (social cohesion) and wellbeing. Highlighting how consensus-anchored leadership enhances social cohesion by accommodating diverse perspectives and minimizing conflict, Chitonge (2021) argues that, "This model is particularly important in Africa's multi-ethnic societies, where inclusivity is critical for maintaining peace and stability. Consensus-building is facilitated through dialogue and communal deliberation." It is important to note that traditionally in many African communities' decision-making involves elaborate conversations that may take considerable time, but ultimately result in resolves that enjoy far-reaching backing. As a reflection of intentional commitment to inclusivity, consensus-building ensures that leadership decisions are culturally aligned. Despite its time-consuming nature, this system offers valued lessons for 21st century governance in prioritising participatory democracy, just, equitable, and egalitarian representation.

Furthermore, promotion of development at the grassroot level is another vital and significant role played by traditional African leadership model. Local leaders, including chiefs and village heads, often act as links (intermediaries) between the community and external entities such as government agencies or non-governmental organisations. Essentially, these leaders ensure that development projects align with local needs and values thereby enhancing their sustainability. Deng (2019) rightly captures it when he writes: "traditional leaders are instrumental in mobilizing community resources, mediating land disputes, and advocating for the equitable distribution of benefits." The cultural relevance and legitimacy of the traditional leaders aids them in influencing the social behaviour and engenders cooperation in such a manner that the contemporary bureaucratic systems cannot. Their role in promoting community-driven development highlights the continued relevance of traditional leadership in addressing contemporary challenges.

It is important to note that despite their fortes, traditional leadership model is not immune to paleness. Chief among the challenges is the colonial interruption that downplay and undermine indigenous systems and their authority. Also to be recalled is the imposition of Western governance structures that created a dual system that often downgrades traditional leaders. From another perspective, some critics argue that traditional leadership can be inclined to patriarchal norms and lack mechanisms for accountability. In modern contexts, "integrating traditional leadership with formal governance systems presents an opportunity to harness their strengths while addressing their limitations. For instance, formal recognition of traditional leaders in national constitutions, as seen in countries like Ghana and South Africa, allows for a blend of modern and indigenous governance practices" (Chitonge, 2021). This integration and complementation can offer a cultural-based background for leadership that aligns with indigenous veracities.

Education and Leadership Transformation in Africa

In Africa, and across the globe education is not only foundational, but also a veritable instrument of

transformation by empowering individuals and fostering societal growth and advancement. Any nation that gets her education right is very likely to get her leadership right too. That is to say that education plays an indispensable transformative role in shaping the leadership structure in Africa. It has to be clearly stated that the historical legacy of colonial education systems, the seemingly unending problem of unequal access, obsolete curricula and inadequate innovation have inhibited the continent from having visionary leaders. To fix this problem, Africa needs a renewed education that integrates adroit ingenuity that breeds critical thinking, creativity., and adaptability with morality, and thereby producing leaders who can think outside the box with empathetic mindset to promote ethical leadership that is key in fostering and enhancing transformational development.

It is on the basis of the above that one understands why Abdi (2020) argues that, “There is no gainsaying the fact that African education systems have long struggled with the remnants of colonial frameworks that prioritized rote learning and administrative training over critical thinking and creativity. These systems were not designed to empower individuals or address Africa’s unique challenges but rather to produce a subservient workforce for colonial powers.” This colonial foundation alienated learners from their cultural identities, fostering a leadership class disconnected from their communities and often adopting Western paradigms of governance that overlooked indigenous knowledge systems.

To be noted is that part of what African education system must necessarily do in order to achieve leadership transformation is to reclaim the continent’s cultural heritage and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems in her curricula. As a matter of urgency, “The inclusion of African philosophies such as Ubuntu, which emphasises interconnectedness and collective responsibility, can redefine leadership as a communal service rather than an individual pursuit” (Letseka, 2019). Similarly, encapsulating the values of Africa first, common good and collective wellbeing, probity, honesty, and accountability in curricula across the continent, African education system will produce leaders who prioritise the development of the continent over and above what they will gain. Furthermore, rethinking education to align with local realities not losing sight of international best practices will produce leaders more poised to address Africa’s developmental challenges. To ensure that education directly impacts the economic growth and resilience in Africa, for instance, there is need to include problem-solving mechanisms related to technology, agriculture, and sustainable resource management.

I wish to say without equivocations that the existing educational systems on the continent of Africa with their emphasis on rote (conditioned or structured) memorisation cannot, and will never prepare students to address multifaceted and complicated problems that foster innovation. By implication, Africa necessarily has to deliberately, consciously and conscientiously decolonise her educational systems. It is in doing so, among other things, that the right leadership that engineer development will be achieved. The decolonisation of education is critical to fostering intellectual independence and empowering future leaders to challenge systemic inequalities and all forms of epistemic injustice. By encouraging students to question established norms and propose innovative solutions, education can serve as a catalyst for leadership transformation. As the 21st century is characterised by technological innovations and advancements, incorporating technology into African education system can enhance teaching and learning outcomes and increase access to quality education. Provisions should be made in such a way that both those who live in cities and those who live in the suburbs and rural areas across Africa are offered opportunities for electronic learning (e-learning) and skill acquisition. Crop of leaders who come up from such an educational structure are more likely to be attuned to the contemporary trend and utilise technology for the socio-economic development of the continent. Education must also address inequities in access, particularly for marginalised groups such as women and rural populations. From another perspective, women have to be carried along in the quest Africa’s development, because in some parts of Africa, women are relegated to the background in almost all spheres of human endeavour. This is of importance because, “Empowering women through education is especially crucial, as studies have shown that female leaders often bring unique perspectives and prioritize social equity in governance” (Letseka, 2019). By so doing creating an opportunity for equal access to education creates variegated crop of future leaders, enriching governance diverse experiences and perspectives. To round off this segment of the conversation, it has to be recapitulated that education is key in decolonising Africa’s education system, embracing Ubuntu philosophy of “I am because we are”

(putting Africa first), and fostering skillful, creative, innovative, empathetic, morally balanced, inclusive, transparent and visionary leaders who prioritising critical thinking and equity will address Africa's unique challenges and drive the transformative agenda for the sustainable development of the continent. By decolonising education, embracing African philosophies, and prioritizing critical thinking and equity, African nations can cultivate a new generation of visionary leaders.

Leadership and Development in Africa: A Philosophical Introspection

For decades, leadership and development have been a topical issue among academics across Africa. Despite the continent's rich human and natural resources, history and plethora of cultural heritage, many African nations continue to grapple with the challenges of leadership, governance, transformational and sustainable development. It is discovered in this philosophical introspection that traditional African leadership models were often collective, grounded in community-based decision-making administered by the council of elders who were believed to possess wisdom derived from ancestral knowledge. This pattern of leadership was strengthened by the African philosophical notion of Ubuntu, which prioritises communality, interconnectedness, interdependence, symbiosis, collective and shared responsibility aimed at common good.

Unfortunately, post-independent Africa inherited the colonial systems of governance and leadership structure that often-interrupted indigenous leadership structures. However, the advent of colonialism introduced foreign systems of governance and leadership structures that often-disrupted indigenous forms of leadership leading to political instability, corruption, and enthronement of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes. It has to be recalled that that in post-colonial era, a good number of African leaders tried to reconcile the need for modern political structures with the desire to retain indigenous values of communalism and consensus-building.

In the post-colonial era, many African leaders have sought to reconcile the need for modern political structures with the desire to retain indigenous values of communalism and consensus-building. The fundamental challenge, question and of primary significance is: how can leadership be structured in a way that synergises both modernity and African traditional systems? A possible answer to this critical question anchors on reviving Ubuntu and other indigenous African philosophies that emphasise relational leadership and collective decision-making.

Transformational and sustainable development in Africa necessarily have to be integrative and complementary, it must be a holistic process that recognizes the inevitable need for cultural preservation, spiritual fulfilment and social cohesion. According to Amadiume (1997), "development must be understood as a process that allows for the flourishing of the individual within a supportive and interdependent community." Amadiume further advocates for an African feminist perspective on development, emphasising the importance of gender equality, the recognition of women's contributions to society, and the need for a transformation of societal structures that perpetuate inequality. Her approach highlights the necessity of a people-centered development that goes beyond economic indicators to include social and ethical dimensions.

From another perspective, the idea of 'decolonising' development has gained a significant attraction in African philosophical discourse. Mignolo argues that African development must be freed from the dominance of Western epistemologies and frameworks that have historically structured knowledge and governance. Mignolo further calls for "a 'decolonial turn' that re-centers African worldviews and prioritises indigenous knowledge systems in the design of developmental policies" (Mignolo, 2009). Empowering the indigenous people of Africa to engage with development in ways that are culturally relevant and ethically grounded, this approach has the potency of providing African leaders with apparatuses to challenge external impositions.

To be clearly stated also is that the relationship between leadership and development in Africa is complex, as leaders are expected to drive economic, political, and social change and also managing the deep-seated historical legacies of colonialism, inequality, and corruption. In the words of Ake (1996), "African leadership has often been characterised by "authoritarian populism," where leaders promise development and prosperity but maintain control through coercive power rather than democratic institutions, even though they claim to be practicing democracy." This creates a situation where the continents priorities are often disconnected from the needs and aspirations of the citizens perpetuating cycles of poverty and underdevelopment. To change this narrative, there is an urgent need for Africa to introspectively reflect on the gains of participatory

governance where leadership is responsive, protects the interest of the people, enthrones accountability, equity and fairness, which Ubutu indigenous philosophy represent. This requires both political will and a philosophical commitment to ethical governance that transcends the personal interests of the ruling elite. If one calls Ubuntu indigenous philosophy African democracy, one might not be mistaken. From the Western construal, democracy is understood as a process of competitive elections and individual freedoms. African democracy can be seen as a system that emphasizes consensus, collective decision-making, and the well-being of the community. As Gyekye (1996) writes, African democracy is rooted in the values of Ubuntu, which emphasize social harmony, collective responsibility, and the importance of community in decision-making." By implication, all the key indices of a people-oriented government and leadership are enshrined in Ubuntu philosophy.

CONCLUSIONS

This critical reflection clearly shows that Ubuntu philosophy has the vital elements of bringing Africa back on track in her quest for transformational development which can only be achieved via responsive and people-oriented leadership. Integrity, inclusivity, probity, accountability, equity, justice, fairness, and sustainability are all part of the ethical foundations of leadership. By embodying these principles, African leaders can navigate the complexities of contemporary challenges and create environments where individuals and communities thrive. Ethical leadership is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable and equitable development in the continent. The colonial legacy in Africa has deeply influenced leadership and development, manifesting in governance challenges, economic dependency, cultural alienation, and social fragmentation. Addressing these issues demands leaders who are not only visionary but also deeply rooted in African values and committed to redirect the affairs of the continent by changing the narrative.

Through decolonisation of educational systems, cultural and traditional leadership models in Africa will offer valuable insights into collective governance, ethical leadership, and participatory decision-making. The Pan-Africanist Ubuntu philosophy, which promotes the role of elders, and consensus-building underscore the enduring relevance of these systems in fostering social cohesion and sustainable development. While traditional leadership faces challenges in modern contexts, its integration with formal governance structures holds the potential to create a hybrid model that leverages the best of both worlds. As Africa navigates its developmental challenges, revisiting and revitalising traditional leadership practices can play essential role in building inclusive, ethical, and culturally resonant governance systems in the continent.

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