

## Chapter 13

# Potential Role of Ubuntu in the Enhancement of School Leadership in Botswana

**Gabatshwane Tsayang**

*University of Botswana, Botswana*

**Phillip G. Bulawa**

*University of Botswana, Botswana*

**Moffat F. Kgotlaetsile**

*University of Botswana, Botswana*

### ABSTRACT

*The chapter explores the potential role that the concept and practice of Ubuntu can be salvaged to inform school leadership in Botswana. Reference is made to traditional ways in which human development is conceived and treated in the Botswana Ubuntu cultural practice which is manifested in Leseya Maturity Stage (LMS), Ngwana Maturity Stage (NMS), Monana Maturity Stage (MMS), and Mogolo Maturity Stage (MgMS). The chapter argues that, at each of the development stages, an appropriate leadership style should be used as in situational leadership. For instance, at the LMS, a human being according to Lerner displays some inconsistencies in his or her behavior which is a perfect example of a reflection of shaky grasp of logic. The chapter asserts that there are adults as in teachers who may display such behaviors even though they may chronologically be adults. The chapter therefore argues that the concept of situational leadership should be used according to the contextual maturity of the led as per the Ubuntu concept. Ubuntu leadership styles can inform school leadership.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Ubuntu* has become very common as a philosophy entrenched in African society to represent the quality of being human and to promote the value of interconnectedness among people. Oviawe (2016) describes

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*Ubuntu* as “a philosophy of being that locates identity and meaning-making within a collective approach as opposed to an individualistic one” (p. 3). *Ubuntu* leadership, therefore, has been described as an African-centered model of leadership that intends to promote the existence of interdependence among workers in an organization. As a leadership model its values can be used by school leaders to, among other things, strive to improve the performance of staff and teaching and learning, as well as promote school leadership based on ideal democratic principles (Msila, 2014) as well as situational ones. Setlhodi (2019) emphasizes that for *Ubuntu* leadership to be considered viable, it should rely on its ability to comprehend the meaning of leadership from an African perspective. When a school leader understands this philosophy in that context, there is high prospect that one would assume *Ubuntu* leadership to turn around performance plight of an underperforming school.

This literature-based chapter discusses the role of *Ubuntu* with a focus on its relationship with school leadership in Botswana. The chapter begins by providing an overview of what *Ubuntu* entails and how school leadership strategies are encapsulated in the *Ubuntu* spirit. Also critical is the experience of the authors in their description of the stages of development of human beings and how these stages can determine the manner in which school leadership is bound to vary, in line with the *Ubuntu* philosophy. Subsequent to how these stages of development could have a bearing on how a leader chooses to manage a school, we reflect on school initiatives intended to enhance school leadership and management, and how such initiatives have encapsulated the spirit of *Ubuntu*. The chapter also looks at how *Ubuntu* school leadership could deal with the prevalence of indiscipline which seems to have become of a major concern in schools. Other significant topics for discussion include, *Ubuntu* leadership as an instrument to address indiscipline, the need to sensitize learners on *Ubuntu*, the professional development of school leadership and teachers, as well as training of parents on the *Ubuntu* philosophy.

## **UBUNTU TENETS**

Described as a postmodern idea, the *Ubuntu* is perceived as distinct to Africa, expressing the character of Southern African countries that include Botswana. It is globally regarded as a guiding principle to humanity as encapsulated in the *Setswana* (Language spoken in Botswana) expression that *motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe*, translated in English “as a person is a person through other persons” (Dolamo, 2013; Mangena, 2016). The literature shows that adherents to *Ubuntu* are supposed to forgive, to be humane, respectful, tolerant, caring, empathetic, sensitive and embrace the spirit of interconnectedness of human beings, compassion, respect, dignity and sensitivity to the needs of others (Mabovula, 2011), all of which should be the bedrock of and embraced by school leadership (Drago-Severson & Blum-Destefano, 2013).

*Ubuntu* holds that individual persons are incomplete unless they are actively connected with their society and culture. In the African context, *Ubuntu* is founded in a traditional African community where the formative moral development of a child is refined (Letseka, 2013). In other words, “*Ubuntu* is the basis of African communal life” (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2005, p. 147), which according to Nussbaum (2003, p. 1) shows that *Ubuntu* recognizes among other things, that:

*Your pain is My pain,*

*My wealth is Your wealth*

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