CHAPTER 3

# Leadership in Africa: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives

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## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we take an analytic dive into how leadership has been studied and practised in Africa. In the following chapter we look at the political, economic, social, and cultural context in which leadership takes place within the variety and complexities of what exists and is generally characteristic of African nations. We have come to understand that there are many forces pulling on leaders in Africa and shaping concepts of leadership. Yet the concept of "leadership" in general continues to be illusive from a worldwide perspective, as was indicated in Chap. 2. Given the increasing demand for "global leaders", it is vital to understand the characteristics of leadership in as many different contexts as possible. The exciting challenge for African leaders is how they can capture the positive essence of what is useful to them.

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Numerous publications have explored the characteristics of good leadership in general, but the majority have taken a contextualized Western standpoint, such as Baum (2007), Blake and Mouton (1964), Hersey and Blanchard (1988), Ladkin (2010), Maxwell (2018), Redeker, de Fries, Rouckhout, Vermeren, and Filip (2014), and Schein (2010) that were referenced in Chap. 2. A few have taken an Asian perspective, such as Ulrich and Sutton (2010), Center for Creative Leadership (2018), Berman and Haque (2014), and DeKrey, Messick, and Anderson (2007), while very few have taken an African viewpoint. Like other regions of the world, leadership frameworks are not new in the context of the African continent and they have been promulgated throughout its multifaceted history, aiming to address current socio-economic demands and future prospectives for growth. One may possibly speak of an American Leadership style because implicitly this is understood to reflect the single country, the USA. Yet referring to European leadership, Asian leadership, or South-American leadership would bring the same challenges as one would have trying to distil African leadership, since all of these continents are composed of many different countries. In this chapter, we capture and make sense of the past, present, and future characteristics of leadership in Africa: a vastly diverse continent in terms of its culture, languages, topography, and political histories.

However, considering Africa's diversity, Iwowo (2015) poses the question of how leadership is conceptualized with respect to Africa and, more so, the implications of this for Leadership Development in contemporary African organizations. She states (2015, p. 414):

> [I]t is evident that just as western or mainstream theories have been judged inadequate in addressing leadership and management capacity building in the face of African cultural complexity, it is equally doubtful as to whether an institutionalised all-African approach [or indigenised model of leadership in Africa] is indeed a solution to its hydra-headed leadership problems given the fiercely debated issue of its cultural pluralism.

African scholars, in seeking to resist western domination in leadership and management, must first avoid simplistic binary oppositions, as the unbridled romanticization of "an African culture" would merely serve to reiterate pre-existing ideological prejudices and "reinforce the very binary which colonial and imperial discourse uses to keep the marginalized in subjection" (Nkomo, 2011, p. 378). Rather, Iwowo proposes "a leadership development model in which current mainstream theories are examined and understood in the light of the prevailing socio-cultural work environment and subsequently contextualized via creative adaptation within a cultural 'third space'" (2015, p. 420).

The available literature on leadership in Africa has increased considerably over the past decade. For example, a search on what was published from 2010–2019 in the "Business Source Complete" database gave 1328 returns (for peer-reviewed articles). The same search for the decade before that—2000–2009—gave only 435 results. This means that the number of articles published on leadership in Africa in the last decade has more than tripled compared to the decade before. Palgrave has also started publishing a book series on African leadership, with 11 already published or forthcoming (including this one).

Nkomo (2011) in her search for "African" leadership and management reviewed the available organization studies literature (both journal articles and books) at the time. Her review thus did not include the surge of studies that were published in the last decade. Nkomo identified four broad categories. First, there is a body of literature under the general rubric of what is known as African management development (Jackson, 2004). This body of literature focuses on the need for capable leadership and management in Africa and arose contemporaneously with development management studies. The second category is a body of work on national culture that has become quite prominent in recent years. These texts examine "African" leadership and management in the context of describing Africa's national culture primarily within Geert Hofstede's (1980) seminal typology or the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) study more current framework (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The third category consists of representations of "African" leadership and management that appear in discussions of precursors to management theory in popular management textbooks (e.g. Griffin, 2008). Finally, Nkomo identified a small but growing body of literature on "African" management philosophy authored primarily by African scholars.

In this chapter we focus on more recent publications, that is, the last decade, and on those publications that aim at developing a theoretical framework for understanding leadership in Africa. As our case studies document the experiences of leaders in civic situations, both in government, in NGOs, in science and in business, we have looked for insights from the literature concerning those types of situations, especially the more recent literature which includes more studies of these civic leaders. The ultimate aim is to provide a framework against which we can analyse and understand the findings of our five case studies, to identify gaps that we address through this volume, as well as deliver a perspective that may trigger ideas on the paradigm shift that future leaders seek.

We present our review in the following sections: Focus on the Leader (Sect. 3.2), Relation Between Leader and Follower (Sect. 3.3), Women Leaders in Africa (Sect. 3.4), Leadership Philosophy and Values in Africa (Sect. 3.5), and lastly Future African Leaders and Leadership Development (Sect. 3.6). In each of these sections it becomes clear there are certain gaps in the literature.

## 3.2 Focus on the Leader: Overwhelmingly Political and Male

Jallow states that "while there are only a few cases of good political leadership in Africa since independence, there appears to be a critical mass of civic leaders whose stories need to be studied and shared" (2014b, p. 2). Jallow's statement implies that most research on leadership in Africa has focused on political leaders, such as national leaders and presidents. Furthermore, a focus on women's engagement in leadership and management in Africa reveals their marginalization (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009), even though there are women leading in all sectors of the society. Our own review of the literature also indicates that civic leaders, such as teachers, doctors, scientists, artists, middle managers, youth, or women, are absent from most analyses of leaders in Africa, almost as if they don't exist in the past and present in Africa.

### *3.2.1 Pre-colonial Times*

Pre-colonial African leaders have typically been studied with reference to chiefs, kings, and sultans, emphasizing both the power of chiefs and the constraints from the community on that power. Amah (2019) states that in pre-colonial Africa leaders were very powerful and had authority to punish and demand obedience. However, their powers were moderated either by a council of chiefs or by some rituals to avoid the abuse of powers. For example, Schapera (1970) noted that although the chiefs in Botswana were very powerful, such powers were moderated by the activities of senior members of the community and some local advisory bodies. Sanction was given when any chief operated in a manner that was not to the best interest of the community. The interest of the community took precedence over any other interests, be it that of the chief or his councils. Chiefs who lost the complete confidence of their people by the way they exercised their powers were effectively removed by being forced to abdicate or to commit suicide or sent in exile. Most studies, however, do not deal

with the much more complex and nuanced issue of being a leader in an acephalous state—a state with no head leader. This is a greatly under-researched area in the study of African leaders, as leaders in such states were more difficult to identify by outsiders, often temporary, but still powerful and effective. What skills of leadership were needed in this very different environment? While these states are no longer in place, our volume shows the importance of consensus building, of networks, of demonstrating ability, of regional specificity, and of leaders adapting to the cultural habits of followers to be effective, all of which may have been important values in such complex societies.

### *3.2.2 Colonial Times*

Jallow (2014a) in his introduction to the volume *Leadership in Colonial Africa* indicates that leadership during colonial times reveal processes of imperialism and the various ways in which African leaders responded to these processes. He looks at three different types of leaders: colonial administrators, chiefs, and nationalist leaders. The latter category consisted of two subcategories: nationalist politicians and guerrilla leaders. He argues that the three categories of leaders operated in conceptually distinct but empirically intersecting fields of leadership. As a result, colonial administrators were extremely powerful and influential in shaping political Africa as we know it today. They "pacified" resistant African leaders, negotiated colonial boundaries with parties to the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, created and oversaw "native" administrative units or other structures, promoted commerce, and controlled the chiefs through whom most colonial policy was implemented (Jallow, 2014a). Jallow explains the situation as follows:

> African chiefs were expected to behave at once like monarchs to their people and unquestioning subjects to the Empire. The two roles required distinctly different sets of behaviour and attitudes that must have made their performance patently awkward, if not neurotic. (Jallow, 2014a, p. 10)

We conclude that African chiefs in colonial times were somehow like present-day middle managers with mid-level power—juggling mandates between their community and colonial authority. Historically, limited power was given to these leaders, whereas at the same time they had absolute power in other spaces. As such, the chiefs in colonial times are not very representative examples of typical leaders in Africa. For understanding leadership in Africa you need thus to understand the context beyond a leader's community. In the present day, the complexity of globalization

and trade-offs between community and higher authority are evident. Our book shows how this resonates in our case studies, and how leaders aim to be good leaders in complex contexts, with leaders balancing community and higher levels of authority. We also see that this raises insecurity about the extent of a leader's power.

### *3.2.3 Post-colonial Times*

Jallow (2014b, p. 2) in his introduction to the volume *Leadership in Post-colonial Africa* states: "while some studies highlight in graphic detail the extent of leadership failure in postcolonial Africa, others show that good leadership has flourished in Africa in spite of the failure of state leadership, in some cases precisely because of the failure of state leadership." He further states that

> [u]nder colonial rule, Western political structures and institutions were haphazardly superimposed on African political structures and institutions characterized by notions and perceptions of leadership at variance with the new political frameworks. The immediate postcolonial situation demanded a transformation of the authoritarian cultures, if not structures of the colonial state into cultures of inclusiveness and collective responsibility for the new national project. (2014b, p. 2)

He goes on to add in the introduction to the volume *Leadership in Post-colonial Africa* that

> [f]ormer nationalist leaders who took over from colonial governors maintained aspects of the colonial state in post-colonial space that inevitably engendered civic and civil conflict and sabotaged the continent's prospects for creative leadership and growth. (2014b, p. 2)

On the other hand, Fistein (2014) indicates that in the literature on African independence leadership, Amílcar Cabral (who led the nationalist movement of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde Islands and the ensuing war of independence against the Portuguese government in Guinea-Bissau) is generally considered a shining example and rightly so. Cabral was a superb organizer and a visionary leader whose integrity, accountability, and willingness to listen to and learn from ordinary people set him apart from contemporaries and continues to inspire scholars of African leadership to this day (Hotep, 2010; Mende, 2006). Fistein (2014, p. 88) states that "[t]he combination of making his country seem interesting in the eyes of

the international community and knowing what ordinary people want, enabled Cabral to generate the kind of foreign aid that benefited the country as a whole and not just the military or the elites." Furthermore, Fistein concludes that "persistence was the hallmark of Cabral's entire enterprise. There were 'no easy victories,' and his diplomatic efforts rarely brought immediate benefits. His motto seemed to be 'if at first you don't succeed, try again'" (Fistein, 2014, p. 88). As such Cabral displayed a range of positive leadership characteristics such as vision, consultation, organization, diplomacy, and perseverance.

Jallow (2014b) distinguishes between what he calls "dark" and "bright" leadership. He explains dark leadership as including political repression and corruption as symptoms of autocratic and transactional leadership of heads of state, such as in Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, and Zaire immediately after independence and more recently in South Africa and Zimbabwe (further detailed by Banda, 2014, Carney, 2014; Kamil, 2014; and Lieberfeld, 2014). Thus, he argues "the colonial state lives on in postcolonial Africa" (Jallow, 2014b, p. 8). As Crawford Young puts it, "in metamorphosis the (colonial) caterpillar becomes (a post-colonial) butterfly without losing its inner essences" (1994, p. 2). "Bright post-colonial political leader" exceptions mentioned by Jallow (2014b) include, for example, Nelson Mandela (South Africa), and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia). Not mentioned in his book, but widely recognized as an example of a "bright" political leader was Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana.

Below we present Malawi and Guinea as two examples that fit Jallow's idea of "dark" leadership.

Banda (2014) describes how Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda ruled Malawi from 1964 to 1994. He argues that Dr. Banda presided over one of the most brutal dictatorships in post-colonial Africa. Starting from 1966, Dr. Banda oversaw the constitutional change, which turned Malawi into a one-party state. In 1971, he oversaw the constitutional amendment, which declared him "President for life". The Banda government instituted a reign of terror overseen by the Malawi Congress Party's paramilitary group, the Malawi Young Pioneers, which was given powers to arrest people without a warrant despite not being constitutionally mandated to do so. Dr. Banda made extensive use of the special branch of the Malawi Police Force, which was mandated to spy on behalf of the regime and was used to silence Banda's perceived opponents, both within Malawi and outside the country. As such, Banda demonstrated non-democratic, authoritarian, and distrustful leadership, and ruled by instilling fear.

Kamil (2014) describes the legacy of Ahmed Sékou Touré, Guinea's independence struggle leader and first President after Independence from 1958 to 1984, in his chapter called "Tyrant Hero". He states that "between heroism and tyranny lies an intriguing personality with extraordinary capacity for both admirable and despicable deeds". Over time, Touré arrested large numbers of suspected political opponents and imprisoned them in concentration camps, and about 50,000 are believed to have been killed in detention camps (Kasuka, 2013). Kamil (2014, p. 49) concludes that "Sékou's vision of a socially, economically, and politically exemplary Guinea never materialized; in fact, it went in the opposite direction. But the atrocities committed in its pursuit constitute an enormous moral debt he owes his country." Sékou thus demonstrated initially visionary, but increasingly dictatorial and tyrannical leadership traits.

Jallow (2014b) is not all negative, however, and states that

> [t]here have been good leaders in Africa, some political, most civic, whose examples are worthy of emulation by future African leaders. It is noteworthy that, increasingly, in Africa as in many other parts of the world, dictatorship is a dying breed. Dictatorship of the kind represented by Nkrumah [in Ghana], Mobutu [in Congo] or Bokassa [Central African Republic] is hardly imaginable in today's Africa, thanks partly to the increasing integration and mutual visibility of the global socio-economic and political community.

In reference to Jallow's notion of "bright" leaders, Robtel Pailey (2014) analysed the leadership styles and legacy of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's and Africa's first female president. Pailey concludes that Johnson Sirleaf

> on the one hand, succeeded in unsettling patriarchal structures by lowering Liberia's 'power distance' (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004) thereby increasing her accessibility to average Liberian citizens through face-to-face community and national consultations. She also introduced gender-sensitive reforms to improve the conditions of women and girls while enhancing the livelihoods of market women throughout the country. On the other hand, however, Johnson Sirleaf invoked "motherhood" as a cultural trope to further entrench patriarchy by appointing men, most notably her three sons, in strategic positions of power at the expense of equally competent women. (Pailey, 2014, p. 184)

Johnson Sirleaf thus displayed positive leadership characteristics such as consultation and a participatory leadership style, as well as focusing on gender issues. However, she also displayed some nepotism and reinforced patriarchy.

Insights into political leaders as presented above are relevant to some extent as they shape the mindset of emerging African leaders, even those outside of politics; they function as role models—both in a positive, example setting manner, but also in a negative way that motivates others to seek transformation.

Based on our reading of the literature, most publications are indeed mainly focused on political rather than civic leaders. In addition, they focus on ideas of authority that resonate well in both the western world and contemporary times. This has resulted in a focus on certain communities with these authority structures, and on men as well as senior leaders. As a result, there has been insufficient focus on the context, such as interaction between leaders and the community and existing traditions.

## 3.3 Relation Between Leader and Follower Leadership Styles

As suggested in Chap. 2, a relation exists between leaders and followers, which greatly influences leadership behaviour, and one could further argue that leadership style interfaces with a person's general character (personality). Furthermore, it was argued that the dynamics of leader–follower relationships are shaped and influenced by expectations on both sides. Iwowo (2015) quotes Yukl (2002) when stating that that while earlier studies had centred primarily on understanding and shaping the role of the individual leader, more recent perspectives have defined leadership as a process in which intentional influence is extended by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization.

Research on leadership styles is a more recent and increasingly common focus of research on leadership in Africa. Two concepts appear regularly in the literature on leadership in Africa. The first is transformational leadership and the second is servant leadership, which are both detailed in Sect. 2.4 of Chap. 2 (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 2010). Given the colonial and post-colonial history of leadership in Africa, and especially the "dark side" as illustrated above, it could very well be a reaction to pivot

towards leaders with opposing styles. Styles that instead aim to transform or effect a change; styles that centre around the followers as opposed to the autocratic and self-serving styles often witnessed in Africa's political leaders in colonial and post-colonial times.

Below we present a few examples from research documenting aspects of transformational and servant leadership and its impact in our case study countries: Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana.

Koech and Namusonge (2012, p. 9) studied the effect of three leadership styles on organization performance in state corporations in Kenya. Based on their survey findings from 72 managers, they found that correlations between transformational leadership factors and organizational performance ratings were high, whereas correlations between the transactional leadership behaviours and organizational performance were relatively low. As such, the transformational leadership style had the biggest positive impact on the performance of employees, and in turn the organization. In a similar vein, Puni, Ofei, and Okoe (2014) documented the effect of leadership on the financial performance of two Ghanaian banks. In their research they compared the autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles and their impact on financial performance represented by net profit. It was evident that democratic leadership style contributed significantly to financial performance, compared to the autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. They state that "[c]learly managers in the two banks are more democratic in their leadership approach because they believe that the calibre of workers they are dealing with is high: they are self-motivated, like responsibility and challenging work, and by involving them in the decision-making process they can build a strong team spirit, high performance and satisfaction" (2014, p. 182). These studies documented the impact of different leadership styles on mostly professional staff, with transformational and democratic styles showing their effectiveness, especially with professional staff.

A survey among Rwandan adults working in non-government sectors found that "servant leadership is positively and significantly related to leader effectiveness" (Brubaker, 2013, p. 114). F. Owusu, Kalipeni, Awortwi, and Kiiru (2017), in their survey of research leaders in Africa, documented similar results, with "people-orientated/relations-orientated" the most preferred leadership style, while "laissez-faire" and "paternalistic" were the least liked.

Although there are some studies of leaders in Africa that focus on interaction between leaders and followers, notably few studies focus on a description of how the interaction between leaders and followers is experienced. Again, few studies focus on women leaders and youth.

## 3.4 Women Leaders in Africa

Our literature review indicates that the literature that focuses on political leaders in Africa has mostly studied men. However, some examples of research on women leaders were discussed above; both political and civic leaders, such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

Ngunjiri (2014) tells the inspiring story of the first African woman to win the Nobel Prize for peace. Ngunjiri argues that Wangari Maathai's "pioneering" and "radical" leadership style—demonstrated in her work as an academic at the University of Nairobi, as founder of the Greenbelt Movement, and with the National Council of Women of Kenya. As a leader, Maathai demonstrates many leadership approaches, the overall approach being "radical leadership", defined as engaging in transformative actions towards the common good in spite of the personal cost. Ngunjiri (2014, p. 130) also comments: "Professor Maathai's legacy has left us with leadership lessons that we can mine for a long time. She illustrates spirited resiliency, radical African feminist agency, and transformative leadership, which overall I dub radical transformative leadership." She further states (p. 133) that "Professor Maathai displayed critical servant leadership, giving up the comforts of a tenured professorship and the comforts of home in order to achieve a self-transcendent goal: the goal of environmental justice that had an impact on millions of rural women in Kenya and beyond." Maathai reflected as follows on her leadership experiences: "It is the giving of self that characterizes prophets, saints, and many local heroes" (Maathai, 2010, p. 15). Maathai's leadership style is characterized by a pioneering vision, the urge to transform and to "do good".

In her book, Madimbo (2016) paints a picture of African women leaders from Malawi, by providing portraits of 11 Malawian women leaders, both senior civic and political leaders.

What is evident from the literature on women leaders in Africa is that they have all made a difference in their roles, and mostly feature as examples of "bright side" leaders. In achieving their goals, they have faced considerable gender-based hurdles in their careers and in performing their leadership roles. The women studied have all shown considerable perseverance, and as such serve as role models for younger female leaders in Africa. However, it can be questioned to what extent these personal strug-

gles have led to systemic improvements for women leaders, as our Kenya case study chapter, for example, shows that women leaders continue to face similar constraints today.

Even the literature with a focus on women leaders has thus predominantly been looking at famous women who entered politics, such as Sirleaf and Maathai. Less is known about women leaders who were not also politicians, as well as young women.

## 3.5 Leadership Philosophy and Values in Africa

Metz (2018) advances a reading of the ethic of communion, and then considers what it entails for good leadership. He states that "[d]espite having been a largely oral tradition until recently, African philosophy and related ideas have been in existence for at least several hundred years and their implications for leadership merit global consideration" (2018, p. 27). Furthermore, based on the interpretation of communion by representative African theorists, she states that

> [t]wo distinct relational goods are repeatedly mentioned, namely, considering oneself part of the whole, being close, sharing a way of life, belonging and experiencing oneself as bound up with others, on the one hand, and then achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, acting for the common good, serving the community and being committed to the good of one's society, on the other. (2018, p. 40)

These two facets of a communal relationship have been distinguished and reconstructed with some precision (Metz, 2013, 2017). We will see that our case studies demonstrate these two aspects of communion very clearly. Metz (2018, p. 42) further states that "the most common saying in an African context about good leadership is: 'A king is a king through his people'" (e.g. also mentioned by Mofuoa, 2015, p. 32; Pheko & Linchwe, 2008, p. 399). There is also this remark: "Leaders have a deep awareness that they are what they are because of other people" (Nussbaum, Palsule, & Mkhize, 2010, p. 10). It would make sense to construe these statements about leadership this way: "one should become a real leader, which one can do insofar as one relates communally and enables others to commune" (Metz, 2018, p. 42). A good example of this is *Ubuntu*, the most well-known and quoted "African Leadership" philosophy. Ubuntu is underscored by the notion of social sensitivity and personal responsibility

for the well-being of others and understood in a specific way among Nguni/isiZulu. It was picked up politically as a governing principle/ideology.

Its meaning was best articulated as "that profound African sense that each of us is human through the humanity of other human beings", by former South African president Nelson Mandela in a speech at his 80th Birthday Party in 1998. Hailey (2008) indicates that Ubuntu represents a collection of values, including harmony, compassion, respect, human dignity, consensus, and collective unity. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) noted that Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a western language other than to characterize it as "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours". Ubuntu is also commonly referred to as African humanism. Although it can be disputed to what extent the concept is known and widely used outside South Africa, Gaylord (2004) points out "there is a history of humanistic thinking among African leaders commonly linked with the de-colonialization process and African socialism. This can be traced back through Kaunda's talk of 'African humanism' in Zambia, Nyerere's introduction of 'ujamaa' in Tanzania, Nkrumah's concept of 'conscientism' in the newly independent Ghana and Azikiwe's concept of 'community' as the basis for national unity [Nigeria]."

This concept is an instance of servant leadership, which, as Metz confirms, abounds in the literature on African approaches to leadership (i.e. Bhengu, 2006, pp. 185–187, 229; Khoza, 2006, pp. 58–59; Mbigi & Maree, 2005, p. 102; Msila, 2014; Ndlovu, 2016). Metz shows how the Afro-communal ethic applies, what the final goal of an organization should be, how decisions ought to be made within it, how to deal with non-performing or misbehaving employees, how to make decisions in a firm, and whom to treat as a stakeholder. He does not provide empirical evidence, but analyses how a leader or a firm would or should act in the spirit of communion. As such, he aims to show how leadership behaviour can be theoretically grounded on the basic value of communion that is prominent in African philosophical discussions of morality. With our case studies we aim to fill the gap of empirical evidence by demonstrating how some leaders understand their actions to be communally and ethically oriented, notably through the notion of "doing good".

Bert van Pinxteren's work (2019) has focused on how colonialism has impacted the characteristics of African nations based on original ethnolinguistic groups. His work uses the database of the Afrobarometer, a non-partisan, pan-African research institution conducting public attitude

surveys on democracy, governance, the economy, and society in 30+ countries repeated on a regular cycle. Pinxteren delved into 35 countries and 198 ethnolinguistic groups. He concludes that important cultural differences remain in Africa: both between, but also within nations. It is important to keep in mind that whilst 198 ethnolinguistics group sounds like a large number, there are over 3000 represented in the continent with 21 out of the 30 most linguistically diverse countries in the world being African. Following in the same vein, Jackson (2004) highlights the cultural diversity and power dynamics that impact intra-Africa cross-border relations and inter-ethnic relations within or outside the post-colonial national borders. Both van Pinxteren's and Jackson's work thus illustrate the need to study and be aware of the cultural diversity within Africa, and within post-colonial nations. This diversity makes it impossible to speak of "African" leadership, but also studying cultural values per nations may overlook the ethnic differences within nations.

Lituchy, Galperin, and Punnett present the preliminary findings of their LEAD (Leadership Effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora) research programme across multiple countries in Africa (Lituchy, Galperin, & Punnett, 2017). This book considers leadership from an Afro-centric perspective and studies components of leadership from an African perspective, the impact of culture on leadership in Africa and the African diaspora, as well as the similarities and differences between leadership in Africa and the African diaspora. At the beginning of the research programme, African participants agreed on many leadership traits. Fairness/impartiality, commitment/dedication, honesty/trustworthiness, and being knowledgeable were all common descriptors of effective leadership. The respondents from Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria agreed that effective leaders were visionary, charismatic, intelligent, and innovative. The research programme is still ongoing, and it will be interesting to see what kind of empirical evidence emerges.

The LEAD programme puts the research results into the context of cross-cultural research. A few cross-cultural studies have included African countries in global comparative studies, such as Hofstede (2001) and House et al. (2004). Hofstede's study covered 50 countries and 3 regions worldwide, including East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia), West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone), South Africa; and Egypt as part of Arab-speaking countries. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) research was based on questionnaires completed by more than 100,000 IBM employ-

ees. Building upon Hofstede's research and other cross-cultural studies, House et al. (2004) research covered 60 countries, including the following countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and Egypt and Morocco in Northern Africa. The results of their Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness Study (GLOBE) were published in 2004, among 17,370 middle managers across food processing, financial services, and telecommunication corporations.

Although all nine dimensions of the GLOBE study directly or indirectly impact leadership behaviour, we have chosen the following three dimensions for a closer look: power distance, in-group collectivism and humane orientation (definitions as used in GLOBE study), because these dimensions resonate most closely with key insights that have emerged from our case studies. Below the key findings from the comparative studies on these three dimensions are presented, which will highlight some regional differences within Africa, as well as how the African scores compare to other countries in the world.

### *3.5.1 Power Distance—Perception of Hierarchy*

Power distance: The degree to which a community maintains inequality among its members by stratification of individuals and groups with respect to power, authority, prestige, status, wealth, and material possessions. The critical aspects are the establishment and maintenance of dominance and control of the less powerful by the more powerful. The studies measured the extent to which a society is perceived to practise and encourage behaviours that enact power differences (See Table 3.1 for main characteristics of power distance.).

On a range from the greatest power distance to the least power distance country, we can see the following scores for practices (Table 3.2).

From the findings it can be concluded that African countries are characterized mostly by high to medium high power distance. Within Africa, West Africa and Morocco rank highest, and East Africa shows high to medium power distance. The GLOBE data for South Africa have distinguished between white and black samples and this indicates that among the black sample power distance is quite low. When people are asked how the power *should be* distributed in a society most responded that a low(er) power distance would be desirable.

**Table 3.1** Characteristics of power distance

| *High hierarchy/power distance societies have these characteristics…* | *Low hierarchy/power distance societies have these characteristics…* |
|---|---|
| • Bias towards power being held and executed by a few people at the top<br>• Pyramid structures with many layers of power<br>• Subordinates show great respect for decision makers<br>• Subordinates will tell the leader what they think he/she wants to hear<br>• Subordinates follow instructions | • Bias towards decisions made by consensus<br>• Relatively flat organizational management structures<br>• Leaders consult widely before taking important decisions<br>• Everyone at all layers engages in active and open debate as this is considered to lead to better decision making<br>• Subordinates take initiative as taking individual responsibility is highly regarded |

**Table 3.2** Scores of power distance in selected countries

| *Country* | *GLOBE score (from 7 to 1)* | *Band* | *Country/ region* | *Hofstede score (from 11 to 104)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nigeria/ Morocco | 5.80 | High power distance (A) | Malaysia<br>Arab countries | 104<br>80 |
| Zimbabwe | 5.67 | | West Africa | 77 |
| Zambia | 5.31 | | | |
| Namibia | 5.29 | | | |
| France | 5.28 | | | |
| South Africa (white sample) | 5.16 | High to medium power distance (B) | France | 68 |
| England | 5.15 | | East Africa | 64 |
| Egypt | 4.92 | | South Africa | 49 |
| USA | 4.88 | | | |
| Israel | 4.73 | Medium to low power distance (C) | USA<br>Great Britain | 40<br>35 |
| South Africa (black sample) | 4.11 | Low power distance (D) | Denmark | 18 |
| Denmark | 3.89 | | Austria | 11 |

### *3.5.2 In-Group Collectivism*

In-group collectivism: The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and interdependence in their families. Here are some of the characteristics of societies that have high and low in-group collectivism (Table 3.3).

On a range from the most in-group collectivist country to the least in-group collectivist country, we can see the following scores for practices (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.3** Characteristics of in-group collectivism

| *High in-group collectivism societies have these characteristics…* | *Low in-group collectivism societies have these characteristics…* |
|---|---|
| • Close ties between family members<br>• Recruitment off in-group/family members<br>• Respect for authority<br>• Loyalty and relationship prevails over task<br>• Extended family structures<br>• Maintenance of harmony and saving face | • Loose ties between family members<br>• No family relations at work<br>• Limited respect for authority<br>• Task prevails over relationship<br>• Nuclear family structures<br>• Speaking the truth: confrontation |

**Table 3.4** Scores of in-group collectivism in selected countries

| *Country* | *GLOBE score (from 7 to 1)* | *Band* | *Country/region* | *Hofstede score (from 6 to 91)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Philippines | 6.36 | High in-group collectivism (A) | Guatemala | 6 |
| Morocco | 5.87 | | West Africa | 20 |
| Zambia | 5.84 | | East Africa | 27 |
| Egypt | 5.64 | | | |
| Zimbabwe | 5.57 | | | |
| Nigeria | 5.55 | | | |
| South Africa (black sample) | 5.09 | Medium in-group collectivism (B) | Arab countries | 38 |
| | | | South Africa | 65 |
| Namibia | 4.52 | | | |
| South Africa (white sample) | 4.50 | | | |
| USA | 4.25 | Low in-group collectivism (C) | Denmark | 74 |
| England | 4.08 | | Great Britain | 89 |
| Denmark | 3.53 | | USA | 91 |

From the findings of both Hofstede and GLOBE studies, it can be concluded that African countries are characterized mostly by high in-group collectivism, with South Africa categorized as medium in-group collectivist.

### *3.5.3 Humane Orientation*

Humane orientation is the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others (Table 3.5).

Since this dimension was not part of Hofstede's study, only the GLOBE findings are presented in Table 3.6. On a range from the most Humane oriented country to the least Humane oriented country, we can see the following scores for practices.

**Table 3.5** Characteristics of humane orientation

| *High humane orientation societies have characteristics such as…* | *Low humane orientation societies have characteristics such as…* |
|---|---|
| • The interests of others are important.<br>• People are motivated primarily by a need for belonging and affiliation.<br>• Members of society are responsible for promoting the well-being of others.<br>• People are urged to be sensitive to all forms of racial discrimination. | • One's own self-interest is important.<br>• People are motivated primarily by a need for power and material possessions.<br>• The state provides social and economic support for individuals' well-being.<br>• People are not sensitive to all forms of racial discrimination. |

**Table 3.6** Scores of humane orientation in selected countries

| *Country* | *GLOBE score (from 7 to 1)* | *Band* |
|---|---|---|
| Zambia | 5.23 | High humane orientation A |
| Egypt | 4.73 | |
| Zimbabwe | 4.45 | High to medium humane |
| South Africa (black sample) | 4.34 | orientation B |
| USA | 4.17 | Medium to low humane |
| Nigeria | 4.10 | orientation C |
| Namibia | 3.96 | |
| England | 3.72 | |
| South Africa (white sample) | 3.49 | Low humane orientation D |
| France | 3.40 | |
| Germany | 3.18 | |

The findings indicate most African countries ranked as high or high to medium humane orientation, with a few countries in medium to low category.

### *3.5.4 Implications for Leadership*

Overall, the sub-Saharan African countries can thus be typified as high to medium high power distance, high in-group collectivism, and high or high to medium humane orientation.

Taking these cross-cultural results, which also tie in with the definition of Ubuntu described earlier, we start to see three characteristics or dimensions of African leadership that resonate with each other and with our own data:

1. *Community*: Collectivism, "doing good", and teamwork
2. *Hierarchy*: Authority (power distance), transformational leadership, with a widespread desire for lower enactment of hierarchy than currently practised
3. *Humane orientation*: People-oriented leadership and leadership characteristics such as integrity and servant leadership

Though these themes are apparent in the cross-cultural research of Hofstede and House et al., their research does not capture the changes in perceptions that are currently happening, as it is a static measurement of perceptions and values. Also, in line with van Pinxteren and Jackson, it is questionable to what extent nations in African are homogenous entities given their ethnolinguistic diversity.

Few studies document the above three themes empirically, such as "doing good" and teamwork, transformation or change in leadership styles, and changes in perceptions of hierarchy in Africa. They are also rarely linked to organizational and cultural values, and empirical studies document leaders' attributes, notably of integrity.

## 3.6 Future African Leaders and Leadership Development

Literature that explores actual experiences of Leadership Development in Africa is rare. Looking to shape the future leadership in Africa, Iwowo (2015) asks, "where do we go from here?" One clear path is to cultivate centres of excellence within the African context quite similar to what the

USA has done with Leadership Development programmes. Some institutions have taken up the challenge articulated by Iwowo, often with the aid of Western aid organizations. For example, a review of initiatives and ways to develop leaders in Africa shows that there is a range of initiatives on Leadership Development emerging. However, in terms of both total spending and number of leaders accessing these programmes, the numbers are still very limited. In addition, effective African Leadership Development programmes cannot be copied from the West, but instead need to be developed and need to respond to the African challenges and reality, including being planned and conducted in a context-sensitive way.

One widely documented Leadership Development initiative is that of the African Leadership University (ALU), with its first campus in Mauritius and its second in Rwanda. It was founded in 2015 by Fred Swaniker, who was born in Ghana and lived and worked in ten African countries. Swaniker argues that "[i]n Africa, good leaders make more of a difference than in the rest of the world. We need leaders who are ethical; leaders who are entrepreneurial; leaders who are hard working" (Holmes, 2019). ALU's stated approach is to seek out leadership potential in the selection process, provide the opportunity for leadership in practice throughout the academic programme, and create leadership networks along the way via internships and mentorship. "It's potential, plus practice, plus opportunity," Swaniker says. "When you do those things and put them together, great leaders can emerge" (Holmes, 2019). The ALU aims to produce three million young African leaders over the next 50 years. The first class of those leaders, made up 79 people hailing from more than 40 countries across the continent, graduated on June 12, 2019 (Baker, 2019). However, to date no studies have been done on the outcome and impact of ALU. Baker further states that Fred is deeply passionate about Africa and believes that the missing ingredient on the continent is good leadership. Baker quotes Swaniker: "The point of ALU is to create a cadre of African leaders and entrepreneurs who are trained to solve African problems. We want a generation of Africans who are thinking on a continent-wide scale, who have networks across the continent, who can build pan-African businesses and grow economies and drive trade." This resonates with leadership characteristics such as entrepreneurship, integrity, innovation, and networking: in short, the definition of global leaders.

Another initiative, the Africa Leadership Initiative (ALI), was launched in 2001 in South Africa. Over the last 12 years some 170 successful African leaders, who were already leaders before joining the programme, in nine classes have taken part in the intensive, transformational, and profound

fellowship programme that fosters their leadership vision and their true commitment to address the most crucial social challenges in Southern Africa (ALI, 2019).

Following the success of the Africa Leadership Initiative, Isaac and Khumo Shongwe founded YALI for a younger generation: The Young Africa Leadership Initiative (YALI, 2019). The Young African Leaders Initiative has received support from the US Department of State and was started in 2010 by President Barack Obama. The motive was to reach out to Africa's future leaders in their younger days and prepare them to lead their societies with integrity. YALI carries the same principles and core values as its older counterpart ALI. It defines itself as a pan-African youth initiative with an aim of transforming young African professionals into values-based African leaders. To empower and train the leaders of the future, the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa team has developed a high-tech, hands-on learning environment that includes involvement, exploration, and self-reflection (YALI, 2019).

Bolden and P. Kirk (2005) researched a pan-African Leadership Development programme sponsored by the British Council. The programme explored the manner in which participants use their understanding of leadership to facilitate beneficial social change in their communities. The InterAction programme involved 300 men and women from 19 sub-Saharan countries. The programme aimed to transform Africa through the development of a new generation of leaders who are encouraged not only to take up their own leadership roles but to share their insights and learning to develop and inspire others within their communities. Rather than bringing in "experts" from the "developed world", InterAction embraced African wisdom, acknowledging the strengths and contributions of all participants and partners, and used a facilitative, discursive, and experiential approach rather than a more didactic teaching based format.

Bolden and P. Kirk (2005, p. 8) state, in a section on the shedding of past images of leadership, the following:

> [T]hrough life experience as well as the experience of the InterAction leadership programme participants have become clear about the nature of leadership. Interestingly, this seems to come most often out of a process of rejecting what they have experienced as the shortcomings of previously held notions of leadership. The process of sifting through their experience has resulted in participants rejecting past images of leadership which for them were negative, exclusive and inhibiting and, instead embracing a more affirmative, inclusive and "life giving" view.

Iwowo (2019) argues that "for effective leadership development one first of all needs to acknowledge that leadership development is not a 'one size fits all'. Even if it would be a 'one size', then what size or whose size would this 'one size' be, given the diversity in the world?" Some studies on the future of leadership in Africa tend towards being prescriptive and lay out what ought to be done. For example, in his recent book on globalization and leadership in Africa, Amah (2019) focuses on servant leadership and young leaders to shift the mindset in Africa. He concludes:

> Future African leaders must embrace the concept of servant leadership with all its requirements for service to enhance their people's development as a means of developing a formidable country and continent. They must look inwards for a way out of African challenges rather than becoming slaves to other powers in the attempt to develop their countries and people. They must be good managers of resources and not worsen the level of corruption by their behaviours and insensitivity. (Amah, 2019, p. 105)

Other authors are putting emphasis on the concept of Ubuntu as central to Leadership Development in Africa (e.g. Bhengu, 2006; Mbigi & Maree, 2005; Msila, 2014). In order to avoid being prescriptive, Iwowo (2019) states that

> while there is need to re-appraise leadership development in Africa which is still heavily influenced by Western/Anglo-Saxon leadership theory, sweeping ourselves back to a 'glorious African past', as the African Renaissance thought school would have us believe is the solution, is also not realistic. We need to relate to the "now", which is shaped both by history, our colonial past, and also influenced by present day interactions with the rest of the world. There is an absence of a local indigenous conceptual framework that facilitates leadership development practice. Therefore, in its absence, one must adapt global leadership development interventions and frameworks to the specific socio-cultural context, the local framework in which leadership theory is applied. (Iwowo, 2019, Skype interview on July 11)

In earlier work, Iwowo has called this approach the "third space" or Hybrid model (2015) showing interfacing paradigms, as illustrated in Fig. 3.1. This model provides a suggestion of how to move forward with Leadership Development that considers the perspectives of past (indigenous knowledge and African society), present (African society and mainstream theories), and future (hybrid: a combination of indigenous and mainstream).

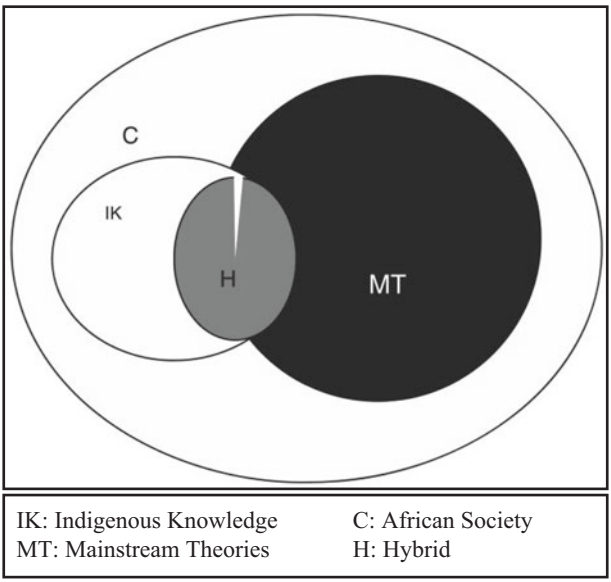


**Fig. 3.1** A "third space" for leadership development. (Source: Iwowo, 2015, p. 424)

It would be interesting to document what kind of leaders are produced by adopting this "Third space" Leadership Development, and how those leaders would contribute to our imagining global leaders' role and impact. In this respect, the examples we see in this book help us think about future leaders in Africa, their successes and challenges, and needs in terms of Leadership Development.

Regarding future efforts to transform Leadership Development, a number of authors have proposed practical ways to develop leadership in Africa, including:

- Critical and comparative examination, with a view to creatively appropriating mainstream [meaning Western leadership] knowledge in the socio-cultural context of "those who must practice it", in a way that is not only recognizable to them, but that is contextually resonant of their lived and experienced forms of work (Iwowo, 2011; Kelly, White, Martin, & Rouncefield, 2006); in other words addressing the practical question of "how I can apply it here and now".

A useful developmental technique is to keep reflective journals prior and post leadership training (Iwowo, 2015).
- Preparation of case studies on leadership in Africa and use of these in Leadership Development training programmes in the continent (Iwowo, 2011)
- *Storytelling*: Generating and sharing real-life operational stories on leadership (Iwowo, 2015)
- Study of books/biographies written by African male and female leaders (Madimbo, 2016)
- Production of descriptive rather than prescriptive studies of leadership in Africa (Nkomo, 2011)

Our volume aims to respond to these practical ways forward, notably by producing case studies of diverse African leaders, describing their personal experiences and leadership journeys with their successes and challenges.

## 3.7 Conclusions

Based on our literature review, we identify three key characteristics or dimensions of African leadership that resonate with each other and with our case study data:

1. *Community*: collectivism, "doing good", and teamwork
2. *Hierarchy*: authority (power distance), transformational leadership, with a widespread desire for lower enactment of hierarchy than currently practised
3. *Humane orientation*: people-oriented leadership and leadership characteristics such as integrity, servant leadership

Our review of literature on leadership in Africa has identified several gaps. These include:

1. Too strong a focus on chiefs/kings and Presidents and ideas of authority that resonate well in both the western world and contemporary times. This has resulted in a focus on certain communities with these authority structures, and on men. In the literature there is a predominant focus on political leaders as an example of leadership more generally. As a result, there has been insufficient focus on

the context, such as interaction between leaders and the community and existing traditions.

2. There are few descriptive studies of leaders in Africa that focus on interaction between leaders and followers. There have been particularly few studies taking an African perspective on servant and transformational leadership, and also few studies focus on women leaders and youth.
3. Even those publications that focus on women leaders have predominantly been looking at famous women who entered politics, such as Sirleaf and Maathai. Less is known about women leaders who were not politicians, nor female leaders who are young.
4. Few studies explore the desire for change in leadership styles and behaviour, (a) using empirical studies to document perceptions of hierarchy in Africa, linked to organizational and cultural values, and (b) examining the attributes of leaders that people are looking for, notably integrity and doing good.
5. The literature analysing the need for and experiences with Leadership Development in Africa is very limited. The existing literature tends to be prescriptive rather than conceptual or descriptive. Most writing tells African leaders what they should do rather than demonstrating what is working or what they want to do and have done. The more recent literature includes more studies of civic leaders. Research on leadership styles, and its impact, is also a more recent and increasingly common focus of research on leadership in Africa. From this research, two concepts of leadership styles appear regularly. The first is transformational leadership and the second is servant leadership. Given the history of leadership in Africa, and especially the "dark side", it could very well be a reaction to pivot towards leaders with opposing styles to "dark side" leaders, eager to transform Africa.

In this volume of case studies, we aim to address the identified gaps in several ways. We decided to study civic leaders, both in government and non-government and business organizations. We also included in each case study a diversity of leaders: we engaged both men and women and senior and young leaders. Our case studies are descriptive and aim to tell their stories, including how they have become leaders and view leadership changes and challenges. Our volume emphasizes the context, doubts, struggles, and successes of civic leaders and presents their experience and

advice on how to deal with the rapidly changing environment in which they find themselves. We also describe several leader–follower interactions in order to understand the transformation and change in perceptions that are widespread.

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