

HUNHU (UBUNTU) AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE IN AFRICA

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1. Introduction

Ubuntu lies at the heart of the African way of life and impacts on every aspect of people's well being. Broodryk¹ observed that Ubuntu is present in all languages of Africa. For instance *Hunhu* a Shona description in the Zimbabwean context, is known as Ubuntu in Zulu; Botho in Sesotho; Ajobi in Yoruba; Numunhu in Shangaan; Vhuthu in Venda; Bunhu in Tsonga; Umntu in Xhosa; Utu in Swahili and Abantu in Ugandan. This paper seeks to explore the notion of being human by grounding discussions around the concept of what is generally referred to as ubuntu in South Africa and *hunhu* among the Shona in Zimbabwe. The issue of discipline in schools is selected as a way to demonstrate the concept of *hunhu/ubuntu* mostly amongst students. *Ubuntu* can be regarded as the soul force that drives almost every facet of societal life in African societies. In this paper the concept of *ubuntu* and *hunhu* have the same meaning and are used interchangeably. The paper seeks to understand how *hunhu* impacts on discipline in Zimbabwean schools. While *hunhu* in the Zimbabwean context is seen as that act of being human, Nussbaum observed that '*ubuntu* is a capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring.'² Nussbaum further notes that *ubuntu* expresses 'our interconnectedness, our common humanity and the responsibility to each other that deeply flows from our deeply felt connection.'³

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¹Broodryk, J., "*Ubuntu: African Life Coping Skills: Theory and Practice*," Paper delivered at the CCEAM Conference held at Lefkosia Nicosia, Cyprus from 12-17 October 2006.

²Nussbaum, B., "African Culture and *Ubuntu*: Reflections of a South African in America," *Perspectives* 17, 1 (2003), 2.

³Nussbaum, "African Culture and *Ubuntu*," 2.

Adjibolosoo noted that ‘one of the greatest desires of every human being is to live in a society where people respect human dignity, liberty, justice, fairness, equity, and other aspects of human rights.’⁴ There is a general trend for African people to demonstrate a strong desire and a tendency to live a life governed by *ubuntu* principles. Thus for many authors particularly those of African origin like Tambulasi and Kanyuni,⁵ *ubuntu* is seen as the foundation of African people’s cultural and communal life. In addition, it is seen as something that works and reinforces the nature of a person’s being human. *Ubuntu*, action-oriented as it is, celebrates the people’s lived experiences and their potential.

This paper examines the consequences of *ubuntu* when applied to the school context especially in areas of school discipline. A high performing school is likely to be characterised by the presence of *ubuntu* in its midst. Generally the level of school discipline reflects the presence and/or absence of *ubuntu*. The underlying argument is that when schools embrace *ubuntu* we witness a disciplined student body. Consequently, the type of leadership that leads to improved school performance is related to the presence or absence of *ubuntu*. An ill-disciplined student body, on the other hand, shows the failure to embrace the principles of *ubuntu*. Hence, the absence of *ubuntu* would result in undesirable outcomes in schools.

This paper is organised into four major sections excluding the introduction and conclusion. The first section defines key concepts such as *ubuntu* (*hunhu*) and the human factor. The second section discusses *hunhu* in its relation to school culture and school discipline. The third section examines the link between ill-discipline in the form of the absence of *hunhu* to what is termed human factor decay. The fourth section preceding the conclusion examines the relationship between *hunhu* and school leadership. Lastly the paper draws a conclusion and presents concluding remarks in the light of the discussion of *ubuntu/hunhu*.

2. Defining *Ubuntu/Hunhu* and the Human Factor

Ubuntu is a Xhosa phrase which means Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu i.e. a person is perceived as a person through one’s relationship to others. *Ubuntu* ‘describes a traditional philosophy that is based on the values of

⁴Adjibolosoo, S., “The Human Factor in Nation Building,” *Journal of the Human Factor* 5, 1 & 2 (1999), 1.

⁵Tambulasi, R. and Kayuni, H. “Can African Feet Divorce Western Shoes? The Case of ‘Ubuntu’ and Democratic Good Governance in Malawi,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14, 2 (2005), 147.

humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values.’⁶ While in Zimbabwe *ubuntu* is generally referred to as *hunhu*, *ubuntu* is recognized as the African philosophy of humanism, linking the individual to the collective through ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’. Many definitions of *ubuntu/hunhu* exist, however, only a few selected ones are referred to in this article. *Ubuntu* makes a fundamental contribution to indigenous ‘ways of knowing and being’ and is ‘based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community in the spirit of the family.’⁷ It is also defined as

The principle of caring for each other’s well being ... and a spirit of mutual support... Each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through [a] recognition of the individual’s humanity. *Ubuntu* means that the people are people through other people: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. It also acknowledged both the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and social well-being.⁸

Mutwa observed that *ubuntu* ‘is simply a way of living and being that allows our basic goodness to come forth.’⁹ True *ubuntu* recognises differences and hence always strives to strike consensus rather than impose a universal sameness on issues. This is why for instance in schools, leadership plays an important role in creating an environment that conducive to both teaching and learning.

True *Ubuntu* takes plurality seriously. While it constitutes personhood through other persons, it appreciates the fact that ‘other persons’ are so called, precisely because we can ultimately never quite ‘stand in their shoes’ or completely ‘see through their eyes’. When the ubuntuist reads ‘solidarity’ and ‘consensus’ s/he therefore also reads ‘alterity’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘co-operation (note: not ‘co-optation’).¹⁰

⁶Broodryk, J., “*Ubuntu: African Life Coping Skills: Theory and Practice*,” 2.

⁷Broodryk, J., *Ubuntu: Life Lessons from Africa*, Tshwane: School of Philosophy, 2002, 56.

⁸Republic of South Africa Government Gazette *Government Welfare Paper on Welfare No. 16943*, Pretoria: South Africa, 1996 February, 18.

⁹Mutwa, D., cited in Mulaudzi, F. M. Libster, M. M. and Phiri, S., “Suggestions for creating a welcoming Nursing Community: *Ubuntu*, Cultural Diplomacy and Mentoring,” *International Journal of Human Caring* 13, 2 (2009), 47.

¹⁰Louw, D. J., *Ubuntu and the Challenge of Multiculturalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Utrecht: Zuidam and Uithof, 2002, 11.

Ubuntu can be seen as ‘the art of interfacing, or finding meaning within the space of interfacing.’¹¹ It can provide a guide on how to see and organize the world and institutions around us as well as how individuals should behave. As indicated above, *Ubuntu* has core defining values such as ‘caring, compassion, unity, tolerance, respect, closeness, generosity, genuineness, empathy, hospitality, conscience, conformity, sharing, and communitarianism.’¹² *Ubuntu* values can play a critical role in terms of effective and efficient management of teaching and learning in schools. For Mbigi there are five key social values known as the collective finger theory that underpin *ubuntu* philosophy: survival, solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity.¹³ They collectively have a bearing on educational outcomes. When put into practice, respect for one another within the school context generates trust among students, teachers and parents. Indiscipline tends to be less where pupils respect their teachers and parents. Sigger, Polak and Pennink¹⁴ expanded on the meaning of the collective finger theory values, suggesting that the dimension of collective survival lies at the heart of *ubuntu*. Thus, in terms of discipline in schools, brotherhood and togetherness underpin *ubuntu* as it is the pupils’ behaviour towards their peers and adults that shows dignity or lack of it. It is indisputable that *ubuntu* puts emphasis on how an individual contributes to the good of the collective.

Among the Shona in Zimbabwe there is the saying that, *kuwanda huuya museve wakapotera pamuzukuru* which means there is an advantage in being many, since at times a friend or a relative can come to your rescue. Therefore ‘values of together-ness and brotherhood ... can be seen as part of a way of living, with a particular dimension of survival.’¹⁵ The emphasis on survival as dependent on group solidarity is also seen in the

¹¹Cilliers, J., “In Search of Meaning Between *Ubuntu* and *Into*: Perspectives on Preaching in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” Paper presented at the 8th International Conference of *Societas Homiletica* held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 19-25 July 2008, 4.

¹²Mulaudzi, F. M., Libster, M. M. and Phiri, S., “Suggestions for creating a welcoming Nursing Community: *Ubuntu*, Cultural Diplomacy and Mentoring,” *International Journal of Human Caring*, 13, 2 (2009), 47.

¹³Mbigi, L., *Ubuntu: The African Dream in Management*, Randburg: Knowledge Resources, 1997.

¹⁴Sigger, D. S. Polak, B. M. and Pennink, B. J. W. ‘*Ubuntu*’ or ‘*Humanness*’ as a Management Concept: Based on Empirical Results from Tanzania, CDS Research Report No. 29, University of Groningen, 2010.

¹⁵Sigger, Polak and Pennik, ‘*Ubuntu*’ or ‘*Humanness*’ as a Management Concept, 12.

saying *kuwanda huuya varume kutswa kwendebvu vanodzimurana* (it is a blessing to be many when disaster strikes men can help one another).

Ubuntu is linked to the second dimension that of solidarity which is highly celebrated in communal life. Solidarity is a principle that empowers and fosters team spirit. The Shona idiom that *chara chimwe hachitswanyinda* (one finger cannot kill lice) denotes that it is impossible to single-handedly accomplish one’s vision or societal goals; hence the emphasis should be on team work. In trying to make sense of the above idioms, and looking at the school with the problems such as truancy, absenteeism and bullying, the need for collective efforts which involve parents, teachers and the senior management team to combat the discipline problems reveals itself. Once this collective effort is achieved, surely improvement is likely to happen.

The third dimension of the collective finger theory is compassion which ‘can be compared with the value of love. Through compassion team members develop a shared vision... This personal understanding and caring will eventually lead to the feeling of belonging to the whole.’¹⁶ Shona greetings do illustrate the issue of the interconnectedness of an individual to the community. In the morning in Shona one would say:

Manganani, marara sei? (Good morning, did you sleep well?)¹⁷
ndarara, kana mararawo (I slept well, if you slept well.)

After lunch time:

Maswera sei? (How has your day been like?)
Ndaswera, kana maswerawo. (My day has been good, if your day has been good.)

There is an emphasis through the above greetings on mutual harmony and well being of every person. Compassion reflects a communitarian spirit which takes into account the value of collectivism, solidarity, love, honest appreciation and concern of the other person’s well being even in simple acts as a greeting. Such concern and recognition of every human being as a person extends to both kin and strangers. This is the essence of *ubuntu*. According to Nussbaum, *ubuntu* ‘addresses our interconnectedness, our

¹⁶Sigger, Polak and Pennik, ‘Ubuntu’ or ‘Humanness’ as a Management Concept, 13-14.

¹⁷Nussbaum, B., “African Culture and *Ubuntu* Reflections of a South African in America,” *World Business Academy* 17, 1 (2003), 4.

common humanity, and responsibility to each other that flows from our connection.’¹⁸ For Nussbaum

the intangible aspect of *ubuntu* is simply the movement and feeling of compassion for our fellow human beings in our hearts and the spontaneous desire to act in a caring and compassionate way, in which our selfhood is inspired by a sense of collective belonging.¹⁹

The dimensions of respect and dignity though treated as separate values are deeply connected among the Shona as is the case elsewhere in Africa. Respect and dignity are key building blocks of *hunhu*. Elders as well as all other members of a society are to be respected if a person is to be accorded as having *hunhu*. With *hunhu* there is a deliberate attempt to ensure that ‘the diversity of vision is encouraged and protected. All voices are respected and heard.’²⁰ Every person is important; hence the need to respect and protect the dignity of all persons. This ability to accord others dignity and respect is self reflective in the quality of humility and is also demanded on oneself as a leader and follower. A wise counsel for Shona leaders is summarised in the saying: *Gudo guru peta muswe vadoko vagokuombera*; meaning, in order to earn respect, a hero should humble himself/herself by demonstrating humility to the juniors. This is an exhortation amongst Shona leaders to humble themselves before their followers. Humility was considered a virtue amongst the many good and effective traditional leaders in Africa.

3. The Human Factor

Adjibolosoo the founder of what is now termed the Human Factor (HF) approach to development, with particular reference to Africa, noted that ‘one of the greatest desires of every human being is to live in a society where people respect dignity, liberty, justice, fairness, equity, and other human rights factors.’²¹ He defined the HF as

The spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, economic and political institutions to function and remain functional over time. Such

¹⁸Nussbaum, B., “*Ubuntu*: Reflections of a South African on our Common Humanity,” *Reflections* 4, 4 (2003), 21.

¹⁹Nussbaum, “African Culture and *Ubuntu* Reflections of a South African in America,” 9.

²⁰Nussbaum, “*Ubuntu*: Reflections of a South African on our Common Humanity,” 15.

²¹Adjibolosoo, S., “The Human Factor in Nation Building,” *Review of Human Factor Studies* 5, 1 & 2 (2000), 1.

dimensions sustain the workings and application of the rule of law, political harmony, a disciplined labour force, just legal systems, respect for human dignity and the sanctity of life, social welfare and so on.²²

The HF is closely related to the notion of *ubuntu/hunhu*. Adjibolosoo noted that the HF includes ‘unique characteristics and qualities of human personality’²³ that contribute to successful accomplishment of goals. The HF relates to practical application of knowledge to solve everyday problems. Some of the positive HF characteristics linked to organisational success include a sense of responsibility, forward looking behaviour, dedication to duty, commitment, resourcefulness, resilience, tolerance, inventiveness, entrepreneurial spirit, innovativeness, imagination, vision, accountability, integrity, diligence and discipline. People who score lowly in any of the above unique characteristics will find it hard to achieve organisational goals and to have *hunhu*.

For Adjibolosoo ‘a properly developed HF animates guides and encourages people to perform.’²⁴ Adjibolosoo identified six components constituting the HF as the spiritual capital, moral capital, aesthetic capital, human capital, human abilities and human potentials.²⁵

The Spiritual Capital refers to the aspect of the human personality that is usually in tune with the universal laws and principles of human life. It equips the individual to see beyond what the five senses are able to grasp and also furnishes him or her with deeper insights into the non-material world.

The Moral Capital represents habits and attitudes of the human heart that are based on universal principles regarding right or wrong. It refers to the qualities individuals possess that lead them to conform or not conform to universal principles of life. Its constituents include integrity, humility, justice, charity, patience, honesty, sensitivity, fairness, etc.

The Aesthetic Capital includes a strong passion for music, art, drama, dance and other artistic capacities (imagination and creativity are strong components) with a deep sense of love for beauty.

The Human Capital refers to the knowhow and acquired skills (i.e., technical, conceptual, intellectual, analytic and communication skills),

²² Adjibolosoo, “The Human Factor in Nation Building,” 2.

²³ Adjibolosoo, S., *The Human Factor in Developing Africa*, London: Praeger, 1995, 33.

²⁴ Adjibolosoo, *The Human Factor in Developing Africa*, 34.

²⁵ Adjibolosoo, *The Human Factor in Developing Africa*, 36-37.

human experiences, knowledge, intelligence, physical well-being, emotional health, etc.

The Human Abilities constitute the power or capacity of an individual to competently undertake projects or effectively perform tasks requiring mental and physical effort. They are required for the effective use of human capital. Examples include wisdom, vision, commitment, determination, diligence, courage, accountability, judgment, responsibility, competence, motivation, human energy, optimism, endurance, self-control, objectivity, reliability, and so on.

The Human Potentials are the human talents that may or may not be harnessed and employed for human utilization. These may be referred to as the yet undeveloped and unused dimensions of the HF.

It is a combination of these components that will ensure a dynamic, healthy organisation including effective schools. With differing emphasis and (re)contextualization *hunhu/ubuntu* and the HF can be considered as a spiritual way of being that have a strong influence on school communities. The two concepts are also an expression of daily living. This is what makes us human. *Hunhu* and the HF are keys to understanding issues of discipline in schools.

4. *Hunhu*, School Culture and School Discipline

In this section we first begin by noting 15 key personality values that are critical to *ubuntu* and have a bearing on educational attainment and teaching and learning.²⁶ A brief definition of school culture and school discipline is proffered. This is done with reference to the Zimbabwean case. The 15 *ubuntu* personality values are as follows:

- togetherness (*humwe*)
- brotherhood (*husahwira*)
- equality (*kuenzana*)
- sharing (*kugovana*)
- sympathy (*tine hurombo*)
- empathy (*kunzvirana*)
- compassion (*moyo muchena*)
- respect (*kutyora muzura*)
- tolerance (*kuzvibata*)
- humanness (*unhu*)
- harmony (*runyararo*)
- redistribution (*kugovana*)

²⁶Broodryk, J. “Ubuntu: African Life Coping Skills: Theory and Practice,” 26.

- obedience (*kuteerera*)
- happiness (*mufaro*)
- wisdom (*njere*).

School outcomes are influenced by these *ubuntu* personality values. Where pupils have more of the above qualities there is greater desire to learn. However, every school has its own unique culture. Organisational culture gives an organisation such as a school its unique identity. Culture represents an organisation’s way of life and the way things are done. Many studies have revealed a link between organisational culture and school effectiveness, school development, academic achievement and learner discipline. Organisational school culture influences how people do things.

African culture embraces every aspect of life; both the material and non material aspects of life. It includes aspects such as norms, values, beliefs, laws, behaviour expectations, technological competences, strategies for survival and all that has to do with being human. It is also important to bear in mind that culture is dynamic, diverse and ever changing. This has a bearing on people’s *ubuntu*. Culture can be regarded as the ‘total life-ways,’ and ‘characteristic of the members of a society including knowledge, and patterned way of thinking and acting, that are learned and shared.’²⁷ According to Schein, organisational culture can be viewed as a pattern of shared basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think and feel.²⁸

According to Janson and Xaba, ‘there is a strong correlation between a positive organisational [school] culture and academic quality or school effectiveness.’²⁹ A supportive school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. The changing school environment in many Zimbabwean schools in the last decade had a detrimental effect on student discipline. It has been noted that ‘effective discipline contributes to a school’s effectiveness and involves keeping good order, consistently enforcing fair,

²⁷Sanderson, *Macrosociology: An Introduction to Human Societies*, New York: Happer and Row, 1988, 31.

²⁸Schein, E. H., *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985, 58.

²⁹Janson, C. A. and Xaba, M. I., “The Organisational Culture of the School,” in van der Westhuizen, P. C., *et al* eds., *Schools as Oganisations*, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 2007, 139.

clear and well-understood rules and the infrequent use of punishment.’³⁰ Discipline sets the limits to what is acceptable behaviour in a given organisational setting such as a school.

School discipline has two major functions one ‘is to ensure the safety of staff and students’ and secondly ‘to create an environment conducive to learning.’³¹ Acts of indiscipline by students and staff defeat the aims and purpose of education. It has been noted that school discipline has preventive, supportive and corrective dimensions.³² Ikoya observes that ‘preventive discipline involves the application of preventive measures to halt the occurrence of misbehaviour,’ while the supportive approach to discipline ‘makes provisions for the student to be constantly aware that he is effectively monitored by the school authority who will not accept any form of misbehaviour’ and the third dimension ‘involves the use of corrective measures to keep the students way from misbehaviour.’³³ Maphosa and Mammen note that ‘discipline in the classroom is a prerequisite if any meaningful learning is to take place ... no meaningful learning can take place in a chaotic environment.’³⁴ This point is supported by Janson and Xaba who stress that ‘learner discipline is an essential aspect of the school’s organisational culture as well as a function of it.’³⁵

5. *Hunhu* and Human Factor Decay

Moral intentional agency in human persons is critical to people’s humanness. Moral responsibility underpins people’s behaviour as self-directing goal seekers. It has been observed ‘that the absence of truth, integrity, responsibility, accountability, trust, and commitment leads to serious social, economic, and political problems’³⁶ that can have strong influences on educational outcomes. To a greater extent an environment

³⁰Janson, and Xaba, “The Organisational Culture of the School,” 137.

³¹Ikoya, P. O., “Gender Difference in the Application of Preventive Discipline Practices among Principals of Secondary Schools in Nigeria,” *Journal of Social Science* 2009, 50.

³²Ikoya, “Gender Difference,” 50.

³³Ikoya, “Gender Difference,” 50.

³⁴Maphosa, C. and Mammen, K. J., “How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms have Become: Insights into Prevalent Forms of Learner Indiscipline in South African Schools,” *Anthropologist*, 13, 3 (2011), 185.

³⁵Janson, and Xaba, “The Organisational Culture of the School,” 142.

³⁶Adjibolosoo, S., “Pillars of Economic Growth and Sustained Human-centred Development,” in Muzvidziwa, V. N. and Gundani, P. eds., *Management and the Human Factor: Lessons for Africa*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2003, 8.

that does not focus on moral character, appropriate work ethics and mutual respect for fellow human beings is bound to lead to human factor decay, i.e., moral degeneracy. According to Adjibolosoo this ‘degeneration of human qualities and/or characteristics – decline in physical, spiritual and ethical systems and mental and moral qualities – ... paved the way for the creation of deeply rooted problems.’³⁷ Once HF decay sets in, it becomes extremely hard for any attempt to correct the situation. The causes of HF decay are both external and internal to individuals and organisations. External forces that impact on people’s lives include the absence of social, cultural and political support. The long-term negative effects of colonial domination and destruction of local cultures is also part of the external forces impacting negatively on people leading to HF decay. The media, religious teachings and an inappropriate educational system dominated by foreign values are part of the powerful forces preventing or slowing down the development of positive HF characteristics in people.

The lack of trust between the various constituent parts, exposure to violence and a lack of striving for meaningful societal goals can also lead to decline in HF development and ultimately HF decay. This decline in human qualities has been very noticeable in many schools in Zimbabwean and other African countries such as South Africa. Internal conditions giving rise to the decline or human factor decay lead to the growth of a culture of violence, lack of respect, intolerance and a culture of anti-school behaviour. Hooliganism increases in some schools. Some of the schools experience the very opposite of what contribute to positive HF development. Moral degeneracy, backbiting, dishonesty, laziness, indiscipline, hot headedness, disruptive behaviour, lack of positive characteristics such as responsibility, compassion, courage, perseverance and wisdom, characterise persons lacking the positive HF qualities. It has been observed that ‘lack of accountability and responsibility are the kingpins of HF decay.’³⁸ For instance in schools an over emphasis on individual achievements and a western oriented curriculum that cherishes western values also leads to HF decay. There is a need to arrest HF decay in African schools as this is likely to spread to the rest o society. HF decay is something that eats into the fabric of any society. In the realm of

³⁷Adjibolosoo, *The Human Factor in Developing Africa*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995, 58.

³⁸Ofori-Amoah, B., “Human Factor Perspective and Development Education,” in Chivaura V. G. and Mararike, C. G., eds., *The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1998, 41.

education it undermines effective teaching and learning. In an article on Servant Leadership Muzvidziwa and Muzvidziwa³⁹ noted how three women principals organised to tackle indiscipline and set their schools on the road to educational success.

It has been observed that ‘in South Africa, for example, there are reports of a sharp increase in the number of cases of learner indiscipline in schools and there are cases where learners are alleged to have murdered other learners on school premises.’⁴⁰ Schools have become unsafe environments that are not conducive to learning and teaching. Some of the commonly cited examples of indiscipline include the use of drugs, gangsterism, shootings, sexual battery, rape, vandalism, hooliganism, violence, substance abuse, theft, pornography, etc. Maphosa and Mammen in their survey of fifteen schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa divide forms of indiscipline into two category, minor and major forms of indiscipline. Fifteen minor forms of indiscipline noted in the study are noisemaking, non submission of work for marking, leaving learning materials at home, talking without the teacher’s permission, teasing other learners, absenteeism, swearing at other learners, minor lies/dishonesty, non completion of given assignments, unsanctioned movement within the class, late coming, unsanctioned movements out of class, violating school dress code, back chatting teachers, use of vulgar language and forcibly taking fellow learners belongings.⁴¹ Another seventeen major forms of indiscipline in schools are identified in the study cited above. The major forms of indiscipline are noted as follows: truancy, bullying, threatening other learners, theft, verbal attacks on fellow learners, assaults on fellow learners, graffiti on classroom/toilet walls, vandalising school property, verbal attacks in teachers, substance abuse, sexual harassment, indecent assaults on female learners, bringing dangerous weapons into the schools, viewing of pornographic materials, threatening teachers, assaults on teachers and burning school property.⁴²

³⁹Muzvidziwa, I. and Muzvidziwa, V. N., Women and the Concept of Servant Leadership: Biblical Influences,” *Journal of Dharma* 36, 4 (2011).

⁴⁰Maphosa and Mammen, “How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms Have Become,” 185-186.

⁴¹Maphosa and Mammen, “How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms Have Become,” 189.

⁴²Maphosa and Mammen, “How Chaotic and Unmanageable Classrooms Have Become,” 190.

What is happening in some schools is a reflection of the transition from *hunhu* (humanness) to *Into* (a thing). Cilliers observed that ‘South Africa is going through such a movement from *Ubuntu* into *Into*, in which people often treat one another not as human beings but as things.’⁴³ There is a prevalence of crime, violence, hooliganism and indiscipline in schools. This situation is not only found in South Africa but other countries in Africa including Zimbabwe. When a person is perceived to be losing *hunhu* among the Shona such a person is referred to as *hapana munhu* (there is no person). It means one has become an *Into*, a thing. It is therefore imperative that schools produce pupils with *hunhu* instead of HF decay (*hapana munhu*). There is the realisation that many school pupils lack *hunhu* and it is part of the role of education to instil *hunhu* in pupils if education is to be worthwhile.

It is quite clear that the lack of a positive HF in any organisation is characterised by the internal fissions and external pressures which seem to contribute to institutional instability and social vices. Partly HF decay in organisations such as schools is due to ignorance, apathy, dishonesty, lack of accountability and responsibility. The development of a positive HF also requires transformational leadership; leadership that is committed to change and cherishes and possesses the necessary HF attributes.

6. *Hunhu* and School Leadership

There is a strong synergy between *hunhu* and educational leadership. Our discussion of the concepts of *ubuntu/hunhu* and the HF leads us to the conclusion that successful schools need to embrace *ubuntu* leadership. The HF series Zimbabwe Chapter has placed leadership at the centre of successful development including educational transformational strategies. In Shona there is the saying that *hove kana yavakuora inotanga musoro* (when a fish starts to rot it starts with the head). This places leadership at the centre as far as educational outcomes are concerned particularly when schools want to improve. There are many Shona proverbs and idioms that offer wise counsel to those in leadership or aspiring to leadership positions. For instance the saying that *mwana washe muranda kumwe* means a chief’s son is an ordinary person outside his kingdom. In the case of schools and their communities, this concept should be applied in such a way that it bridges the gap of perceiving the school and the community as

⁴³Cilliers, J., “In Search of Meaning Between *Ubuntu* and *Into*: Perspectives on Preaching on Post-Apartheid South Africa,” Paper presented at the 8th International Conference of *Societas Homiletica* held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 19-25 July 2008.

different such that there is no partnership. Both parents and pupils should take ownership of the school responsibilities and the school staff needs to be accommodative of the community. *Ubuntu* is about humility and followership in the spirit of servant leadership. Teachers and school principals would benefit in their capacities as school leaders by embracing the *ubuntu* ideals of servant leadership. Similarly the previously mentioned saying that *gudo guru peta muswe vaduku vagokutya* (in order to earn respect, a hero should humble himself/herself by demonstrating humility to the juniors) applies to and tends to give meaning to leaders who respect their colleagues and followers. There is a lot to be gained by school leaders through a grounding of the curriculum and leadership principles in *ubuntu*. Leadership that practice *ubuntu* in the school context, like everywhere in society, is respectful of its community partnership. School leaders are facilitators. This is underlined by sayings that warn people against the dangers of pig headedness like *ndambakuudzwa wakaonekwa nembonje pahuma* (talks of the dangers of ignoring advice as this often leads to disastrous outcomes). The idiom highlights the importance of sharing and accommodating other people's views. It is always imperative for one to listen to wise counsel by others. No individual person can single-handedly know it all. Shona proverbs and idioms are a very rich source of wisdom for school leaders and their partners. It is therefore useful to ground school leadership approaches in *ubuntu* philosophy as a guide to effective and successful educational leadership.

Four more Shona proverbs/idioms are presented below in order to expand on the critical role *ubuntu* can play on school leadership. For instance the saying *zano pangwa uinerako* means wise counsel is effective if you also have your ideas. This implies that a school leader is a student of leadership forever. A school leader needs to have a vision and sense of purpose. You need to give as well as take counsel from others. Everybody needs to be part of the process contributing to the transformation process in schools.

The saying *kuziva mbuya huudzwa* (you come to know certain things through learning/training) encourages leaders to be open-minded and to be prepared to learn. This encourages leaders to mentor their followers. Nobody is born a knower. There is also wise counsel in the saying *chisichako masimba mashoma* (without a sense of ownership there is very little commitment). This is a call to leaders to involve others in decision making so that they may be willing to participate in school programme as well as developing a sense of commitment to the programmes being

implemented. The centrality of school community partnership is implied in the above saying. These idioms demonstrate the importance of grounding school leadership principles and practices in *ubuntu*. The true value of *ubuntu* is realised when those in leadership stop paying lip service to *ubuntu* philosophy. School principals are not just administrators; they are there to offer a vision and lead the way in implementing curriculum changes embracing *ubuntu*. Msila observed that ‘many township schools in South Africa continue to be underperforming and management structures are usually said to be helpless in the face of educational change.’⁴⁴ Partly this situation is due to failure to develop positive HF approaches to leadership as well as embracing of *ubuntu* in school settings.

7. Conclusion

There is a strong sense that prospects for a bright future for many in Africa depends on grounding practices and policy in *hunhu/ubuntu*. The discussions in preceding sections of this article do demonstrate the importance of being human in essence having *hunhu*. *Hunhu/ubuntu* can be used as a spring and sounding board for action and social practices including the field of education. There is a call to make *ubuntu* a rallying point in terms of development of education that empowers students and their communities. However, success is premised on the assumption that in Africa this will depend on the adoption of *ubuntu* and the positive HF approach to human challenges. While the numbers of those who have embraced *hunhu/ubuntu* philosophy is small, there is increasing recognition that *ubuntu* can offer an alternative that can be the foundation on which many social practices and programmes including educational ones are anchored. There is a need to make *ubuntu* and the HF resources for transformation and development of sound educational and development programmes leading to positive outcomes. The preceding discussions while not exhaustive offer hope for the future.

Sustainable development depends on harnessing the energy of the majority instead of focusing on the few. The article strongly argues that the focus in teaching, learning and professional development irrespective of field needs to be grounded on notions of *ubuntu/hunhu*. Leadership through *ubuntu* is perceived as some form of collective agency. In the case of education it means adoption of a strong community-school partnership where all stakeholders, i.e., teachers, learners, school leaders, parents, community and local and central government co-participate in shaping and

⁴⁴Msila, V., “*Ubuntu* and School Leadership,” *Journal of Education* 44 (2008), 68.

implementing of learning programmes. *Hunhu* opens up possibilities that can lead to the building of leadership that facilitates positive changes in society. The voice of everyone is valued and consensus building can lead to strong communities.

While the numbers of those who have mainstreamed *hunhu/ubuntu* in their programmes might be few, there are cases that demonstrate that *ubuntu* can empower both leaders/followers. *Ubuntu* can give direction in terms of what needs to be done and how things can shape up. With growing awareness of the centrality of *hunhu* and that people matter people will begin to do things for themselves thereby in the processes learn to break away from the chains of dependence. When leaders have embraced *hunhu* they are likely to generate support and sustain school development and professional development. Everybody within a given community or in the case of a school will feel part of the change process and that they are valued and have something to contribute toward realisation of desired educational outcomes.

The consequences of failure to embrace *ubuntu/hunhu* are there for all to see. It is what is referred to as human factor decay. In schools HF decay manifests itself through students' indiscipline. HF decay can be arrested in schools by adopting *ubuntu/hunhu* and developing positive HF attributes amongst the learners, educators and parents. It is our hope that this article adds to the increasing literature on what it means to be human in Africa and also examines practical application of *ubuntu/hunhu* in education.