

Values of the ubuntu characteristics business essay



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This research will focus on the perceived values of the Ubuntu characteristics in leadership style of the Hospitality industry in South Africa and how Ubuntu can influence, and be applied to leadership level. It is therefore important in this research to understand Ubuntu leadership and the values of the Ubuntu philosophy can contribute to the business world.

Adair (2006) explains that leadership is of the spirit compounded of personality and vision and he illustrates that management as a trend of the mind more of an accurate methods, calculation and routine. This is to say that leadership is the understanding and sharing of a common purpose without which there can be no effective leadership. Adair believes that leadership is to manage change and leadership is to manage growth. In this research paper it will be established if the Ubuntu style of leadership and the core of its values can bring about any good leadership and nurturing of growth within an organisation in the hospitality industry of South Africa.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this research study is to establish the perceived values of the Ubuntu characteristics in leadership style of the Hospitality industry in South Africa and determine the importance of Ubuntu leadership in this sector. Because the style of Ubuntu leadership and management involves the leading of an organisation by departing from the hierarchically structured management relations and rather introduces a cooperative and supportive form of leadership in which collective solidarity of the group is employed and respected (Prinsloo 1998). The report of this study will establish whether perceived values of the Ubuntu characteristics in leadership style of the

Hospitality industry in South Africa are the answer to the leadership challenges the industry faces.

Context of the study

The principle of knowledge within the fields of leadership theories and practice has been developed and adopted mainly from the Western capitalist principles, with leading thinkers in the field being mainly of European or American dissent. These thoughts have then been ‘exported’ beyond American or Western boundaries as trade has moved from being multinational, through international to global, and practices such as international outsourcing have become more widespread. While some areas of Asia, mostly India, may be both responsive and adaptive to some of these Western practices, other areas of Asia and Africa as a whole are not so. This paper offers contextual understanding of how the Concept of Ubuntu or Ubuntu leadership can be of value through its philosophies.

The Western world has mostly underpinned and still continues on supplying leadership, implementation and strategic management ideas; this is through the political systems, and economic infrastructures to Africa, since the time of the colonial times to present. Though seemingly with good intentions, these Western theories that are continuously being used in organizations (business) in Africa have not achieved their desired outcomes because many Africans find it difficult to relate to them, having to sacrifice their authenticity in order to fully embrace such Western ideals. Thus the need to find out if Ubuntu kind of leadership and philosophy can serve the purpose of indigenous Africa to fully embrace it in the Hospitality industry.

This now places an interest for the need to understand the Ubuntu context as well as the indigenous thought system and, in particular, the perspective of the Ubuntu worker.

Problem statement

The hierarchical organizational structure in every business structure will always reflect the organized coordination which ensures that the goals and objectives of the said entity are achieved. The aim of this proposal is to investigate on the perceived values of the Ubuntu characteristics in leadership style of the Hospitality industry in South Africa.

Main problem

This research will seek to understand the perceived values of Ubuntu kind of leadership in the hospitality industry of South of South Africa. The question is how does the Ubuntu philosophy impact on the leadership in the hospitality organization of South Africa?

Sub-problems

Below are the sub-problems which have been identified to be ideal with the main problem and gain insight into the perceived value of Ubuntu philosophy in the hospitality industry of South Africa.

The first sub problem is to examine the significance of Ubuntu leadership style in Hospitality industry of South Africa.

The second sub problem is to find out if there is any relationship between Ubuntu leadership style and South African society.

Significance of the study

This research will fill the gaps of difficulties the South African hospitality industry face in terms of team work and commitment. This makes it essential in finding and establishing many ways of managing an organisation. Since there are many new ways of instilling values in order to overcome leadership challenges, Ubuntu leadership should be the solution. This is according to Booyens (2001) who argues that there is no doubt that the Ubuntu philosophy is needed because it promotes team work down to the grassroots level and encourages workers to sacrifice personal goals for the company.

This study will provide guidance on how the characteristics of Ubuntu leadership can provide organisational responsibility through the vision. It is said that good leadership in today's organizations calls for actively involving everyone in the organization, leaders are still ultimately responsible for establishing direction through vision and strategy (Daft. 2005: 535). The results of this research will be analysed to place emphasis on the combination of Ubuntu leadership style required by a transformational and transactional leader during the strategic planning process.

Delimitations of the study

The research will be delimited in the following respects:

The research will be delimited to exploring the question from the perspective of Ubuntu leadership. Thus no effort will be made to explore or understand the factors from a customer and/or a stakeholder perspective.

The research will not look at corporate reputation in relation to Ubuntu philosophy; suffice a brief acknowledgement of the existence of this relationship in the literature review, as it falls outside the ambit of the current research. The research will take place in Johannesburg, Gauteng but could be applicable to other organisation in South Africa.

Definition of terms

Ubuntu – The doctrine of Ubuntu has been used in almost all the parts of Africa. This culture has been of Doctrine has been most used and applied in South Africa. Most Academic commentators have pointed out the philosophical notion classification known as Ubuntu, which symbolizes the beliefs, values, and behaviors’ of a large majority of the South African population. Ubuntu is defined by Mangaliso (2001) as “ humaneness–a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness–that individuals and groups display for one another. Ubuntu is the foundation for the basic values that manifest themselves in the ways African people think and behave towards each other and everyone else they encounter” (Mangaliso, 2001: 24). Ubuntu has been viewed to be one of the most critical values in the African culture as a whole, and it is believed that this practice on the basis of management can be harmonious with the peoples of Africa. But the question still needs to answered is can Ubuntu can it compete and be of any advantage universally (Mbigi, 2005; Mangaliso, 2001).

Leadership – Leadership has been well defined by Gray (2004) that it is managing the performance of others in any organised set up (Gray, 2004:

76). Conceivably the commonest constituent of definitions found in the <https://assignbuster.com/values-of-the-ubuntu-characteristics-business-essay/>

literature concerns exercising influence in one way or another. This is quite clear since it implies that the exercisers of power should be able to have some ideas of their own about what they want to achieve, or what they want other individuals to do. In other words, they have vision, and are proactive in trying to turn that vision into reality by involving other people.

Assumptions

It is assumed that for this study, the respondents of the interviews will answer all questions as openly and honestly as possible. The respondents will answer the interviews on their own and that, the responses will not be completed in groups or influenced by other people or respondents. The respondents will be interviewed in one sitting. All employees are ready and willing to be a part of the project work. All respondents will have technical and operational experience in the hospitality industry. The results from this study which is focused on a particular sector (Hospitality industry) can be used in other organisation with the same Style of Ubuntu leadership in strategy management and implementation.

Literature review

Introduction

The evolution and progression of indigenous management theories and practices in Africa has been seriously affected and hindered by colonialism. The imposing of colonial administration was introduced by the western countries, and their management theories and practices are considered as the engine and the universal remedy for the continent's socio-politico-economic development. The Western education, scholarship and prose

generally diminished and denounced the astonishing management competency and practices of early African civilizations; this is evidenced, for example, in the building of the great Egyptian pyramids. It is assumed that these so called “ foreign management systems” generally failed to achieve the desired results as they discountenanced African cultural inertia and social milieu. The paper addresses the development and effective if Ubuntu leadership style in Strategy management and implementation. Ubuntu leadership is an African management philosophy, which is rooted in the African cultures, value system and beliefs, to provide the practical way for the efficient and effective running of organizations in Africa, with the aim of having a global competitiveness. The Ubuntu leadership style or the “ new management techniques” known by different scholars, puts much of its emphasis on humanness, communalism and African patriotism, and it provides the veritable starting point for the development of indigenous African management philosophy.

Background discussion

A number of African researchers today have embarked on the advocacy for the indigenous African leadership philosophy that would serve the need of the African continent. In South Africa today, there is an emergency of a philosophical thought system derived from African culture, beliefs, and values and behaviors’ known as Ubuntu, (Ubuntu is a Bantu word meaning, broadly, sharing and community). Mangaliso (2001) defines Ubuntu as “ humaneness – a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness – that individuals and groups display for one another. Ubuntu is the foundation for the basic values that manifest

themselves in the ways African people think and behave towards each other and everyone else they encounter” (Mangaliso, 2001: 24).

Leaders of Ubuntu philosophy

According to Poovan, du Toit and Engelbrecht (2006) Ubuntu philosophy permits administrators, leaders and managers to tap into the familiar African values to build and reinforce their work environment effectively by:

Teaming up and organizing resources for survival – this maintains productivity and effectiveness which deeply depends on shared values and individual contribution: it encourages focus on communal (and differences) with reliance to minimize threat to survival through conflict;

creating of unified situations – the spirit of solidarity, that is, mutual regard among members and individual adhesion to the group; create situations defined by ‘ group’ behaviors’ – sit together, focus, on each other, co-ordinate behaviour;

It enhances social oneness and participation – sets up informal opportunities based on traditional ‘ set ups’ – central village location for gatherings, activities, mediation, decisions, events and rituals.

Thus Ubuntu is considered to be an important value of African culture that can form the foundation of African management (Ubuntu leadership) philosophy that is in tune with the peoples of Africa. Though the proponent of Ubuntu leadership have argued that the concept was created as a system of management practice, for competitive advantage and to command a universal appeal beyond the shores of the continent (Mbigi, 2005; Mangaliso,

2001). Mangaliso (2001) suggests that: “ Incorporating Ubuntu principles in management hold the promise of superior approaches to managing organizations. Organizations infused with humanness, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness will enjoy more sustainable competitive advantage” (Mangaliso 2001: 32).

Therefore, Ubuntu leadership system emphasizes on teamwork, attention to relationships, mutual respect and empathy between leader and followers, and participative decision-making. These are very fundamental principles of management, which hold promise for improving organization activities and functioning in South Africa and Africa at large.

The importance of Ubuntu leadership in an organisation

Managing culture is another element of Ubuntu leadership. It is the entrepreneurial leader’s role to shape the organizational culture by setting example, the norms, standards and defining the values of the organization. Rossouw, Le Roux and Groenewald (2003) state that managers often find it difficult to think that there could be a relationship between an organization’s culture and its strategy. Strategic leadership is defined by Daft (2008) as follows; “ The ability to anticipate and envision the future, maintain flexibility, think strategically and initiate changes that will create a competitive advantage for the organization in the future” (Daft, 2008: 511). The other definition of strategic Leadership is of Dubrin (2004) which provides a clearer picture of the concept of strategic leadership. This definition of Dubrin helps to understand the necessity and effectiveness of carrying out strategic management. He defines it as a “ Strategic

management refers to the process of ensuring a competitive fit between the organization and its environment” (Dubrin, 2004: 401).

Ubuntu leadership is right for living

The distinctive feature about Ubuntu governance is an indigenous democracy with very deep African cultures that had emerged from African traditional institutions and practices. The hallmark of African traditional governance is the focus on collective stewardship (collectivism), freedom of expression, grass-roots participation, consultation, discussion and consensus to accommodate minority needs and views (holism). The emphasis was not just on majority views but also on compromise and accommodation. The focus is on the need to reach an acceptable consensus through discussions to accommodate minority groups and views in order to avoid majority group dictatorship. This was essential because the traditional African political institution was characterized by the cultural diversity of tribes and clans, which did not disappear as a result of majority rule (Mbigi, 1997: 22).

This autocratic leadership style expects subordinates to be submissive and obedient. Because leadership in modern Africa is authoritarian and politicized (Kiggundu, 1988: 226; Jaeger & Kanunzo, 1990; 17; Blunt & Jones, 1992: 6-23), such autocratic leadership styles, by expecting subordinates to be submissive and obedient, may stifle innovativeness and impede community motivation and Ubuntu.

Why Ubuntu leadership in hospitality industry?

For every industry especially in the Hospitality business, leadership basically deals with the human relations where problem solving, communication and

decision making are promoted and cultivated. Leithwood and Mcleah (1987) indicate that highly effective leaders know many forms of decision-making are skilled in their use and are situationally sensitive in their selection of a particular approach to decision-making (Leithwood and Mcleah, 1987: 35). They are thus very analytical and rational in the way they perceive and perform their functions. Basson and Smith (1991) allude to the fact that effective leaders can be selected or trained. It is also useful to think of leadership as a generic term which refers to the process characterized by the interrelationships among people as they work together in the formation and achievement of shared goals (Basson and Smith, 1991: 148). Hallinger et al. (1989) claim that leadership in an industrial worldview influences people by developing a clear mission that provides an instructional focus for people throughout the community. Leadership does not reside exclusively with the chief or president; in fact Weber (1989: 217) identifies the need to develop 'shared leadership' in the community (Weber, 1989: 217). One of the current shifts in thinking regarding leadership is a shift from an instructional to a transformational leadership. Brandt (1992: 3) declared that because of change and democracy 'instructional leadership is out; ... transformational leadership is in'. Such leadership is 'leadership for change' (Brandt, 1992: 3).

Another important aspect in hospitality industry's leadership is the shared vision. There is the discipline for translating individual vision into shared vision. People should feel free to express their dreams, but also learn how to listen to each other's dream. The fundamental role of leadership in Ubuntu setup is to create connotative meaning through significant but important

rituals and ceremonies. Mbigi (1997) highlights that in traditional African communities the ultimate test of leadership maturity in terms of training and development is determined by the ease with which a new leader carries out rituals and ceremonies (Mbigi, 1997: 19). It is through well-designed rituals and ceremonies that leaders can effectively manage collective meaning and collective trust. It is not just an intellectual journey. It is a symbolic and emotional as well as a spiritual journey. Therefore effective leadership in Ubuntu requires people to have convivial experiences by digging deep into their emotional and spiritual resources. This may be equivalent to the mission and vision in a Hospitality industry and an industrial worldview.

The sense of Ubuntu leadership system is to enhance governance, collective solidarity, respect, human dignity and the right to freedom of expression, as well as collective trust and compassion. Ubuntu is central to indigenous governance systems and can be central to modern governance.

Can Ubuntu leadership system be relied upon?

African society requires Ubuntu leadership

Afro-centricity encompasses African history, traditions, culture, mythology, and the value systems of communities, according to Khoza (in Mangaliso, 2001: 278-279), the Chairperson of Eskom, the supplier of electricity in South Africa. Khoza believes that corporations in Africa will be successful if they adopt the Ubuntu philosophy and leadership styles, which are people-centred. It is perhaps telling that Eskom registered an after-tax profit of R5. 2 billion over a period of 15 months up to the end of March 2005 after the corporation had adopted the Ubuntu management philosophy (Broodryk,

2005: 17). Similarly, Wolmarans (1995), reports that South African Airways (SAA) adopted an Ubuntu management system in 1994. Since then, the African Ubuntu philosophy has been a driving force in the company. The secret behind its success has been the publicly stated core values of South African Airways – these include corporate performance, customer orientation, employee care, corporate citizenship, integrity, safety, innovation and teamwork, which are all embodied in the Ubuntu management philosophy. Improved results demonstrate that culture and leadership style play pivotal roles towards the achievement of set goals and strategies of an organisation.

Emerging African management philosophies see an organisation as a community and can be summed up in one word – Ubuntu (Mbigi & Maree, 2005: v-vi). An African Ubuntu leadership system recognises the significance of group solidarity that is prevalent in African cultures, acknowledging that an African leadership style involves group and community supportiveness, sharing and cooperation. Ubuntu-based leadership dictates sharing burdens during hard times, because by doing so, suffering is also shared and diminished. What is distinctive about the Ubuntu philosophy is the premise of a short memory of hate (Mazrui, 2001). Africans teach children to communicate effectively, reconcile, and find ways to cleanse and let go of hatred and give the children skills to do so. The Ubuntu approach to life enables people to express continued compassion and Perseverance within communities and institutions.

Lived experiences of Ubuntu leadership

African organisations can build cooperation and competitive strategies by allowing teamwork based on Ubuntu principles to permeate the organisation
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(Mbigi & Maree, 2005: 93). As a people-centred philosophy, Ubuntu stipulates that a person's worth depends on social, cultural and spiritual criteria. It requires a life that depends on a normative engagement with the community, a substantive appreciation of the common good and a constitutive engagement with one another in a rational and ethical community.

In this way, in order for a person to be identified as a true African, community and community are substantive prerequisites. Communalism and collectivism are essential to the spirit of the African Ubuntu philosophy. Equally important in Ubuntu relationships is the aspect of working with others as a team (English, 2002: 197; Poovan et al., 2006: 17). A spirit of solidarity simultaneously supports cooperation and competitiveness amongst the team by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the betterment of the entire group.

In a team setting, the existence of Ubuntu as a shared value system implies that team members are encouraged to strive towards the outlined team values, which consequently enhance their functioning together as a team (Poovan et al., 2006: 25; Van den Heuvel et al., 2006: 48). The team is brought one step closer to being effective because of the increased level of team members' commitment, loyalty and satisfaction, which ultimately has a positive impact on overall performance. Thus, management systems that tend to focus on achievements of individual team members and not the entire group are likely to miss out on all the social and collective framework of an African society.

Is Ubuntu leadership has a place in Hospitality industry?

Issues of corporate governance are becoming more pronounced in modern business practices. Corporate governance, which is intertwined with business ethics, is considered critical in organisational practice, as well as in general corporate productivity (Rossouw, 2005: 105). The founding principles of business ethics and corporate governance are in line with the Ubuntu philosophy of regarding all members of an organisation as part of the community. It is this direct involvement of and with community members that brings about greater solidarity, love, caring and sharing within a grouping (organisation).

A major governance challenge in current governance issues has been corruption, which reveals the moral depravity and badness of the perpetrators (Broodryk, 2005; Moloketi, 2009; Nyarwath, 2002). Generally, corruption is caused by a lack of commitment to moral beliefs by the perpetrators, which is in turn due to the Weak moral will of an individual towards other people. Corruption can be seen as a hindrance.

Conclusion of Literature Review

Desire for Ubuntu leadership in Hospitality industry

The Ubuntu management system and the “ new management techniques” as advocated by African management scholars, set the revolutionary agenda for evolving an indigenous African management philosophy that will emphasize our cultural traits of humanness, communalism, and participatory decision-making in organizational life. African governments and the private sector must support the development of African management philosophy

through creating an enabling environment for management research and the provision of adequate research funds or grants.

Ubuntu leadership encourages participation

In a Western worldview, the concept leadership accommodated the sense of belonging, as did the Ubuntu worldview. Sergiovanni (1982) supports this when he says: leadership promotes the feeling of actual belonging, participating, being co-partners in the entire organization. In all, a leader who has leadership skills sees to the rapid growth of the organization. Leadership skills are situational specific, of short duration, and focused on specific objectives or outcomes' (Sergiovanni, 1982: 231).

Therefore the Ubuntu philosophy represents an African conception of human beings and their relationship with the community that embodies the ethics defining Africans and their social behaviours (Dia, 1992; Mbigi, 2005: 75; Van den Heuvel, Mangaliso & Van de Bunt, 2006: 48). Africans are social beings that are in constant communion with one another in an environment where a human being is regarded as a human being only through his or her relationships to other human beings (Tutu in Battle, 1997: 39-43). Therefore, the survival of a human being is dependent on other people – the community and society.

Research methodology

The research objective is to identify the Ubuntu in leadership style within hospitality industry in South Africa and factors that leader's extent to which managers desire to have leaders, who lead using Ubuntu framework.

The methodology selected for the proposed research is qualitative, since the study is exploratory in nature (Creswell 2003). Furthermore, since the research aims to develop a ranking of factors that significantly contribute to Ubuntu leadership style in South Africa and render valuable strategies for managers, boards of directors, senior executives, senior management and other company stakeholders by also providing a background to the ranking, a qualitative approach is thus deemed suitable as it is particularly concerned with understanding multiple perspectives of different individuals (Leedy and Ormrod 2005; Williams 2007).

Research methodology / paradigm

Qualitative research is particularly suited to research that is exploratory in nature (Creswell 2003; Carrie 2007).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005) and Williams (2007), qualitative research studies typically suit the following purposes:

To reveal the characteristics or qualities of people, processes, relationships, systems, and even situations.

To allow the researcher to:

gain new insights in respect of the phenomenon being studied;

develop new concepts about a phenomenon; and/or

Ascertain the problems that exist within a phenomenon.

To allow the researcher to test the validity of certain claims, theories or generalisations.

To enable a researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of certain policies, practices or innovations. Nonetheless, qualitative research also suffers from a number of shortcomings and weaknesses, which include the lack of structure, objectivity, large samples, numeric data, established guidelines and clear data analysis conventions (Miles 1979; Yin 1994; Leedy and Ormrod 2005).

Research Design

The methodological approach that will be adopted will be that of a semi-structured interview, as it will enable the researcher to elicit views and opinions from respondents that are being interviewed. In investigating the phenomenon, the interpretative approach, particularly constructive-interpretative paradigm will be used in the study; taking into account its ability to generate an in-depth understanding regarding factors that impacts on Ubuntu leadership (Cohen et al, 2007: 155; Creswell, 2003: 52; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 318). In the course of investigations, the interpretative approach would allow, the researcher to explore, analyse, describe, and show the relationships between Ubuntu and strategy management and implementation. That will be made possible because the phenomenon of Ubuntu and leadership will be investigated in their unique and natural setting (Lauer, 2006: 76). Simply put; all interviews, observational field notes and documents analyses would be done at the participant place.

In employing the qualitative research design, a case study will be employed to sample participants, collect data, and analyse data as shown below.

Population and sample

Population

The focus for this study will be on employers and employees of Orion group of companies which is a Hospitality Industry. The company has staff numbering around 1000 employees. Orion is sub-divided into many different business branches and each business branch is run as a business on its own. The research study focuses on Orion group; the staff compliment at each branch is comprised of about 100 full time permanent employees. From the total number of employees working at Orion Braamfontein office, all are eligible to participate. Over 15 participants out of the 50 employees will be selected for the purpose of this study and will form the target population for the study.

There are no limitations as to age, race, gender, education background and previous work experience. However, it would be necessary that members of this group be currently employed in the Hospitality industry, as well as having been in any leadership position of the company.

Sample and sampling method

A sample of twelve employees from the population will be drawn. Significant effort will be made to include both, female and male employees into the sample. A list of potential respondents is provided in Table 2. The employees included in the sample will all be based in companies with country headquarters in the Gauteng provincial area for ease of conducting the

research as well as due to time constraints. This convenience sampling is not expected to affect the research data. Convenience sampling as opposed to random sampling will be employed as potential respondents are persons for which one will need to gain access to and will be based on the convenience of access for the researcher (Creswell 2003).

The researcher will use a purposive sampling to select participants.

According to Budhal (2000: 62), Creswell (2003: 52) and, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 317), a sample represents a small and distinct group of “information-rich informants” that would enable the researcher to “understand the problem in depth”.

Furthermore, purposive sampling will be done by combining strategies like site selection, network sampling and sampling by case in order to maximize its impact. Lastly, permission would be sought from the Orion Head office.

Table1: List of potential respondents

Number

Institution

Respondent

1

Orion Hotels

2

InterContinental Hotels

3

Sun International

4

Protea Hotels

5

Lamunu Hotel (South Point Group)

6

Three Cities Hotels & Resorts

7

Legacy Hotels & Resorts

8